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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE
(Culture in the teaching of foreign language at secondary schools)

VZŤAH MEDZI JAZYKOM A KULTÚROU
(kultúra vo vyučovaní cudzieho jazyka na stredných školách)

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NITRA 2010

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Declaration of Originality

I, the undersigned, solemnly declare that this diploma work is the result of my own independent research and was written solely by me using the literature and resources listed in Bibliography.

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Čestne vyhlasujem, že diplomovú prácu som písala samostatne na základe preštudovaného materiálu a použité zdroje som na príslušných miestach uviedla.

Nitra, 24. máj 2010

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ABSTRACT

HLAVÁČOVÁ, Judita: Vzťah medzi jazykom a kultúrou (Kultúra vo vyučovaní cudzieho jazyka na stredných školách).[Diplomová práca]. Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre. Filozofická fakulta; Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky; consultant. Mgr. Elena Ciprianová, PhD. Nitra, 2010. pp63.

Cieľom diplomovej práce je definovanie vzťahu medzi jazykom a kultúrou s podnázvom: Kultúra vo vyučovaní cudzieho jazyka na stredných školách. Práca je rozdelená na teoretickú a praktickú časť. Teoretická časť má obsahujúce dve kapitoly. Prvá kapitola sa zameriava na poňatie kultúry vo všeobecnosti. V prvej podkapitole definujeme kultúru a vzťah medzi jazykom a kultúrou. Druhá kapitola opisuje vyučovanie kultúry a jej ciele, históriu vyučovania kultúry, definovanie interkultúrnej kompetencie a interkultúrneho vzdelávania. V praktickej časti uvádzame metodológiu výskumu, výsledku výskumu a ich dopad na problematiku vyučovania kultúry.

Kľúčové slová: kultúra, jazyk, interkultúrna kompetencia, interkultúrne vzdelávanie

ABSTRACT

HLAVÁČOVÁ, Judita: The relationship between language and culture (Culture in the teaching foreign language at secondary schools).[Diploma work]. Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre. Filozofická fakulta; Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky; consultant. Mgr. Elena Ciprianová, PhD. Nitra, 2010. pp. 63.

The aim of my diploma work is to present the relationship between language and culture with the subtitle: Culture in the teaching foreign language at the secondary schools. The work is divided into the theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part includes two chapters. The first chapter deals with the issue of culture in general. The subheads of this chapter contain the definition of culture and the relationship between culture and language. The second chapter covers the teaching of culture with the following subheads: goals of teaching, the history of teaching culture, intercultural teaching. The practical part consists of methodology used in the research, presenting the results of the research and the implication.

Key words: Culture, Language, Intercultural competence, Intercultural Education

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INTRODUCTION

In our diploma work we will discuss the relationship between language and culture as well as integrating culture in the teaching of foreign language at the secondary schools.

The reason for presenting these issues can be found in the current situation of globalization around the world and the migration of people which results in the loss of boundaries existing between nations and different cultures. We are getting more and more often in contact with the individuals of foreign culture. So it is very important to acquire the ability of adequate and effective communication. It means that the foreign language education requires achieving the certain level of intercultural communication.

First of all, we need to understand the conception of culture. We will present various approaches to the definition of culture although it is clear that we cannot state the exact definition because none of them can be taken as definite. Culture is the dynamic process which changes its features and forms all the time.

The explanation of culture will be followed by the relationship of culture and language. We will describe the theories of such a great scholars as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Edward Sapir or Benjamin Lee Whorf. All of them claimed that culture and language could not be separated.

In the second chapter we will focus on the teaching of culture in the foreign language education. We will also look at the history of teaching culture and investigate the status of culture in the methods of foreign language teaching used from the beginning of the 20th century till the present. We will chose three approaches, such as the Grammar-translated method, Audio-lingual method and the Communicative Language Teaching. We will also define the intercultural communication competence which is considered to be the most important ability to develop in the present.

In the practical part of our diploma work we are going make a quantitative research using questionnaires in order to investigate the perception of culture in the teaching of foreign language.

The first part of the research will focus on the students´ perception and their attitudes to the learning about the foreign culture. We have decided to compare data´s from students of two secondary schools who are in the last year of their studies. We presume that there will be no difference in the results.

The second part of the research will aim at the comparison of teachers' approach to the teaching of foreign culture and the students' attitude to the learning about the culture while learning the foreign language.

We think that after the analysis of data, the results will show the difference between the students' and the teachers' point of view.

1 CULTURE

1.1 Definition of culture

There are many approaches to the concept of “culture” which can be explained by different definitions although none of them can be taken as definite. There has been much disagreement about the conception of culture and there are still ongoing negotiations about the meaning of culture nowadays.

What we can definitely state that culture is “*behaviour peculiar to Homo sapiens, together with material objects used as an integral part of this behaviour*” (Encyclopedia Britannica). It is culture what distinguishes us, human beings, from animals. This statement is also pointed out by Tepperman who says that culture is a “*humanly created environment for all our thoughts and actions*”.

Some of us use this term to refer to traditions, norms, beliefs and values which are difficult to observe. Others think of various cultural artefacts which include literature and art. These are called “material” manifestations of culture. Culture can be also related to a particular civilisation or historical period such as Roman culture or the ancient culture. On the other hand we can refer to the certain society or nations as well, for example Irish Culture or Slovak culture.

The word “culture” comes from the Latin “cultura” - stemming from the root “colere” which means to cultivate, to inhabit. The “cultura” in Latin stands for husbandry, in other words, the “cultivation” of fields, plants, animals. The figurative meaning is the cultivation of an individual.

In 1871, the anthropologist, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor wrote in the first paragraph of his Primitive Culture the following explanation of culture which is considered to be the classic definition of culture: “*Culture... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*” (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

The concept of culture was more precisely worked out by the American anthropologists, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in their book, Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions, published in 1952. They published a list of 160 different definitions of culture and organized them into eight categories: topical, historical, behavioural, normative, functional, mental, structural and symbolic. Kroeber and Kluckhohn, among other anthropologists, preferred the

conception that culture is “an abstraction from behaviour”. They defined the culture as consisting of “*patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture system may, on the one hand considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.*”

Some of the scholars (Brooks, Lafayette) agreed that culture consists of unvarying, concrete facts. This model of culture was defined as “a static view of culture” which treats cultural knowledge as either facts or artefacts. (Liddicoat, 2002). The culture learning was considered to be the acquisition of information about a foreign country and its people. This approach treated the cultural competence as the recall of the learnt information. The culture was regarded as a closed, final and fixed phenomenon, establishing stereotypes of the culture and prejudices.

We should not define the term “culture” as the collection of facts only. It should be seen as the system of practices, attitudes and beliefs. It is also the dynamic process that is able to acquire new features and forms, in other words the culture can be described as “*a highly variable and constantly changing phenomenon*”. (Liddicoat, 2002)

To quote L. M. Crawford-Lange and D. L. Lange, the culture is “*a constellation in a continual process of change, brought about by the participants in the culture as they live and work*”. It is passed on from generation to generation which means that the culture is not biologically inherited but “*continually created and re-created by participants in interaction*” (Liddicoat, 2002).

It is the language of people that plays the major role in their interactions as a communication and a cultural tool. It is impossible to set the borderline between language and culture. In the next chapter we are going to present theories of several scholars who were dealing with the relationship between culture and language.

1.2 Culture and Language

Many scholars have been dealing with the relationship between language and culture. In the past, there were Wilhelm von Humboldt, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf discussing the issue of language and culture. The recent outstanding researchers in this field are Michael Byram, Claire Kramsch and Anthony J. Liddicoat. The most of them claimed that language and culture cannot be separated and cannot function without each other.

Language is needed for acquiring culture, expressing its features and transmitting them from generation to generation. On the other hand, language is shaped by the culture of the particular society therefore it is culturally influenced very much.

As far as at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, German scholars Johan Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt gave the great importance to the diversity of the world`s languages and cultures. They pointed out the connection between language and culture by the following idea: *“Different people speak differently because they think differently, and that they think differently because their language offers them different usage of expressing the world around them.”* (Kramsch, 1993, p11). It can be understood that the culture of the nation affects its language and conversely, the language impacts the culture of the people.

In 1907 Wilhelm von Humboldt also stated that *“language is the outward manifestation of the spirit of people: their language is their spirit, and their spirit is their language; it is difficult to imagine any two things more identical.”* The language is considered to be the soul of the nation.

About one hundred years later, the notion of Wilhelm von Humboldt that *“man lives in the world about him principally, indeed exclusively, as language presents it to him”* was picked up and expanded on by the American linguist Edward Sapir. In his work *“The Status of Linguistics and a Science”* he argued that:

“Human beings do not live in the objective world alone... but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society.... The fact of the matter is that the `real world` is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. ... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.” (Sapir 1958, p69)

According to Edward Sapir, human beings are not aware of this connection. He pointed out that the way how people think about the world is directly, though unconsciously influenced by their language. It means that the language is the expression of the particular culture therefore the language and the culture of its speakers cannot be analyzed in isolation.

A few years later, Edward Sapir's student, Benjamin Whorf extended these ideas in the work "Science and Linguistics". He declared that "*the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds.*" It says that the grammar and lexicon of the language help to shape the ideas of its users. In other words, "*the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves.*" (Kramsch, p9) This view has become known as Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, or the Whorfian hypothesis.

There are two versions of the hypothesis, the weak and the strong one. The strong version proposes that "*language determines thought*" and "*the structure of a language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world*" (Wardhaugh, p221) It suggests that we are prisoners of our language and we are not able to think without language but perceive only what our language allows us. We call it "linguistic determinism". There are many arguments against this claim.

According to Danny D. Steinberg, "*The fact that children have the ability to understand speech indicates that they must have the thought that is involved in the comprehension of speech.*" (p103) Similar proof is how the new born baby is able to acquire the language. It would not be possible to learn the language without thought.

The weaker version, "linguistic relativity", presents that "*people who speak different languages perceive and think about the world quite differently*" (Chandler) This variant explains why speakers of different languages do not understand each other. The reason is that "*language filters their perception and the ways they categorize experience*". They understand the meaning and the value of the words differently and they also do not view and interpret the events in the same way. (Kramsch, p13) This concept is generally accepted by the linguists of the present time.

According to Claire Kramsch "*language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. ... used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.*" (1993, p3) Under the "multiple and complex ways" she means three possible connections between language and culture.

The first connection is that “*language expresses cultural reality*”. In other words, the human beings use words to express their ideas, their beliefs, attitudes, and also events and facts about the reality.

Secondly, “*language embodies cultural reality*” which can be understood that people do not use language for expressing their experience only but they also use it to “create experience through language”, to use all the verbal and non-verbal aspects to give meaning to their experience in order that the social group they belong to, would understand it. (p.3).

Finally, inasmuch as Kramsch defines language as “*a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value*” she also points out that “*language symbolizes cultural reality*”. Language of the social group is perceived as a symbol of the community members` identity.

