THE ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN STUDYING THE NATIONAL TRADITIONS OF OTHER COUNTRIES

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Abstract: In the contemporary globalized world, the study of national traditions and cultural heritage of different countries has become an important component of education, international communication, and intercultural understanding. Foreign languages play a significant role in this process because they provide direct access to the historical, cultural, social, and spiritual values of other nations. Knowledge of a foreign language enables individuals not only to communicate with representatives of different cultures but also to understand their customs, traditions, beliefs, literature, historical experiences, and national identity through authentic sources. Translation alone cannot always convey the full meaning of culturally specific expressions, idioms, symbols, and traditional practices. Therefore, learning a foreign language creates opportunities for a deeper and more accurate understanding of another nation's cultural environment.

Keywords: foreign languages, national traditions, cultural heritage, intercultural communication, cultural identity, language learning, international relations, national values, cultural awareness, globalization

INTRODUCTION. In the modern world, international relations, economic cooperation, tourism, education, science, and cultural exchange are developing rapidly. People from different countries increasingly interact with one another in professional, academic, social, and personal environments. These processes have made the ability to understand other cultures an important requirement of contemporary society. However, successful intercultural communication requires more than the ability to speak a foreign language. It also requires knowledge of the historical background, national values, traditions, customs, social norms, and cultural characteristics of the people with whom communication takes place.

Every nation possesses a unique cultural identity formed throughout its historical development. This identity is reflected in traditional clothing, national cuisine, family relationships, religious and social celebrations, folk music, dances, architecture, literature, oral traditions, and everyday communication. These cultural elements represent the collective experience and historical memory of a society. Studying them helps individuals understand not only the lifestyle of another nation but also the factors that have influenced its worldview and social organization.

Foreign languages provide an important means of accessing this cultural knowledge. Through language, people can read original literary works, historical documents, newspapers, scientific publications, travel descriptions, folklore, and other cultural materials. They can also communicate directly with native speakers, participate in international educational programmes, and observe cultural practices from the perspective of their participants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. This study is based on theoretical analysis, comparative examination, and the interpretation of scientific literature related to foreign language education, intercultural communication, cultural studies, and national identity.

The methodological foundation includes several complementary approaches.

Theoretical analysis. Scientific publications concerning the relationship between language and culture were examined to identify the role of linguistic knowledge in understanding cultural

traditions. Particular attention was paid to the concepts of communicative competence, intercultural competence, and language as a carrier of cultural information.

Comparative analysis. The comparative approach was used to explain how national traditions differ across societies and how foreign language knowledge helps identify the historical and social reasons behind these differences. This approach makes it possible to examine similarities and distinctions in family traditions, holidays, hospitality, communication styles, and social behaviour.

Cultural and contextual analysis. This method focuses on understanding cultural expressions within their original historical and social environment. It is particularly important when studying proverbs, idioms, traditional ceremonies, literary works, and forms of social interaction.

Systematic approach. Language learning and cultural education were considered as interconnected components of a broader educational process. The study emphasizes that linguistic knowledge, historical awareness, cultural interpretation, and communication skills should develop together.

The research is theoretical and analytical in nature. It does not claim to present experimentally measured results. Its findings are based on the interpretation of established academic approaches and the development of recommendations for foreign language education.

Foreign languages as a tool for developing intercultural communication. Intercultural communication refers to the exchange of information and meanings between people who belong to different cultural backgrounds. Successful communication requires linguistic knowledge, cultural awareness, tolerance, and the ability to interpret behaviour within its appropriate context.

A person may possess good grammatical knowledge of a foreign language but still experience difficulties in communication if they do not understand cultural expectations.

For example, communication styles differ across societies. Some cultures prefer direct and explicit statements, while others place greater emphasis on indirect expressions, politeness, and maintaining social harmony. Differences may also occur in eye contact, personal distance, gestures, silence, and the organization of conversations.

Foreign language learning helps individuals recognize these differences and adapt their communication appropriately.

