

UDC 37:004.588; 004.85

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64076/iedc251206.13>

The role of background knowledge in enhancing the linguocultural competence of future English teachers

Oksana Mykhailova

Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2999-8583>

Abstract. *The article analyzes the significance of background knowledge in shaping a profound linguistic worldview of future English teachers. It is emphasized that one of the key objectives of foreign language instruction is to broaden students' linguistic outlook by enabling them to acquire country-specific and intercultural information. The paper argues that the concept of "linguistic outlook" is broader than "linguistic competence," as it encompasses not only the command of linguistic means but also readiness for foreign-language communication and the ability to effectively perform communicative tasks. Three key stages for forming the linguistic outlook through background knowledge are identified: the presentation-cognitive, the training-practical, and the creative-exploratory stage, with corresponding examples of exercises provided. The findings confirm that the development of background knowledge is an essential condition for a deeper understanding of the language and culture being studied.*

Keywords: *language literacy, linguistic outlook, background knowledge, lexical competence, future English teachers.*

The processes of globalization of social life and global integration trends necessitate an increasing role for foreign language as a means of international and intercultural communication. The modern English teacher must see their goal not only in transmitting the language system but also in forming the student's ability to use the language to expand their horizons, self-development, and obtain necessary information in any field of knowledge. This requires a high level of language literacy and, in particular, a developed linguistic outlook from future educators.

The problem of expanding the linguistic outlook through the formation of country-specific and background knowledge (BK) has become the focus of attention for many Ukrainian (O. B. Bigych, V. D. Borshchovetska, O. Yu. Halchenko) and foreign scholars. The structure of background knowledge has been highlighted in the works of N. V. Bozhko, H. V. Kytsaka, and I. V. Povora. Various scientific approaches to defining the essence of BK and its role are presented in the works of S. Kaniel, T. A. Van Dijk, and B. Haslett. Among Ukrainian studies, only O. Osadcha's research is comprehensively dedicated to the application of background knowledge as a didactic tool.

A complete understanding of a foreign language text is possible only when the context is considered, which requires the presence of shared knowledge about the world, behavioral stereotypes, and moral and ethical norms. It is precisely background knowledge (BK) that creates a unified information space between communicants.

Background knowledge is a set of ideas that a student brings from previous experience: knowledge, beliefs, life impressions, and personal attitudes. They are of key importance as they influence the student's ability to understand, analyze, and memorize new material [3].

It is worth distinguishing between: background knowledge—information that the learner receives during the learning process—and prior knowledge—a resource that the student already possesses based on their own experience and education.

Language does not exist separately from culture. It is a tool for communication, the content of which directly depends on the social, cultural, and historical contexts. Therefore, BK plays a crucial role in language teaching [4].

The analyzed definitions confirm that background knowledge is a complex that includes cultural realities, non-equivalent vocabulary, personal experience of communication and interaction with native speakers, as well as knowledge of non-verbal forms of communication.

In the international academic tradition, the term "competence" is used more often. However, the article argues that the concept of "linguistic outlook" is broader than "linguistic competence," as it encompasses not only the command of linguistic means (vocabulary, grammar, spelling) but also readiness for foreign-language communication and the ability to effectively perform communicative tasks [3].

Particular attention is paid to linguistic-sociocultural competence, which involves the acquisition of sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and social norms of language use.

Advantages of Using Background Knowledge in Vocabulary Instruction

Background knowledge plays a defining role in the process of acquiring foreign language vocabulary and offers a number of advantages [1]:

No.	Advantage	Brief Description
1	Understanding Lexical Units	Facilitates the acquisition of new words related to the topic through knowledge from other subjects.
2	Retention in Long-term Memory	Helps associate new units with existing knowledge, improving memorization.
3	Basis for Acquiring New Information	Contributes to establishing connections between new and existing information.
4	Development of Critical Thinking Skills	Provides the opportunity to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.
5	Identification of Knowledge Gaps	Facilitates the learning process by identifying insufficient information.

Stages of Enhancing Linguistic Outlook Based on Background Knowledge

For the systematic enhancement of the linguistic outlook of future English teachers supported by background knowledge, three key stages have been developed:

Presentation-Cognitive Stage

Goal: Introduction of new lexical units.

Exercise Types: Receptive, receptive-reproductive.

Example: Using historical background knowledge to predict the lesson topic ("National Holidays") based on keywords from video material.

Training-Practical Stage

Goal: Consolidation of the context in which the use of lexical units is appropriate.

Exercise Types: Reproductive, reproductive-productive.

Example: Acquiring the meaning of set expressions (echo chamber, fivefold weight allowance) by comparing paraphrased sentences with the original text (sociocultural background knowledge).

Creative-Exploratory Stage

Goal: Development of the creative potential of learners for using lexical units in their own utterances.

Exercise Types: Productive.

Example: Using new lexical units to narrate a personal experience (a heart stopping moment) or to compose a speech (make a speech) on a national holiday of Ukraine, imitating the style of speeches from authentic sources (sociocultural background knowledge).

Systematic adherence to this sequence ensures a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic richness of the countries whose language is being studied.

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that one of the leading indicators of confident foreign language proficiency is a broad worldview and awareness of the cultural and social realities of the native speakers of that language.

The proposed sequence of tasks is an effective mechanism for developing and consolidating the background knowledge of students. It not only expands their linguistic outlook but also contributes to the formation of professional-methodological skills in future teachers regarding the planning and integration of intercultural work.

References

1. Cervetti, G. N., Pardales, M. J., & Damico, J. S. (2001). *A tale of differences: Comparing the traditions, perspectives, and educational goals of critical reading and critical literacy*. Reading Online, 4(9). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334372467_A_Tale_of_Differences_Comparing_the_Traditions_Perspectives_and_Educational_Goals_of_Critical_Reading_and_Critical_Literacy (accessed March 28, 2023).
2. Hartin, T., & Rangelova, R. *Understanding background knowledge and prior knowledge*. Study.com. Retrieved from <https://study.com/learn/lesson/background-prior-knowledge-reading-comprehension-teaching-strategy-benefits.html> (accessed November 3, 2022).
3. Kaniel, S. (2010). Domain-specific vs domain-general: Implications for dynamic assessment. *Gifted Education International*, 26, 95–109.
4. Starke, K. (2021). *The importance of background knowledge in understanding text*. TeachHub. Retrieved from <https://www.teachhub.com/teaching-strategies/2021/08/theimportance-of-background-knowledge-in-understanding-text> (accessed November 3, 2022).
5. Zhang, L. F., & Sternberg, R. J. (2010). Teaching and learning strategies for the thinking classroom. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 49(3), 94–96.
6. Osadcha, O. (2018). Background knowledge as an important aspect of intercultural competence formation. *Southern Archive*, 72, 130–132.
7. Chetverikova, O. (2019). The role of background knowledge for the adequate perception and translation of media discourse. *Scientific Bulletin of Izmail State Humanities University. Philological Sciences Series*, 41, 138–144.