This conclusion is also shared by Michael Byram by saying the following: “*...there is the fact that language, and language variety – dialect or sociolect – is one of the overt signs of cultural identity which people meet daily in their lives.*” and language is “*a way of marking cultural identity*”. (p40) He argues against looking upon language independently of the culture because “*it disregards the nature of language*”. (p41)

2 TEACHING CULTURE

The connection between language and culture has been also discussed by the foreign language educators for a long time. They have been arguing for integrating the study of culture into the study of foreign language. Many of them have been emphasizing the fact that teaching the foreign language without presenting also the target culture is inadequate and inaccurate. For example, I. Krasner stresses that *“linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language”*. We should have in our mind that *“if we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning...”* (Politzer, 1959, p100-101)

The students have to be aware of appropriate behaviour and the way of communication used by people of the target culture. It should be evident that the customs and habits used in one`s culture could be interpreted differently in the target culture.

We have to admit that learning the grammar and lexicon of the foreign language is not enough in order to be able to communicate. This fact is also pointed out by E. Bada: *“the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.”* (p101)

The cultural knowledge of the foreign language has been often considered as the fifth skill in language learning. One of the scholars who has been arguing against this statement is Claire Kramersch:

“Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.”

(1993, p1)

In other words, the person whenever uses a language, he is always involved in culture. It does not matter if he is speaking, listening, writing or reading.

2.1 The goals of teaching culture

There are many goals of teaching culture defined by the scholars in recent years. Most of them focus on one main goal which is educating and preparing the students to communicate effectively and appropriately with the people of the foreign culture. We have to admit that in the process of globalization it is not enough to acquire the linguistic competence only but the students must also gain the intercultural competence.

One of the scholars dealing with the goals of teaching culture is Seelye who introduced his “supergoal”: *“All students will develop the cultural understanding, attitudes, and performance skills needed to function appropriately within a segment of another society and to communicate with people socialized in that culture.”* (1993, p29)

Later on he described his “supergoal: in details and stated the “goals of cultural instruction”. He suggested that the teachers should *“help the student to develop interest in who in the target culture did what, where, when and why.”*

Tomalin and Stempleski modified the Seelye`s “goals of cultural instruction” by defining the following goals of teaching culture:

- 1) to help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours,
- 2) to help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave,
- 3) to help students to become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture,
- 4) to help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language,
- 5) to help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence,
- 6) to help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture,
- 7) to stimulate students` intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

(1993, p7-8)

Rebecca M. Valette from Boston College was also dealing with the cultural goals which should be accomplished by the classroom teacher. She divided them into four categories: “*developing a greater awareness of and a broader knowledge about the target culture; acquiring a command of the etiquette of the target culture, understanding differences between the target culture and the students` culture; and understanding the values of the target culture*”. (p179)

Michael Byram adds that “*the aim of language teaching is to develop both linguistic and cultural competence, which can be called an intercultural communicative competence*”. (1999) This kind of approach to the language teaching is called intercultural language learning and its goals are as follows:

- understanding and valuing all languages and cultures
- understanding and valuing one`s own language(s) and culture(s)
- understanding and valuing one`s target language(s) and culture(s)
- understanding and valuing how to mediate among languages and cultures
- developing intercultural sensitivity as an ongoing goal.

(Liddicoat, Scarino, Papdemetre, Kohler: Report on intercultural language learning, p46)

2.2 The history of teaching culture

If we look at the history of foreign language teaching, we can see that the cultural dimension has been always present in the study of language at a certain degree although it has changed in the course of time depending on the general aims and principles of the foreign language teaching and different interpretation of culture in the past.

The notion of culture had different status in the grammar-translation method, later on in the audio-lingual approach and it`s role has also changed in the communicative approach used in the recent years.

In the past, the foreign language was learning by the students with the intention of reading and studying its literature including the great works of its important scholars which were considered to be the main medium of culture. This approach was also typical for the grammar-translation method used in the beginning of the 20th century. As J. Flewelling writes, “*it was through reading that students learned of the civilization associated with the target language*”. (1993,p.339)

The aim of this grammar-translation method in general was to gain knowledge in literature, history and fine arts with the goal of intellectual development. The speech was neglected which means that the students were not able to communicate adequately in the foreign language.

In the second half of the 20th century, other methods became important in the teaching of foreign language. In the 1960`s the audio-lingual approach was the most frequently used in the European countries. The language was learnt by the repeating drills where the spoken language played the central role and the concept of culture began to be stressed considerably. Many educators like Seelye, Damen and others were emphasizing the importance of integrating culture in the teaching of foreign language. It was related to the development of the social science, especially the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

In comparison with the grammar-translation method where literature was considered to be the most important cultural aspect to deal with, the audio-lingual approach highlighted the concept of culture defined as “patterns for living” (Brooks) or “structured systems of patterned behaviour” (Lado, 1971, p111) To quote Brooks who “*emphasized the importance of culture not for the study of literature but for language learning*”. (cited in Steele, 1989, p155). He also suggested that the teaching of culture should focus on the “*individual`s role in the unending kaleidoscope of life situations of every kind and the rules and model for attitude and conduct in them*”. (1997, p22-23) It means that the educators should present to their students the everyday way of life in the target culture, including the rules of behaviour, way of communication.

The turning point for integrating culture into teaching language came in 1970`s and following in 1980`s, with the new approach in this field, called Communicating Language Teaching. It became popular because of the educators` dissatisfaction with the previous methods used in the language teaching. They had an impression that the students did not learn the language used in real life which resulted in an inappropriate use of communication. Due to this fact, the main focus was on the communicative competence of the learner. He should be able to communicate properly in the target society therefore not only the grammar but also the semantics and the sociolinguistics was important. For this reason, the language and culture are inseparable and complex, in other words “*by teaching a language... one is inevitably already teaching culture implicitly.*” (McLeod, 1976, p212)

The foreign language was learnt for the real-life usage although, by mid 1980`s, there were problems and disagreements about the way of teaching culture and what kind of cultural aspects to teach.

At the end of 1980s and through the early of 1990s the importance of incorporating the teaching of culture in the teaching of foreign language was getting stressed by Michael Byram and Claire Kramsh who have already published many great works dealing with this issue.

In the work “Context and Culture in Language Education“, published in 1993, Claire Kramsh argued against a simple “transmission of information” about the foreign culture. She points out “*the new ways of looking at the teaching of language and culture*” which are the following:

- a) *Establishing a “sphere of interculturality”* – which can be defined as not “a transfer of information between cultures” but “putting that culture in relation with one`s own.” It includes a reflection both on the foreign culture and the native culture.
- b) *Teaching culture as an interpersonal process* – it is important to present not only cultural facts in a structural way, but to present understanding values, beliefs, processes or attitudes.
- c) *Teaching culture as difference* - it can be understood that culture is not only national traits but we also have to consider other cultural factors such as age, gender, regional origin, ethnic background and social class
- d) *Crossing disciplinary boundaries* – there is the attempt to link teaching culture to other academically recognized disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and semiotics because teachers need to have wider knowledge on subjects related to culture in order to teach about it.

(Kramsch, 1993, p205-206)

It can be concluded that the main aim of the recent years has been to develop the students` ability to acquire the intercultural competence and to prepare them for intercultural communication.

2.3 INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

However, the term “intercultural communication” was first introduced in 1959 by the American anthropologist, Edward T. Hall, in his work “The Silent Language”, the European educators were getting interested in it by the end of 1980s.

First of all, we have to understand the meaning of intercultural competence. According to the Common European Framework for Language Learning, the competence means “*the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions*” (2000, p9)

On the contrary, Michael Byram criticizes The Common European Framework that it does not deal with the intercultural competence completely and points out that it lacks the assessment of the socio/cultural competence which results in incompleteness of teaching/learning process. He stresses that “... *if it is not tested, it is not taught:*” (2000, p8)

According to him, the intercultural competence involves five elements:

- a) **attitude** – defined as curiosity and openness to the foreign culture
- b) **knowledge** – our own products and practices as well as the products of the other culture,
- c) **skills of interpreting and relating** – means interpreting the document and the events of the foreign culture and relating them to our own ones,
- d) **skills of discovery and interaction** – ability to acquire new knowledge, skills and attitudes while communicating with the people of foreign culture,
- e) **critical cultural awareness** – critical approach to our own products and practices as well as to the products and practices of the foreign culture

To sum up these elements, he characterizes the person with “some degree of intercultural competence” as someone who:

- “is able to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and is able to mediate, that is interpret in terms of the other, either for themselves or other people.”
- “has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures”
- “is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural.”

(Byram, 2000, p9)

According to G. Chen and W. Starosta, the term “intercultural communicative competence” can be defined as “*the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviours that negotiate each others’ cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment*”. (1999, p28)

There is a set of commonly recognized principles for teaching intercultural communicative competence which help teachers in planning programs for students.

1. Active construction – the information about the foreign culture are not presented directly by the teachers but the students have to look for them, they have a chance to see the culture through meaningful language in context
2. Making connections – is it important to link the existing knowledge with new knowledge – it means to connect the learner’s own culture with the culture of being learnt
3. Social interaction – it focuses on the communication with others, the students needs to know how to express ideas and respond to others, communicating across linguistic and cultural boundaries
4. Reflection – intercultural learning involves analysing, thinking and interpreting
5. Responsibility – students must take responsibility for their own actions, attitudes and responses

(Liddicoat et al., 2003, pp.47-51)

Regarding the current situation in Slovakia, there are several linguists and educators who are interesting in the studies of intercultural and multicultural education.

One of the most important educators is Erik Mistrík who deals with the study of culture and multicultural education.

Viktória Marková from the University of Comenius in Bratislava states that the connection of teaching foreign language and the intercultural communication helps students to gain knowledge and ability in order to communicate effectively with the people of foreign culture. The conception is divided into four phases:

The first phase is important to for the self-recognition in order to communicate effectively and for understanding the person of foreign culture. The second phase emphasizes the understanding of own culture in the confrontation with

the foreign culture. It is followed by the theoretical part which includes the presentation of foreign culture elements, its values and rules of behaviour. And the last phase focuses on development of intercultural competence by practising intercultural situations.

2.3.1 Intercultural education

The Council of Europe stresses the need of “intercultural education” which is determined by the following characteristic features:

- a) “*inclusion and participation*” – it means that each human being can learn what she/he wants to learn in order to be able to participate in the different realms of the society
- b) “*learning to live together*” – although each of us are different we need to share a feeling of belonging to a wider community based on mutual respect. It includes the respect for diversity, tolerance and openness to the foreign culture.

The Council of Europe also promotes the following goals of “intercultural education”:

- the ability to look at issues from different perspectives;
- becoming experienced with interaction in heterogeneous groups in order to solve problems
- the experience of reflecting on the quality of dialogues and discussions
- to respect the values.

The concept of “intercultural education” cannot be accomplished by the teacher who is only passing the basic facts and information to the students, therefore a new role of the teacher is stressed by the educational authorities and researchers. The teachers should act as facilitators, observers, managers and evaluators of learning processes.

The Committee of Ministers recommends that teachers should have the professional competency to:

- organise co-operative learning in classrooms in such a way that all students participate and can be held accountable for their contributions;
- identify and validate the various skills and knowledge that students bring into the classroom;
- encourage students and deal with status issues in the classroom;
- discuss controversial issues based on respect for diversity within the framework of human rights principles

(Intercultural education: managing diversity, strengthening democracy, 2003)

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

In the previous chapters we mentioned that there has been the tendency to integrate the target culture into the teaching of foreign language in recent decades. It has become evident that without intercultural competence, the students are not able to interact effectively with people from the foreign culture. That is the reason why the aspects of culture, including intercultural communicative competence, are considered to be the one of the most demanding aims of foreign language teaching. It is clearly pointed out in the document “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” as well as in the national documents concerning the teaching of foreign languages.

