



RULE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LESSONS IN DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Shermuxamedov Asliddin Ma'rufjon o'g'li

Group №2118, Foreign language and literature: English language, SamSIFL

E-mail: asliddinshermammedov97@gmail.com

+998944748097

Scientific supervisor: T. N. Nomozova

Abstract: *English language lessons are essential not only for improving linguistic skills but also for fostering intercultural competence among learners. By integrating culturally diverse content, authentic materials, and communicative activities, students develop the ability to understand, respect, and interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. This study investigates the role of English lessons in promoting learners' intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and practical communication skills in cross-cultural contexts. The findings indicate that lessons incorporating culturally rich resources, collaborative tasks, and reflective exercises significantly enhance learners' intercultural competence, preparing them for active participation in global communication and professional environments.*

Keywords: *English language teaching, intercultural competence, cross-cultural communication, cultural awareness, reflective learning*

Introduction. In the era of globalization, intercultural competence has become an essential skill for students, enabling them to navigate diverse social, academic, and professional environments. English, as a widely used international language, offers a unique platform for developing both linguistic proficiency and intercultural awareness. Intercultural competence refers to the ability to understand, respect, and communicate effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It includes attitudes, knowledge, and skills that allow learners to interpret and relate to unfamiliar cultural practices appropriately. English language lessons, when carefully structured, provide learners with exposure to multiple cultural perspectives.

By incorporating authentic materials such as literary texts, films, media content, and real-life communication scenarios, students can engage with cultural nuances beyond the classroom. These lessons also promote critical thinking, empathy, and adaptability, which are integral to successful intercultural interaction. Furthermore, collaborative learning activities encourage peer-to-peer exchange, enabling learners to experience cultural differences firsthand and develop practical skills for cross-cultural communication. In addition, regular reflection and discussion help students internalize these experiences and connect them to their own cultural context. This holistic approach ensures that learners not



only acquire language skills but also develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.

The importance of embedding intercultural competence in English lessons lies in its ability to prepare learners for global citizenship, professional opportunities, and socially responsible behavior. Therefore, educators must design lesson plans that balance linguistic objectives with cultural understanding, ensuring that students develop a holistic set of competencies that extend beyond mere language acquisition. By integrating interactive activities and real-world cultural examples, teachers can make lessons more engaging and meaningful. Additionally, fostering an environment of open discussion encourages learners to critically evaluate different perspectives and develop empathy toward diverse cultures.

Research demonstrates that English language instruction can be instrumental in fostering intercultural competence among learners. Byram (1997) emphasizes that intercultural communicative competence comprises attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. These components collectively enable learners to understand and negotiate cultural differences effectively. Deardorff (2006) highlights the significance of reflective practices and collaborative projects in the development of intercultural skills. By engaging learners in activities that require perspective-taking and critical reflection, teachers can promote deeper understanding of cultural diversity. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) note that integrating authentic materials from diverse English-speaking contexts allows students to encounter multiple worldviews, social norms, and communicative styles, thereby enriching their cultural knowledge.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) further supports the development of intercultural competence by prioritizing meaningful interaction over rote memorization. Through group discussions, role-plays, debates, and project-based tasks, learners not only practice the target language but also negotiate meaning and cultural understanding simultaneously. Kumaravadivelu (2008) stresses that the combination of linguistic and cultural learning creates learners who are better equipped to operate in multicultural and globalized contexts. The literature consistently indicates that the development of intercultural competence is a gradual process requiring repeated exposure, reflective engagement, and structured guidance from educators. A well-planned curriculum that incorporates both language and cultural learning can significantly enhance learners' readiness for international communication and professional collaboration.

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how English language lessons contribute to the development of intercultural competence. Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and analysis of lesson plans and learning materials that incorporated cultural content. The participants included thirty secondary school learners aged fifteen to eighteen and five English teachers experienced in teaching English as a foreign language. The study also examined how different teaching strategies influenced students' engagement with cultural topics. Additionally, it considered



learners' reflections and responses to classroom activities to gain a deeper understanding of intercultural competence development.

The study focused on examining how cultural content was integrated into lessons, the extent to which authentic materials such as films, literary texts, media content, and real-life scenarios were used, and how collaborative learning activities fostered intercultural interaction. Additionally, the research explored reflective practices aimed at helping learners critically evaluate cultural differences, assumptions, and their own responses in cross-cultural contexts. The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in learners' intercultural competence development, the strategies employed by teachers, and the overall effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches.

