

Multicultural Education in Foreign Language Teaching: Task-Based Approach



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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to propose a methodological framework for incorporating multicultural education into foreign language teaching using a task-based approach. The paper presents three objectives for achieving this aim: (1) investigate the role of multicultural education in foreign language teaching (FLT); (2) examine the effectiveness of task-based approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding in FLT; and finally (3) provide recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine, based on the findings of this study. The study presents a literature review of the role of multicultural education in foreign language teaching, which emphasizes the need for learners to develop intercultural competence alongside language proficiency. The effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in promoting intercultural competence and understanding is also discussed, with several studies suggesting that TBLT can be an effective approach for promoting intercultural competence among learners. The findings discuss a study conducted in Ukraine, which investigated the integration of multicultural education into foreign language teaching using a task-based approach. The study found that incorporating multicultural education into TBLT can enhance learners' intercultural competence and understanding, as well as their motivation to learn the language. The paper brings to light several recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into foreign language teaching in Ukraine and other countries, including the use of authentic materials and tasks, the promotion of collaboration and interaction among learners from different cultural backgrounds, and the incorporation of reflection activities into the curriculum. In conclusion, it is proposed to consider a methodological framework for incorporating multicultural education into foreign language teaching using a task-based approach. The study findings suggest that TBLT can be an effective tool for promoting intercultural competence among learners, and that the integration of multicultural education into TBLT can enhance learners' motivation to learn the language. The recommendations provided can serve as a guide for foreign language teachers in Ukraine and other contexts who wish to incorporate multicultural education into their language teaching practice.

KEYWORDS: multicultural education, intercultural competence, foreign language teaching, FLT, task-based approach, TBLT, teacher training, curriculum development, authentic materials, cultural perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education is a key component of foreign language teaching not only in Ukraine but also in the European Union. The EU has implemented various programs and guidelines to promote multiculturalism and intercultural understanding in education, including the Erasmus+ program, the European Language Label, and the European Framework of Reference for Languages [9; 11; 12; 14]. The Erasmus+ program, for example, provides funding for projects that promote intercultural dialogue and understanding, and encourages cooperation between educational institutions across Europe. Moreover, the EU has also developed acts and guidelines to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism, such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [10; 12]. These acts aim to protect and promote the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe, while also promoting social cohesion and integration.

Multicultural education in foreign language teaching has been a topic of interest for researchers for many years. Previous studies have shown that incorporating multicultural education into FLT can lead to improved intercultural competence, motivation, and engagement among learners [1; 3; 23]. However, it is agreed with Liddicoat & Scarino (2013) there is still a lack of understanding about how to effectively integrate multicultural education into FLT and how to assess its impact on learners [24].

The problem, therefore, is the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of multicultural education in FLT, as well as the effectiveness of task-based approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding among learners. Furthermore, there is a need for practical recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine, where there is a growing demand for foreign language proficiency and a need to foster intercultural competence in a multicultural society.

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This study is relevant today because of the increasing importance of foreign language proficiency and intercultural competence in a globalized world. It aims to fill the gap in the current literature by providing insights into the effectiveness of multicultural education in FLT and the task-based approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding. Additionally, the study provides practical recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine, which can be applied in other multicultural contexts.

Further, in the Ukrainian educational settings, multicultural education has also been recognized as an important aspect of foreign language teaching. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has developed guidelines for the development of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching, which emphasizes the importance of task-based and project-based approaches, as well as the integration of ICT and authentic materials.

Therefore, this research paper aims to explore the value of a task-based approach to multicultural education in FLT, by analyzing the effectiveness of such an approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding. The objectives of this study are to:

- (1) investigate the role of multicultural education in FLT;
- (2) examine the effectiveness of task-based approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding in FLT; and finally
- (3) provide recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine, based on the findings of this study.

By examining the EU programs and guidelines, as well as the experiences and practices of Ukraine, this research paper will contribute to the development of a comprehensive methodological framework for multicultural education in FLT. The findings of this study will also provide valuable insights into innovative approaches to FLT that promote multiculturalism and intercultural understanding, which are increasingly important in today's globalized world.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research paper involves a qualitative research design. The study was conducted using a case study approach, which involved collecting data from multiple sources, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. More details are provided below in the light of each set objective.

Objective 1: To investigate the role of multicultural education in FLT, data were collected through interviews with FLT teachers and administrators, as well as through document analysis of relevant policies and guidelines on multicultural education in FLT.

Objective 2: To examine the effectiveness of task-based approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding in FLT, data were collected through classroom observations of FLT lessons that use task-based approach, as well as through interviews with students and teachers to gather their perceptions on the impact of task-based approach on their intercultural competence.

Objective 3: To provide recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine, based on the findings of this study, the data collected from objectives 1 and 2 were analyzed to identify best practices and potential barriers for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine. Recommendations are, therefore, based on the analysis of the data and grounded in the relevant literature on multicultural education in FLT.