The purpose of our research was to investigate the status of learning and teaching culture in the English classes. The main research was divided into two parts. One of them was conducted among the students of two secondary schools who were planning to take the A-levels of the English language this year.

The students were 18-19 years old who had been learning English for many years now, the most of them for 8 years – in the primary school and during their study at the secondary school.

There were 148 students altogether who participated in our investigation – 74 respondents in each secondary school. This number of respondents was given by the A level takers in Sturovo, though there were more A level taking students in Nove Zamky. For this reason, we decided to have the same number of students in both secondary schools to make the research under the equal conditions.

In Sturovo, the sample comprised 28 students of male gender and 46 of female gender. Out of the respondents in Nove Zamky, 23 are boys and 51 students are girls.

Regarding the other part of the research, it concentrated on the teachers of English language and their concept of integrating the foreign culture at their lessons. We decided to choose the teachers from different schools, primary as well as secondary schools. We made the decision because there should not be any difference between the teachers of primary school and the teachers of secondary schools concerning their level of education although it is not always true. The other reason

for mentioned decision was the fact that there were not many teachers at the secondary school in Sturovo and at the secondary school in Nove Zamky.

We carried out the research on the sample of 34 teachers. Out of these 34 respondents, 14 teachers were teaching at the primary schools and 20 of them were teachers at the secondary schools in the time of the investigation. Regarding their gender, 7 of them are males and 27 are females.

We employed a quantitative research and decided to use the questionnaire as the data collection instrument which gave us the possibility of obtaining large-scale data relatively fast. That is one of the advantages of the questionnaire. The other one is the anonymity of it which we made use of as well. It means that the respondents were more willing to answer the questions. On the other hand the questionnaires have some disadvantages too. It can happen that the questionnaire is not filled in by the respondent, indeed. To avoid this problem, we asked the teachers of the respondents to pay attention. The second disadvantage can be that the questions are not formed clearly and comprehensibly, therefore we pre-tested it on the smaller sample of students in another secondary school in Sturovo, called Private Business Academy.

As we already mentioned, there were two parts of our investigation therefore two questionnaires were prepared – one for teachers and one for students. Both questionnaires were designed with the application of Likert scale which helped the respondents to express their opinions about the subject of the research. However the main goal of the research was compare the students of two secondary schools, we designed the questionnaire for the teachers similar to the one for the students in order to compare and contrast their opinions about the way of learning and teaching the foreign culture at English lessons.

The questionnaires were handed out to the teacher respondents personally by visiting both secondary schools. We also asked them to give the questionnaires to the students at the English lessons. They were willing to do it without any problem. Couple of days later, we went back for collecting the questionnaires to the schools and got each one of them back filled in.

Hypothesis:

1. Students` concept of learning about foreign culture differs from the teachers` actual approach to the teaching of foreign culture.
2. One secondary school students` attitude to the learning of foreign culture is the same as the attitude of the other secondary school students.

3.1.1 The students` questionnaire

It was designed with the purpose to find out the students` opinion and attitude about the learning of foreign culture while learning the English language. First of all we introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of doing the research. We also pointed out that all the information the respondents provide were confidential.

The questionnaire consisted of one open question and 6 closed questions:

1. How would the students define culture?
2. How important do the students consider the learning about culture in foreign language classes?
3. Which culture of the English speaking country would they like to learn about?
4. How often would the students like to learn about the foreign culture while learning English language?
5. Where have they learnt the most information about the foreign culture?
6. Which cultural topics do they consider to be interesting to learn about?
7. Which of the stated activities do the respondents consider to be the most useful in order to learn about foreign culture?

The purpose of the first question, the only open one, was to find out the respondents` knowledge about culture in general. The following four questions, number 2, 3, 4 and 5 were provided with the multiple-choice answers. The students were asked to tick only one option in these questions. The question number 6 was asking respondents to rate each stated topic using the 5-point Likert scale, from number 1 for “extremely interesting” to number 5 standing for “not at all interesting”. There were 8 topics given with the possibility of adding any extra topic by the student. In the last question, number 7, the respondents had to tick 3 activities which they thought to be the most useful in order to learn about foreign culture.

At the end of the questionnaire, we asked the respondents to state their gender and we expressed our appreciation for their cooperation.

3.1.2 The teachers` questionnaire

The aim of the teachers` questionnaire was to investigate their perception of integrating culture and intercultural competence into the teaching of English language. It was also our purpose to find out their attitude to the importance and the aims of teaching the foreign culture. The same as in the students` questionnaire, we indicated the aims of the research and assured the respondents that the collected data were confidential.

The following questions were formed:

1. How would they define culture?
2. How important do the teachers consider to teach culture in foreign language classes?
3. How much time do the respondents devote to teach about the foreign culture?
4. Which culture of the English speaking country do they present?
5. Which of the provided aim they consider to be the most important in order to teach culture?
6. Which of the stated activities do the teachers use the most frequently?
7. What kind of materials do they use in order to teach about foreign culture?
8. How much emphasis is placed on teaching culture across the curriculum of second language teaching?

The teachers` questionnaire also consisted of one open-ended question. They were asked to provide the short definition of culture. There were 6 questions provided with the answers of multiple-choice and one question was formed with the 5-point Likert scale.

The question number 2 was asking about the respondents` opinion of the importance to teach culture in the foreign language classes. The following question, number 3, focused on the time devoted to teach about the foreign culture. The teachers were asked to tick the option which reflected their teaching the most. In the question number 4, they selected the English speaking country which of the culture they introduce to their students. The question number 5 was asking the teachers to tick the 5 aims of teaching culture which they considered to be the most important. In the question number 6, the respondents had to tick 3 activities which they use the

most frequently to present and practice the cultural aspects at their lessons. The teachers were also asked to assess the materials they use in order to teach about the culture. They used the 5-point scale, 1 standing for “extremely useful” and 5 for “not at all useful”. And in the last question, they asked to express their opinion about the emphasis placed on teaching culture across the curriculum of second language teaching.

After receiving the questionnaires, we began to analyse the answers provided by the respondents which means that we had to encode the information from the questionnaires so the software would understand it. For analyzing the data we decided to use statistical program “PASW Statistics” – in the past, this software was known as SPSS. It offers many useful tools for statistical analyzing of data.

The first step was filling in the data into the “Data Editor” which consists of two lists - the “Data View” and the “Variable View”.

In the “Data View” we can follow each case - the data given by each respondent (the table lines) and each variable (the table columns), for example gender, school, time or importance of teaching culture.

By the functions of “Variable View” we can specify the features of each variable, for example the name, type, label, measure, values or decimals.

After completing the “Data Editor”, we continued by the analyzing the frequencies of the data. It provides the information about the respondents like their gender, the school they attend etc.

We also used the comparative analysis of the file from the aspect of one variable. So we were able to get information about the analyzed data from the particular respondents’ point of view.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The students` questionnaire

As we already mentioned we conducted the research in two secondary schools, one is situated in the town of Sturovo which has 13000 inhabitants. The other secondary school is 50 km from Sturovo, in the town of Nove Zamky. It is a district town of 30000 inhabitants.

The aim of the research was to investigate the students` attitude to the learning of culture at the lessons of English language and find out whether they share the same conception of it or there is a contrast between them.

The following table provides the information about the respondents of each school and their gender.

Table 1: Students` gender

GENDER	SCHOOL		TOTAL
	Sturovo	Nove Zamky	
Male	28	23	51
% within school	37,8%	31,1%	34,5%
Female	46	51	97
% within school	62,2%	68,9%	65,5%
TOTAL	74	74	148
% within school	100%	100%	100%

A. The definition of culture (SQ1)

The first question focused on the students` knowledge about culture in general. In Sturovo 72 (97,3 %) respondents out of 74 did provide the answer. There were 62 (83,8 %) students in Nove Zamky who provided some definition of culture. Although we were very pleased with the high percentage of the response, there were some definitions that could not be counted.

As some of the following examples show, the definitions apply to two kinds of cultures.

- a) to the so-called small “c” culture that refers to the customs, traditions and the way of life in general – for example:
 - *“summary of customs and traditions specific for each nation, creating unique national identity”*
 - *“system of habits, traditions and customs typical for each country or nation”*
- b) to the so-called capital “C” culture that includes literature, arts, history and geography
 - *“We use the word culture to speak about music, art and literature.”*
 - *“Culture plays an important part in our life. It includes theatre, literature and it is also our national history.”*
- c) combination of small “c” culture and the capital “C” culture
 - *“The culture is the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievements regarded collectively.”*
 - *“For me culture is a specific language of the country, rules of behaviour, customs, traditions, history and theatre or music. It is everything that defines the country.”*

Table 2: The students` definitions

	small “c” culture	capital “C” culture	combination of both	Total
Sturovo	29 40,3%	16 22,2%	27 37,5%	72 100%
Nove Zamky	20 32,3%	11 17,7%	31 50%	62 100%
Total	49 36,6%	27 20,1%	58 43,3%	134 100%

The table no. 2 shows that most of the respondents defined culture as the combination of small “c” and the capital “C” culture although there were slightly more students in Sturovo who were thinking of culture as the sum of habits, customs and traditions.

Some of the respondents (17) also pointed out the relation of language and culture”

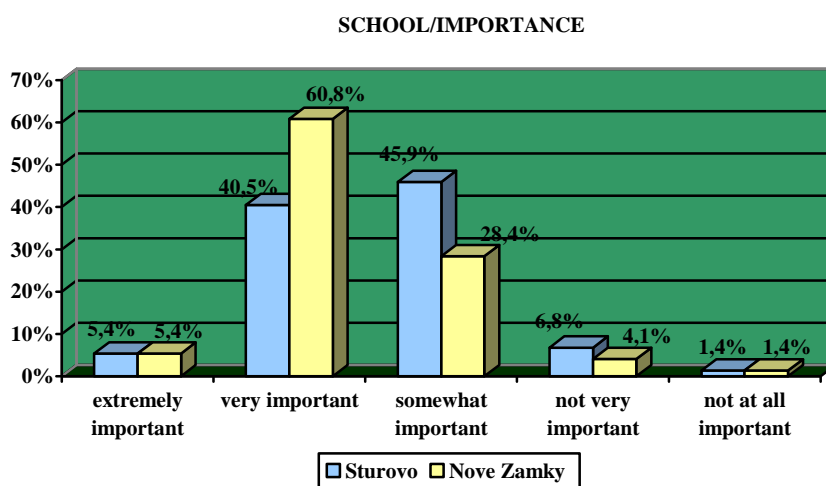
- “Culture is a specific language of the country...”
- “... language is also a part of culture.”
- “Culture includes tradition, language, arts.”

Many respondents stressed that the culture refers to the specific group of people who lives in the same territory.

- “The common habits, customs and traditions of people living in some area.”
- “The sum of customs and traditions specific for each nation.”
- “It`s a word for a certain group of traditions, mindsets, everything that puts a give group of people under the same banner.”

