

Formation of Students' Personal Culture in English Classes

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Abstract—Students' personal culture must be paid special attention at university, as the formation of a highly professional specialist means not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the manner of behavior and ability to communicate with other people. This article reveals the approaches to the formation of personal culture of students of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University. We assumed that English classes may not be restricted only to linguistic issues and grammar revision, but these classes might have a high educational potential. In our experiment we researched how English classes can develop students' personal culture. At the beginning of the academic year a survey to understand students' awareness and interest in this issue was conducted. The analyses of the answers showed that their understanding of this notion was narrow enough. The author developed a number of activities aimed at increasing the awareness about personal culture. Such activities as mini lectures, discussions of different aspects of personal culture, role plays etc. have changed the attitude of students to their personal culture. At the end of academic year the author conducted a survey again. It showed that the understanding of personal culture was developed; the students understood the need to improve their personal culture. The components that were not discussed during the classes almost did not change in percentage terms. After taking part in the experiment, almost all students mentioned tolerance and culture of behavior in the definition of personal culture, which we also consider a positive result.

Index Terms—culture, personal culture, students, English classes, activities

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the modern young generation is in the spotlight in many aspects: education, youth culture, youth policy, youth and sports, youth and science, youth and subcultures etc., but it is often forgotten that in addition to all this, the youth needs to advance their personal culture. It is impossible for a person to succeed in life if they are not cultured. The youth is the most mobile and active part of our society. These are young people who, in a few years, will become the moving force of our economics – they will take their places from the sphere of production to the sphere of management. If today we educate young people with a highly moral level of culture, we will care about the future of our country as well.

We are convinced that it is necessary to pay special attention to the development of personal culture especially in higher education institutions, because the active formation of personality takes place at this age. Taking part in public organizations, associations, and creative teams, students acquire solid life guidelines, organizer skills, personal qualities necessary for full-fledged social interaction in various fields of activity, develop their personal culture as a universal basis for the formation of an individual way of existence in modern world.

That is why, along with providing professional training, the university is to create conditions for the development of the students' personality, the mastery of culture as the basis for their full self-realization in society.

In the context of the modernization of the education system, it is necessary to put forward the problem of developing an individual who can adapt to modern conditions of socio-economic reform of society. Modern trends in changing the general situation of education coincide with the following general principles of its reform in the world: 1) the integration of all the educational and social tools (the organic cohesion of education and other social institutions in order to educate rising generations); 2) differentiation and individualization in education (creation of conditions for the full manifestation and development of the abilities of each student); 3) democratization (creation of prerequisites for the development of activity, initiative and creativity of all subjects of the educational process, their interaction, broad public participation in education management); 4) humanization (student-centered approach which is based on the statement that every personality must be considered as the highest social value of society) (Butenko, 2012; Vinichenko et al., 2020).

These principles correlate with the problem of cultural development of students in the system of higher professional education, especially in the context of humanization, which aims to develop the personality of the students, their general and personal culture, the formation of value orientations in relation to the world, society, other people, themselves, work, etc. (Hamina & Kratinova, 2012, p. 167).

Moreover, students also understand the need to develop personal culture. Thus, the students of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University were asked whether they needed classes to improve the level of personal

culture. The survey showed that 35% were interested in it, 55% were interested, but not in additional classes, but in the course of integrating this knowledge into the study of other subjects, and only 10% considered it to be the waste of time.

After this survey, the idea of forming personal culture in the process of teaching English arose, which is due to the fact that this discipline has a huge educational potential and allows conducting various activities.

The *purpose of the publication* is to highlight the experience of forming the personal culture among students of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University when teaching English.

For this, we consider it necessary to solve the following tasks:

- generalize approaches how to define culture and personal culture in scientific literature;
- find out data regarding students' attitude towards personal culture;
- highlight activities that are held during English language classes for the formation of the personal culture among students;
- present students' attitude to the personal culture after appropriate activities.

Object of study – students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, the Faculty of Primary Education, the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University.

The subject of *research* is the level of students' personal culture.

