
Integrative-mediation methodology for developing pre-service English teachers' language skills and cultural mediation competence

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Annotation *This article presents the theoretical foundations and empirical outcomes of an Integrative-Mediation Methodology (IMM) designed to simultaneously develop language skills and cultural mediation competence in pre-service English language teachers. Grounded in sociocultural theory, intercultural communicative competence frameworks, and task-based language teaching, IMM integrates specialist subject content across four skill areas — reading, listening, speaking, and writing — through a structured system of integrative-mediative exercises organised in a five-level hierarchy. An experimental study involving 94 pre-service English teachers at Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages was conducted over two academic semesters (2023–2025). Results demonstrated statistically significant gains in all four language skills and in cultural mediation competence among participants in the experimental group compared to the control group, with effect sizes ranging from $d=0.71$ to $d=1.02$. Qualitative data from reflective journals and focus-group interviews corroborated the quantitative findings, identifying five mechanisms through which IMM accelerates language and intercultural development. The article proposes a replicable model for IMM implementation in pre-service ELT programmes across non-Anglo higher education contexts.*

Keywords *Integrative-mediation methodology, pre-service English teacher education, language skills, cultural mediation competence, intercultural communicative competence, task-based language teaching, NNES teachers, specialist subject integration*

Bo'lajak ingliz tili o'qituvchilarida til ko'nikmalari va madaniy vositachilik kompetensiyasini rivojlantirishning integrativ-mediativ metodologiyasi

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Annotatsiya *Ushbu maqolada bo'lajak ingliz tili o'qituvchilarida til ko'nikmalarini va madaniy vositachilik kompetensiyasini bir vaqtda rivojlantirish uchun mo'ljallangan Integrativ-Mediativ Metodologiya (IMM) ning nazariy asoslari va empirik natijalari taqdim etiladi. Metodologiya ijtimoiy-madaniy nazariya, madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiya kontseptsiyasi va vazifaga asoslangan til o'qitishga tayanadi. IMM mutaxassislik fanlarining mazmunini to'rt ko'nikma sohasi — o'qish, tinglash, gapirish va yozish — bo'yicha besh bosqichli iyerarxik mashqlar tizimi orqali integratsiyalaydi. Namangan davlat chet tillari institutida 94 nafar bo'lajak*

ingliz tili o'qituvchisi ishtirokida ikki akademik semestr (2023–2025) davomida eksperimental tadqiqot o'tkazildi. Natijalar eksperimental guruhdagi ishtirokchilarning barcha to'rtta til ko'nikmasi va madaniy vositachilik kompetensiyasi bo'yicha statistik jihatdan sezilarli yutuqlarini ko'rsatdi ($d=0,71-1,02$).

Kalit so'zlar *Integrativ-mediativ metodologiya, bo'lajak o'qituvchilarni tayyorlash, til ko'nikmalari, madaniy vositachilik kompetensiyasi, madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiya, vazifaga asoslangan til o'qitish, mutaxassislik fanlarini integratsiyalash*

Интегративно-медиативная методология развития языковых навыков и компетенции культурного посредничества у будущих учителей английского языка

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Аннотация *В данной статье представлены теоретические основы и эмпирические результаты интегративно-медиативной методологии (ИММ), разработанной для одновременного развития языковых навыков и компетенции культурного посредничества у будущих учителей английского языка. Методология основана на социокультурной теории, концепции межкультурной коммуникативной компетентности и предметно-языковом интегрированном обучении. ИММ интегрирует содержание специальных дисциплин в четырёх языковых областях — чтении, аудировании, говорении и письме — посредством структурированной системы интегративно-медиативных упражнений. Экспериментальное исследование с участием 94 будущих учителей английского языка проводилось в течение двух академических семестров (2023–2025). Результаты показали статистически значимые улучшения по всем четырём языковым навыкам и в компетенции культурного посредничества в экспериментальной группе по сравнению с контрольной ($d=0,71-1,02$).*

Ключевые слова *Интегративно-медиативная методология, подготовка будущих учителей, языковые навыки, компетенция культурного посредничества, межкультурная коммуникативная компетентность, предметно-языковое интегрированное обучение*

