

# ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЙ ПРИМЕР ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ МУЛЬТИПЛИКАЦИОННЫХ ФИЛЬМОВ ДЛЯ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ

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В статье обозначен важнейший аспект успешной межкультурной коммуникации. Развитие межкультурной компетенции считается одной из основных целей обучения английскому языку. В статье описаны элементы межкультурной компетенции и инструменты развития критического мышления. Обсуждается использование мультипликационных фильмов как средства развития межкультурной компетенции на уроках английского языка и межкультурного общения. Показаны примеры использования различных культурных моделей для анализа мультипликационных фильмов.

Ключевые слова: Межкультурная компетенция; индекс дистанции власти; индивидуализм; коллективизм; маскулинность; фемининность; временная ориентация.

## A CASE STUDY IN THE USE OF ANIMATED CARTOONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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A critical aspect of successful intercultural communication is identified in the article. Developing intercultural competence is considered to be one of the main aims of English language teaching. The article describes the elements of intercultural competence and the tools for developing critical thinking. Using animated cartoons as a means of developing intercultural competence in English language and intercultural communication classes is discussed. Examples of the application of various cultural models for analysing cartoons are demonstrated.

Key words: Intercultural competence; power distance, individualism; collectivism; masculinity; femininity; time orientation.

Today, it is generally understood that successful intercultural communication is determined not only by a proficient command of a foreign language by interlocutors but also their ability to apply their knowledge about the unique features of a particular culture. A number of English language teachers are attempting to provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular culture through teaching a target language in 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL) and intercultural communication classes.

It is admitted that language learners should be prepared for the demanding task of interacting with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In order to realize this objective, they are expected to be taught to critically assess the cultures of their own as well as those of their interlocutors.

The framework for developing intercultural competence based on Byram's model consists of five components: attitude, knowledge, the skill of interpreting and relating, the skill of discovery and interaction, and critical awareness. Realising the equal importance of all five elements, we would like to point to the third one, which «covers the skill of communicators to analyse non-native cultural phenomena, and to compare them to the ones from their own» [1, p.193]. Students can improve their communication skills and gain an understanding of how culture influences behaviour by studying cross-cultural scenarios. This will prepare them for any challenges they may encounter during intercultural communication.

In EFL classes, and outside of them, various tools and materials are available for learners to study cultural images and descriptions. EFL teachers are invited to demonstrate cultural representations in the media and arts both on- and offline. For example, along with adult movies such as *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), *Green Card* (1990), *Lost in Translation* (2003), *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002), etc., one can also use animated films to develop the skills of cultural analysis and intercultural communication. For distinguishing and examining various cultural dimensions, as an example, we suggest for using the following three cartoons:

*Mulan* (1998) is a Disney film which centres on a Chinese girl who disguised herself as a man so she could take her father's place during general conscription to stop the invasion of China.

*Coco*, a 2017 animated film by Pixar Animation Studios, follows the story of a 12-year-old Mexican boy named Miguel who accidentally travels to the Land of the Dead.

The 2016 movie *Zootopia* by Walt Disney Studio is about a rabbit police officer named Judy Hopps who tries to solve a crime in the metropolis of Zootopia inhabited by animals.

In order to analyse the aspects of culture expressed in the cartoons at hand, G. Hofstede's six-dimensional model is applied as well as the notion of time orientation by G. Ferraro and E. Briody. The following three of the six pairs of cultural elements introduced by Hofstede are used: large and small Power Distance, Individualism/ Collectivism, Masculinity/ Femininity.

It is known that the Power Distance Index measures the degree of power distribution in an organization or society and tackles the problem of hierarchy and equality. Furthermore, the Individualism/ Collectivism Index draws attention to the degree of importance people attach to belonging to a specific group. Finally, unlike relation-oriented Feminine culture, Masculine values challenge, task-achievement, recognition, and promotion.

