

Education Quarterly Reviews

Ozturk, M. (2023). Development of Social Competence of Future Tourism Specialists by Conducting Excursions within the Framework of English Language Classes. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 6(4), 172-180.

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.06.04.795

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

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Development of Social Competence of Future Tourism Specialists by Conducting Excursions within the Framework of English Language Classes

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Abstract

This study covers the conduct of excursions to tourism and service industry enterprises as a part of English language classes. It is known that with the development of the tourism industry, the demand for workers in this field is growing. The requirements for employees in this area are high too. Proficiency in English is one of the most important requirements today. Since work in tourism involves constant communication with guests and partners from around the world. It is necessary to note that it is important to develop social competence of the future tourism specialists. Social competence implies the ability to take responsibility, to work on something controversial, uncertain, and the ability to make decisions in various professional situations. It is known that today graduates must possess such qualities as resistance to stress, mobility and innovation. Thus, it is important for a future specialist not only to know, but also to be able to demonstrate the necessary skills and knowledge. This study presents excursions as an auxiliary form of educational activity, aimed at developing social competence among future tourism and service industry specialists. The results of this study showed the effectiveness of organizing excursions for the development of social competence of the future tourism specialists in the process of teaching English.

Keywords: Tourism and Service Industry, Tourism Specialists, English Language, Competence, Social Competence

1. Introduction

It is known that tourism is one of the highly profitable sectors of the world economy, ranking second in terms of income after oil production and refining. Tourism industry is booming and captures rigorous attention of academics, business tycoons, and economic analysts because of its growing effect on the GDP of a country ("Tourism industry is booming and captures rigorous attention of academics, business tycoons, and economic analysts because of its growing effect on the GDP of a country").

In the Kyrgyz Republic this sector is one of the priorities, which is confirmed by a significant increase in recent years in the number of economic entities engaged in tourism and service. According to the information of the

National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic in January 2023 in the Republic registered 121.1 thousand economic entities engaged in economic activities related to tourism [National Statistical Committee]. Active development of the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan increases the demand for specialists in this field.

The National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040 highlights the importance of the tourism industry. "We need professional staff at all levels from management to service personnel..." (National Strategy, b. d., p. 62).

However, experience shows that workers in this industry often face some difficulties related to social adaptation, interpersonal communication. Also, insufficient command of English causes difficulties in communicating with guests, clients, colleagues.

Work in the field of tourism and service, first of all, involves communication with customers from different countries. Thus, mastery of foreign languages, in particular English, is one of the primary criteria for employment in the enterprises of this sphere. In addition, the ability to communicate effectively with people, the ability to quickly adapt to new conditions requires the development of social competence from the specialists of this sphere regardless of specialization" (M. Ozturk, 2018, p. 180).

Competency-based approach today is considered as an innovative process in education, aimed at changing the principles of learning organization and the role of the student from a passive recipient of knowledge, skills and abilities to an active cognitive subject of the educational process (Verbitsky A. A., 2009). In our opinion, the competence approach in the training of future tourism specialists should become one of the priority directions in the activities of modern universities.

The issues of competence approach are considered in the works of V.I. Baidenko (Baidenko, 2004), I.L. Bim (I.L. Bim, 1998), N.I. Gez, I.A. Zimnyaya, D. Raven, R. White and many others. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the problem of competency-based approach is devoted to the works of N.A. Asipova (Asipova N.A., 2014), K.D. Dobaev (Dobaev K.D., 2010), A.T. Kaldybaeva, A.K. Narkoziev (Narkoziev A.K., 2011), A.S. Raimkulov and others. The main concepts of the competence approach are "competence" and "competence".

In the Pedagogical Dictionary, the term "competence" means a range of powers, occupation in which a person has the necessary knowledge and experience (Pedagogical Dictionary, 2008). According to I.A. Zimnyaya's point of view, competence is an "integrative personal quality" manifested by a person in solving various professional and social tasks (Zimnyaya I.A., 2016). In other words, competence is the ability to apply the knowledge obtained during training in practice.

Our research studies social competence and its development in students, future specialists of tourism and service sphere. Given the fact that the service sphere is a close communication between the subject of service and its consumer, and this communication requires a sufficient level of formation of social competence.

The problem of students' social competence development is touched upon in the works of E.G. Azimov, N.I. Geza, N.D. Galskova, I.A. Zimnyaya, and others. (Zimnyaya I.A., 2016). Let's consider different points of view regarding the definition of the term "social competence".

