

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract. This paper examines innovative approaches for integrating intercultural communication competence (ICC) in English language education, especially within the Uzbek context. As Uzbekistan strives to improve global communication skills among learners, developing ICC is becoming a fundamental objective in language instruction. The article outlines theoretical foundations, practical strategies, challenges, and examples of culturally integrated classroom practices. It also considers the importance of teacher training and institutional support in promoting ICC in foreign language programs.

Keywords: intercultural communication, language education, English as a foreign language, cultural competence, foreign language teaching methodology.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili ta'limida madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiyani rivojlantirishga qaratilgan zamonaviy yondashuvlar tahlil qilinadi. O'zbekiston kontekstida madaniyatlararo muloqot ko'nikmalarini shakllantirish chet tilini o'qitishning ajralmas qismi bo'lib bormoqda. Maqolada ICC asosidagi nazariy qarashlar, amaliy uslublar, sinfdagi faoliyatlar, o'qituvchilarni tayyorlash va mavjud qiyinchiliklar muhokama qilinadi. Shuningdek, madaniyatlararo o'qitish yondashuvlarini milliy ta'lim dasturlariga qo'shish zarurati yoritiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: madaniyatlararo muloqot, til ta'limi, ingliz tili, madaniy kompetensiya, xorijiy til metodikasi.

Introduction

Grammar and vocabulary are not the one and only constituents that make one proficient in a foreign language in today's globalized world. What matters more is the ability to manage social as well as cultural differences. This skill, known as intercultural communication competence (ICC), enables learners to interact and work in diverse cultures. As Byram (1997) explains, ICC combines several intellectual and practical components such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness, which empower an individual to interact with people from different cultures. Like many other educational frameworks around the world, foreign language education applies this concept as it helps learners to master the cultural aspects as well as the language of different societies. Hence, it has become an essential education goal on an international level. So as to communicate, conduct business and learn on a global level, Uzbekistan has placed immense focus on English language teaching in the country. The 2017 government State Education Standards Document stipulates "national and global cultural competence" (milliy

va umummadaniy kompetensiya) as an obligatory achieved learning result. Yet, there is a gap between policy objectives and reality as insufficient resources, untrained teachers, and lack of authentic cultural exposure impede the incorporation of intercultural frameworks in classroom teaching (Avazmatova, 2021).

Theoretical Background

The idea of ICC stems from the more classical communication models and foreign language teaching approaches. Byram (1997) gives the definition of ICC including five components:

- Attitudes (curiosity, openness, respect)
- Knowledge of own and others' cultures
- Skills of interpreting and relating
- Skills of discovery and interaction
- Critical cultural awareness

These components enable the learners to not just speak a foreign language, but to actively interpret, negotiate meanings, and prevent cultural misunderstandings as a result of misperceptions. Also, the research done by Deardorff (2006) adopted a more process-oriented approach and considers ICC as a reflective, interactive, and experiential lifelong journey. One does not simply achieve ICC; it is something that is built over time with sufficient exposure, education, and practice

Methodology

This article stems from a qualitative literature analysis enriched with practical examples. Published documents from 2015 to 2024 were gathered using educational databases such as ERIC and Science Direct. The review incorporated international literature on intercultural pedagogy, Uzbekistan's national curriculum, and teacher professional development frameworks. In addition, real teaching practice examples were collected from conference documents, teachers' interviews, and journals to demonstrate the integration of ICC in Uzbek English classrooms. While this paper does not involve primary field research, the synthesis of theoretical and contextual data aims to inform practical applications in the local education system.

In spite of the increasing understanding of intercultural competences, there are some hurdles to be addressed in the context of the Uzbek language education system as follows:

1. **Insufficient Teacher Education:** Most teachers were educated with grammar-translation techniques and have little exposure, if at all, to communicative and intercultural teaching.
2. **Absence of Relevant Resources:** Textbooks often neglect current trends in culture, and from a cross-cultural perspective, they may only represent so-called Western cultures.
3. **Large Classes and Rigid Exam Structures:** Discussion-based or project-based learning is often sidelined due to high teaching demands.

4. Limited Interaction with Real Speakers: Numerous students and teachers have never had contact with real native speakers, so they have to be provided to simulated intercultural experience.

Addressing these concerns requires embedding ICC not only into teaching curriculum but also into pre-service and in-service training programs. The most recently published works provide differing strategies for teaching ICC as well as practical applications within the classroom:

a) Inclusion of Authentic Materials

Integrating various media, including motion pictures, interviews, and blogs, from different cultures aids in showcasing diversity to students and helps them situate concepts in the real world. Teachers can illustrate Uzbek holidays and compare them with other English-speaking countries utilizing videos and articles.

b) Learning Through Projects

With tasks such as “My Culture in English”, students show case English presentations about Uzbek customs. This is useful for enhancement of self-reflection and self-regard and helps in language training.

c) Classroom Discussions and Critical Thinking

Debate around cultural values, their stereotypes and media representations invite deeper reflection. For instance, the differentiations of non-verbal gestures can be a strong starting point for more profound consciousness.

Discussion

In a study conducted by Sagre et al. (2024), Colombian rural school students developed ICC by integrating language topics with their personal experiences. Lee et al. (2023) conducted an online classroom in Thailand which implemented cultural aspects into the teaching of English and successfully enhanced the students' global perspective. These examples show that internationally, and financially, unbounded ICC can be cultivated.

Uzbek schools can implement these models by starting with content well-recognized to students, integrating their experiences, and systematically introducing new cultures to them.

Conclusion

The ability to communicate across cultures is crucial in language education today. Students are required to communicate and understand different viewpoints in the 21st century. English classrooms in Uzbekistan are uniquely positioned to foster these skills given the increasing global engagement of the country. To enhance ICC, organizations need to focus on refining teaching materials, revising cultural elements in curricula, and improving instructor workshops. If adequately supported, educators in Uzbekistan will be able to equip the upcoming English-speaking population to be well-versed in various cultures with empathy and global consciousness.

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