# DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CULTURAL COMPETENCIES OF NON-PHILOLOGICAL STUDENTS THROUGH TELECOMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

**Ziyayeva Muhayyo Usmanjanovna**

*muhayo.23@mail.ru*

*Senior teacher, Department of Integrated Course of English Language*
*Uzbekistan State World Languages University*

**Abstract.** This study investigates the use of telecommunication technologies in developing social-cultural competencies among non-philological university students. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys (n=120) and focus groups (n=40) with undergraduate students at a large public university in Uzbekistan. Findings indicate that integrating telecollaboration activities into humanities and social science courses significantly improves students' intercultural communication skills, cultural self-awareness, and ability to work in diverse teams. However, challenges were identified regarding technology access and instructor support. The study highlights best practices and provides recommendations for effectively leveraging telecommunication tools to foster social-cultural competencies in non-language-focused disciplines.

*Keywords: social-cultural competence, telecollaboration, higher education, intercultural communication.*

**Аннотация.** В данном исследовании исследуется использование телекоммуникационных технологий в развитии социокультурных компетенций у студентов нефилологических вузов. Был использован смешанный подход, сочетающий опросы (n=120) и фокус-группы (n=40) со студентами бакалавриата крупного государственного университета Узбекистана. Результаты показывают, что интеграция деятельности по телесотрудничеству в курсы гуманитарных и социальных наук значительно улучшает навыки межкультурного общения студентов, культурное самосознание и способность работать в различных командах. Однако были выявлены проблемы, связанные с доступом к технологиям и поддержкой инструкторов. В исследовании освещаются передовые методы работы и приводятся рекомендации по эффективному использованию средств электросвязи для развития социально-культурных компетенций в дисциплинах, не связанных с языком.

*Ключевые слова: социокультурная компетентность, телесотрудничество, высшее образование, межкультурная коммуникация.*

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu tadqiqot filologiya bo'lmagan universitet talabalari o'rtasida ijtimoiy madaniy vakolatlarni rivojlantirishda telekommunikatsiya texnologiyalaridan foydalanishni o'rganadi. O'zbekistondagi yirik davlat universitetida bakalavriat talabalari bilan so'rovnomalar (n=120) va fokus-guruhlar (n=40)ni birlashtirgan aralash usullardan foydalanildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, telehamkorlik faoliyatini gumanitar va ijtimoiy

fanlar kurslariga integratsiya qilish talabalarning madaniyatlararo muloqot ko'nikmalarini, madaniy o'zini o'zi anglashini va turli jamoalarda ishlash qobiliyatini sezilarli darajada yaxshilaydi. Biroq, texnologiyaga kirish va o'qituvchilarni qo'llab-quvvatlash bilan bog'liq muammolar aniqlandi. Tadqiqot ilg'or tajribalarni ta'kidlaydi va tilga yo'naltirilmagan fanlarda ijtimoiy madaniy vakolatlarni rivojlantirish uchun telekommunikatsiya vositalaridan samarali foydalanish bo'yicha tavsiyalar beradi.

*Kalit so'zlar: ijtimoiy madaniy kompetentsiya, telekollaboratsiya, oliy ta'lim, madaniyatlararo muloqot.*

**INTRODUCTION.** In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, social cultural competencies have become essential skills for success in diverse professional and social contexts [1]. Higher education institutions play a crucial role in equipping students with these competencies, which include intercultural communication, cultural self-awareness, perspective-taking, and the ability to work effectively in diverse teams [2]. While language learning has traditionally been the primary focus for developing such skills, there is growing recognition of the need to integrate social cultural competencies across disciplines [3].

Telecommunication technologies offer promising opportunities for fostering social cultural competencies among non-philological students. Tools such as videoconferencing, online collaboration platforms, and social media enable students to engage in authentic intercultural interactions and collaborations with peers from diverse backgrounds [4]. Research suggests that technology-mediated intercultural exchange can enhance cultural knowledge, communication skills, and attitudes toward cultural diversity [5][6].

However, effectively integrating telecollaboration into non-language courses presents challenges. Instructors may lack experience or training in facilitating intercultural learning, and students may have varying levels of technological access and competence [7]. Additionally, simply providing opportunities for online cross-cultural contact does not guarantee meaningful learning; careful pedagogical design and facilitation are necessary [8].

This study aims to investigate the development of social-cultural competencies among non-philological students through the use of telecommunication technologies. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Examine the impact of telecollaboration activities on students' intercultural communication skills, cultural self-awareness, perspective-taking, and ability to work in diverse teams
2. Identify challenges and best practices for integrating telecollaboration into humanities and social science courses
3. Provide recommendations for leveraging telecommunication tools to foster social-cultural competencies across disciplines

**METHODS AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative focus groups. Participants included 120 undergraduate students enrolled in telecollaboration-enhanced courses in history, sociology, and communication at a large public university in the Uzbekistan. Courses were selected based on instructors' willingness to integrate telecollaboration activities into their curricula.

Pre- and post-surveys were administered to assess changes in students' social cultural competencies over the semester. The survey instrument was developed based on existing scales of intercultural competence [9][10], and included items related to intercultural communication skills, cultural self-awareness, perspective-taking, and teamwork in diverse groups. Surveys used a 5-point Likert scale and were analyzed using paired sample t-tests.

Eight focus groups were conducted with a purposive sample of 40 students (5 per group) to gain deeper insight into their experiences with telecollaboration. Focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis [11]. Two researchers independently coded transcripts and discussed themes to reach consensus.