According to I.E. Shishova, social competence is "the ability to interact effectively with other people in the process of speech communication and implementation of some other activity on the basis of available knowledge, skills, abilities, formed communicative abilities and personality qualities" (Shishova I.E., 2006). L.S. Znikina believes that social competence is the ability to take responsibility in making professional decisions, tolerance to different cultures. In addition, she attributes to it the ability and readiness to independently acquire new knowledge and skills, to realize one's personal potential (Znikina L.S., 2005).

According to V.I. Baidenko, social competence is "readiness and ability to form and live in social interaction: to change and adapt" (V.I. Baidenko, 2004, p. 7).

Social competence of a specialist of tourism and service industry, in our opinion, is an acquired set of abilities and skills formed in the process of specially organized training or adaptation to working conditions in this sphere.

The object of this study is the process of teaching English to students, future specialists in tourism. The subject of the study is the formation of social competence in the process of teaching English.

It is known that the development of social competence implies the necessity of using active forms of learning, organizing excursions, as well as game activities (Ozturk M.S., 2021).

This article considers conducting excursions to the enterprises of tourism and service industry as one of the activities aimed at the development of students' social competence.

There are different points of view regarding the term "excursion". Let's consider some of them. According to T.S. Shirobokova excursion is "an ancient form of educational and educational work, the peculiarity of which is that the learning process is realized not in the conditions of the classroom, but on the streets of the city, in the museum, in nature, in parks, in production, etc., during the direct perception by students of the surrounding world" (Shirobokova T.S., b. d.). V.V. Kostovarova considers "educational excursion as a form of organizing training, which allows observations, as well as provides an opportunity to study various subjects, phenomena and processes in natural conditions" (V.V. Kostovarova, 2015, p. 102). According to I.E. Shishova, the use of lessons-excursions is effective for the formation of social competence in the process of teaching foreign languages (Shishova I.E., 2006, p. 112).

2. Method

The method of study of psychological and pedagogical scientific and methodical literature on the problem of research is "a way of initial ideas and initial concept about the subject of research, its sides and connections, detection of gaps, ambiguities in the development of the problem selected for study" (Obraztsov, 2004, p. 268). Detailed study of the literature on the problem under study allows to identify already studied and developed concepts, points of view, experience, thus forming an idea of the degree of development of the problem. In the process of work, this method includes initially compiling a bibliographic list on the topic under study to be analyzed. "Analysis is a mental dissection of a subject or phenomenon into its constituent parts, that is, the allocation of individual parts, features and properties in them, while synthesis is a mental connection of individual elements, parts and features in a whole" (Mindiyarova, 2018, p. 2). The analysis allows us to delve deeper into the essence of the problem under study. Thus, having analyzed a variety of sources, the points of view of various scientists regarding the problem we are studying have been revealed.

Conducting pedagogical research involves the use of empirical methods to identify problems in the pedagogical process.

Questionnaire survey is "a method of mass collection of information by means of specially designed questionnaires-questionnaires" (Podlasy, 2015, p. 567). Questionnaire survey, which allows to interview a large number of respondents, gives an opportunity to investigate certain pedagogical phenomena. In our study this method was used to assess the level of formation of students' social competence. It is important not to allow ambiguous questions in the questionnaires. Also, before starting the questionnaire, its goals and objectives should be explained. In practice, open, closed and mixed types of questionnaires are used. Open-ended questionnaires contain questions to which the interviewees give their answers, while closed-ended questionnaires include questions and possible answers to them. "The strength of a written survey lies in the possibility to cover a large number of interviewees with the research and, therefore, to identify mass phenomena, on the basis of the analysis of which facts are established" (Zagvyazinskiy et al., 2008, p. 117).

In the framework of our research we consider it appropriate to use the method of questionnaire survey, which allows us to survey the necessary number of respondents to assess the level of formation of social competence of future employees of the tourism and service industry. The following questionnaires were used for this purpose:

the questionnaire for diagnosing the level of empathic abilities of V.V. Boyko. Boyko, aimed at assessing the ability to empathize, sympathize with a partner in communication; the questionnaire of tolerance-intolerance to uncertainty by T.V. Kornilova, developed in 2009 and reflecting such personality variables as tolerance to uncertainty (TN), intolerance to uncertainty (ITN) and interpersonal intolerance to uncertainty (IITN).