II. METHODS

To achieve the goal and solve the set tasks we considered it necessary to use of a set of research methods: *theoretical* methods – the analysis of the results of scientific research on culture and personal culture, as well as systematization, generalization and comparison of the theoretical and empirical experience of the formation of the specified quality; *empirical* methods – conversations, pedagogic observations, questionnaires, analysis of the experience of students' use of methods of personal culture development.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Let us, first of all, present approaches to the definition of "culture" and "personal culture", because these are the key concepts of our research.

Scientists emphasize that a characteristic feature of culture is the extraordinary ambiguity of its interpretations, in other words, polysemanticity. In the modern theory of culture, there is a significant number of definitions that point out various qualitative characteristics and features of human life. The ambiguity of the understanding of the term culture is due to the variety of real forms of its existence, which were created at different times and among different people (Krupskyy, 2010).

The classical range of meanings of the Latin word *cultura* is conveyed in the modern language by the words "processing", "education", "creation", "formation", "development", and "respect". The proposed versions of the translation define the phenomenon of culture in different ways, emphasizing both the material and spiritual principles in it. Currently, there are more than 400 definitions of culture, which is explained both by the multifacetedness of the culture phenomenon and by the dependence of study results on research guidelines. It is very difficult to give an exhaustive definition of the concept of "culture", since it can take on different meanings depending on the purpose for which it is used (Velykyy tлумachnyy slovnyk, 2009, p. 653).

Unlike other living beings, people adapt to their environment not due to genetic or morphological variability, but through their culture. In this regard, R. Foley noted: "If there is a new evolutionary process that can be detected in humans, it is cultural evolution. Culture is a key concept for anthropology, encompassing much of what we think of as uniquely human. In a broad sense, culture refers to the non-biological aspects of the behavior of the human species, the ability to think symbolically and express oneself with the help of symbols; culture is transmitted not through a system of genetic mechanisms, but through learning and assimilation of knowledge and behavior patterns (Fouli, 1990, p. 18).

Summing up, let us consider culture, first of all, as a set of spiritual values, and therefore the most adequate definition of culture as a qualitative characteristic of human activity and the reality created by it, with priority to spiritual values that it purposefully creates, preserves and develops. The material, objective world is a phenomenon of culture to the extent that it symbolizes the spiritual principle.

Personal culture has a narrower meaning. Scientists define it as a set of actions, beliefs, experiences and ideas about oneself and the surrounding world. Personal culture is developed by the norms and rules that this or that society and individuals adhere to. The concept of personal culture includes all areas of the external and internal personal culture, including certain manners of behavior, accepted ways of communication, which suggest how to behave correctly and nicely in society, to be polite and considerate with elders and with women, and to understand what is proper to do in given environment. Personal culture is an integral part of world civilization and the general culture of mankind. To become a well-developed and literate person, it is necessary to know the main components of personal culture: the culture of communication, the culture of thinking, speech etiquette, mastering the art of self-presentation, etc. (Drach et al., 2003, p. 137).

Let us stick to the definition of personal culture formulated by Ukrainian scientists. According to them, personal culture is the individual's achievement of a certain harmony, which gives him/her a full-fledged social life and work, as well as personal psychological comfort. Conditionally, the following directions of the basic culture of the individual can be distinguished: the culture of vital self-determination; culture of family relations; economic culture; work culture; political, democratic and legal culture; intellectual, moral and communication culture, speech culture, ecological culture; art culture; physical culture, etc. (Kurylo et al., 2019, p. 53).

Based on the analysis of scientific literature, three main aspects of personal culture can be distinguished:

- gnoseological one;
- procedural and operational one;
- subject-personal one.

The gnoseological aspect includes norms, knowledge, values, symbols and meanings. The main direction of the procedural and operational aspect is to solve the issue of the content of that activity, which is the basis of the development of culture, starting from the motivation of the activity through the processes and operations of its implementation to the results of further evaluation. The subject-personal aspect includes the culture of communication, language and speech, the culture of feelings, thinking, behavior, etc.

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Despite a large number of works related to the students' personal culture, work experience shows that the level of general personal culture of students has been decreasing in recent years. We associate this with the low socialization of young people, which is due to the pandemic and the political situation that has developed in Ukraine since the end of February 2022. The manner of students' communication has become more aggressive and less polite, which we explain with such factors as uncertainty about the future, changes of residence, military actions in the east and south of the country, etc.

