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The cultural component in language education: its implementation in secondary school course books for teaching English in Soviet *Ukraine* (1930s–1980s)

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ABSTRACT

The present article is a result of historical investigation into the cultural aspects of English language education in secondary schools of Ukraine in the 1930s–1980s, when Ukraine was one of the republics of the former Soviet Union. The course books, the school curricula and the articles published in scientific journals during this period built the documentary basis of the examination of the evolution of intercultural and intracultural information in instructional materials over these decades. The article offers insights into the content and character of the texts and tasks included in the English course books and major trends in presenting cultural aspects of language teaching. The article relies on data from 16 English-language textbooks written and published in the Soviet Union following the regularly issued national secondary school curricula. The qualitative and chronological study of the textbooks uses a combination of methods of content analysis (CA), qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), and critical discourse analysis (CDA). We single out stages in the development of the cultural component of English language education, including the character of the cultural messages delivered through them, and the values, attitudes, and behaviour patterns suggested by different discourse forms. We argue that although the obligatory study of one foreign language (English, German, French, Spanish) by every student was officially introduced in the USSR in 1932, this knowledge remained mostly useless because of an almost complete lack of contact of ordinary people with the outer world and, thus, the cultural component of the language education pursued primarily ideological goals.

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KEYWORDS

Cultural component; Soviet Ukraine; English language education; course book/ textbook; Soviet

Introduction

Today, it is a commonly acknowledged issue that language learning/teaching is inseparable from the cultural awareness/sensitiveness of a language learner. It is a twofold process, when, on the one hand, language is a product of culture and, on the other hand, language is the key to understanding one's own and other cultures. As Michael Byram says,¹ language is the key to open the closed door before the culture.

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