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## TEACHING WRITING DESCRIPTIONS AS CONSTITUENTS OF SOCIOCULTURAL COMMENTS

*В статті розглядається опис як невід'ємна складова соціокультурного коментаря, уніфікується його визначення в ракурсі лінгвістики, лінгвокраїнознавства, лексикографії та методики викладання мов. Чітко визначаються цілі опису, аналізуються проблеми, які виникають у процесі його написання. Окремо посилюється увага до вправ, необхідних для розвитку умінь укладання описів.*

**Ключові слова:** коментар, компетенція, комунікативна компетенція, лексикографічна компетенція, медіатор, опис, укладання опису, укладання коментаря.

*В статье рассматривается описание как неотъемлемая составляющая социокультурного комментария, унифицируется его определение в ракурсе лингвистики, лингвострановедения, лексикографии и методики преподавания языков. Четко определяются цели описания, анализируются проблемы, которые возникают в процессе его написания. Отдельно усиливается внимание к упражнениям, необходимым для развития умений составления описаний.*

**Ключевые слова:** комментарий, компетенция, коммуникативная компетенция, лексикографическая компетенция, медиатор, описание, составление описания, составление комментария.

*The article deals with a description as a constituent of a sociocultural commentary. Its definition is unified from the linguistic, cultural, lexicographic and methodological points of view. The aims of a description are listed; the problems of a technology of its writing are analyzed. The tasks necessary for the development of the skills of writing a description are also in the focus of the article.*

**Key words:** comment, comment writing, competence, communicative competence, lexicographic competence, description, description writing, mediator.

In Ukraine students' communicative competence is a focus point at any level of studying a foreign language. Students should be equipped with the skills necessary to continue their studies and professional development.

One of the content-intercultural skills is the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between native and foreign cultures on the bases of cultural awareness [4, p. 181-182]. It becomes possible in case a mediator possesses skills of commenting on socio-cultural phenomena. These skills will

allow a person to deal with intercultural misunderstanding and stumble block situations effectively.

Due to “Curriculum for English Language Development in Universities and Institutes” writing sociocultural comments on literary extracts is one of obligatory skills, which is in the list of demands for 4-year students [4, p. 97]. A comment demands production of a detailed, well-structured and developed description. The latter is the subject of our article and the procedure of its writing is its object. The main aim of the paper is to give the definition to the term ‘description’ from linguistic, lexicographic and methodological points of view that makes its topicality. To define the functions of a description, analyse its structure, the procedure and problems of its writing, as well as activities developing skills of describing objects and phenomena are the tasks of our article. Linguistic, methodological literature and reference guides, sample descriptions and tasks were made use of as materials for the article writing.

Studying a sociocultural comment, we found out that from the linguistic point of view a description is frequently characterized as a constituent part of a definition as a means of semantization [2, p. 132; 3, p. 433], from the cultural and lexicographic ones as an exegesis [1, p. 85, 88] or a comment [5, p. 48 – 54]. It is a text segment which consists of one or several words or, more often, word combinations which characterize, make precise or specify the target object. A description is usually represented by lists of characteristics which form a unique image of an object and minimize its vagueness.

From a methodological point of view we characterize a description as a means of semantization represented by a sentence segment written due to the lexicographic rules. On the one hand, it may perform a descriptive and differentiating function, i.e. differentiate the object from other objects of the same class and say what it is. On the other hand – a specifying one, i.e. limiting the meaning of the object described, especially its national or cultural component.

A description is a productive activity of a person characterized by the following procedures: a succession of the operations of inventarization (singling out units under analysis), segmentation (division of these units into constituents), interpretation (distinguishing criteria of the taxonomy groups) and taxonomy (classification of the units grouped) [3, p. 433]. A product of a definition or a commentary with a description in it can be defined as a particular lexicographic metaspeech.

Starting to write a description a student usually faces a complex of problems connected with norms, language and culture. The first group deals with the rules of structure and content unification. The text of a description should correspond to the norms of any encyclopedic text, i.e. follow the lexicographic demands for its writing. They are volume, structure, position, criteria for descriptive words grouping, subjectivity and controversy avoidance. The demand of sufficiency should not be neglected either.

In the course of writing descriptions as constituents of sociocultural comments students are provided with guidance about material organization, format, logical succession of the characteristics of the objects described, about work with samples, description structure and content, as well as editing, correcting, revising and evaluating the description made. The material for these skills development are texts corresponding to Curriculum of year 4 ("Law and Crime", "Political System", "Higher Education", "Keeping Up To Date", "Man and Music"). Tasks related to the steps of skills formation on the material of the above mentioned topics are in the focus of our studying a description writing.

Providing effective motivation, pre-writing activities stimulate students' interest to the format of a description, influence their mental development by practising the operations necessary for a description creating, such as synthesis, selecting, analysis, comparison, classifying, logical organization. The main activities suggested for this step are as follows: brainstorming, facing memories which are the material for new ideas, free-writing, collecting associations in mind-maps, classifying ideas or associations, grouping them, selecting major and minor elements for a description, giving examples from texts. For instance, "What do you think about when you speak about English / American / Ukrainian traditions? Make notes and build an association field", "Analyze whether there is a different element in your association field. Encircle it", "According to which criteria can you group the words-associations for each element?", "Decide which words stand for the object described better", "Read the text about English / American / Ukrainian traditions. Complete the table with the words from the text which describe these traditions", "Which criteria can you group the descriptive words according to?", "Find the words in the description which differ from others. What makes them different?" etc.

The following step deals with the group of language and culture problems. We call it productive. The problems of a proper language means selection, criteria for their selection and collocation of them with the units under description are in its focus. At the same time the problems of culture should also be solved, as they may influence the meaning of the object described. To make the text of a description exact and accurate, one should know how to select proper equivalents for descriptive words in L2 thus making the object unique. This presupposes the necessity of developing both linguistic and cultural competences.

Writing the first draft on the basis of the previous work done and its improvement (second, third drafts) make the content of a productive stage. To make the written description better, one should select proper lexical units and grammatical structures, take into consideration intext and intratext connections while working with a certain text. In our research we do not develop skills of evaluation, editing and correcting drafts separately, as they make a constituent

part of every step, revealing the structure of a person's activity. The latter comprises orientation, production and revision.

The productive stage of writing descriptions includes both reproductive and productive tasks. Tasks for developing reproductive descriptive skills are as follows: work with samples, analysis of their structure and content. For example, such tasks as "Read the text about culture. Give examples of descriptive constructions", "Think about the structure of these descriptive constructions. State their syntactic functions", "Give examples from the text of the descriptions which undergo the following formulae" form reproductive skills, concerning a structure of a description. The following tasks influence a description content making: "Decide whether there are synonyms among the descriptive words written. Underline them", "Choose a neuter nuclear element in the row of synonyms", "Decide on the type of the descriptor", "Insert a general descriptor in the structures below", "Work with the monolingual dictionary. Find the meanings of the words. Distinguish all types of descriptors" etc.

To improve the structure and content of the description one may follow the tasks for evaluating, editing and making corrections, for instance: "Suggest your ways-out and make a list of them", "Read the instructions to a description improvement. Put the items in the correct order", "Use the MEMO information and make necessary corrections", etc.

Teaching to write descriptions makes students aware of writing comments and their constituents that makes a perspective of our research work.

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