



## TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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**Abstract.** *In the context of globalization, learning foreign languages is gaining particular importance not only as a means of communication but also as a way to develop intercultural competence. This article examines the significance of an intercultural approach in foreign language teaching, emphasizing the necessity of integrating cultural aspects into the educational process. The influence of culture on linguistic communication is analyzed, along with the principles and methods of developing intercultural competence. Special attention is given to the role of information technologies and authentic interaction with native speakers in fostering intercultural communication.*

**Keywords:** *foreign languages, intercultural competence, intercultural communication, language education, intercultural approach, authentic interaction*

In the context of globalization and the intensification of intercultural connections in all spheres of society, the demand for specialists proficient in foreign languages and possessing a high level of intercultural competence is increasing. Modern methodologists and educators face the challenge of optimizing and intensifying the process of foreign language learning to develop a secondary linguistic personality capable of effective intercultural interaction.

An insufficient level of intercultural competence hinders adequate understanding between representatives of different cultures, thereby obstructing the processes of cultural exchange and enrichment. One of the key solutions to this



problem is the application of an intercultural approach in foreign language teaching. In modern conditions, language education is no longer merely a process of language acquisition; it is transforming into a holistic system incorporating both the theory and technology of foreign language education. Thus, language learning should not only focus on vocabulary and grammar but also on a deep understanding of the culture to which the language belongs.[1]

Intercultural communication training in foreign language learning is implemented through the development of intercultural competence, which includes knowledge, attitudes, and skills, as well as linguistic material presented in the form of thematic blocks, typical communication situations, and task systems. Knowledge within intercultural competence is viewed through the principle of considering cultural universals characteristic of the studied language. In high-context and collectivist cultures, a significant portion of meaning in communication is conveyed not through direct verbal expressions but through non-verbal cues, situational context, and social norms. In such linguistic systems, emphasis is placed not so much on words as on their subtext, intonation, tone, and pauses. This is particularly evident in interpersonal interactions, where open conflicts are avoided, and the primary communicative goal is to maintain harmony and express respect.[2]

Such cultural characteristics require foreign language learners not only to master grammatical and lexical norms but also to understand hidden meanings, social hierarchy, and traditional communication models. Successful communication is possible only when these factors are taken into account, making the intercultural approach to foreign language teaching an integral part of the educational process. Research confirms that learning a foreign language is impossible without immersion in the culture of its native speakers. In this context, the concept of intercultural learning becomes especially significant. As noted by



Columbia University professor Bonny Norton in her work "Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Change," the process of mastering a new language goes beyond learning vocabulary and grammatical constructions. It also includes familiarity with cultural traditions, norms, and worldview aspects characteristic of that language.[3]

Norton's analysis of languages from different families demonstrates that each language contains unique words and expressions shaped by the culture and mindset of its speakers. This supports the thesis that language is formed under the influence of historical, social, and cultural contexts. Therefore, full proficiency in a foreign language requires not only mastering its structural elements but also gaining a deep understanding of the worldview, values, and behavioral models of its native speakers. As mentioned earlier, language and culture are inextricably linked, and effective intercultural learning contributes to the expansion of students' cognitive boundaries, the development of their flexible thinking abilities, and their successful adaptation in a multilingual and multicultural environment. Studying the culture of the language's native speakers not only enhances linguistic competence but also fosters intercultural empathy, which is a crucial factor for successful interpersonal communication in a globalized world.

Analyzing various researchers' approaches, one can conclude that culture in the language-learning process represents contextual knowledge necessary for successful communication in specific situations. It encompasses a set of social and cultural norms, values, and symbolic meanings accumulated by the linguistic community. Without understanding these aspects, full language proficiency is unattainable, as communication extends beyond simple encoding and decoding of information and involves interpreting meanings within a cultural context.

The practical significance of developing intercultural competence lies in its ability to provide students with the opportunity to successfully interact with



representatives of different cultures in academic, professional, and social spheres. Foreign language proficiency combined with cultural awareness enhances specialists' competitiveness in the international labor market while also fostering personal growth, adaptability, and constructive dialogue skills.

All available resources – classroom environments, schools, local and national contexts, as well as international collaborations – should be utilized for intercultural interaction. New information technologies play a crucial role in this process. These tools should help integrate students' real-life experiences in intercultural communication into the educational process. Students should have opportunities for authentic interaction with native speakers of the studied linguistic culture. This acquired experience should be organically incorporated into the learning process and monitored by both teachers and students through conscious reflection and self-reflection. This approach emphasizes that the learning process is individualized, dependent on students' efforts and their personal responsibility for learning outcomes. Thus, intercultural competence becomes not only a desirable outcome of foreign language learning but also an essential tool for successful integration into the global community.

## REFERENCES

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