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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION. WHAT MAKES IT SUCCESSFUL?

Cross-cultural communication involves communication between representatives of different cultures, during which at least one of the participants can speak a non-native language. In the modern world, where English has firmly taken the position of the language of international communication, often both participants in communication speak a non-native language, bringing their own cultural nuances to it. In connection with the expansion of cross-cultural contacts, the need of society for specialists of various profiles who speak a foreign language increases. At the forefront is the need for verbal support of cross-cultural communication (establishing personal contacts, conducting telephone conversations, presentations, meetings and negotiations, exchanging correspondence, participation in conferences and seminars). Language – the main expression of the identity of culture – is also the main intermediary in the intercultural communication process. At the same time, successful cross-cultural communication involves, along with the ability to speak a foreign language, the ability to interpret the communicative behaviour of a representative of a foreign society adequately, as well as the willingness of participants to perceive another form of communicative behaviour, to understand its differences and variations from culture to culture. The strategy of convergence of foreign cultural knowledge is aimed to prevent not only semantic, but also cultural failures in communication.

The main problem here is the problem of understanding. When solving this problem, it should be remembered that language is only a tool for transmitting forms of speech behaviour, it only creates an environment for cross-cultural communication. Understanding in cross-cultural communication is a complex process of interpretation, which depends on a complex of both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. To achieve understanding in cross-cultural communication, its participants must not only know the grammar and vocabulary of a particular language, but also know the cultural component of the meaning of the word, the realities of another culture.

Thus, mastering a foreign language code that allows successful cross-cultural interaction involves the study of cultural features that determine the specifics of the partner's social and business behaviour, influenced by historical traditions and customs, lifestyle, etc. Therefore, foreign languages as a means of communication between representatives of different peoples and cultures should be studied in inseparable unity with the world and culture of the peoples who speak these languages (previously, a foreign language was studied in isolation from its socio-cultural context as an end in itself and practically did not preserve a functional load). The point is that the actual use of words, the actual reproduction of speech, is largely determined by the knowledge of the social and cultural life of the people speaking this language. In other words, language does not exist outside of culture, that is,

outside of the socially inherited set of practical skills and ideas that characterize our way of life. As the basis of language structures are socio-cultural structures, for the active use of language as a means of communication, it is necessary to know as deeply as possible the world of the studied language. The world of the language being studied consists of a set of extra-linguistic facts, i. e., the world of the language being studied, those socio-cultural structures and units that underlie language structures and units and are reflected in the latter.

We can say that the linguistic picture of the world is a reflection of the socio-cultural picture of the world. Without knowing the world of the language being studied, it is impossible to master language as a means of communication, it can only be mastered as a way of storing and transmitting information as a »dead« language, deprived of the life-giving soil – the culture of the native speaker. This, by the way, explains the failures with artificial languages, which have not received wide spread and are doomed to die. That is why the study of a foreign language involves not only the assimilation of the plan of expression of a certain linguistic phenomenon, but also the plan of its content, i. e., the development in the students' minds of the new subjects and phenomena's concept that have no analogues either in their native culture or in their native language. to do this, it is necessary to include elements of country studies in language teaching. A comprehensive approach that combines proper linguistic training and knowledge of the socio-cultural context of the language being studied allows an adequate translation from a non-native language into a native one.

The process of mastering a foreign language is based on the same skills that are obtained when mastering the native language. No wonder that a person who has mastered one foreign language, masters the second, the third more easily, i. e. becomes a polyglot. However, the described interference process cannot be evaluated unambiguously. While at the linguistic level, interference often helps cross-cultural communication, at the psychological level, it often prevents adequate understanding.

The study of the communicative behaviour of representatives of a foreign-language society, their linguistic, sociological and cultural features contributes to the introduction of »non-native speakers« of the language to the conceptual system, the picture of the worldview, valuable concepts of its speakers, the reduction of cross-cultural distance, an ability to adapt to another culture, a different socio-cultural interaction in order to develop an optimal strategy for cooperation and communication in a foreign language. Of course, in cross-cultural communication, there are areas of meanings that are common to all of humanity, and meanings that are the same for speakers of different languages. So in business communication understanding is facilitated by the familiar aspects to all participants of communication and the same subject content of the activity for all of them. Nevertheless, the content and semantic barriers that arise in cross-cultural communication are the rule rather than the exception, since each participant in communication brings to it his own system of meanings common to him as an individual and as a representative of the corresponding culture. It is the latter that comes to the foreground in cross-cultural communication.