The factors mentioned above stimulated the study of nowadays situation and the determination of ways how to improve the personal culture of students when teaching English. 75 students of the aforementioned faculties were involved in the experiment. Their level of English was not less than B1.

At the beginning of the experiment, we gave the students a survey in English, in which they were asked to identify:

1. a person's personal culture and how important this culture is a) in everyday life; b) during professional communication; c) in force majeure circumstances;
2. their own level of personal culture;
3. the level of personal culture of teachers;
4. the level of personal culture of their environment;
5. the level of personal culture of group mates;
6. factors affecting the formation of personal culture.

The results of the survey on the definition of the components of personal culture are presented in Table 1. The components of personal culture are based on the work by Kurylo V. I., Svitlychnyy O. P., and Kurylo L. I. (Kurylo et al., 2019).

TABLE 1
DEFINITION OF THE COMPONENTS OF PERSONAL CULTURE

Components of personal culture	Number of students who mentioned this component	Percentage who mentioned this component
vital self-determination	4	1,3
family relationships	51	68
knowledge on economics	23	31
work style	15	20
tolerance in political points of view	10	13
understanding of democracy and law	5	7
intellectual activities	31	41
moral aspects	62	83
communication style	50	67
speech style	45	60

As we can see from the table, most students have a rather narrow vision of the essence of personal culture. Most of the respondents noted such components of personal culture as family relations (68%), intellectual activities (31 %), moral aspects (62 %), communication style (50%) and speech culture (45 %). A large percentage of respondents did not mention such components as understanding of democracy and law, tolerance in political points of view, work style, and vital self-determination. It is interesting that the majority of students (73%) believe that the level of personal culture in force majeure situations does not matter at all; only 53 % are convinced that personal culture is important for professional communication.

Regarding the self-assessment of the level of personal culture, only 15 % consider their own level of personal culture to be high, 79 % consider their own level of personal culture to be average, and 6 % of students consider their own level of personal culture to be low. To the question "Do you always follow the rules of behavior in public places?", the students answered as it follows: 45% follow and 55% do not follow these rules, which also indicates an insufficient level of personal culture.

It should be noted that such a rather narrow vision of personal culture could not help affecting the students' assessment of the personal culture of teachers, group mates and their own environment, because most students did not take into account all the components of personal culture. The results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
THE EVALUATION OF THE LEVEL OF PERSONAL CULTURE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS

Groups of people levels	Levels of personal culture		
	High level of personal culture	Medium level of personal culture	Low level of personal culture
	%	%	%
teachers	84	10	6
group mates	54	28	18
close environment	65	30	5

In order to have a complete picture, we also asked students to enumerate the factors that influence the formation of their personal culture. The summarized results are presented in the diagram. Let us note that each student could choose several factors.

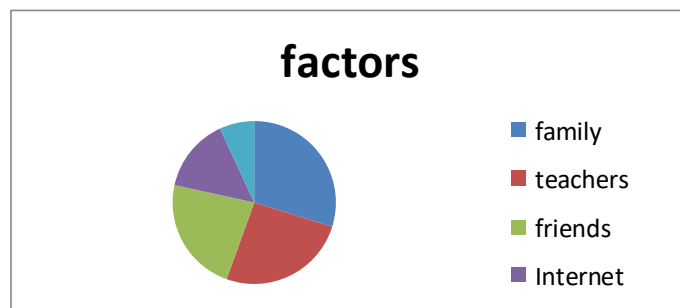


Diagram 1. Main Factors That Influence the Formation of Students' Personal Culture

Having conducted the appropriate survey and summarized the information, we developed a set of tasks aimed at improving the students' personal culture while learning English. However, we did not set ourselves the task of covering all components of students' personal culture due to the lack of a sufficient number of academic hours. Another reason that motivated us to choose only some components of personal culture was that we wanted to see how effective our classes are: that is, to see how much the attitude of students has changed towards the components of personal culture that we discussed during the classes, and the components that we didn't touch upon. So, we focused our attention on the discussion of the concept of personal culture in general and on such its components as vital self-determination, family relations, work style and style of communication.