Telecollaboration activities were designed in consultation with course instructors and informed by models of intercultural learning [12][13]. Activities included synchronous videoconference dialogues with international partner classes, asynchronous online discussions of cultural texts/media, and collaborative research projects in multicultural teams. Facilitators guided student reflections on cross-cultural similarities, differences, and misunderstandings.

## RESULTS

Survey results indicate significant increases in students' self-reported intercultural competencies pre- to post-course. On a 5-point scale, students' mean ratings increased from 3.2 to 4.1 for intercultural communication skills ($t(119)=8.42$, $p<.001$), 3.4 to 4.0 for cultural self-awareness ($t(119)=6.05$, $p<.001$), 3.1 to 3.9 for perspective-taking ($t(119)=7.19$, $p<.001$), and 3.5 to 4.3 for ability to work in diverse teams ($t(119)=7.57$, $p<.001$).

Focus group findings provide further insight into students' learning experiences. Four key themes emerged:

1. Authentic engagement: Students appreciated the opportunity to have "real conversations" with international peers, noting how it made culture "come alive" compared to textbook learning.

2. Perspective-taking: Telecollaboration promoted understanding of different viewpoints. One student reflected: "Hearing directly from someone with a totally different background made me re-examine my own assumptions."

3. Transferable skills: Students recognized the professional relevance of skills gained, such as adapting communication styles and collaborating remotely.

4.     Challenges: Students noted technical difficulties, scheduling across time zones, and uneven participation as obstacles. Some felt unprepared to discuss sensitive cultural topics.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative and qualitative results suggest that integrating telecommunication technologies into humanities and social science courses can significantly enhance non-philological students' social cultural competencies. The authentic intercultural engagement afforded by telecollaboration appears to be key to this impact, aligning with Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis that meaningful interactions between groups can reduce prejudice and promote understanding [14].

The development of perspective-taking skills is particularly notable, as research emphasizes perspective-taking as a core component of intercultural competence. Telecollaboration seems to provide a powerful tool for cultivating this ability by directly exposing students to diverse viewpoints. Additionally, students' recognition of the transferability of communication and collaboration skills gained suggests that these experiences have relevance beyond the classroom.

However, the challenges identified point to the need for intentional design and support. Instructors may need training in both the technological and pedagogical aspects of telecollaboration. Careful selection of user-friendly, accessible platforms is important, as is providing students with guidance on navigating technical difficulties. Instructors should also be prepared to facilitate sensitive discussions that may arise. Aligning schedules across locations remains an obstacle, but can be mitigated through a mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

The study's limitations should be considered. The sample was limited to one institution and three disciplines; wider examination across contexts is needed. Self-report data has inherent limitations, and the addition of direct behavioral measures of intercultural competence would strengthen findings. Finally, the specific telecollaboration models used here are not necessarily generalizable; different approaches may be suitable for different contexts.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides empirical evidence for the efficacy of telecommunication technologies in fostering social cultural competencies among non-philological students. Integrating telecollaboration activities into humanities and social science courses appears to significantly enhance students' intercultural communication, self-awareness, perspective-taking, and teamwork skills through authentic engagement with diverse peers.

However, realizing these benefits requires overcoming challenges of access, technological competence, and pedagogical design. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

Provide instructors with training and support to effectively integrate and facilitate telecollaboration, including handling sensitive cultural discussions.

- Select user-friendly, accessible telecommunication platforms and provide students with technical guidance.
- Design telecollaboration activities that align with best practices for intercultural learning, including opportunities for guided reflection.
- Use a mix of synchronous and asynchronous formats to accommodate scheduling challenges.
- Scaffold students' development of social cultural competencies by integrating telecollaboration across multiple courses and semesters.
- Conduct further research across diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts, using behavioral measures alongside self-reports.

In conclusion, telecommunication tools hold significant potential for developing essential 21st century intercultural skills among non-language learners. With intentional implementation, telecollaboration can open new pathways for humanities and social science students to engage with cultural diversity, broaden perspectives, and build competencies for an interconnected world.

**References:**

1. Allport, G. W. (1954). The nature of prejudice. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
2. Arasaratnam, L. A. (2009). The development of a new instrument of intercultural communication competence. Journal of Intercultural Communication, 20.
3. Barrett, M., Byram, M., Lázár, I., Mompoint-Gaillard, P., & Philippou, S. (2014). Developing intercultural competence through education. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
4. Belz, J. A. (2003). Linguistic perspectives on the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. Language Learning & Technology, 7(2), 68-117.
5. Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), Education for the intercultural experience (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
6. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.
7. Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
8. Chun, D. M. (2011). Developing intercultural communicative competence through online exchanges. CALICO Journal, 28(2), 392-419.
9. Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. Journal of Studies in International Education, 10(3), 241-266.
10. Fantini, A., & Tirmizi, A. (2006). Exploring and assessing intercultural competence. World Learning Publications, 1.

11. Guth, S., & Helm, F. (Eds.). (2010). Telecollaboration 2.0: Language, literacies and intercultural learning in the 21st century. Bern: Peter Lang.

12. Helm, F. (2015). The practices and challenges of telecollaboration in higher education in Europe. Language Learning & Technology, 19(2), 197-217.

13. Kramsch, C. (2014). Teaching foreign languages in an era of globalization: Introduction. The Modern Language Journal, 98(1), 296-311.

14. O'Dowd, R. (2007). Online intercultural exchange: An introduction for foreign language teachers. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.