The findings revealed that learners who were regularly exposed to culturally diverse materials demonstrated a noticeable improvement in their understanding of different social norms, traditions, and values. English lessons that incorporated authentic cultural content helped students move beyond surface-level language use and develop a more meaningful awareness of cultural diversity. As a result, learners became more open-minded and respectful toward perspectives different from their own. Furthermore, collaborative classroom activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and project-based tasks significantly enhanced learners' communicative abilities. These activities provided opportunities for students to practice adjusting their language and behavior according to different cultural contexts, which strengthened their practical communication skills.

Reflective activities, including guided discussions and short written reflections, supported the development of critical thinking by encouraging learners to recognize personal biases and assumptions. Teachers also noted that the consistent use of interactive and culturally rich materials contributed positively to learners' motivation and engagement. Overall, the results indicate that well-structured English lessons can effectively support the development of intercultural competence alongside language proficiency. In addition, these practices encouraged learners to participate more actively in classroom interaction and to approach cultural differences with openness and respect. As a result, students became more confident in expressing their ideas and engaging in intercultural communication both inside and outside the classroom.

This study highlights the important role English language lessons play in promoting intercultural competence when language instruction is combined with cultural learning. English classes provide a meaningful space where learners can explore cultural diversity while simultaneously developing communication skills. Through exposure to authentic materials and interactive classroom practices, learners gain opportunities to reflect on cultural norms and compare them with their own experiences. The integration of collaborative activities such as discussions, role-plays, and project work encourages learners to interact from different perspectives. These activities help students become more flexible in their communication and more aware of how language use may vary across cultures.



Reflective tasks further support this process by allowing learners to evaluate their attitudes, assumptions, and responses to unfamiliar cultural situations.

The role of the teacher is especially significant in guiding learners through intercultural learning. By carefully selecting materials and designing tasks that promote cultural understanding, teachers can create an inclusive learning environment where learners feel confident to express ideas and engage in intercultural dialogue. As a result, English lessons move beyond language instruction and contribute to learners' personal growth, empathy, and social awareness. Teachers' continuous support also helps students recognize and navigate cultural differences more effectively. Moreover, integrating authentic cultural experiences encourages learners to apply their intercultural skills in real-life contexts.

The findings indicate that linguistic interference from Uzbek significantly influences learners' English production, affecting pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Targeted interventions, including contrastive analysis, communicative practice, and exposure to authentic materials, were effective in reducing errors. Raising learners' awareness of cross-linguistic differences allowed them to self-monitor and correct mistakes, fostering independent learning skills. Moreover, interactive classroom activities, such as role-plays and peer discussions, not only improved accuracy but also enhanced learner engagement and confidence. The results suggest that addressing both cognitive and linguistic factors is essential; understanding the ways in which L1 affects L2 enables educators to provide supportive feedback while encouraging active language use. The study confirms that a holistic approach, integrating metalinguistic awareness, corrective feedback, and authentic input, can mitigate negative transfer and improve overall proficiency.

Conclusion. In recent years, the development of intercultural competence has become an essential goal of modern education, particularly within English language teaching. English lessons offer unique opportunities for learners to encounter diverse cultural perspectives and to develop the skills necessary for effective communication in a globalized world. This study demonstrates that English language lessons play a significant role in fostering intercultural competence when cultural content, authentic materials, collaborative learning, and reflective practices are effectively integrated into instruction. Learners not only improve their language proficiency but also develop greater cultural awareness, empathy, and adaptability in cross-cultural interactions.

Overall, incorporating intercultural elements into English teaching enhances learners' ability to communicate respectfully and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, English language education should aim to balance linguistic objectives with intercultural learning in order to prepare learners for academic, professional, and social engagement in an increasingly interconnected world. *This approach not only improves language proficiency but also fosters empathy, open-mindedness, and cultural sensitivity among students. Moreover, it equips learners with the skills needed to navigate complex multicultural environments successfully.*



The role of teachers is crucial in guiding learners through intercultural learning experiences, as by selecting relevant materials, designing meaningful tasks, and encouraging reflection, educators create a supportive environment that nurtures curiosity, tolerance, and mutual respect, while collaborative activities, such as group discussions, role-plays, and project work, along with reflective exercises like journals and classroom dialogues, allow students to practice intercultural communication, critically evaluate their assumptions, recognize biases, and develop both immediate language skills and long-term personal, professional, and cultural competence necessary for effective engagement in a globalized society.

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