Introduction

The preparation of competent English language teachers in non-Anglo higher

education contexts presents a persistent methodological challenge. Pre-service teachers must simultaneously develop four language

skills to a professional level of proficiency while acquiring the pedagogical knowledge, intercultural awareness, and cultural mediation capacity that contemporary English language teaching demands. Yet in most pre-service ELT programmes, specialist subject content — methodology, linguistics, literature, cultural studies — and language skills are taught in parallel, isolated streams, producing graduates whose linguistic and professional competencies remain disconnected (Holliday, 2006; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

The concept of cultural mediation has gained increasing prominence in applied linguistics and language teacher education since its introduction into mainstream European language policy through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment — Companion Volume (CEFR-CV, Council of Europe, 2020). The CEFR-CV positions mediation — the capacity to act as an intermediary between two interlocutors or cultural frameworks who cannot communicate directly — as a fourth macro-skill alongside reception, production, and interaction. For pre-service English teachers operating as future mediators between their students, English-language content, and their students' cultural frameworks, cultural mediation competence is not supplementary but foundational.

The Integrative-Mediation Methodology (IMM) proposed in this article responds to this challenge by providing a systematic framework for developing language skills and cultural mediation competence simultaneously, through the integration of specialist subject content across all four language skill areas. IMM is grounded theoretically in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), Byram's (1997, 2021) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, and the task-based language teaching tradition (Ellis, 2018). It draws operationally on the instructional design principles proposed by Mishan and Kiss (2024) for intercultural language materials and on Khalyapina's (2021)

research on integrative approaches to language and culture teaching in digital environments.

The article reports the theoretical foundations of IMM, its instructional design, and the results of a two-semester experimental study (2023–2025) at Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages (NamDCHTI), Uzbekistan, involving 94 pre-service English teachers. The study addresses three research questions: (1) Does IMM produce significantly greater gains in language skills than conventional parallel instruction? (2) Does IMM produce significantly greater gains in cultural mediation competence? (3) What mechanisms explain IMM's effects on language and intercultural development?

Theoretical background

Sociocultural Foundations

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory provides the foundational epistemological basis for IMM. Two core concepts are especially relevant. First, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) — the space between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with expert mediation — suggests that language learning is most productive when tasks are calibrated at the upper edge of learners' current competence, supported by scaffolding that can be progressively withdrawn. Second, Vygotsky's concept of the unity of affect and cognition implies that emotionally meaningful, culturally resonant learning tasks produce deeper processing and more durable learning outcomes than decontextualised skill exercises. IMM operationalises both principles: integrative-mediative tasks are calibrated to ZPD through a five-level progression from reproductive to creative difficulty, and their cultural content is selected for relevance and resonance with learners' own cultural experiences and future professional contexts.

Lantolf and Thorne's (2006) extension of Vygotskian theory to second language acquisition adds the concept of symbolic mediation: language learners do not merely

acquire a neutral communicative tool but internalise a symbolic system through which they think, feel, and construct identity. This perspective supports the IMM principle that language skill development and cultural identity engagement cannot be separated: developing English language skills means simultaneously developing new symbolic resources for mediating experience, which inevitably engages learners' cultural identities and values.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

Byram's (1997) foundational model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) identifies five dimensions: knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*), and attitudes of openness and curiosity (*savoir être*). In his 2021 revision, Byram extended the model to address transnational identity and digital communication, positioning ICC as a dynamic, context-sensitive competence rather than a fixed set of cultural facts. IMM is designed to address all five ICC dimensions systematically: *linguo-cultural* and *sociocultural* exercises address the knowledge dimension; *discourse-analytical* exercises address skills of interpreting and relating; *reflective-professional* exercises address critical cultural awareness; and *project-creative* exercises engage attitudes of openness.