Tolerance to uncertainty (TO) reflects the ability to make decisions and perform actions in situations of uncertainty, ambiguity, readiness for new, sometimes creative ideas.

Intolerance to uncertainty (ITN) means a person's constant striving for orderliness and clarity in affairs, rejection of ambiguity in work, opinions, inability to change established views in new conditions.

Interpersonal Intolerance to Uncertainty (MITN) is a scale of such a personality property as acceptance or non-acceptance of ambiguity in interpersonal relations. The higher this index, the more the subject does not tolerate ambiguity in communication with people. This questionnaire includes three blocks of questions, each of which is aimed at measuring the above-mentioned indicators. In total, 33 questions are presented in the questionnaire. The first block (1-12 questions) represents tolerance to uncertainty, the second block (13-25 questions) represents intolerance to uncertainty, and finally, the third block (26-33 questions) represents interpersonal intolerance to uncertainty.

As noted above, V.V. Boyko's questionnaire is aimed at diagnosing the level of intolerance to uncertainty. Boyko's questionnaire is aimed at diagnosing the level of empathic abilities, which are a component of social competence of a tourism specialist. This is the ability to sympathize, empathize, be responsive in communication with colleagues and clients. The questionnaire of V.V. Boyko's questionnaire contains 36 questions. Respondents are asked to answer positively "Yes" or negatively "No" to the statements proposed in the questionnaire. The total score can theoretically vary from 0 to 36 points. Each positive answer is assigned 1 point. If the respondent scores a total of 30 points or higher on the answers, he/she has a very high level of empathy; from 29 to 22 - average; if the total score is 21-15, it is an underestimate. A score of less than 14 indicates a very low level of empathy.

3. Results

In our study, the lessons-excursions were conducted in three stages: 1) preparatory, 2) departure to the object of excursion 3) summarizing. Let us consider the first stage of the excursion. At the preparatory stage, students are preliminarily familiarized with the object of excursion, the guide is determined. In addition, students are informed in advance of the theme and purpose of the excursion. If necessary, the lesson reinforces the passed theoretical material. Also students are given tasks, the answers to which should be found during the excursion. At the final third stage of the excursion, the results are summarized, the tasks performed by students are checked and the results are discussed.

The sphere of tourism includes enterprises that provide services to tourists. Such enterprises can include: travel agents, tour operators, hotels, catering companies, transport companies, entertainment organizations, etc.

As part of the forming experiment we organized study tours for students to the following organizations of tourism sphere: Kyrgyz Concept Company, Burana Tower, Jannat Regency Bishkek Hotel, Ala-Too Square, Ala-Archa Nature Park, Frunze Restaurant.

Let's consider one of the excursions conducted in the tourist company "Kyrgyz Concept", organized in accordance with the stages outlined above.

1. Preparation for the excursion.

Activity of the teacher:

1. Familiarize with the object and route of the excursion.
2. Carry out the work of collecting information about the company, its activities.

3. After familiarizing with the information about the company to hold a meeting with the management of the company "Kyrgyz Concept", during which to determine the date and time of the excursion.
4. Decide the issue of transportation of students to the excursion site.
5. Determine a tour guide.
6. Conduct a class preparing students for the upcoming field trip.

In a class devoted to an upcoming field trip to a tour company it was decided to:

1. Meet the students near the tour site at the designated time.
2. In coordination with the management of the company, to appoint the manager of the human resources department of the company "Kyrgyz Concept" as a tour guide.

Let's consider a fragment of the experimental lesson at the stage of preparation for the excursion.

Introduction. Mutual greeting. Informing students about the upcoming excursion, its objectives.

Tasks of the class: putting forward the problem; distribution of tasks among the participants, to which it is necessary to find answers during the excursion.

Course of the lesson:

1. Conducting a lexical warm-up.
2. Organizing an interactive group discussion using brainstorming technology. The teacher writes the word "Travel Agency" on the board, and students have to name as many ideas as possible in English that are associated with this word.
3. Reading the text "Six steps to successful selling". After reading the text, the teacher asks students the following questions: What is the main idea of the text? (Describe each of six stages of the selling process. After reading the text, students learn about the sales process in a travel agency.
4. Learning new lexical material on the topic "Travel Agency".
5. Performing a listening exercise. Students listen to five dialogs, in each of which customers want to buy a particular product or service from a travel agency. After listening twice, students have to name which product or service each individual customer wants to buy.
6. Students are given assignments to complete that they will be able to complete after obtaining the necessary information during the field trip. The student needs to fill in the appropriate table with the information obtained during the tour.

