
Importance of developing intercultural competence in teaching English as a foreign language

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Annotation

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in higher education increasingly requires the development of learners' intercultural competence (IC) as an essential component of overall communicative proficiency. This article explores theoretical foundations and practical methods for cultivating IC among students of language universities, where oral fluency and authenticity remain core objectives. Building on research in applied linguistics, language pedagogy, and educational technology, the discussion highlights the tensions between striving for native-like oral production and sustaining learners' own cultural identities. It examines common obstacles such as limited exposure to authentic discourse, transfer of native-language structures, and low motivation, while also analyzing how authentic materials, technology-enhanced instruction, and culturally responsive teaching can foster the ability to mediate between cultures. The article emphasizes that the goal is not imitation of native speakers, but the formation of a "linguistic personality" capable of negotiating meaning across cultural boundaries. Recommendations include purposeful integration of authentic tasks, intercultural projects, and digital resources to create an immersive yet identity-affirming learning environment.

Keywords

Cultural component, personality, target language, monotonous phrases, students' motivation

Важность развития межкультурной компетенции при обучении английскому как иностранным языку

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Аннотация

Преподавание английского языка как иностранного (EFL) в системе высшего образования всё более требует развития межкультурной компетенции (МК) обучающихся как неотъемлемой составляющей общей коммуникативной компетенции. В статье рассматриваются теоретические основы и практические методы формирования МК у студентов языковых вузов, где устная беглость и аутентичность остаются ключевыми целями. Опираясь на исследования в области прикладной лингвистики, методики преподавания языков и образовательных технологий, автор анализирует противоречие между стремлением к носительской устной речи и сохранением собственной культурной идентичности учащихся. Изучаются распространённые трудности, такие как ограниченный доступ к аутентичному дискурсу, перенос структур родного языка и низкая мотивация. Особое внимание

уделяется тому, как использование аутентичных материалов, технологий и культурно-ориентированного подхода способствует развитию способности к межкультурному посредничеству. Делается вывод, что цель обучения – не имитация речи носителей, а формирование «языковой личности», способной вести диалог между культурами. Рекомендации включают целенаправленное внедрение аутентичных заданий, межкультурных проектов и цифровых ресурсов для создания погружённой, но сохраняющей идентичность образовательной среды.

Ключевые слова Культурный компонент, личность, целевой язык, однообразные фразы, мотивация студентов

Ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitishda madaniyatlararo kompetensiyani rivojlantirishning ahamiyati

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Annotatsiya *Oliy ta'limda ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'qitish (EFL) jarayonida talabalarining umumiy kommunikativ mahoratining ajralmas qismi bo'lgan madaniyatlararo kompetensiyani (MK) rivojlantirish tobora muhim ahamiyat kasb etmoqda. Ushbu maqolada til universitetlari talabalari uchun MKni shakllantirishning nazariy asoslari va amaliy usullari yoritiladi. Maqola amaliy lingvistika, til o'qitish metodikasi hamda ta'lim texnologiyalari bo'yicha tadqiqotlarga asoslanib, talabaning ona tilidagi madaniy identitetini saqlagan holda ona tiliga o'xshash talaffuzga intilishdagi ziddiyatlarni tahlil qiladi. Cheklangan autentik nutq muhiti, ona tili strukturasi ta'siri hamda past motivatsiya kabi keng tarqalgan to'siqlar ko'rib chiqiladi. Autentik materiallar, texnologiyalarga asoslangan darslar va madaniyatga mos yondashuv madaniyatlararo muloqotni rivojlantirishga qanday yordam berishi ham ko'rsatib o'tiladi. Maqolada ta'kidlanishicha, maqsad tilni ona tilidek takrorlash emas, balki "til shaxsiyati"ni shakllantirishdir. Tavsiyalar sifatida autentik topshiriqlar, madaniyatlararo loyihalar va raqamli resurslarni maqsadli qo'llash taklif etiladi.*

Kalit so'zlar *Madaniy komponent, shaxs, maqsad til, bir xil iboralar, talabalar motivatsiyasi*

Communicative competence has long been recognized as the cornerstone of successful foreign-language acquisition. Within modern methodology, the spoken mode remains the central medium of communication and thus the primary instructional target (Goh, 2007). For institutions

devoted to language training, such as universities of world languages, expectations are especially high: students and graduates are expected to demonstrate oral proficiency that approaches the lexical, phonetic, and grammatical authenticity of an educated native speaker.

However, equating competence with native-speaker imitation presents theoretical and practical contradictions. Scholars note that true acquisition of a new sociocultural identity is neither feasible nor desirable (Nomatova, 2021). Each learner inevitably speaks with a personal "voice," shaped by their first language and cultural background. Therefore, the emerging standard in foreign-language pedagogy is the formation of a *linguistic personality* capable of acting as a mediator between cultures rather than as a mimic of the target culture (Selwyn, 2022).

Following Goh's (2007) conceptualization, intercultural competence can be defined as the ability to conduct one's communicative behavior in accordance with the norms of the target culture while simultaneously representing and negotiating one's own culture. This dual orientation supports the creation of shared meaning and mutual understanding, which is the true aim of communicative interaction.