The CEFR Companion Volume's (Council of Europe, 2020) mediation descriptors provide IMM with a concrete operational vocabulary for cultural mediation competence. Specifically, the descriptors for 'mediating a text', 'mediating concepts', and 'mediating communication' across cultural contexts map directly onto IMM's three-tier mediative task structure: text-level mediation tasks (summarising, reformulating), concept-level mediation tasks (explaining, contextualising), and communication-level mediation tasks

(facilitating dialogue, resolving misunderstanding).

Task-Based Language Teaching and Specialist Subject Integration

Ellis's (2018) task-based language teaching (TBLT) framework provides the pedagogical architecture for IMM's exercise typology. TBLT's core principle — that language is acquired most effectively when learners are engaged in meaningful communicative activity directed toward a non-linguistic goal — aligns with IMM's integration of specialist subject content as both the vehicle for language development and the domain of cultural mediation practice. Fogarty's (2009) taxonomy of curriculum integration models provides a further structural resource: IMM draws specifically on his 'webbed' and 'threaded' integration models, which maintain the integrity of individual subject disciplines while weaving shared conceptual threads — in IMM's case, cultural mediation — across them.

Mishan and Kiss (2024) contribute the most recent and directly applicable methodological framework: their Intercultural Language Materials Design model, which specifies principles for creating materials that develop language skills and intercultural competence simultaneously through authentic, culturally complex tasks. IMM operationalises four of their core principles: cultural authenticity (materials drawn from genuine cross-cultural communication contexts), task complexity (tasks require genuine meaning-making, not just form manipulation), reflective engagement (tasks require learners to position themselves as cultural agents, not just language users), and iterative progression (tasks revisit cultural themes at increasing levels of linguistic and analytical complexity).

The integrative-mediation methodology: Design

- **Core Principles**

IMM is organised around five core principles that distinguish it from both conventional language teaching and conventional intercultural competence

instruction. (1) Integration: specialist subject content (language methodology, linguistics, cultural studies, literature) provides the substantive material for language skill development, so that language and content are developed simultaneously rather than in parallel. (2) Mediation orientation: tasks position pre-service teachers as cultural mediators — agents who explain, translate, and negotiate between cultural frameworks — rather than as cultural apprentices seeking a native speaker norm. (3) Spiral progression: cultural themes and mediation skills are revisited at increasing levels of linguistic and analytical complexity across the curriculum. (4) Skill integration: reading, listening, speaking, and writing are developed through tasks that require their coordinated use rather than their isolated practice. (5) Reflective identity engagement: tasks require learners to position their own cultural identity as a resource for mediation rather than an obstacle to target language acquisition.

- **Exercise Typology**

IMM's exercise system is organised in a five-level hierarchy of increasing complexity and mediative demand, drawing on Passov's (2010) progression model and extending it with explicit cultural mediation objectives. Level 1 (Linguo-cultural exercises) develop awareness of the cultural dimensions embedded in target language vocabulary, pragmatics, and discourse patterns. Level 2 (Sociocultural exercises) develop learners' knowledge and analytical skills in relation to cultural practices, values, and communication norms. Level 3 (Discourse-analytical exercises) develop skills of identifying, interpreting, and re-voicing cultural meanings across texts and modalities. Level 4 (Reflective-professional exercises) develop learners' capacity for critical self-reflection on their own cultural assumptions and their implications for professional practice. Level 5 (Project-creative exercises) integrate all preceding levels in open-ended, authentic mediation tasks — collaborative cultural projects, cross-cultural simulations, real-world

mediation scenarios — that require coordinated use of all four language skills and all three tiers of cultural mediation competence.

- **Assessment Framework**

IMM employs a three-component assessment system aligned with its dual objectives. Language skill development is assessed through CEFR-referenced performance tasks in all four skill areas, with analytic rubrics addressing accuracy, fluency, discourse organisation, and register appropriateness. Cultural mediation competence is assessed through a portfolio of mediative performances — recorded role-plays, written mediative commentaries, reflective journal entries — evaluated against descriptors adapted from the CEFR-CV mediation scales (Council of Europe, 2020). Intercultural sensitivity development is monitored using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer, 2011) administered at pre- and post-test intervals.