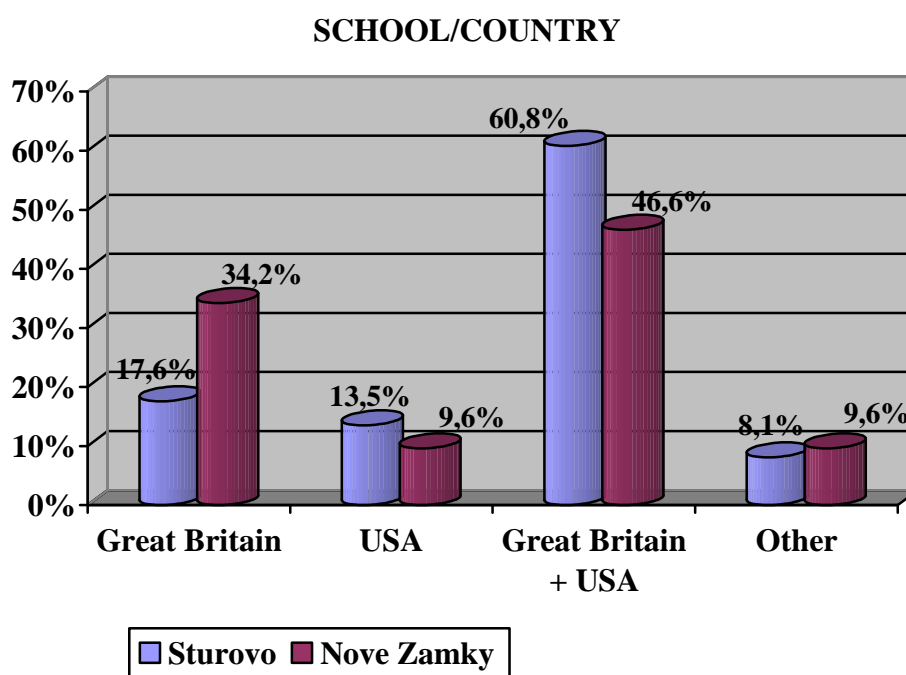
B. Importance of learning culture (SQ2)

The second question was referring to the importance of learning about the foreign culture in second language classes. The result of the analysis indicates that there was different standpoint between the students of secondary school in Sturovo and the students form Nove Zamky. While most of the students from Nove Zamky considered the learning of culture very important (60,8%), the most of the students from Sturovo expressed their opinion that it is somewhat important (45,9%). The same number of students from both schools thought that integrating culture in the teaching of foreign language is extremely important (5,4%). There was only one respondent from each school asserting that learning of culture was not at all important.



C. Culture of the English speaking country (SQ3)

We also wanted to find out which culture of the English speaking country would the students like to learn about. We were curious if there would be any difference between the answers of students not attending the same school. We can see in the graph below that in fact, the students of both schools would like to know more about the culture of Great Britain as well as the culture of USA although there were higher proportion of students in Nove Zamky who would like to learn about the culture of Great Britain only.



In this question there was a possibility of specifying other English speaking country whose culture would the student like to learn about. There were 13 students altogether – 6 in Sturovo and 7 in Nove Zamky – who stated the following countries:

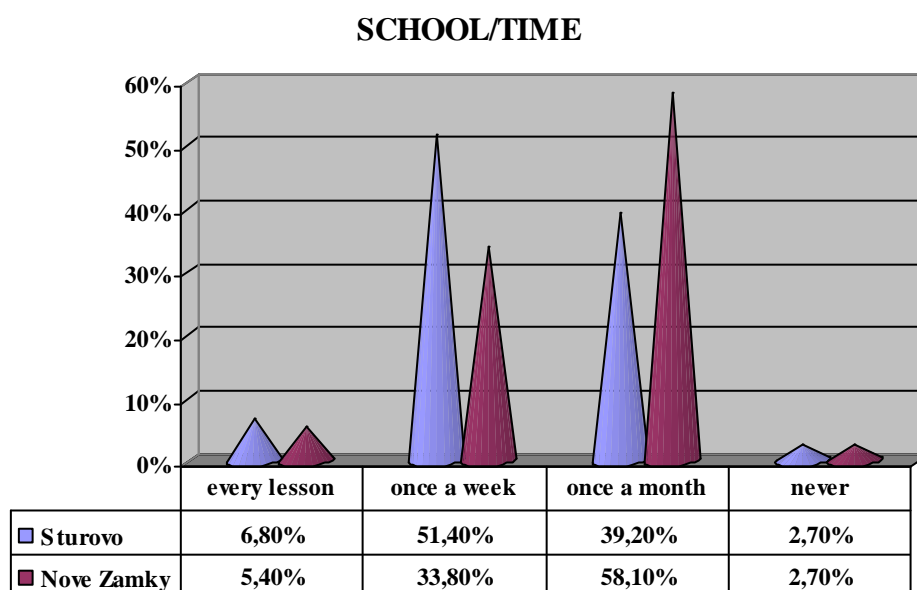
- New Zealand (1 student from Sturovo and 2 students from NZ)
- Australia (2 students from Sturovo and 3 students from NZ)
- Canada (2 students from Sturovo and 2 students from NZ)
- India (1 student from Sturovo)

We would like to point out the answer of one respondent from the school in Sturovo. He made the request that he would like to learn about the Slovak culture in English language.

D. Frequency of learning about culture (SQ4)

Regarding the issue of frequency of dealing with the foreign culture, another contrast occurred in the responses of the students attending the last year classes of secondary schools in different towns.

According to the answers of respondents from Sturovo, most of them (51,4%) would like to learn the culture once a week. Only 33,8% of students from Nove Zamky stated this frequency. The majority of students (58,1%) would like to have the culture of the target language presented at the lessons more than once a month.

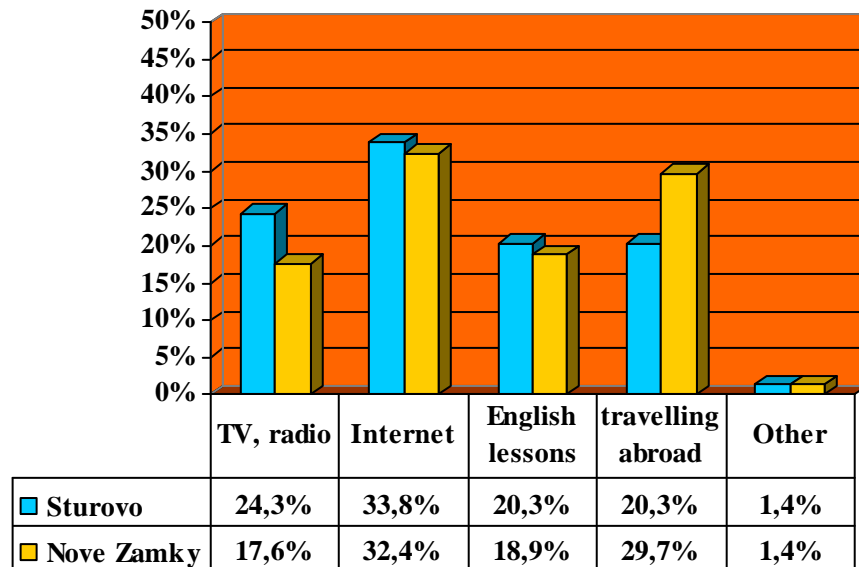


In both secondary schools there were 2 – 2 respondents who would not like to have the foreign culture integrated in the English language teaching. And only 5 students in Sturovo and 4 students in Nove Zamky would like to learn about the cultural aspects at every English lesson.

E. Source about culture (SQ5)

The next question focused on the issue of source. We wanted to know where the respondents learn the most information about the foreign culture. In the time of globalization and of widespread mass media including the Internet, it is much easier to be in touch with the foreign culture as it was ten – fifteen years ago. Nowadays the students do not have problem to acquire general knowledge from any medium although it is very important to sort out the information which are important and useful for our life. It is the parents` and the teachers` responsibilities to make sure that the students are not influenced by the information which is immoral.

SCHOOL/SOURCE



The graph indicates that we were right in our prediction that the students find the most information on the Internet. There is not fundamental difference between the respondents of the two schools. The Internet as the source of information about the foreign culture was ticked by the most of the respondents. The second most marked option was travelling abroad. This is the other important opportunity to get in contact with the aspects of foreign culture. Unfortunately, most of us have the possibility of travelling abroad more than our parents and the great parents ever had.

The important data gained from the analysis is that the English lesson as a source of information about the foreign culture was placed on the third position by the respondents of both schools.

F. Topics (SQ6)

The students were asked to rate the each of the given topics by the 5-point scale where the number 1 was standing for 'extremely interesting' and the number 5 for 'not at all interesting'. There was no surprise, that the youth culture was indicated by the respondents of both schools as the extremely interesting topic.

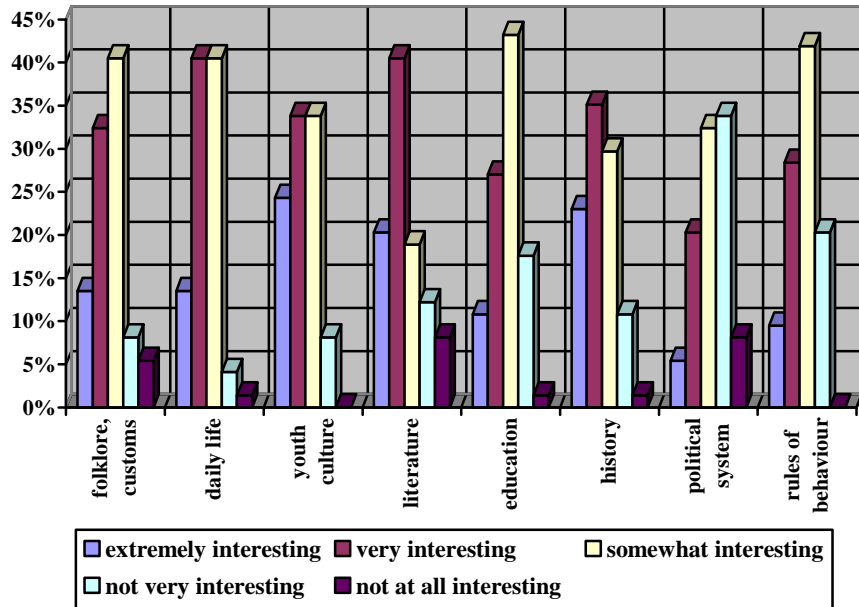
In Sturovo, 24,3 % of students ticked the topic of the youth culture and the second most interesting topic was history, marked by 23% respondents.

In Nove Zamky, the topic of the youth culture was chosen by 21,6% of students and it was followed by the topic of daily life (18,9%).