As the formation of personal culture was during our English classes our aim was to combine it with the development of the skills in foreign language. At the first class, we focused on the discussion of personal culture, attracting attention of students on the components of personal culture that were not mentioned by them in the survey. We also asked them to give examples of appropriate or inappropriate behavior in terms of vital self-determination, work culture, economic culture and other components of personal culture.

For more effective communication, we prepared an active vocabulary, which we worked out with the students before the discussion. In particular, it included such lexical units as *improving personal culture*, *vital self-determination*, *advantages*, *disadvantages*, *attitude*, *opinion*, *formation*, *components*, *reflections*, *behavior in public places*, *self-discovery*, *self-education*, *self-determination*, *aggressiveness*, *politeness*, *neglect* etc.

Let us emphasize that we devoted each subsequent episode of a session (because, unfortunately, we could not devote the entire session to performing only these types of activities) to one of the components of personal culture. Thus, when discussing vital self-determination, first of all we asked students what exactly they understood by this concept. During the conversation, we encouraged students to formulate self-determination as self-discovery, identification of their positive qualities and features, as well as those aptitudes, which later, through self-education, a person might turn into abilities, and talent into a stable character trait. Also, we suggested students to analyze a passage from the book "Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland" by the English writer Lewis Carroll and to reflect on the topic of why it is so difficult to answer the question "who are you?".

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

'Who are YOU?' said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!'

'I can't explain MYSELF, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'

'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar. (Carroll, 2022; Dubuque, 2023)

In order to make students continue to think about their own self-determination as homework, we offered them to find out more information on the biographies of people who made themselves and determine which character traits helped them achieve their goals (from a linguistic point of view, we encouraged students to revise (study) adjectives that describe character traits (*determined, self-confident, arrogant, smart, self-esteem, affectionate, diplomatic, independent etc.*)).

Also, we performed with students such activities as "Analysis of moments when we waste time" and asked them to identify for themselves moments due to which they wasted goal setting, time, which did not allow them to competently organize their own work and studies. After performing such exercises, we summarized the information, asking students to generalize the main components of self-determination (personal, family, professional and social). From the point of view of language learning, discussions of this topic allowed students to learn verbs that describe everyday activities.

As we could see from the survey, the majority of students understood well that such component of personal culture as family relations is very important. The majority of students identified the family as an important factor influencing the formation of personal culture. At the same time, we were convinced that discussing one's own family was a very personal matter, so we decided to approach this component abstractly. We asked students to comment on each element of the "circle of tolerance" and illustrate it with possible examples: how one can or cannot behave in a particular situation.

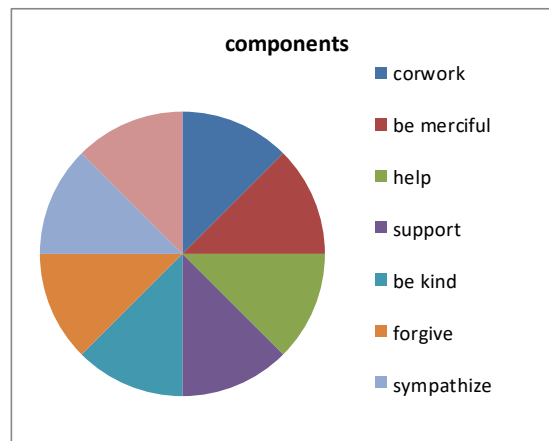


Figure 1. Circle of Tolerance

We consider this type of work to be effective both for the formation of students' personal culture and for the development of oral communication. Experience has shown that the discussion of this aspect of personal culture arouses lively interest among students. In addition, this aspect has become especially important in the country that is in the state of war.

For example, when discussing the topic of forgiveness, we asked students to comment on the following statements and say how much they agree with these statements:

- *Forgiveness does not change the past, but it clarifies the future.*
- *It is easier to forgive an enemy than a friend.*
- *If we want to love, we must forgive.*
- *Know how to forgive and your strength will increase.*
- *To forgive is to release the prisoner and understand that you were the prisoner.*

When discussing the topic of mercy, we discussed what exactly mercy is. Often, in parallel with mercy, we touched on such concepts as sensitivity, altruism, and selfishness.