Methods

Research design. The study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design. The experimental group received a two-semester pre-service ELT course restructured around IMM principles. The control group received the standard parallel-instruction curriculum at the same institution, taught by instructors matched for experience and qualification level.

Participants. Ninety-four pre-service English teachers at NamDCHTI participated: 48 in the experimental group and 46 in the control group. Participants were second-year students (mean age 19.8 years; 71 female, 23 male), all Uzbek first-language speakers with Russian as a second language, studying English as their major. Groups were matched at pre-test on CEFR proficiency level (predominantly B1–B2) and IDI orientation stage.

Instruments. Four instruments were used. (1) A language proficiency battery assessing speaking (recorded monologue and dialogue tasks), writing (summary and

argumentation tasks), reading (comprehension and critical analysis tasks), and listening (gist and detail tasks), scored by two trained raters (inter-rater reliability: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). (2) A Cultural Mediation Competence Scale (CMCS) developed by the researcher, comprising 12 performance descriptors rated on a 5-point scale across the three mediation tiers defined in Section 3.3 (content validity confirmed by five expert reviewers; internal consistency $\alpha = 0.84$). (3) The IDI (Hammer, 2011). (4) A reflective journal protocol and focus-group interview schedule (five groups of 8–10 participants each) for qualitative data collection.

Procedure. The experimental course ran across two academic semesters (September 2023 – May 2025), comprising 32 instructional weeks of 4 contact hours per week. Pre-tests were administered in September 2023; post-tests in May 2025. IMM was implemented across four specialist modules: Language Methodology, Theoretical Linguistics, Cultural Studies, and English Literature. Each module was restructured around the five-level exercise hierarchy, with modules sharing common cultural themes to enable spiral reinforcement.

Data analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using independent-samples t-tests to compare group post-scores (controlling for pre-test scores via ANCOVA), and Cohen's d for effect size estimation. Qualitative data from reflective journals ($n=94$) and focus-group transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with two independent coders achieving agreement of $\kappa=0.81$.

Results

Language Skill Development

Across all four language skills, experimental group participants demonstrated significantly greater post-test gains than control group participants. Speaking proficiency: experimental group mean post-score 76.4 (SD=6.8) vs. control group 68.2 (SD=7.4), $t(92)=5.63$, $p<0.001$, $d=1.02$. Writing proficiency: experimental 73.8 (SD=7.1) vs.

control 67.4 (SD=7.9), $t(92)=4.11$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.87$. Listening comprehension: experimental 78.2 (SD=6.4) vs. control 73.1 (SD=7.2), $t(92)=3.62$, $p<0.001$, $d=0.76$. Reading proficiency: experimental 74.6 (SD=6.9) vs. control 70.3 (SD=7.8), $t(92)=2.83$, $p=0.006$, $d=0.71$. Effect sizes were largest for speaking ($d=1.02$) and writing ($d=0.87$), suggesting that integrative-mediative tasks have their strongest impact on productive skills.

Cultural Mediation Competence

CMCS post-scores showed significantly stronger gains in the experimental group: mean post-score 3.84 (SD=0.61) vs. control group 2.97 (SD=0.72), $t(92)=6.34$, $p<0.001$, $d=1.31$. Gains were most pronounced on the communication-level mediation tier (facilitating cross-cultural dialogue, resolving intercultural misunderstanding), consistent with IMM's Level 5 project-creative exercises, which provided the most extensive authentic mediation practice.

Intercultural Sensitivity Development

IDI post-scores indicated significant developmental progress in the experimental group: the proportion of participants in the 'minimisation' orientation decreased from 58% to 24%, while the proportion in the 'acceptance' orientation increased from 11% to 43% ($\chi^2(4)=41.7$, $p<0.001$). Control group IDI distribution showed no significant change across the study period.

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of reflective journals and focus-group data identified five mechanisms through which participants reported IMM accelerating their development. Theme 1: 'Meaningful content generates genuine language production' — participants reported that using specialist subject content as the vehicle for language tasks created authentic communicative purpose that drill-based exercises lacked. Theme 2: 'Mediation tasks activate all four skills simultaneously' — participants described Level 5 project tasks as uniquely demanding in requiring them to read, listen, speak, and write in coordinated ways.