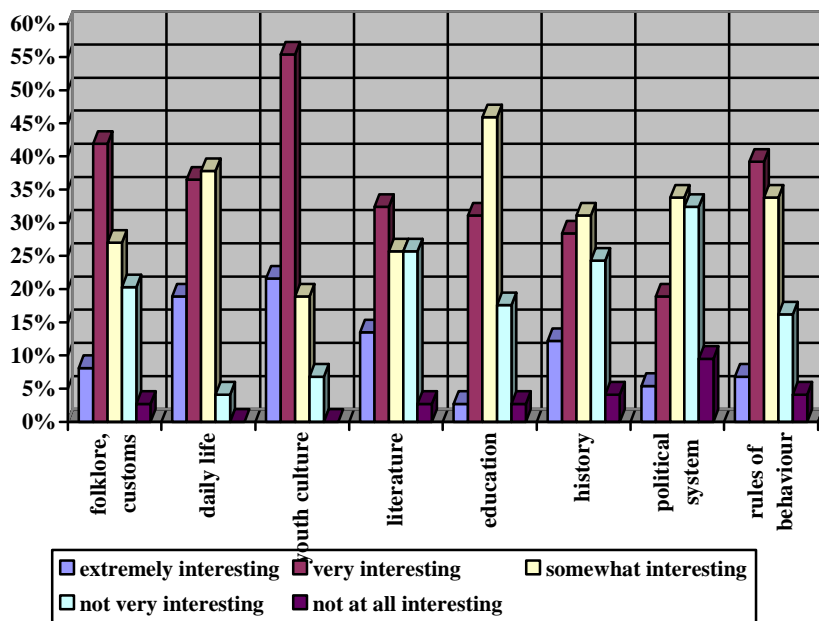
The difference between the students of these two secondary schools can be seen in the ranking of literature. While 40,5 % of the students in Sturovo rated in as very interesting, in Nove Zamky it was only 32,4% of the respondents.

On the other hand, the topic of political system was chosen as not very interesting or even not at all interesting cultural topic by the students of both schools.

Topics in Sturovo



Topics in Nove Zamky



The students could also suggest some topics which they would like to learn about and were not stated in the questionnaire. They added the following subjects: ‘the beauties of the country’, ‘geography’, ‘films’, ‘sport’, ‘communication with foreign students’ and ‘places of interest’.

G. Activities (SQ7)

In the question number 7, the students should have assessed the listed activities as the ways of teaching about the foreign culture. They were asked to tick only three of them which they considered to be the most useful in order to learn about the cultural aspects.

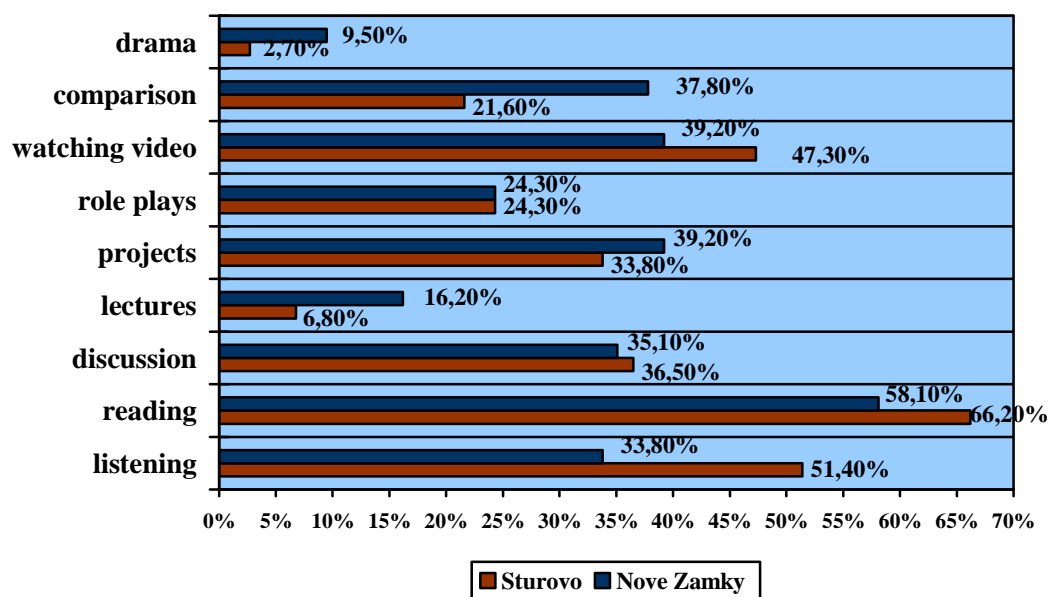
We can see in the graph below that the students in Sturovo (66,2%) as well as in Nove Zamky (58,1%) ranked the reading texts, newspaper articles and interpreting them as the most useful activity.

In Sturovo it was followed by listening to songs, radio programme and interpreting the cultural phenomena (51,4%) and the third place was taken by watching films (47,3%).

The students of the secondary school in Nove Zamky assessed the watching video and doing projects equally (39,2%).

The drama was considered to be the least useful activity in Sturovo (2,7%) as well as in Nove Zamky (9,5%) although there are many great drama activities which can introduce cultural aspects. They can also be very helpful in order to practice cultural habits, manners and rules of behaviour used in the foreign culture.

Activities considered to be most useful by the students



The students also had the scope for suggesting other ways of teaching about the foreign culture. Couple of them would like to meet people of the target culture, travelling to the country they learn about or they would like to communicate with the students of the target culture more often. They would also appreciate to learn from the native teacher.

4.2 The teachers` questionnaire

Regarding the questionnaire designed for the teachers it consisted of one open-ended question, six multiple-choice questions and one question was formed by using the 5-point scale.

There were primary school teachers as well as teachers of secondary schools participating in the research. We focused on the teachers who had accomplished their university studies and achieved the Bachelor`s degree at least. The following table gives the information about their gender and their qualification.

Table 3: The teachers` gender

	Number	Percent
Male	7	20,6 %
Female	27	79,4 %

Table 4: The teachers` qualification

	Bachelor degree	Master degree	PhD.
Male	2	4	1
Female	4	21	2

A. The definition of culture (TQ1)

The same as the questionnaire designed for the students, the teachers` one was beginning with the question asking for defining culture. Out of 34 teachers, there were 19 respondents who did not write anything. The definitions of the rest teachers (15) can be divided into the same three groups as it was in the case of students.

a) the so-called small “c” culture – 5 definitions

- *“Something which is passed by previous generations to contemporary generation. It is connected with the way of behaviour, social connections, tradition.”*
- *“The culture represents attitudes, values, beliefs, goals of a social group.”*

- b) the so-called capital “C” culture – 1 definition
 - *“Art, painting, literature...”*

- c) the combination of the two – 9 definitions
 - *“The sum of language, history, habits, customs shared by group of people.”*
 - *“A system of habits, customs, traditions, including language, arts and religion.”*
 - *“It is the way of life, traditions, customs, the way we behave to each other, the way we spend our time, the things we appreciate and admire, our background and concerns. It also includes the art, history and the literature of the certain nation.”*

The most of teachers were defining culture by listing the elements of the culture, the visible ones but in the most cases, they connect the culture with its aspects which are not touchable such as customs, habits or tradition.

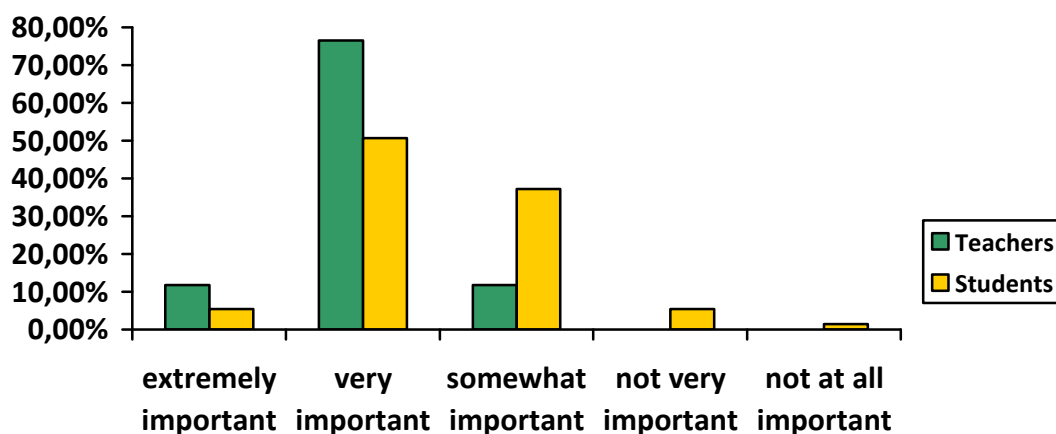
B. Importance of teaching foreign culture (TQ2)

The teachers of English language were considering the teaching the aspects of foreign culture in English language classes to be very important – 26 teachers which comprise 76,5 per cent of the respondents. Four teachers (11,8%), all of them females, ticked the option that the culture plays the extremely important part of teaching the students foreign language.

By comparing the teachers` data to the students` opinion about the importance of culture in the foreign language classes, the result is obvious. The teachers consider the teaching culture more important than the students of the both secondary schools. Out of 148 students, only 8 of them (5,4%) thought that the culture is extremely important, 75 respondents (50,7%) expressed that it is very important while 55 learners (37,2) stated that learning about the foreign culture is somewhat important only.

Table 5: The teachers` data

	extremely important	very important	somewhat important	not very important	not at all important
Male	0	85,7%	14,3%	0	0
Female	14,8%	74,1%	11,1%	0	0
Total	11,8%	76,5%	11,8%	0	0



C. Frequency (TQ3)

The other matter of our research was related to the time the teachers were devoting to deal with the culture while teaching foreign language. More than 35 per cent claimed that they teach cultural aspects once a week while there were only 8 respondents (23,5%) who stated that they introduce cultural issues at every English lesson. On the other side, up to 10 teachers (29,4%) who responded that they teach about culture twice a month, and 4 out of 34 teachers ticked the option of “once a month” only.

D. Culture of the English speaking country (TQ4)

The teachers were also asked to point out which culture of the particular English speaking country they present at the lessons. We expected that the culture of Great Britain would be the most often indicated because of the British English dominance.

After analysing the data we found out that it was partially true. According to the analysis, the combination of two cultures, the British and the American culture, was chosen by 64,7 per cent of respondents. The culture of Great Britain was on the

second place with 20,6 per cent and the culture of USA was stated by 5,9 per cent of teachers.

The teachers had also a chance to mention the culture of other English speaking countries they were presenting. Three other cultures were added, the Australian, Canadian and the Irish.

The teachers` responses for this question are comparable with the students` demand of learning about the foreign culture.