We began the discussion of the topic of mercy by quoting A. Chekhov. This was a story "Case Study": *The daughter of the factory owner was ill. They called a doctor. The doctor examined the girl and said that everything was fine, she just needed some rest. Her mother was standing next to her. She stood motionless and looked at the doctor with tears in her eyes. Then she asked the doctor not to leave, because last night her daughter scared her with her condition, and she*

was her only child. The doctor wanted to say that he had a lot of work to do, that his family was waiting at home. But he looked at the woman's face and stayed (Chekhov).

Then we encouraged the students to share their ideas why the doctor had agreed to stay with the family (a duty or a manifestation of mercy?). After that, we asked students to provide examples of showing mercy from their lives. From the point of view of language learning, we could either work as a whole group (if there were less than 10 people in it), or students were divided into small groups, and then a summary was made in the whole group.

During the discussion of this topic, we also touched upon the topic of division of responsibilities in the family, respect for older family members and the need to pay attention to the younger members of family. Here are some questions for discussion:

What does the word "family" mean to you?

Which of your family are you proud of? Why?

Does your family have any legend?

Are there any family stories related to the profession of your parents or other relatives?

What is an ideal family for you?

How do the roles of the man and woman differ in the family, if they do?

What should be done to maintain perfect relations in the family? etc.

It should be noted that before discussing each information block, we carefully analyzed lexical units and grammatical constructions that could be used by students. Scientists emphasize that the culture of communication is an extremely relevant modern problem, because language is a rather dynamic category and often changes in connection with the further development of society and processes of globalization that take place in the modern world.

Scientists state that students' culture of communication is one the most productive resource of higher education for the personal development, which stimulates young people to master it as a universal characteristic of a specialist that helps to fulfill social expectations of society and reach a high professional and personal level.

On the one hand, the culture of communication adjoins to the concept of "communicative tolerance", and on the other hand, to the concept of "styles of communication" when interacting with society. The culture of communication is an integrative trait of an individual, which reflects features of a tolerant personality, as well as objective evaluation of people, ability to have a conversation, and establish cooperation, determining an active moral position in interaction with people (Butenko, 2012, p. 290; Chmut, 1999).

According to the definitions of this notion, the culture of communication is one of the components of the fundamental culture of a person, which includes specific values, knowledge, qualities, habits, etc.) that enables people to live in harmony with their inner and outer culture, national values, contribute to the development of the society, etc. The culture of communication is a crucial component of emotional, mental, social, and intellectual, development of a person (Lytvynova, 2020; Sevryugina, 2009).

Thus, we consider the culture of communication as a very important element of personal culture. We started the discussion of this block with a survey of students. To determine the level of knowledge about communication culture as a component of personal culture, we asked the question: "What do you understand by the culture of communication?"

The basis of the correct definition was the statement that the culture of communication, unlike the ethics of communication, is not limited to the behavioral level and the qualitative assessment of behavior, it includes both the culture of etiquette, the culture of behavior, the culture of language, feelings, facial expressions, gestures, and psychological culture subjects of communication, culture of consciousness (Stasyuk, 2009; Smolins'ka O., 2010).

It turned out that 75% of students were able to give only a partially correct answer to the question, they believed that the culture of communication was only a set of personal qualities of a person. The remaining 25% of students gave more or less correct answer according to the chosen definition. The answers to the following questions made it possible to determine the level of communication culture of students in general.

To the question "How do you assess the level of culture of communication among students?" the majority answered that they had a low level of culture of communication: 70% of students believed that their communication often contained obscene language, rude expressions, and offensive words against other people. From this it followed that there was a need for the formation of knowledge and skills in the field of culture of communication. However, answering the question "How do you assess your level of communication culture at the moment?" 80% of students defined it as "average", which meant that the data could be unreliable, i.e. subjective.

It should be noted that the role of communication stands for the formation of the independence of a person, professional self-consciousness and the assimilation of the basis of the future carrier and ability to communicate effectively with the opposite sex.

At this life phase, in the context of the entanglement of the relationship system in which the person is involved, young people often face the problem of their personal choice, which means consciousness of their points of view and responsible decision-making. During the learning process, communication with groupmates plays a crucial role for young people (Sevryugina, 2009, p. 194).