The class concludes with a discussion of the date and time of the upcoming field trip. The instructor also reminds about the rules of behavior during the excursion [Dissertation].

II. Departure of students to the excursion object and fulfill the necessary academic work.

Tasks: meeting with students at the appointed time at the object of excursion; familiarization of students with the object (conversation, visual demonstration, independent work according to the plan: observation, collection of illustrative material, etc.).

The course of the lesson:

1. At a predetermined time, students led by the teacher go to the object of excursion.
2. At the very beginning of the excursion the representative of the company conducting the excursion gets acquainted with the students, asks them questions concerning their choice of profession. In order to give students more complete information about the company, the representative makes a presentation about Kyrgyz Concept Company (Kyrgyz Concept Company, established in 1990, is the leader of the tourism market of Kyrgyzstan. The main products of the company are air tickets, tours abroad, tourism in Kyrgyzstan, conference management, education abroad). Also during the tour, a training on "Customer care" was conducted for students. Students asked questions, gave examples of situations from personal practice, made necessary notes.

3. The tour guide introduces the students to the departments of the company, telling about their main functions and specifics of work. Students take pictures, ask questions, answers to which they need to prepare as part of the assignment.
4. Completion of the excursion.

III. Summarizing the results of the excursion.

The third stage of the class-excursion is the final stage, includes summarizing and discussing the results with the students, checking the assignment given to the students before the excursion.

Introduction:

Mutual greeting. The teacher thanks the students for their active participation in the excursion.

Objectives: to discuss with the students the excursion to the company "Kyrgyz Concept"; to check the students' fulfillment of the assignment; to summarize the results.

Course of the lesson:

1. The instructor asks the students questions about the excursion: Did you like our excursion to "Kyrgyz Concept" Company? (Did you like our excursion to Kyrgyz Concept Company? What did you like most of all? What benefits have you gained from this excursion? (What benefits have you gained from this excursion?))
2. Students hand in their assignment sheets. The assignments for each item are discussed.
3. At the end of the class, the instructor summarizes the results. Students emphasize the importance of customer care as one of the main requirements of the tourism business, list the qualities of a professional consultant in selling products and services. In addition, the importance of such qualities as the ability to anticipate the behavior of the client, partner, and the ability to create a benevolent psychological atmosphere both in the team and in communication with clients, the ability to act in situations of uncertainty is highlighted.

The excursion to the company "Kyrgyz Concept" gave students the opportunity to see the work of the travel agency, communicate with employees, get acquainted with the specifics of the work of each department, and get information about the possibility of internship and employment in the company.

In our study we conducted an experiment consisting of three stages: 1) ascertaining stage; 2) forming stage; 3) control stage. The following research methods were applied: the method of studying psychological and pedagogical methodological and scientific literature on the research problem and the method of questioning. The study of literature on the research problem gave an opportunity to familiarize with different points of view on the issues under study. This method allowed us to see the general picture of the degree of development of the problem. In the framework of this study, social competence consists of the following two components: 1) a component related to orientation towards the other; 2) a component related to social mobility and human activity (Ozturk, 2021) (Figure 1).

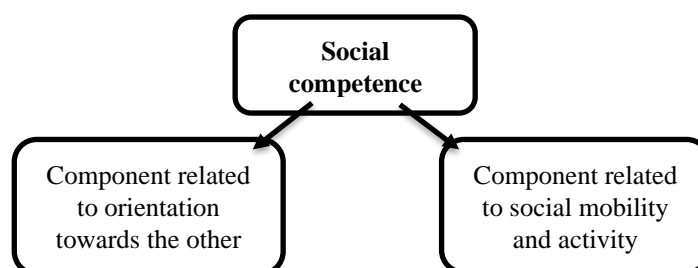


Figure 1: Component related to social mobility and activity

Taking into account the structural components of social competence, at the founding stage of the experiment for a more objective assessment of the formation of social competence we conducted a questionnaire by means of the questionnaire for determining the level of empathic abilities V.V. Boyko. Boyko Questionnaire-1. The component

related to social mobility and human activity was assessed using the questionnaire of tolerance-intolerance to uncertainty developed by T.V. Kornilova Questionnaire-2. The above-mentioned questionnaires were adapted by us to the tasks of the present study (Ozturk M.S., 2021).