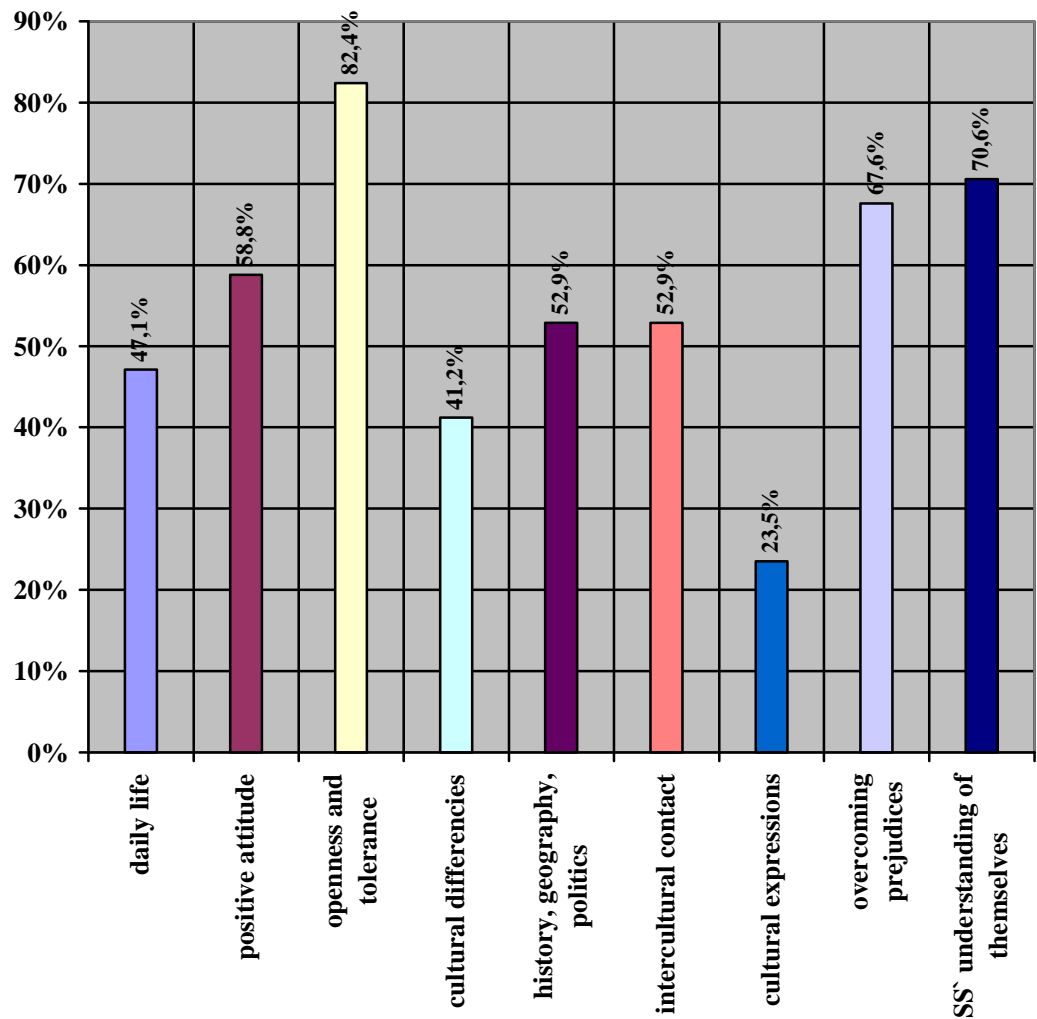
E. Aims (TQ5)

In the next task the teachers were asked to choose from the listed aims of teaching culture in order of importance. They should have ticked five of them.

The following graph shows that the most of the teachers (82,4%) indicated the aim to develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other culture to be the most important. It was followed by the effort to develop students` understanding of themselves and their own culture (70,6%). Without students` understanding of their own identity and culture it is not possible to accept the cultural aspects of the foreign country and to develop intercultural competence. Our own identity plays the major role in acceptance of other human being.

The ability of overcoming prejudices and stereotypes was placed on the third position and encouraging positive attitudes and a sympathetic approach to other cultures was considering being very important as well.

Aims of teaching culture



F. Activities (TQ6)

Comparison of cultures, the differences and the similarities of two or more cultural aspects were indicated as the most often used way of teaching about foreign culture (64,7%). This method was also mentioned by many great scholars and educators. Students would understand and accept the new cultural phenomena.

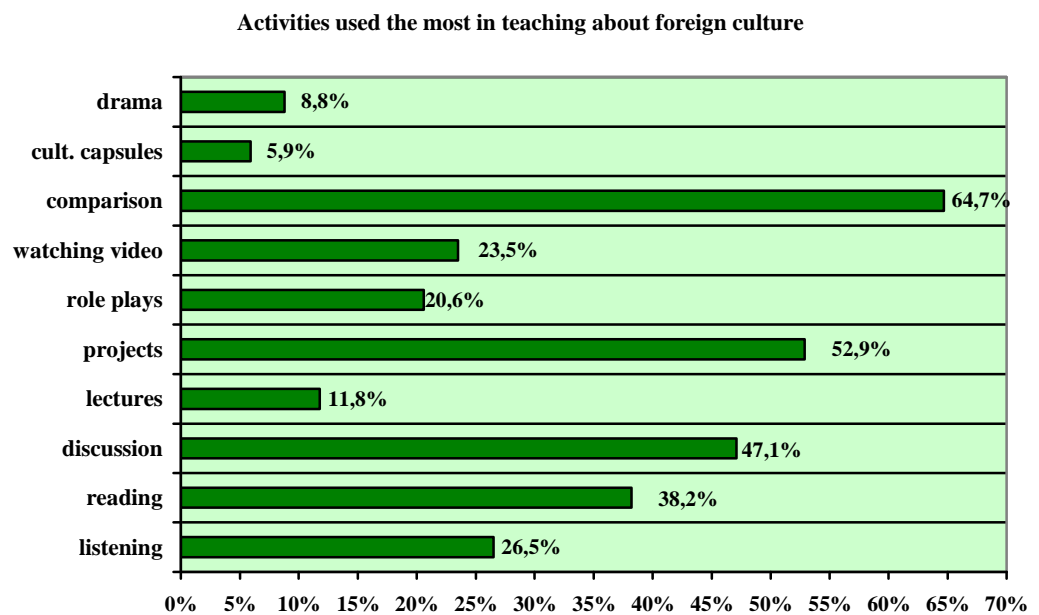
The other favourite way of presenting the foreign culture is by doing projects with the students. It is frequently used in our schools. Many times the students are asked to prepare some projects at home concerning new topic and they are presenting it to their classmates. It is often followed by the discussion about the topic. The discussion was the activity stressed by 47,1 per cent of the teachers as the most useful.

The technique of the “culture capsule” which was defined by the scholars as “short (5-10) minute presentations that focus on one minimal difference between the

target culture and the native culture of the students” was mentioned by 5,9 per cent of respondents only.

On the other side, the students stressed the following three ways of learning about the foreign culture as the most useful: reading texts, newspaper article and interpreting the cultural phenomena, watching video and listening to songs, radio programme followed by the interpreting the cultural phenomena.

However, more than one third of students thought that doing projects and discussions on cultural topics help them to understand and accept the foreign culture.



G. Materials (TQ7)

We assumed that the textbook would be stressed as the most useful in order to teach about the foreign culture. On the other side the Internet was pointed out by the most respondents as the extremely useful tool (47,1%). The schools and the teachers realize that the Internet as the widespread source of information can help them in teaching foreign language as well as foreign cultural aspects. Unfortunately, the possibility of access to the Internet is not depending on the teachers but the financial situation of the schools.

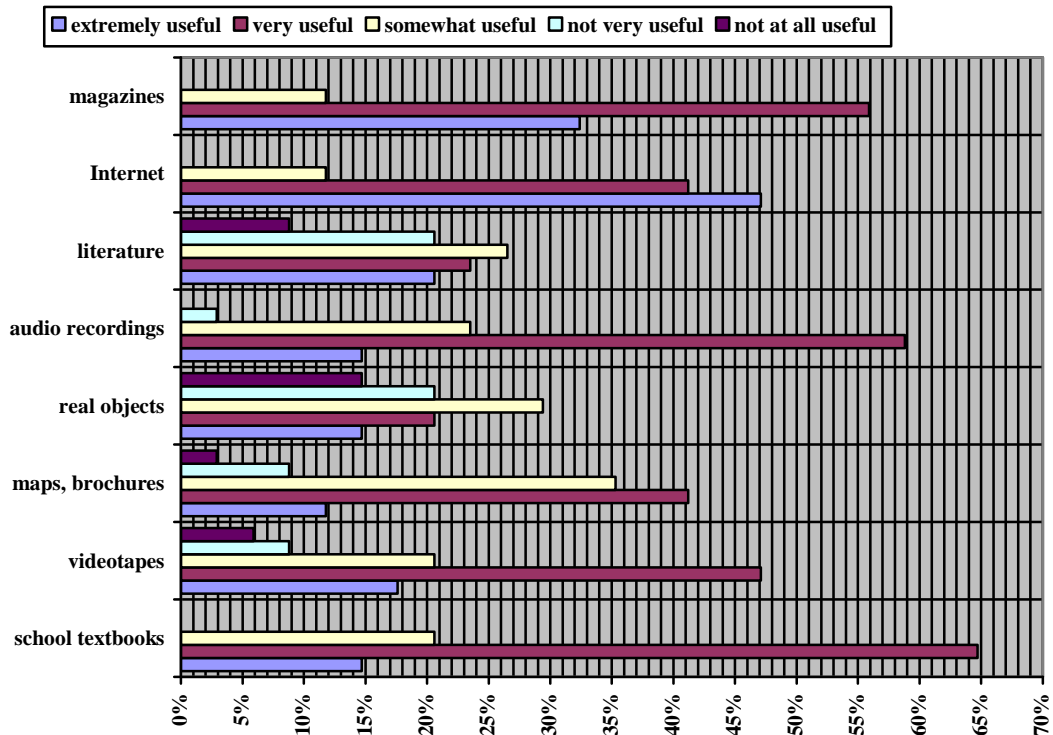
According to the students` data, the Internet was the source of cultural information marked by the most respondents (32,4%).

After the Internet, the newspapers and the magazines were stated as the extremely useful resources.

Regarding the school textbooks, most of the teachers(64,7%) agreed that they are very useful together with the audio recordings – the CDs and the audiocassettes – provided together with the school textbooks.

Literature and the real objects were mentioned as not very useful sources or even not at all useful materials by the respondents.

Materials used by teachers



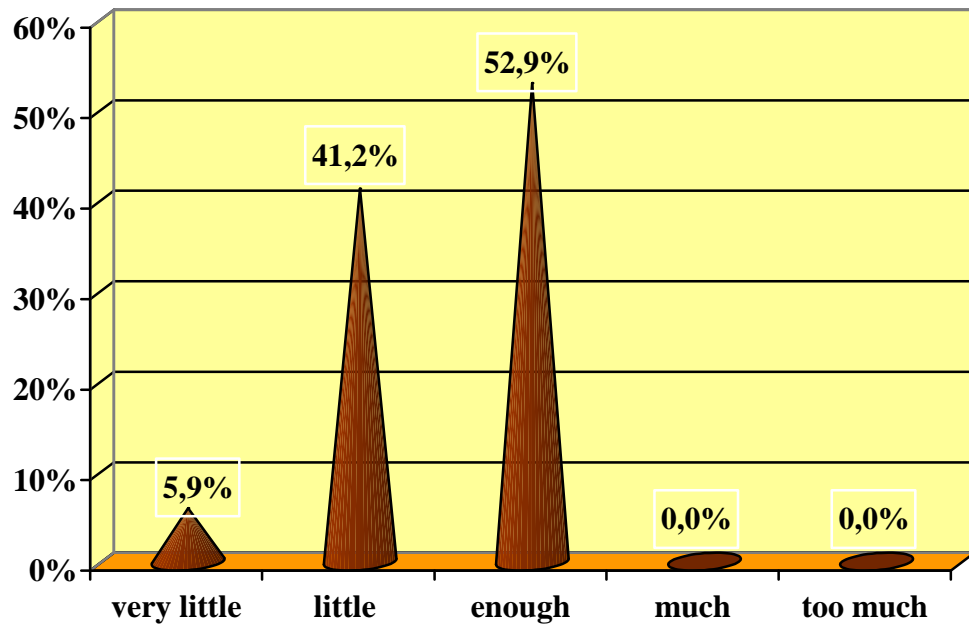
H. Emphasis (TQ8)

At the end of the questionnaire we wanted to know the opinion of the respondent regarding the emphasis places on teaching culture across the curriculum of second language teaching.