Despite being fantasy films, the suggested cartoons demonstrate the features of different cultures. The first one provides insight into Chinese culture, the second - into the cultural values of Mexicans, and the third - into an imaginary world of anthropomorphic mammals. It should be noted that the three animated films were all made in the USA and target western audiences, thus, they portray

the cultures from a western viewpoint. The main idea of the cartoons is for the central characters to find their true selves, which already demonstrates a western perspective. As a result, the main characters demonstrate the adherence to the ideas of equality, independence in taking decisions, and the right to pursue their dreams.

To analyse these cultures, students are instructed to read the scripts after watching the cartoons and find examples that justify the cultural dimensions they are studying. As a second option, students can be offered an opportunity to study a part of a script before watching the movies and to predict the type of society they will see on the basis of their analysis.

For example, they can be invited to read the following passage from Mulan film script:

«The Matchmaker and other women: Boys will gladly go to war for you/ With good fortune / And a great hairdo/ You'll bring honor to us all. / A girl can bring her family / Great honor in one way / By striking a good match / And this might be the day./ Men want girls with good taste / Calm / Obedient / Who work fast-paced / With good breeding / And a tiny waist / You'll bring honor to us all / We all must serve our Emperor / Who guards us from the Huns / A man by bearing arms / A girl by bearing sons» [2, p. 4].

Here are a few examples of the conclusions that students usually make having analysed the Mulan script:

Ancient China depicted in the film is a hierarchical society with an emperor on the top and inequalities among people not questioned. Mulan is taught to obey and respect her parents and older relatives at all times. As Hofstede writes, «power is based on tradition or family, charisma, and the ability to use force» [3, p. 83]. Secondly, China is a group-oriented country, where belonging to a family is very important. Closely connected to it is the idea of bringing honour to the family. Ideas of how girls should look and behave in order to successfully marry are maintained by the older members of the family: «brides should be young, industrious, and chaste; bridegrooms should be older» [3, p.113]. Finally, China in the film is a male-dominated society, with a distinct division between male and female roles. According to Hofstede, «men should be assertive, ambitious, and tough; women are supposed to be tender and to take care of relationships; most women want the male dominance» [3, p.151].

Similar to Mulan, Coco demonstrates the elements of strong hierarchy in the main character's family. Students note that the power in Miguel's family is centralized in the hands of his grandmother. She decides what profession Miguel will have in the future. According to the grandmother, it is better for him to be a shoemaker like other members of the family rather than doing what he likes. The importance of being together, being part of the family, following family traditions is the unifying idea that runs throughout the film. Taking all of these facts together, it is clear that this Mexican family demonstrates the signs of a hierarchical, collective, and masculine culture.

Finally, Zootopia depicts a metropolis where all the animals live in harmony and with «the same value standards which are supposed to apply to everyone» [3, p. 113]. In this society every young mammal has countless opportunities. Unlike Mulan's and Miguel's parents, Judy's allow her to become what she wants despite their concern. Although family is important, individual interests override collective interests. Thus, it can be seen that this society values the concept of equality, individualism, and femininity. However, in the film the police academy and police station are the examples of a strong hierarchical culture.

These three animated movies can also illustrate the extent to which people focus on the past, the present, or the future. In past-oriented cultures, people tend to be quite concerned about the history and origins of their families and quite often pray to their ancestors. The Mulan and Coco films demonstrate this in a way that shows the past orientation of both Chinese and Mexican cultures. Meanwhile, the mammals of Zootopia appear “to do things because of the inherent pleasure they will derive in the here and now” [4, p. 58], thus revealing a more present-oriented viewpoint.

Obviously, cartoons cannot be regarded as a reliable source of information and cannot be used as a substitute for serious cultural analyses. Despite this, they can still be used as method of practising critical thinking, introduce a relaxing class atmosphere, and encourage students to learn and as a result to improve their performance. Since, it has been noticed that using the humour in cartoons helps make a complex concept more understandable.

To sum up, it is important to develop the skills of intercultural communication in EFL classes. A great deal of attention should be paid to developing intercultural competence at the same rate as language proficiency. As part of that latter process, one must master skills for critical analysis, not just of other cultures but also of one's own. A method of achieving this can be done in EFL classes through animated films that allow the students to practice their skills in a more relaxing environment.

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