4. Discussion

The main purpose of Questionnaire-1 was to determine the level of empathic abilities in students. It is known that when working in the service sector, it is important to anticipate customer behavior, to be able to put oneself in the place of another person, to create a favorable atmosphere in the team and in communication with guests. There are 36 questions in the above questionnaire, which must be answered "Yes" or "No". The final score can range from 0 to 36 points. For each "Yes" answer, 1 point is assigned. If a respondent scores a total of 30 points or higher, the level of empathy is high; from 29 to 22 - average; 21-15 is considered an underestimate. A result totaling less than 14 points indicates a very low level of empathy. In accordance with the results obtained at the establishing stage of the experiment in the experimental group the average score, amounted to 16, in the control groups - 21. Both indicators are underestimates.

In our study, Questionnaire-2 is aimed at determining the following indicators: 1) tolerance to uncertainty (TN); 2) intolerance to uncertainty (ITN); 3) interpersonal intolerance to uncertainty (IITN). Uncertainty tolerance (UT) is the ability to perform complex work tasks independently, the ability to be open to something new. Intolerance to uncertainty (ITN) reflects a person's aversion to novelty and uncertainty. Finally, interpersonal intolerance to uncertainty (IITN) shows the aversion to uncertainty in interpersonal relationships.

Questionnaire-2 consists of 33 statements, after reading each statement, students had to rate their degree of agreement or disagreement. The indicators of tolerance to uncertainty (TN) are presented as: 12-35 - low, 36-60 - medium and 61-84 - high. Indicators of Intolerance to Uncertainty (ITN) are presented as: 13-38 - low, 39-65 - medium and 66-91 - high. Interpersonal Intolerance to Uncertainty (IITN) score is presented as 8 to 23 is low, 24-40 is medium and 41-56 is high. The results of the formative experiment on Questionnaire-2 in the experimental group are as follows: on average, TN was 32 points, ITN - 67, and IITN - 29 points. The situation in the control group is as follows: TH - on average 39 points, ITN - 52 and IITN - 31 points (Ozturk M.S., 2021).

According to the results of the establishing experiment, the indicators of social competence formation in the control group do not significantly exceed the indicators of formation in the students of the experimental group.

The formative stage of the experiment lasted from September 2017 to June 2018. It involved 59 students of the control group (31 2nd year students of the department "Tourism" of the Professional Higher School KTU "Manas" and 28 2nd year students of the training direction "Tourism" and "Hospitality" of the Academy of Tourism). The experimental group included 58 students (36 students of the 2nd year of the department "Tourism" of the Professional Higher School of KTU "Manas" and 22 students of the 2nd year of the direction of training "Tourism" and "Hospitality" of the Academy of Tourism) (Ozturk, 2021).

It is worth noting that during the forming experiment students began to show increased attention to learning English, motivation appeared. In addition, social communication skills improved in the groups we studied.

The results of the forming experiment showed that the tolerance to uncertainty (TU) in the experimental group increased from 32 to 41 points. This indicator is average and characterizes a person who strives for novelty and is ready to go off the beaten path. Intolerance to uncertainty (ITN) decreased from 67 to 55 points, indicating a decrease in students' desire for clarity in their work. In addition, Interpersonal Intolerance to Uncertainty (IITN) decreased from 29 to 18 points, indicating a decrease in one's feelings of anxiety and discomfort in interpersonal communication in situations of uncertainty.

TN scores in the control group decreased slightly, from 39 to 37 points. There was also an increase in ITN from 52 to 61 points, which indicates denial of uncertainty, unknown. The IITN score decreased from 31 to 28 points, indicating the effectiveness of our experiment (Ozturk, 2021).

In conclusion, it should be noted that it is important for a worker in the tourism and service industry to be able to interact effectively in various situations of professional communication, including in English, which requires the formation and development of social competence. In the framework of this research we have studied the realization of educational excursions to the enterprises of tourism and service sphere in students of future specialists in tourism as one of the types of activity aimed at the development of social competence. As the results of the experiment showed, the excursion is one of the effective methods of training, developing observation, attention, stimulating students' interest in learning, as well as contributing to the development of students' social competence, bringing them closer to the social reality of modern tourism industry business.

Note: This article was presented under the title “Enhancing Future Tourism Professionals' Social Competence Through Company Visits in English Language Courses” at the IV. International Congress of Turkish Civilization.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed to this research.

Funding: Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent Statement/Ethics Approval: Not applicable.

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