To train the culture of communication as a component of personal culture, we carried out the following activities:

- mini-lectures which were a kind of an interview during which the educator encouraged learners to ask relevant questions on the theme. The activity was conducted as a discussion, during which responses were formulated. After performing it, the teacher analyzed the questions as an observation of the students' concerns and knowledge;
- educational games, for example, "Cultural dialogues" and "Intermediary", which involved the creation of special situations that simulated real cases which might happen in life;
- seminar-discussions, when topical problematic issues were brought up for discussion. First, students individually thought about them, then formed focus groups in which those questions were analyzed and some generalizations were made. At the end of the class focus groups presented their results to the whole group of students and discussed them together;
- cognitive game "Group Photo", the aim of which is to analyze and role play a particular ambiguous situation from a real life and try to find out a solution which would be suitable for all the participants. This game focuses on teaching the students how to act in different life circumstances, assess the situation properly, make contacts with people, and be able to feel themselves in other peoples' shoes;
- intercultural seminars, which were devoted to the discussion of the problems that might happen during the communication with representatives of other cultures or nationalities. The learner's task was to build up a pattern how to behave and come up with the most optimal approaches to communication; Such exercises as "Web of Bias" and "Cultural Transformations" aimed at developing three aspects of communication that appear simultaneously (communication, interaction, perception) were also of great importance;
- conducting non-traditional activities (such as "Private communication", "Elements of oratorical art", "Public presentation" with elements of monologue speech, etc.).

The formation of a culture of communication was also facilitated by the game "Verbal behavior (confident, insecure and rude)". The teacher indicated to the students the goal of the game: to learn to see such features of their behavior as confidence, uncertainty, and rudeness. The rules of the game are:

Three items are selected that conditionally denote confident, insecure and rude behavior, respectively. The teacher offers students a specific situation and distributes objects. A student who gets an object denoting, for example, rude behavior must show how a rude person will behave in this situation. Then, a new situation is offered, and other students receive objects. It is important, and this is stipulated at the beginning, that confident, insecure and rude behavior within the framework of this game should be expressed verbally.

Here are some situations which we offered to our students: 1) the teacher underestimated the score at the seminar; 2) you had to prepare for a colloquium, and friends invited you to go for a walk; 3) you were going to a concert of your favorite band, and your mother asked to look after your younger brother; 4) it is necessary to interrupt a protracted conversation, etc. Each scene took about 3-4 minutes. As a result, the reflection of the game was carried out and the students formulated what confident, insecure, rude behavior meant to them.

Touching upon economic culture our task was to inculcate the skills of budget planning and appropriate allocation of funds, and we suggested students to analyze whether they spent money appropriately and how these expenses could be optimized. Implementing such kinds of activities in our classes we conducted activities on synonymous and paronymic replacements, expansion and paraphrasing of texts, exercises on translation, editing, creation of micro dialogues, etc.).

At the end of the academic year, we again conducted a survey in which we asked students to formulate a definition of personal culture and indicate how it had been changed (if it had been) during the academic year. After processing the data, we concluded that in general the vision of personal culture became broader (in 75% of students), the attitude towards themselves and the environment also had been changed: the students became more self-critical and tolerant, which are important components of personal culture. At the same time, the main components of personal culture were named by students as those that had been discussed during the academic year. 85% of students noted they need to improve the culture of family relations, 98% of students understood the importance of their own culture of communication, the definition of economic culture as a component of personal culture has increased to 45%. Those components that had not been discussed during the classes almost were not changed in percentage terms. It should be noted that almost all students mentioned tolerance and culture of behavior and speech in the definition of personal culture, which we also consider a positive result of the experiment.

As for language training of students, it should be noted that the preparation of active vocabulary and revision of grammar constructions depended on the language level of students, that is why the article does not present detailed information on this aspect, but only gives some examples that illustrate the general approach to solving this task. From work experience, it can also be said that students actively participate in the discussion of these aspects of personal culture, which allows improving their language skills and deepen their vocabulary.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, it should be noted that personal culture is a necessary element of a worthy citizen, a highly qualified specialist, parents and children of any culture and society. That is why it is necessary to pay great attention to the formation of the personal culture of the young generation. After conducting the experiment, we were convinced that various types of educational activities have a positive effect on the formation of personal culture.

In the future, we are going to work on the formation of other components of students' personal culture in the same groups.

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