As most as 18 respondents out of 34 (52,9%) claimed that the national curriculum of second language teaching emphasize the teaching of culture optimally although 14 teachers maintained a position that there was little emphasis placed on cultural concepts in teaching of foreign language in the schools.

Emphasis placed on TFC across the curriculum

□



5 IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the research was to investigate the actual status of foreign culture in teaching English language. We focused not only on the approach of language teachers to the presenting and teaching cultural issues but we also examined the attitudes of students to the learning about the foreign culture. We targeted a particular group of secondary school students who were planning to pass the A-level exams this year.

So there were two main aims of the research. The first one was to compare the attitude to the learning about the foreign culture of students attending secondary schools. Half of these respondents were students of the secondary school in Sturovo and the other half were students of the secondary school in Nove Zamky.

The second goal of our research was to confirm the hypothesis that the students' concept of learning about foreign culture differs from the teachers' actual approach to the teaching of foreign culture.

We began our research by asking the students to define the culture. The students of both schools provided similar definitions which referred to the habits, customs, traditions as well as to the arts, literature and other "manifestations of human intellectual achievements regarded collectively". Most of the students combined the concept of so-called small "c" culture and the so-called capital "C" culture. There were few students in both schools who reduced the definition of culture to the so-called capital "C" culture or "high" culture.

It reveals that the students think of culture in general terms as the way of life and rules of behaviour which includes habits, customs and tradition in itself.

Regarding the importance of incorporating the teaching of culture into the foreign language teaching, there was different point of view between the students in Sturovo and students in Nove Zamky. The difference was more than 20 % between the students thinking of learning culture as very important. There were also up to 17% more students from Sturovo than students from Nove Zamky claiming that the presence of cultural issues at the lesson of English language is somewhat important only. Unfortunately, we could not reveal the reason of it which is the evidence of the questionnaire's disadvantage.

The most students of both schools were interested in the cultures of Great Britain and the USA. There could be two reasons for this result. The first could be that the school textbooks were focusing on these two countries mostly and the other

reason could be the mass media which broadcast mainly British and American movies and sitcoms.

The students agreed that they would not like to deal with the cultural issues at every lesson although there was a disagreement about the frequency. The students of Sturovo`s secondary school stated that they would like to learn about the cultural facts once a week. There was about 20 per cent less students in Nove Zamky who stated the same frequency. On the other side they suggested to learn about the foreign culture once a month. We were looking for the reason of it and after the analysing the answers of the male and female students in Nove Zamky and Sturovo we found out that there were also more females in Nove Zamky ticking this option than females in Sturovo.

In the question of source there was almost the same number of answers for each option. The Internet was pointed out by the same percentage of students in both schools. There is no surprise. The second most ticked answer was travelling abroad which we also presuming.

The other field of our research was concentrating on the topics of foreign culture the students would like to learn about. The students chose the topic which is the closest to them – it was the youth culture including the music, fashion, style of young people living in the foreign culture. However, the students of these two secondary schools placed different topics on the second place of their interest. The respondents from Sturovo were interested in history and literature, the students from Nove Zamky ranked the topic of daily life. The response of the students from Sturovo made us wonder about it so we asked their teachers for the explanation. We found out that the students of those classes were very happy and satisfied with the teachers of literature and history. It proves the fact that the approach of the teacher to the students is very important and it can influence the students in great extent.

There was also not a significant difference concerning the way of learning about the foreign culture. The most students of both schools ranked the reading texts, newspaper articles and interpreting the cultural phenomena as the most useful activity for acquiring knowledge about the foreign culture. The truth is that there are many other great ways of learning about culture of the foreign culture. We assume that the students think of reading as the useful activity just because the teachers had not introduced to them any other appropriate techniques. The reason of it could be that they are not aware of more interesting and useful activities for teaching foreign

culture although there are many books presenting the different ways of teaching culture written by great educators.

To sum up this part of research we have to conclude that our first hypothesis is not valid entirely. There are differences between the students of two secondary schools though the students are of same age and of the same level regarding the knowledge of the foreign language.

The suggested reasons of it are the quality of education, the influence of the teachers or the students` different kind of personal interests.

The other aim of our research was to confirm or disprove the hypothesis that the students` concept of learning about foreign culture differs from the teachers` actual approach to the teaching of foreign culture.

The teachers were providing similar definitions of culture. It proves that the teachers as well as the students have the same conception of culture. In general they link it with the habits, customs and traditions of the certain group of people.

The results of the research made it clear that the teachers considered the teaching of culture while teaching the foreign language more important than the students. They were aware of the fact that without the cultural and intercultural competence the students can hardly communicate appropriately with people of the target culture. These competences are also needed to develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other culture and overcoming the prejudices and stereotypes. These were also the aims of teaching culture indicated by the teachers.

The results also revealed that there was a big problem concerning the time which was devoted to deal with the foreign culture. Most of the teachers pointed out that they were not presenting the cultural issues at every lesson although several scholars state that culture should be an integral part of every language class. (Tomalin and Stempleski, 1993, p8).

We can look for the cause of it in the national documents and curriculum which still stresses the developing of four skills of language – reading, writing, speaking and listening – at the various level of testing the students.

The solutions could be that the cultural aspects would be also included in the testing of students.

Concerning the issue of the decision which target countries` cultures were presented by the teachers, the given answers were same as the students gave. The teachers stated that they were introducing the cultural issue of Great Britain as well

as the USA and the students agreed that they would like to learn about the cultures of those two countries as well.

The teachers and the students had the possibility of adding extra country that was not listed in the questionnaires. Both group of respondents stated the culture of Canada and Australia.

There was a contrast between the teachers' actual way of teaching about the foreign culture and the notion of the students about the learning technique. The students would have preferred reading texts, newspaper article and interpreting the cultural phenomenon, watching video and listening to songs, radio programme followed by the interpreting the cultural phenomena.

On the other side, there were 38.2 % of the teachers who were using the technique of reading the text in order to teach about the target culture. There were as few as 26.5% of teachers indicating the listening activities. The teachers were keen on the comparison of cultures by pointing out the differences and the similarities of two or more cultural aspects the most and it was followed by doing projects.

We were surprised that the drama techniques including the role plays were not mentioned neither by the teachers nor the students. We assume that the teachers were not including these kinds of activities due to lack of knowledge and experiences.

The use of culture capsules was ticked only by 5.9% of teachers although we suggest this activity as very important in order to teach about the foreign culture.

We would recommend the foreign language teachers to study the book of Tomalin and Stempleski "Cultural Awareness" where they can find various activities for teaching about the foreign culture. We would also suggest to look for the activities on the Internet where are thousands of them explained in details.

After analyzing the results of the research we can declare that the second hypothesis we set before conducting the research proved to be true partially. It is obvious that there are differences between the actual approach of teachers to the teaching of foreign culture and the students' conception. However, we have to point out that the respondents – the teachers and the students – agreed in the issue of the target culture. Both groups of respondents pointed out culture of Great Britain and the United States of America.

CONCLUSION

Our diploma work has been devoted to the relationship between culture and language as well as to the teaching of foreign culture at the secondary schools.

Due to the process of globalization and migration of people, there is greater chance for people of different cultures to get in the close contact. For this reason it is important to develop the person's ability of cultural awareness and intercultural competence as well. Many educators has been emphasizing that the students should acquire knowledge about the culture of the language they are learning. Without understanding of the foreign culture, its customs, values or the even the rules of behaviour, they would be never able to communicate effectively with the people of that culture.

First of all, we presented various conceptions and definitions of culture. Some of the scholars claim that the culture means the art, literature and history of the nation. The others perceive the concept of culture as the system of habits, customs, values, beliefs, attitudes of a social group.

Culture can be also related to a particular historical period or we can refer to the certain society. However there are hundreds of various definitions, none of them can be taken as definite.

In the second chapter we were dealing with the relationship between culture and language. According to many great scholars, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Edward Sapir or Benjamin Lee Whorf, culture and language are so interconnected that we cannot separate them. One of the many functions of language is expressing the features of culture and transmits them from generation on generation. It is considered to be a mean of nation's culture. On the other hand, language is culturally influenced and shaped by the cultural features.

Then we moved to explaining the importance of teaching culture while teaching the foreign language. It must be admitted that learning the grammar and lexicon of the foreign language is not enough in order to be able to communicate adequately with the native speaker. We must be aware of appropriate behaviour and the way of communication used by people of the foreign culture. Otherwise it can happen that we are misunderstood or even we can offend them. It can easily happen in the other way, too.

The cultural dimension has been always present in the study of language although it has changed in the course of time. We looked back at the history of

foreign language teaching as far as the beginning of 20th Century and characterized the following approaches of the teaching foreign language: the grammar-translation, the audio-lingual method and Communicating Language Teaching. We focused on the status of teaching culture in each of these approaches.

To be able to understand the aim of teaching foreign culture, we mentioned some of its main goals defined by various educators and scholars.

In the practical part of the diploma work we made the quantitative research concerning the issue of integrating culture in the teaching of foreign culture. It consisted of two parts.

In the first part we were focusing on the students' perception of learning about foreign culture. We decided to compare students of two secondary schools. In our hypothesis we presumed that there would be no difference between them but after analyzing the data we had to admit that even two seemingly same group of respondents have different opinions regarding the learning of foreign culture.

In the second part, we decided to investigate the teachers' actual approach to the teaching of foreign culture and to compare it with the students' perception.

After analyzing the results of the research we can declare that the second hypothesis we set before conducting the research proved to be true partially. It is obvious that there are differences between the actual approach of teachers to the teaching of foreign culture and the students' conception.

RESUME

V diplomovej práci som sa venovala vzťahu medzi kultúrou a jazykom, pričom som sa zamerala na kultúru vo vyučovaní cudzieho jazyka na stredných školách.

Danú problematiku považujem v súčasnosti za veľmi dôležitú, keďže v dôsledku procesu globalizácie, či už sa to týka ekonomiky, politiky alebo masmédií, dostávame sa do užšieho styku s kultúrami iných národov. Významným a veľmi dôležitým krokom v tomto procese bol jednak prijatie Slovenskej republiky do Európskej únie v roku 2004, ako i vstup do schengenského priestoru o tri roky neskôr. Zrušením hraníc sa nám otvorili možnosti spoznávať iné krajiny a ich kultúru. Avšak také jednoduché to nie je. Pre potreby efektívnej komunikácie s príslušníkmi iných kultúr, musíme rozvíjať naše schopnosti verbálnej i neverbálnej komunikácie. Taktiež je potrebné, aby sme sa kultúrne vzdelávali, pochopili a akceptovali myslenie a správanie ľudí z odlišnej kultúry. Bez snahy spoznať hodnoty a normy inej kultúry nie je možné plnohodnotne fungovať v danej spoločnosti.

