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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION LEARNING

Стаття присвячена основним функціям та специфіці міжкультурного спілкування. Увага звертається на важливість дослідження особливостей мови в її тісних взаємозв'язках із культурою мовців.

Статья посвящена основным функциям и специфике межкультурного общения. Внимание обращено на важность исследования особенностей языка в его непосредственных взаимосвязях с культурой носителей языка.

The scientific study of cross-cultural communication is a relatively new area of research. By the term «cross-cultural communication» we mean both verbal and non-verbal communication between people from different cultures; communication influenced by cultural values, attitudes and behaviour, and, finally, the influence of culture on people's reactions and responses to each other. Cross-cultural communication

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includes verbal (spoken communication, containing the use of words and intonation to convey meaning) and nonverbal («silent») communication, consisting of the use of gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and conversational distance) communication.

People from different cultures meet. Sometimes communication comes easily to them, but it might happen that other times it does not. If the non-US born person is fluent in English or if the American speaks the other's language, then conversation won't cause any difficulties. What if the situation is quite different? Is it enough to speak the same language to make a conversation possible? Can it happen that people who speak the same language misunderstand each other? Does fluency in a language guarantee perfect communication all the time? All these and many other questions require one necessary point to be cleared out: fluency in a language does not guarantee perfect communication, thus two people who speak the same language can have difficulty caused by the lack of their cross-cultural communication knowledge. Effective communication in another culture means knowing both the language and the culture. Let's imagine the following situation – an American in England.

An American has travelled to England and is staying with a friend. During his stay, the American decides to talk to the Englishman about some things that are bothering him.

American: *«I feel uncomfortable with many of the people here, but I'm not sure why. I speak the same language, so there shouldn't be any problem. Back home, I usually **get along with** people. You know what that I'm very friendly».*

Englishman: *«Yes, that's true, but you're friendly in the way that American's are friendly».*

American: *«I'm not sure I understand what you mean».*

Englishman: *«Well, for example, at the meeting we went to the other night, you immediately called people by their first names. We do that here, but not when we first meet someone».*

American: *«That's how we make people feel comfortable. People feel friendlier toward each other when they use first names».*

Englishman: *«It's different here. For example, when you met my boss at the meeting, you should have used his last name. There's something else that you do that English people don't often do».*

American: *«What's that?».*

Englishman: *«You touch people on the shoulder **quite a bit**, especially when you **compliment** them».*

American: *«I guess I've never thought about that before. I suppose that is what I do at home».*

This is an important lesson for the American. He speaks the same language as the English do, so he *assumes* that he won't have any problems. He doesn't stop to think that he may have to do things differently. Luckily for him, he has someone who can help him understand the people that he meets. He quickly learns that in England he needs to be able to do more than speak English [1, 44].

Understanding both the culture and learning to communicate properly with the people who are at the same time the bearers of that culture is necessary and is as important as learning the rules of the language. When abroad, people might think that they'll get to know much about culture after a few weeks or months. Usually at this first stage of learning people acquaint themselves with some basic customs and then it is often difficult for them to know what to learn because much of what is called «culture» cannot be seen. Among certain cultural differences one can mention tastes and habits of people, their customs and traditions, values and beliefs about what is right or wrong. The latter ones influence much of a person's way of thinking, communicating, perceiving the world. To be able to communicate well with people from other cultures, one should become aware of all often hidden components of culture.

At first it may be rather difficult to understand another cultural way of thinking. Furthermore, if deep cultural differences appear, a person may misunderstand someone from another culture, be misunderstood by other people or both. In a quite different culture, he/she can find it difficult to explain his/her ideas and feelings. For these and other reasons, it takes much time and effort to make sure what people really mean by communicating and behaving in definite ways. However, it often happens that people from the same cultural background cannot figure out why, there was a misunderstanding, irrespective of the fact that they have similar ways of communicating and behaving. People do have different ideas of what is «normal», «right», on the one hand, and «wrong», «strange» on the other hand: what is right in one culture, may be wrong in another one. They may find out that their «normal» behaviour is seen and interpreted as strange.

Culture, unlike language, is not comprised of fixed rules that all members are to observe. Individuals' characteristics should also be taken into account. Discussing his/her culture's values and behaviour, he/she is to keep in mind two levels of observation:

- 1) all cultures have values and ideas accepted by their members;
- 2) people's language and behaviour may not always reflect those values, as besides culture, people's behaviour is influenced by their age, gender, life experiences, relationships, economic and educational levels, specific situations etc.

Learning about cross-cultural communication, culture in particular, is enriching. The more information one gets about others, the more one sees one's own culture clearly. By learning about differences existing between both languages and cultures, one can better understand the ways culture influences individuals and their communication with others.

REFERENCES

1. *Levine D. R., Baxter J., McNulty P.* The Culture Puzzle. Cross-Cultural Communication for English as a Second Language. – New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents, 1987. – 236 p.