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## **CULTURAL SELF-AWARENESS IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD**

Today we can hear the terms such as “soft skills”, “core competences” and “global skills” from every potential employer who is seeking for a person to work in the global business environment. Globalization penetrated into all spheres of our lives. All financial operations, services and business connections cannot be imagined without cooperation with foreign partners. Even if the company works within one country, it is very likely that the team is international. With all this cultural diversity it became extremely important for modern graduates to acquire global awareness.

The idea of global awareness and intercultural awareness has been thoroughly studied by numerous scholars among which are J. Beneke, M. Byram, E. Bandura and others. However, they did not consider cultural self-awareness as an independent concept and only viewed it as a part of intercultural competence. Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to study cultural self-awareness as an independent context and suggest the ways of its developing in the course of English learning.

A successful global leader is someone who can operate effectively across national boundaries and cultures, defining goals that will appeal to a diverse set of people, whether individuals in their own company or external groups and organizations [3]. That means this person possesses a range of competencies among which are global awareness, critical thinking and intercultural understanding.

Global awareness is an understanding of how environmental, social, cultural, economic and political factors impact the world [1]. Cultural awareness, as one of the constituents of global awareness, is, therefore, demonstrating an understanding of other people’s values, beliefs and perceptions which may differ from yours. But sometimes to be culturally aware is not enough for successful performance at work. One can learn other cultures in the course of their foreign lessons, history and geography at school or college, they can travel to, live and work in another country, and however, they will still perceive other cultures and behaviors through their own culturally-derived implicit beliefs and values. That is why it is

important to develop intercultural understanding through cultural self-awareness as it is believed that our cultural heritage has developed in us assumptions and behaviors that affect us [3].

The understanding of cultural self-awareness can be derived from the definition of intercultural competence which states that it is the ability to cope with one's own intercultural background in interaction with others [2, p.45].

According to A. Nizegorodcew, Y. Bystrov et al. [2, p.46] the five basic components of intercultural competence include the development of cultural self-awareness and knowledge as an integral part of it. It is impossible to be less judgmental and unbiased about other cultures and beliefs if you do not know your own. The necessary knowledge and skills include the knowledge of historical and contemporary relationships between the cultures, the national perception one's own country, its heritage, geographical space, relationships with its neighbors and overall national image. On the basis of this it is possible to critically evaluate the political and economical events which happen inside one's own country and find the connection with global tendencies applying local solutions to solving global issues.

In order to bring up globally aware specialists it is important to implement cultural self-awareness into the curriculum. The most natural way to do it is through learning languages. Thus, ESL teachers are responsible for developing cultural self-awareness through teaching a foreign language. It may seem challenging but English teacher as a mediator between two cultures must not only make students acquainted with the peculiarities of the target culture through language learning but also show them the beauty and value of their own culture. The best way to do it is to use authentic materials using the variety of sources such as newspapers, periodicals, social and cultural studies as well as classics. Though, presenting different styles and points of view, a teacher must be sure that knowledge is constructed individually without copying stereotypes [2, p.48].

To sum up, it is impossible to become a good 21<sup>st</sup>-century leader if you perceive other cultures through the lens of personal values and stereotypes. That is why to acquire intercultural competence students, first of all, should develop cultural self-awareness. While ESL teachers do not only become the representatives of other cultures but demonstrate the uniqueness of their own culture in the globalized world.

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