Treba ale pripomenúť, že dôležitou podmienkou interkultúrnej kompetencie je sebaopoznanie a pochopenie vlastnej identity. K tomu však najprv potrebujeme spoznať vlastnú kultúru a jej elementy.

Spomínaný proces sebaopoznanie a pochopenia vlastnej kultúry sa začína už pri narodení. Človek je ovplyvňovaný svojím prostredím, ktoré je determinované kultúrou. Z toho vyplýva, že na vedomé spoznávanie vlastnej kultúry a taktiež kultúry iných národov, nikdy nie je priskoro. V posledných desaťročiach, u nás hlavne po roku 1989, viaceré významné osobnosti zdôrazňujú potrebu integrácie kultúry do vyučovania cudzieho jazyka na školách, na čo som sa zamerala aj v tejto práci.

V prvej kapitole teoretickej časti som priblížila viaceré pohľady a rôzne prístupy, čo sa týka zadefinovania kultúry vo všeobecnosti. Nájdeme tu definície kultúry, ktoré ju vysvetľujú ako systém noriem, hodnôt a tradícií po stáročia prechádzajúce z generácie na generácie. Iní zase pod pojmom kultúra majú na mysli rôzne kultúrne artefakty, umenie a literatúru. Kultúra sa taktiež vzťahuje na rôzne historické obdobia.

Slovo „kultúra“ pochádza z latinského slova „culture“ – základom je slovo „colere“, čo znamená obrábanie pôdy. V prenesenom význame rozvíjanie osobnosti jednotlivca.

Niektorí významní vedci, ako Brooks, považovali kultúru za nemenný, stály, a uzatvorený fenomén. Kultúrne vzdelávanie bolo zamerané len na spoznanie konkrétnych faktov, ktoré sa aj tak podľa nich nemenia.

Naopak kultúra je neustále sa meniaci proces. Prejavuje sa v rôznych formách a mení svoj charakter. Sú to hlavne hodnoty, normy a tradície.

V druhej kapitole som sa zaoberala vzťahom medzi kultúrou a jazykom. Predstavila som teórie významných svetových vedcov, ako sú Wilhelm von Humboldt, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf a taktiež som spomenula súčasných: Michael Byram a Claire Kramsch.

Ich názory sa zhodujú vo fakte, že kultúra a jazyk nemôžu byť oddelené a fungovať jeden bez druhého. Jazyk potrebujeme na vyjadrenie svojich názorov ako i kultúrnych elementov. Na druhej strane, kultúra ovplyvňuje používanie a vývoj jazyka.

Po vysvetlení si základných pojmov, dostala som sa k vyučovaniu kultúry na hodinách cudzieho jazyka. Významní lingvisti taktiež zastávali názor, že jazyk a ani kultúra nemôže fungovať bez pomoci druhého. Už v minulosti sa zdôrazňoval fakt, že vyučovanie cudzieho jazyka bez integrácie kultúry daného jazyka je neadekvátne. Musíme priznať, že ovládanie gramatiky a dostatok slovnej zásoby nepostačuje. Je napríklad zrejmé, že bez kultúrnej kompetencie, zvyky a tradície inej kultúry môže študent pochopiť inak.

V podkapitole som stručne zachytila históriu vyučovania kultúry. Charakterizovala som jednotlivé metódy vyučovania cudzieho jazyka od začiatku 20. storočia až po súčasné trendy. Priblížila som postavenie kultúry v gramaticko-prekladateľskej metóde, v audio-linguálnom prístupe a nakoniec v komunikatívnom prístupe.

Gramaticko-prekladateľská metóda zdôrazňuje štúdium literárnych diel a iných vedných prác, ktoré sa považovali za kultúru spoločnosti.

V 60.-tych rokoch minulého storočia sa najčastejšie používala vo vyučovaní cudzieho jazyka audio-linguálna metóda. Dôraz sa kládol na hovorený jazyk, pričom cudzí jazyk sa študenti učili neustálym opakovaním. Viacerí učitelia v tomto období sa snažili integrovať kultúru do vyučovania. Na rozdiel od gramaticko-prekladateľskej metóde, audio-linguálna definovala kultúru ako systém pravidiel správania. Snažili sa priblížiť žiakom každodenný život v danej kultúre a spôsob komunikácie.

Prelom v integrácii kultúry do vyučovania nastal v 70.-tych a následne v 80.-tych rokoch minulého storočia s nástupom komunikatívnej metódy vyučovania cudzieho jazyka. Zdôrazňovala sa najmä komunikatívna kompetencia študentov. Cudzí jazyk sa učil pre reálne potreby komunikácie.

Od 90-tych rokov nastúpil trend interkultúrnej kompetencie, ktorá podľa Michaela Byrama zahŕňa v sebe päť elementov: postoj, vedomosti, schopnosť interpretácie, schopnosť interakcie a kritickú vnímavosť kultúry.

Dôležitosť interkultúrneho vzdelávania je podporované aj Európskou komisiou, ktorá považuje nasledovné ciele interkultúrneho vzdelávania za najdôležitejšie:

- schopnosť vnímať problematiku z rôznej perspektívy
- rešpekt hodnôt
- získať skúsenosti s riešením problémov
- získať skúsenosti v diskusii

Čo sa týka praktickej časti diplomovej práce, rozhodla som sa urobiť výskum v danej problematike – využívanie kultúry na hodinách cudzieho jazyka, a to z pohľadu učiteľa, ako aj z pohľadu študentov

Výskum som rozdelila na dve časti – najprv som porovnala prístup k vyučovaniu kultúry študentov dvoch rôznych stredných škôl. Pred výskumom som predpokladala, že sa nevyskytnú markantné rozdiely medzi nimi. Ďalej som mala v úmysle porovnať prístup učiteľov k vyučovaniu kultúry a predstavu študentov o vyučovaní kultúry. Domnievala som sa, že v tomto prípade výsledky výskumu potvrdia rozdiel medzi predstavami učiteľov a študentov na druhej strane.

Konkrétne som sa zamerala na študentov – maturantov dvoch gymnázií, a to v Štúrove a v Nových Zámkoch.

Na získanie potrebných informácií som zostavila rovnaké dotazníky pre študentov a rovnaké pre učiteľov.

V prípade porovnania študentov dvoch gymnázií, prekvapujúco som zistila, že sú tam isté rozdiely v poňatí problematiky vyučovania kultúry. Napríklad, čo sa týka obsahu – aj keď väčšina študentov z oboch škôl by sa najradšej učili o kultúre mladých, u štúrovských študentov nasledovala literatúra a história, kým väčšina študentov z Nových Zámkov by sa nerada učila o literárnych dielach predstaviteľov iných kultúr.

Po spracovaní dát získaných z dotazníkov učiteľov, som došla k záveru, že študenti by naozaj pristupovali k vyučovaniu kultúry na hodinách cudzieho jazyka

inak ako učítelia. Aj keď musím uznať, že sa napríklad zhodli v názore, čo sa týka výberu kultúry. Oba tábory respondentov by sa najradšej učili aj vyučovali kultúru Veľkej Británie a Spojených štátov amerických.

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APPENDICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Judita Hlaváčová and I am doing research in “Relationship between language, culture and identity – teaching culture in foreign language classes” for my diploma thesis. The aim of my research is to find out how English teachers present culture during their teaching. The information you provide will be very useful for completing my research in this field. All the information you provide is confidential.

1. How would you define culture?

2. Is it important to learn about culture in foreign language classes?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> extremely important | <input type="checkbox"/> not very important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> very important | <input type="checkbox"/> not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat important | |

3. Which culture of the English speaking country would you like to learn about?

- Great Britain
- USA
- both (GB+USA)
- other (please specify)

4. How often would you like to learn about foreign culture while learning English language?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> every lesson | <input type="checkbox"/> once a month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> never |

5. Where have you learnt the most information about the foreign culture?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>on TV and radio</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>by traveling abroad</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>on the Internet</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>other (please specify).....</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>at English lessons</i> | |

6. Which cultural topics do you think are interesting to learn about? (please rate each topic)

TOPICS	<i>extremely interesting</i> <i>1</i>	<i>very interesting</i> <i>2</i>	<i>somewhat interesting</i> <i>3</i>	<i>not very interesting</i> <i>4</i>	<i>not at all interesting</i> <i>5</i>
traditions, folklore, customs					
daily life					
Youth culture (music, fashion, etc.)					
literature, art					
education					
history					
political system, government					
rules of behavior					
other (please specify)					

7. Which of the following activities do you consider to be most useful in order to learn about foreign culture? (please tick only 3 activities which are the most useful)

- listening to songs, radio programme and interpreting the cultural phenomena
- reading texts, newspaper articles and interpreting the cultural phenomena
- discussion on cultural topics
- lectures on cultural topics
- doing projects
- role plays
- watching video
- comparison of cultures (differences & similarities)
- drama
- other (please specify)

Please state your gender:

- male
- female

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Judita Hlaváčová and I am doing research in “Relationship between language and culture – teaching culture in foreign language classes” for my thesis. The aim of my research is to find out how English teachers present foreign culture during their teaching. The information you provide will be very useful for completing my research in this field. All the information you provide is confidential.

8. How would you define culture?

9. Is it important to teach culture in foreign language classes?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> extremely important | <input type="checkbox"/> not very important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> very important | <input type="checkbox"/> not at all important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat important | |

10. How much time do you devote to teach about the foreign culture?

(please tick the option which reflects your teaching the most)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> every lesson | <input type="checkbox"/> twice a month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> never |
| <input type="checkbox"/> once a month | |

11. Which culture of the English speaking country you present?

- Great Britain
- USA
- both
- other (please specify)

12. Which aims of teaching culture do you consider the most important?

(please tick the 5 most important)

- provide information about daily life
- to encourage positive attitudes and a sympathetic approach to other cultures
- develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other cultures
- promote reflection on cultural differences
- provide information about the history, geography and political system of the foreign culture
- promote the ability to handle intercultural contact situations
- provide experiences with a rich variety of cultural expressions
- overcoming prejudices and stereotypes
- to develop students` understanding of themselves and their own culture

13. Which of the following activities do you use the most in order to teach about foreign culture?

(please tick only 3 activities which you use the most)

- listening and interpreting the cultural phenomena
- reading texts and interpreting the cultural phenomena
- discussion
- lectures
- doing projects
- role plays
- watching video
- comparison of cultures (differences & similarities)
- culture capsule - short (5-10) minute presentations that focus on one minimal difference between the target culture and the native culture of the students
- drama
- other (please specify)

14. What kind of materials do you use in order to teach about foreign culture? *(please rate all materials)*

<i>MATERIALS</i>	<i>extremely useful 1</i>	<i>very useful 2</i>	<i>somewhat useful 3</i>	<i>not very useful 4</i>	<i>not at all useful 5</i>
school textbooks					
videotapes					
realia (maps, brochures, etc.)					
real objects					
audio recordings					
literature					
The Internet					
newspapers, magazines					
other (please specify)					

15. How much emphasis is placed on teaching culture across the curriculum of second language teaching?

- very little
- little
- enough
- much
- too much

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.