

**Bakhriniso Norova, Surayyo Kasimova**  
Tashkent State Agrarian University  
e-mail: [surayyoqosimova789@gmail.com](mailto:surayyoqosimova789@gmail.com)

### **DEVELOPING THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

**Abstract.** Teaching and learning a foreign language does not mean only direct instruction in linguistic skills such as phonology, morphology, vocabulary, and syntax. In addition to grammatical competence, a culturally competent student should have sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, sociocultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness. Culture, according to one definition, is values, traditions, customs, arts and institutions shared by a group of people united by nationality, ethnicity, religion or language. Foreign language teachers' interest in intercultural communication has increased over the past few decades.

**Keywords:** dimension, diversity, cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication.

**Норова Бахринисо Юлдашевна**  
**Касимова Сурайё Салохитдиновна**  
Ташкентский государственный аграрный университет  
e-mail: [surayyoqosimova789@gmail.com](mailto:surayyoqosimova789@gmail.com)

### **РАЗВИТИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА**

**Аннотация.** Преподавание и изучение иностранного языка не означает только непосредственное обучение лингвистическим навыкам, таким как фонология, морфология, словарный запас и синтаксис. В дополнение к грамматической компетенции культурно компетентный учащийся должен обладать социолингвистической компетенцией, прагматической компетенцией, социокультурными знаниями и межкультурной осведомленностью. Культура, согласно одному определению, это ценности, традиции, обычаи, искусства и институты, разделяемые группой людей, объединенных национальностью, этнической принадлежностью, религией или языком. За последние несколько десятилетий интерес учителей иностранных языков к межкультурной коммуникации возрос.

**Ключевые слова:** измерение, разнообразие, культурное сознание, межкультурная коммуникация.

The components of intercultural competence are knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social

groups. Accepting the 'Intercultural Dimension' requires skills of comparison, of interpreting, relating, and critical cultural awareness. While teaching English for non-specialized language learners, we, English teachers should not only teach our students the vocabulary, grammar, but also give them some knowledge, encouraging and supporting students' critical reflection on their intercultural experiences and on.

As a consequence the 'best' teacher is neither the native nor the non-native speaker, but the person who can help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures, can help them acquire interest in and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives [2, p. 326].

Intercultural learning programs including intercultural dimensions, in the classroom allow students to seize splendid opportunities that diversity offers and learn how to interact in a global, diverse and challenging world. The main purpose and aim of the teaching English is also give learners enough language about intercultural competence; prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures. It is essential to use authentic material but to ensure that learners understand its context and intention. Materials from different origins with different perspectives should be used together to enable learners to compare and to analyze the materials critically. It is more important that learners acquire skills of analysis than information.

Foreign language learners can acquire the skills of critical analysis of stereotypes, taboos and prejudice in texts and images they read or see. Their own prejudices and stereotypes, taboos are based on feelings rather than thoughts and need to be challenged, but teachers need to ensure that the ideas are challenged not the person, if the effect is to be positive.

The teachers very often encourage learners to compare cultures, while working with the literary texts and interesting topic or grammar structures. The reasoning behind it would be that comparing is based upon observing, noticing and interpreting cultural symbols, different rituals, and ceremonies and so on. However, the question is whether critical thinking is involved, too, which would be the real value of this activity. Talking about one's own cultural experience is a valuable cultural activity for those who do it, since they get personally involved. Moreover, it is a cultural-awareness activity. The results show that the teachers talk about their own cultural experiences slightly more often than prompting learners to talk about theirs. Although the difference is not significant, it might, however, raise a question of whether the teachers are still more prone to using teacher-centred activities. This opinion is reinforced with the results pertaining to learners' active role in the learning process [1, p. 35].

Culture teaching is mostly defined in terms of developing positive attitudes towards other cultures and acquiring cultural knowledge, not so much about daily life and routines as about the civilization issues. Although comparison of cultures is considered to be an important aspect of culture teaching, the teachers do not pay that much

attention to dealing with one's own culture, as if not aware that culture, just like language, is part of one's identity. Much less importance is given to intercultural skills, and the least relevant culture teaching objectives are, again, the ones related to some of the essential IC issues, namely, values, beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices. Cultural knowledge can help learners to become aware of their own cultural background; however, it cannot significantly change their attitudes towards other cultures and their members.

Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognising that the aims are:

- to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence;
- to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures;
- to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours;
- to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience.

So language teaching with an intercultural dimension aims not only at helping learners to acquire the linguistic competence needed to communicate in speaking or writing, to formulate what they want to say/write in correct and appropriate ways. It also develops their intercultural competence i.e. their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality [2, p. 326].

A foreign language teacher plays a great role in structuring and managing discussion, by providing various ways of approaching the material, through a range of question types, by eliciting multiple and varied responses and by enabling learners to deal with complex or confronting issues in their talk. Students need to be encouraged to develop their own perspectives and not seek to conform to a notion of a particular 'right' answer to understand their experiences of language, culture, and learning. Students need to learn to talk about issues of language, culture, and diversity. Such talk is not something that learners may be aware of when they begin to learn a new language. Students should be encouraged and given the resources to use all of their language abilities is interacting and dealing with questions.

In each class I try to teach my students to recognize that language and culture are closely related, culture is an important part of English learning, and rich cultural knowledge will improve their ingrate skills in English language. As a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs, it has an important social function and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity. It is the means by which culture and its traditions and shared values may be conveyed and preserved. Culture and language are linked with to each other's. You cannot understand a culture without first learning a language. A specific language is usually associated with a particular group of people. You interact with the culture of the language's speaker when you communicate in their language, finding out some interesting, various dimensions related to different cultures.

Culture greatly affects communication; it is helpful for teachers to introduce lessons and activities that reveal how different dialects, forms of address, customs, taboos, and other cultural elements influence interaction among different groups. Organizing different types of activities as Email exchange, project work, movies and films, on-line communication, use of media, case studies, narration of stories in teaching English is considered productive and fruitful. Sending information about cultural dimensions to the students is very important. It depends on teacher's creativity and fantasy. Making an experiment among my students I have chosen the project work in order to develop my students' cultural awareness and cultural awareness. Project work lends itself very well to the development of learners' intercultural knowledge because it is typically content-oriented. It also develops students' critical thinking, language skills, problem-solving skills, their fantasy, creativity, imagination, research skills, and teamwork skills. In addition, project work can allow students to learn in an autonomous way. In assigning projects, good foreign language teachers assess their students develop the ability to learn about the world's cultures without supervision. Effective projects and learning activities teach students where to look for information, how to infer cultural information encoded in a written or spoken text, how to make comparisons between different cultures, and how to make use of the new knowledge.

In conclusion part I would like to mention that teachers should let learners not only pay attention to cultural differences but also try to understand and study the differences to avoid misunderstanding in study and communication. It is essential for students to be educated directly and develop their awareness of cultural background knowledge in order to overcome the obstacles produced by cultural differences. The aim of English teaching is to foster students' comprehensive English capability by learning language and its culture. In successful teaching and study of both language and cultural background knowledge, cultural dimensions, cultural introduction contributes to foster students' cultural consciousness of target language. As a result, our students can improve their English comprehensive capacity and cultural communication of the target language.

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