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**THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CULTURE
AS A KEY ELEMENT OF EDUCATION**

Democracy will thrive only in a culture that accepts diversity, respects different points of view, regards truths as relative rather than absolute, and tolerates, – even encourages – dissent.

Since gaining its independence the Republic of Kazakhstan has undergone radical changes in every sphere of our life including higher education system. There have been political and social transformations that have encouraged such students' behaviours as social and moral responsibility and personal efficacy.

I am not criticizing but simply giving as the fact that whole generations in the Soviet Union were ingrained with the notion that allegiance to the country meant allegiance to the Communist party, to the system, to the leader, and that diversity, critical thinking and individual differences were considered treacherous. Now students are taught, not just through formal learning but through practice, what it means to be a citizen, to uphold values such as freedom, equality, and respect of human rights. Now they are taught to question, inquire, participate, work in teams, and communicate. Now they know that there is usually more than one side to any particular issue, that they should seek information about, and debate the many sides of the issue, if they consider that their points of view are correct, if they ready to analyze of consider any other interpretations. But at the same time we should be confident that current education reforms will not be to the detriment of our society.

In quality education Education programs must support the overall development of the individual

and a culture of positive values in each society and throughout the world, believing that education is a purposeful activity designed to help humanity flourish.

English has become firmly established as the international language of the present time. It is used and taught in a diverse range of situations and cultures throughout the world, often far removed, both in distance and in beliefs and values, from the cultures of the original English speaking countries.

Culture and language are inexorably linked and cannot be separated. Teaching English is impossible without teaching culture. Culture is consciously or unconsciously part of the teachers' pedagogic aims, the transmission of culture is unavoidable. Every lesson is about something, and that something is cultural.

“Language teachers are so much teachers of culture that culture has often become invisible to them”.

Students often express a desire to learn about English speaking culture, to use their English and communicate with native speakers or within English speaking environments.

There exist different approaches to teaching culture. When we present information, we first of all mean the target culture such as history, geography, institutions, the arts, customs and traditions and way of life. But there exist some other approaches that in-

stead of being concerned with the facts of one culture, it's better to interpret culture through cross-cultural understanding, involving comparisons and contrasts with a learners' native culture and the culture or the language they are studying. (Valdes, 1986).

Dunnet S., Dubin F. suggest 6 aspects of culture that learners and teachers should be familiar with:

1. Languages cannot be translated word-for-word. Words may have idiomatic connotations that go beyond the individual word itself. Sometimes it becomes impossible to explain in a simple dictionary style word-for-word translation. For example, the following sentence – **Labour pains were long but she was very patient and calm** – a student translated word-for-word: *Трудовые усилия были длительными instead of – Родовые схватки были длительными, но она была очень терпеливой и спокойной.*

2. The tone of a speaker's voice (the intonation pattern) carries a certain meaning.

3. Each language – culture employs gestures and body movements which convey some meaning. Many gestures are similar, for example, as nodding for affirmation, many others are not shared. For instance, a smile may display a joy, a delight, but in Thailand it may mean an apology.

4. Languages use different grammatical elements for describing the processes in the world, i.e. the concepts of time, inflection, word order, etc.

5. All cultures have taboo topics. For example, in the USA they never ask such questions: Why aren't you married? How much do you earn? Why don't you have children? Or irrelevant attitude to the British royal family.

6. In personal relationships the terms for addressing people vary considerably among languages and cultures.

Terms of address in Kazakhstan often refer to the age of interlocutors. If he or she is much older than you are, we never address him by his first name. We usually add – **aghai or apai** or use his or her patronymic as in the Russian culture.

Applying these criteria to our culture (I mean Russian or Kazakh), it is possible to identify a number of areas for productive cultural comparisons.

For centuries, the main objective of educational systems has been to prepare students for citizenship roles.

These roles have been constantly evolving and taking on new meanings in response to legal, cultural, social, and political changes.

More recently, elements of citizenship educa-

tion were introduced in the General Conference of UNESCO, which issued the "Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms".

According to this document, the main mission of education is to increase mutual understanding between peoples by means of cultural and educational exchange; to help students improve their critical thinking (in order not to take everything for granted) and analytical skills in the process of learning English.

We should develop an awareness of the processes that are going on in the world today. In order to understand cultural differences we should examine and discuss our values and attitudes towards diversity, tolerance and human dignity.

We should develop language and social interaction skills to promote peaceful relations among people, among nations, and between human beings.

We should learn to solve problems and think critically regarding issues of conflict and violence, but not to neglect them in order not to be led to unexpected and unpredictable consequences.

We should use the classroom as a microcosm of a just world order, in which the global cultural and educational values of positive interdependence, social justice and participation in decision making processes are learned and practiced, engaging in activities that encourage cooperation, consensus building and reflective listening.

In conclusion, I would like to give some quotations from I. Gandhi's writings:

"Civilization in the real sense of the term is the respect and understanding of cultures of other nations".

"True knowledge is impossible without a guru".

"The more one gives to society, the more he gains personally".

"The culture of the country and the language must necessarily go together".

It is very valuable to have NESTs (Native English Speaking Teachers) at the Chair.

1. Recommendations of UNESCO (2001-2011)

2. Alptekin C. (1984) "The Question of Culture: ELT in Non-English speaking countries".

3. Dunnett S., Dubin F. (1986) "ELT from an Intercultural Perspective".

4. Guest M. (2002) A Critical "Checkbook" for Culture Teaching and Learning, ELT Journal.