Theme 3: 'Cultural identity as a mediative resource' — participants reported that being positioned as cultural mediators, rather than native speaker apprentices, gave their cultural backgrounds professional value. Theme 4: 'Reflective practice deepens cultural insight' — Level 4 exercises were identified as the most cognitively challenging but also the most professionally meaningful. Theme 5: 'Spiral design creates cumulative competence' — participants noted that revisiting cultural themes at increasing complexity created a sense of growing mastery absent from parallel instruction.

Discussion

The findings provide robust empirical support for IMM's dual objectives. The effect sizes obtained for language skill development ($d=0.71-1.02$) are substantially larger than the mean effect sizes reported for conventional ELT instruction in recent meta-analyses ($d=0.40-0.60$; Ellis, 2018), suggesting that the integration of specialist content and cultural mediation orientation provides a measurable instructional advantage over parallel skill-and-content instruction.

The particularly strong effects on speaking and writing ($d=1.02$ and $d=0.87$ respectively) are theoretically significant. IMM's Level 5 project-creative exercises require extended, purposeful language production in authentic mediative contexts — conditions that Skehan's (2003) task-based processing model predicts will produce both fluency and complexity gains, as learners' attention is directed toward communicative success rather than formal accuracy. The qualitative Theme 2 ('Mediation tasks activate all four skills simultaneously') provides direct participant evidence for this mechanism.

The very large effect size for cultural mediation competence development ($d=1.31$) supports the proposition that positioning pre-service teachers as cultural mediators — rather than providing intercultural training as a supplementary element of ELT methodology courses — produces qualitatively different and

more substantial competence outcomes. This aligns with the argument advanced by Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) that intercultural competence is most effectively developed through sustained integration into language practice rather than through discrete cultural awareness units.

The qualitative Theme 3 ('Cultural identity as a mediative resource') connects to the broader identity-affirming pedagogy literature reviewed in the theoretical background. Participants' accounts of their cultural backgrounds acquiring professional value through the mediative positioning confirm Norton's (2013) investment model: learners who perceive their cultural identity as an asset in the target language context demonstrate stronger engagement and more ambitious language production than those who experience it as an obstacle.

Several aspects of IMM's design warrant critical reflection. The spiral progression model depends on consistent implementation across specialist modules, which requires sustained coordination among subject lecturers — a substantial institutional demand. The CMCS, while showing good internal consistency, requires further validation across different institutional and national contexts before its use can be recommended as a standard assessment tool. Future research should also investigate the differential effects of individual IMM exercise levels to identify which levels contribute most strongly to specific competence gains.

Conclusion

This article has presented the theoretical foundations, instructional design, and empirical outcomes of the Integrative-Mediation Methodology for developing pre-service English teachers' language skills and cultural mediation competence. The key finding — that IMM produces significantly and substantially stronger gains in all four language skills and in cultural mediation competence than conventional parallel instruction, with effect sizes ranging from $d=0.71$ to $d=1.31$ —

establishes IMM as an evidence-based instructional model for pre-service ELT programmes in non-Anglo contexts.

The study makes three contributions to the field. Theoretically, it synthesises sociocultural, ICC, and TBLT frameworks into a coherent pedagogical model that addresses the integration challenge at the heart of pre-service ELT. Empirically, it provides the first large-scale experimental evidence of the effects of integrative-mediative instruction in the Uzbek higher education context. Practically, it offers a replicable five-level exercise typology and a three-component assessment framework that can be adapted

across different national and institutional contexts.

Limitations include the single-institution design, the two-semester timeframe (which does not capture long-term retention or transfer effects), and the need for further validation of the CMCS instrument. Future research directions include longitudinal follow-up studies examining the effects of IMM training on graduates' classroom teaching practice, cross-national comparative studies investigating IMM's transferability to other non-Anglo ELT contexts, and investigations of the role of digital and AI-assisted mediation tools in extending IMM's reach.

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