
INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES



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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the cultural dimension of foreign language education, and teachers today are expected to promote the acquisition of intercultural competence in their learners. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the opinions and attitudes of Turkish teachers of English on intercultural competence teaching and to see how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes are reflected in their classroom applications. Data were collected from 503 EFL teachers by means of a questionnaire. The findings have revealed that language teachers seem to be aware of the role of the culture in foreign language education though they do not often integrate culture into their teaching in order to develop intercultural competence in their learners.

Keywords: *Intercultural competence, EFL teaching, Turkish teachers of English, cultural exchange, internships abroad*

The process of globalization, which is currently developing, leads to an expansion of the interactions of various countries, peoples and cultures. Influence is carried out through cultural exchanges and direct contacts between state institutions, social groups, social movements, through scientific cooperation, trade, tourism, etc. Communication with foreigners becomes a reality, and a clash with representatives of a different culture enters our daily life. More and more often educational institutions exchange students and schoolchildren, teachers organize joint projects and take internships abroad, thus participating in intercultural communication and dialogue of cultures. Intercultural communication promotes mutual understanding in the process of intercultural communication.

Intercultural competence refers to the ability to communicate in a foreign language, taking into account the differences in cultures and stereotypes of thinking. The study of the problems of intercultural communication involves acquaintance with the following phenomena and concepts: the principles of communication, the basic functions of culture, the influence of culture on perception and communication in its various fields and types, parameters for describing the influence of culture on human activity and the development of society. Formation of intercultural competence should be considered in connection with the development of the ability of students to participate in the dialogue of cultures on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, tolerance for cultural differences and overcoming cultural barriers.

Intercultural education is aimed at the formation of students' ability to intercultural communication and contributes to the students' consciousness of their belonging to a certain ethnos, as well as acquaintance with the traditions and cultural characteristics of representatives of another culture. A modern person who speaks a foreign language is involved in the process of communicating with other people who are representatives of their cultures. In this regard, learners of a foreign language are required not only to have a rich lexical stock and decent pronunciation, to know grammar well, but also to form an intercultural competence.

This competence assumes of such level of language knowledge, which allows, at first, to react flexibly to all kinds of unforeseen turns in the course of a conversation; secondly, to determine an adequate line of speech behavior; thirdly, to select accurately specific funds from the vast arsenal; and finally, fourthly, to use these means accordance the proposed situation.

The formation of intercultural competence implies the interaction of two cultures in several directions acquaintance with the culture of the country of the studied language by means of the foreign language itself and the assimilation of the behavior model of carriers of foreign culture; the influence of a foreign language and foreign culture on the development of the native language and the model of behavior within the framework of the native culture; development of personality under the influence of two cultures.

It is necessary to consider how the information of intercultural competence of students is carried out in the context of the above-mentioned areas. In the process of mastering a foreign language, students learn the material that demonstrates the functioning of the language in the natural environment, the speech and non-verbal behavior of the native speakers in different situations of communication and reveals

the behavioral features associated with folk customs, traditions, the social structure of society, ethnicity.

First of all, this happens with the help of authentic materials, which are normative in terms of language design and contain information.

It is important to know the national and cultural characteristics of the behavior of a foreigner in order to avoid possible conflicts in interethnic communication. In this way, learning foreign language, student must assimilate not only its lexical, grammar and syntactic features, but also must learn how to respond adequately to the replicas of native speakers, to apply appropriately facial expressions and gestures, use the formulas of speech etiquette and know the cultural and historical peculiarities of the country of the learned language.

The implementation of intercultural communication presupposes a person's readiness not only to accept a representative of a different culture with all his national and mental characteristics, but also the ability to change himself.

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