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THE RELEVANCE OF THE COUNTRY STUDIES ASPECT IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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Introduction

In the contemporary society, the purpose of teaching a foreign language cannot only be the transfer of linguistic knowledge and the development of students' speech skills. In the conditions of globalization and integration of languages and cultures, the socio-cultural component occupies a central place in foreign language lessons, helping in the development of the student's knowledge in the field of culture, geography, history, music of the studied language, with the help of which communicative competencies in various fields of knowledge are formed.

During English lessons, it is important when the teacher introduces students to the achievements of the development of the country's culture. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce country studies aspects in English lessons. This contributes to the education of students in the context of intercultural communication, introduces them to moral values, increases their cognitive interests, understanding of the internal national characteristics of the country and forms their conversational abilities in English. The purpose of this article is to analyze the relevance of the country studies aspect when teaching the English language to school students.

Main part

Country studies is the process of teaching a foreign language, during which students get acquainted with the country of the language being studied, its geographical features, territorial structure, politics, economy, its historical past and culture.

Tomakhin G.D. (doctor of Philology, Professor) considers country studies as “an academic discipline, the aim of which is a certain way selected and organized set of economic, socio-political, historical, geographical and other knowledge related to the content and form of speech communication of native speakers of a given language” [1]. From the point of view of Shchukin A.N (teacher, linguist, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor) country studies is “a basic science for the methodology, the subject of which is a set of information about the country of the language being studied”. Shchukin A.N believes that the country study material “provides not only cognitive, but also communicative needs of students, contributing to the formation of communicative and socio-cultural competence”. [2, p.35-36]. According to German linguists, the object of the study of country studies is the “social background”, which integrates geographical, sociological, ethnographic and cultural elements, and the structure of the social background consists of the following aspects: territorial-structural, historical, theoretical-conceptual, international-comparative and cultural-artistic.

No matter how disagreements arise in the views of philologists around the world in defining the concept of “country studies”, they come to one, the most important conclusion – teaching a language is impossible without relying on the culture of the country of this language.

The purpose of the education system is to develop personal potential, to acquire solid knowledge, skills and abilities with the possibility of their application in practice. What are the objectives and tasks of “country studies”?

The scientists focused on the following objectives of country studies:

- Acquisition of communication and speech skills;
- Acquaintance with the traditions, peculiarities of culture, history, geography and politics of the country of the studied language;

– Formation of personality and education of respect for a foreign-speaking country and its language.

In the education system, a task is something by which a goal is achieved. In the case of “country studies”, the task is understood as the achievement of a certain level of knowledge, then the subsequent development of skills and abilities, the consolidation of the material.

In the tasks of country studies, scientists include the following:

- Assimilation of socio-cultural material by students;
- The study of specifically formal means of a foreign language for the designation of significant regional phenomena;
- Analysis of the national-specific connection of linguistic and non-verbal means of communication in various conversational situations;
- Linguistic substantiation of the country-specific aspect of educational materials for dictionaries focused on country-specific vocabulary.

The use of the linguistic and cultural aspect contributes to the formation of the motivation of teaching, which is very important in the conditions of learning a foreign language in secondary school, since foreign language communication itself is not supported by the language environment. In addition, a very important motivational incentive for learning a foreign language is the desire to expand one’s horizons and general knowledge about the culture of the country of the language being studied. Consequently, at school this subject is a means of introducing students to the “spiritual culture of other peoples” [3, p. 21].

“Country studies” is a multifaceted subject. It includes several areas of knowledge at once, while remaining a language discipline. Based on the goals set, several aspects can be distinguished at once in the content of teaching country studies in English lessons:

1. Educational aspect. This aspect implies the acquisition of a foreign language as a means of interpersonal communication, as well as obtaining skills of independent work in the process of developing the level of foreign language culture;
2. Cognitive aspect. This aspect is a way of enriching the spiritual world of the individual and is implemented mainly on the basis of listening and reading;
3. The developmental aspect is one of the most significant. It promotes the development of speech and mental functions, the ability to communicate;
4. Educational aspect. It includes teaching foreign language culture, is a means of all aspects of education.

In the process of teaching, the teacher’s task is to provide conditions for introducing students to a foreign language culture, preparing them to participate in the transfer of the spiritual wealth of the people of the country of the language being studied, enriching the topics offered for study in regional studies so that everything works for intercultural communication. To maintain students’ interest in a foreign language throughout the entire period of study, the introduction of elements of country studies in the lessons plays an important role. While teaching country studies information the teacher can enter tasks of a creative nature. Creative work on country studies can be carried out in all classes of training on almost all academic topics.

The following types of creative tasks can be distinguished:

- Types of creative tasks that develop: a) language competence (vocabulary, phonetics, grammar); b) speech competence (speaking, listening, reading, writing); c) socio-cultural competence (system of values, realities of life, internal national characteristics of the country).
- Types of creative tasks that develop language competence, for example, baby books, crosswords on various topics, the creation of project works.
- Types of creative tasks that contribute to the development of speech competence: illustrated essays, stories about the city using photographs, portraits, illustrations, mini-studies of poems, songs, films, artistic translations of poems with illustrations in English, making layouts on the topics of “Sights of cities”.

– Types of creative tasks aimed at the development of socio-cultural competence: illustrated essays, greeting cards, the creation of brochures and booklets, the publication of newspapers dedicated to the countries of the studied language.

Conclusion

The relevance of this linguistic discipline is that familiarity with the culture of the language being studied occurs through constant evaluation and comparison of previous knowledge and concepts with knowledge and concepts about our country. Country studies is one of the most important language disciplines, which covers two significant areas in the teaching of a foreign language at once: language teaching and acquaintance with the culture of the country of the language being studied. Appreciable differences in information among speakers of different languages are mainly determined by different material and spiritual conditions of existence of peoples and countries, the peculiarities of their history, development, culture, socio-economic system, and political system.

The culture of the country of the language being studied, which contains social and spiritual factors, contributes to increasing interest and motivation for mastering and consciously learning a foreign language. This leads to the now generally recognized conclusion about the need for a linguistic and cultural approach in teaching a foreign language.

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FEMALE FIGURES OF IMPORTANCE IN ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS OF KAZAKHSTAN: THE FREQUENCY OF THEIR MENTION

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Introduction

Gender stereotypes in school and language textbooks may have a particular impact on how students and teachers perceive gender roles. Based on one theory, visual narrative representation, this study examines the representation of gender stereotypes in three secondary English textbooks used in Kazakh public schools. The research findings show that gender stereotypes are represented in every of three textbooks, with the social role of males being more emphasized in the written texts compared to their female counterparts. The possible effects of unbalanced gender representation in textbooks on children are discussed within the framework of social cognitive theory. It is recommended that the education authorities create specific rules to assist textbook authors in creating instructional materials that help foster a gender-fair society in Kazakhstan.