Intercultural competence includes several important components:

- Linguistic competence - the ability to understand and use vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and appropriate expressions.
- Sociolinguistic competence - the ability to select language forms according to social situations, relationships, and communication purposes.
- Cultural knowledge - understanding the historical background, traditions, values, and social norms of another society.
- Interpretative competence - the ability to identify cultural meanings in language, behaviour, and social practices.
- Interpersonal competence - the ability to communicate respectfully and cooperate with people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Critical cultural awareness - the ability to examine cultural differences objectively and avoid stereotypes.

These components are interconnected. Linguistic competence makes communication possible, while cultural knowledge helps ensure that communication is meaningful and respectful.

Foreign language education should therefore encourage learners to compare cultures without automatically considering one culture superior to another. The main purpose should be to develop mutual understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. The theoretical analysis demonstrates that foreign languages perform several interconnected functions in the study of national traditions.

First, foreign language proficiency provides direct access to authentic cultural and historical information. It reduces dependence on translated materials and allows learners to examine how members of a society describe their own traditions.

Second, language knowledge supports the interpretation of culturally specific expressions, symbols, ceremonies, and social practices. These elements often contain meanings that cannot be adequately explained through literal translation.

Third, the integration of language learning and cultural studies contributes to the development of intercultural competence. Learners become better prepared to recognize cultural differences, communicate appropriately, and avoid stereotypical interpretations.

Fourth, digital technologies expand access to international cultural resources. However, their effective use requires language skills, digital literacy, and the ability to evaluate information critically.

Fifth, comparative cultural research creates opportunities to understand both the uniqueness and common features of different societies. It also strengthens learners' awareness of their own national identity.

The analysis further indicates that cultural education should be integrated into the entire foreign language learning process rather than treated as an occasional supplementary topic. Language textbooks, classroom discussions, independent assignments, and research projects should contain materials that represent the historical and contemporary life of different societies.

The proposed five-stage model provides a systematic framework for organizing this process. It connects linguistic preparation with authentic information acquisition, cultural interpretation, comparative analysis, and practical communication.

Nevertheless, several challenges should be considered. These include insufficient access to authentic materials, limited foreign language proficiency, the risk of cultural stereotyping, inaccurate online information, and excessive dependence on automated translation. Addressing these challenges requires appropriate educational resources, teacher training, critical evaluation skills, and opportunities for direct intercultural communication.

CONCLUSION. Foreign languages play an essential role in studying the national traditions, cultural heritage, and social values of other countries. Their importance extends beyond everyday communication because they provide access to the historical memory, literature, folklore, customs, ceremonies, and worldview of different nations.

The study has shown that language and culture are closely interconnected. Language preserves cultural information and reflects the historical and social experience of the people who use it. Consequently, a deeper understanding of national traditions requires not only the translation of cultural information but also the interpretation of its original linguistic and social context.

Foreign language proficiency enables learners to study authentic materials, understand traditional expressions, communicate with native speakers, and examine cultural practices from different perspectives. It also contributes to the development of intercultural competence, tolerance, critical thinking, and respect for cultural diversity.

Modern digital technologies have expanded opportunities for cultural learning through online museums, digital archives, educational platforms, documentary films, and international communication. However, these technologies should complement rather than replace linguistic knowledge and critical interpretation.

The proposed five-stage model demonstrates how foreign language education can be systematically connected with cultural studies. It includes linguistic preparation, acquisition of

authentic information, cultural interpretation, comparative analysis, and practical intercultural communication.

For higher education institutions, the integration of national traditions and cultural studies into foreign language programmes can improve the quality of education and prepare students for international cooperation. Educational institutions should encourage students to investigate different countries through authentic sources, conduct comparative research, and present the cultural heritage of their own country to international audiences.

In conclusion, learning foreign languages is one of the most effective ways to gain a deeper understanding of other nations. It opens the door to cultural knowledge, strengthens international relations, and promotes mutual respect among peoples. At the same time, it helps individuals appreciate their own national heritage and recognize the importance of preserving cultural diversity in the modern world.

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