The inclusion of a cultural component within language-teaching methodology has therefore shifted the instructional focus. Learners must not only master vocabulary and grammar but also develop the sensitivity to perceive and respect difference, the skills to explain their own cultural perspectives, and the strategies to bridge communicative gaps (Nomatova, 2021). In this sense, intercultural competence is inseparable from communicative competence and should be embedded across the curriculum.

Despite broad agreement on its importance, the development of authentic oral proficiency in contexts lacking a natural language environment remains difficult. Students frequently encounter barriers such as uncertainty in selecting appropriate linguistic forms, overuse of clichés, and transfer of native-language structures that distort intended meaning. Classroom observations and surveys reveal that learners often cannot fully implement the communicative repertoire demanded by real-world interactions, leading

to mismatches between intention and production.

Several factors contribute to these challenges. Individual psychological traits, earlier negative experiences of language study, and low motivation can all impede progress. More significantly, the absence of daily contact with native speakers limits opportunities to internalize authentic speech patterns and pragmatic conventions (Goh, 2007). As a result, even students with strong grammatical knowledge may hesitate in spontaneous conversation or default to formulaic expressions.

Another structural difficulty emerges at the intermediate stage of study, when learners wish to discuss complex social or personal topics but lack the linguistic resources to do so fluently. This gap between cognitive maturity and language capacity often causes frustration and discourages risk-taking, thereby slowing the development of authentic oral expression (Nomatova, 2021).

To address these issues, methodologists advocate the systematic use of authentic materials and tasks that simulate genuine communicative contexts. Carefully designed exercises, role-plays, and project-based activities can provide "virtual immersion," allowing students to practice negotiation of meaning and sociocultural norms in a controlled environment (Goh, 2007).

Technological tools also play a growing role. Interactive platforms, video conferencing, and AI-driven applications expand exposure to diverse speech models and create opportunities for cross-cultural exchange even in settings with limited access to native speakers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019; Luckin, 2018). For example, virtual language tandems and online discussion forums connect students with peers worldwide, fostering authentic interaction and intercultural awareness.

Culturally responsive pedagogy further enhances these efforts. Teachers who explicitly value students' home cultures and encourage critical comparison with the target culture help

learners develop a balanced intercultural identity. Such an approach reframes the classroom as a space for dialogue rather than unilateral assimilation (Selwyn, 2022).

The integration of machine learning and human intelligence offers additional pathways for cultivating intercultural competence. Adaptive learning systems can tailor tasks to individual needs, providing real-time feedback on pronunciation, pragmatic usage, and discourse strategies (Luckin, 2018). However, technology must complement – not replace – human mediation. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) caution, artificial intelligence in education is most effective when paired with skilled instruction that nurtures empathy and critical thinking.

In practice, this means designing blended learning environments where digital tools supply authentic input and data-driven feedback, while instructors guide reflection on cultural differences and communication styles. For example, recorded conversations with international partners can be analyzed in class to identify subtle pragmatic features, such as turn-taking cues or indirectness, that differ across cultures.

Translation studies offer useful insights into intercultural mediation. Madaminovich (2017) emphasizes that translators inevitably adapt texts to align with the ideological and cultural expectations of target audiences. Similarly, EFL learners must learn to negotiate meaning, choosing expressions that respect both linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness. Classroom activities that involve paraphrasing, interpreting, or comparing translations can therefore sharpen awareness of cross-cultural nuance and foster the flexibility required for authentic communication.

Motivation remains a key variable in developing intercultural competence. Students who perceive EFL study as merely an academic requirement may not invest the sustained effort needed to achieve authentic oral proficiency. Conversely, when learners see language as a

gateway to intercultural understanding, they are more likely to engage deeply with authentic materials and real-world communication (Nomatova, 2021).

Teachers can enhance motivation by designing tasks that align with students' personal interests and by highlighting the professional advantages of intercultural skills in today's globalized economy. Moreover, affirming learners' own cultural identities reduces the anxiety associated with performing in a foreign language and helps them view themselves as legitimate participants in global discourse (Selwyn, 2022).

Recommendations for Practice

1. Authentic Materials and Tasks

Use films, podcasts, interviews, and contemporary texts as core inputs for speaking activities. Encourage students to analyze and imitate authentic discourse, focusing on pragmatics and intonation patterns.

2. Intercultural Projects

Organize collaborative projects with partner institutions abroad. Virtual exchanges, joint presentations, and cross-cultural debates provide meaningful contexts for practicing mediation skills (Goh, 2007).

3. Technology-Enhanced Learning

Integrate adaptive pronunciation tools, AI-driven conversation simulators, and online forums to extend practice beyond the classroom (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019; Luckin, 2018).

4. Reflective Practices

Implement regular self-assessment and peer feedback sessions. Guided reflection on communicative successes and challenges reinforces metacognitive awareness of intercultural dynamics.

5. Teacher Development

Provide professional training in intercultural pedagogy so instructors can model and facilitate culturally sensitive communication (Selwyn, 2022).

Developing intercultural competence in EFL instruction is not a peripheral enrichment but a central pedagogical imperative.

Language universities must balance the pursuit of authentic oral proficiency with the recognition that learners are cultural agents in their own right. By embedding authentic tasks, leveraging technology judiciously, and fostering reflective dialogue, educators can cultivate students who are not mere imitators

of native speakers but confident mediators of meaning across cultures. Such graduates are better equipped to participate in the increasingly interconnected world, where effective communication depends as much on cultural intelligence as on linguistic accuracy.

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