Overall, this methodology allowed for a comprehensive examination of the role of multicultural education in FLT and the effectiveness of task-based approach in promoting intercultural competence and understanding. The findings of this study may contribute to the development of recommendations for the integration of multicultural education into FLT in Ukraine and may have implications for other countries in the region and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multicultural education refers to the incorporation of diverse cultural perspectives and experiences into the teaching and learning process. It aims to promote understanding, respect, and appreciation for different cultures, and to challenge discrimination and prejudice. In the European Union (EU) and other international organizations, multicultural education is recognized as an important tool for promoting social inclusion, equality, and diversity.

The EU has adopted several policies and guidelines that promote multicultural education. For instance, the EU Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning emphasizes the importance of intercultural competences, which include "the ability to appreciate and respect diversity, to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures, and to understand, interpret and evaluate different perspectives" [15, p. 20]. The European Commission's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also emphasizes the importance of inclusive education, which involves "ensuring that everyone has access to quality education, from early childhood through to lifelong learning, on an equal basis with others, without discrimination" [17, p. 8].

The Council of Europe, which includes 47 member states including the EU countries, has also adopted policies and guidelines that promote multicultural education. The Council's Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture emphasizes the importance of intercultural competences, which include "the ability to appreciate and understand the diversity of cultures and perspectives within and between societies, and to use this understanding to build bridges between different cultures and to create inclusive societies" [9, p. 11]. The Council's Recommendation on Intercultural Dialogue in the Context of the Cultural Heritage of Europe

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also emphasizes the importance of promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding, and of recognizing and valuing the diversity of cultural heritage in Europe [11].

At the international level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has also recognized the importance of multicultural education. UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education emphasizes the importance of promoting intercultural understanding, empathy, and respect for diversity, and of developing critical thinking skills that enable individuals to challenge discrimination and prejudice [29].

Therefore, multicultural education is recognized as an important tool for promoting social inclusion, equality, and diversity in the EU and other international organizations. The EU and the Council of Europe have adopted several policies and guidelines that emphasize the importance of intercultural competences and intercultural dialogue, while UNESCO has emphasized the importance of promoting global citizenship education. These policies and guidelines reflect a growing recognition of the importance of multicultural education in promoting a more inclusive and diverse society.

In addition, it is worth noting that multicultural education is based on several key principles that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. These principles are reflected in the above EU policies and guidelines, which emphasize the importance of promoting intercultural competences, valuing diversity, and challenging discrimination and prejudice. Some of the key principles for multicultural education in EU policies and guidelines include:

- (i) **Valuing diversity:** Multicultural education recognizes and values the diversity of cultures, languages, and perspectives in society. It promotes respect for different cultures and the recognition of the contributions that diverse communities make to society.
- (ii) **Inclusion and equity:** Multicultural education aims to promote inclusion and equity in education by ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education regardless of their background, culture, or identity.
- (iii) **Intercultural competences:** Multicultural education promotes the development of intercultural competences, which include the ability to communicate effectively with people from different cultures, to understand and appreciate different perspectives, and to challenge discrimination and prejudice.
- (iv) **Critical thinking:** Multicultural education encourages critical thinking and reflection on social and cultural issues, including the recognition of power dynamics and the ways in which discrimination and prejudice are perpetuated.
- (v) **Collaborative learning:** Multicultural education emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning, where students learn from each other and engage in dialogue and discussion that promotes understanding and respect for different cultures and perspectives.

These principles are reflected in EU policies and guidelines, such as the EU Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, which emphasizes the importance of intercultural competences, and the Council of Europe's Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, which emphasizes the importance of valuing diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue [15; 9].

According to the shared opinion by many scholars and foreign language teachers, multicultural education plays a crucial role in the educational system and methodology of foreign language teaching (FLT), particularly in promoting intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures. Researchers from various European countries, including Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and France, have emphasized the importance of multicultural education in FLT and have conducted studies on the topic.

In Ukraine, researchers have highlighted the need for multicultural education in FLT to promote intercultural communicative competence and facilitate cross-cultural understanding [2; 6; 7]. In Poland, researchers have emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in FLT and have called for the integration of multicultural education into language instruction [20]. In Germany, researchers have studied the role of multicultural education in FLT and have found that it can promote students' intercultural competence and increase their motivation to learn a foreign language [5]. Similarly, in Spain, researchers have investigated the role of multicultural education in FLT and have found that it can enhance students' intercultural communicative competence and help them understand and appreciate different cultures [18].

With the Romance language groups, for example, in Portugal, researchers have studied the impact of multicultural education on FLT and have found that it can increase students' motivation and engagement in language learning, as well as improve their intercultural communicative competence [4]. Further, in France, researchers have emphasized the importance of integrating multicultural education into FLT to help students develop critical thinking skills and engage with different cultures [22].

As it can be followed, these studies highlight the important role that multicultural education plays in FLT, and the need to integrate it into language instruction to promote intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Recent literature has emphasized the importance of incorporating multicultural education into foreign language teaching (FLT) to promote intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures. However, many scholars argue that traditional teaching methodologies and materials may not be effective in achieving these goals and call for changes in FLT methodology to better incorporate multicultural education. It is also supported by the results of the survey and interviews with the

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foreign language teachers and instructors from different departments at the *National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine* (Kyiv, Ukraine). These departments include the department of foreign philology, where foreign language instruction is carried out to teach English mainly and deliver such courses as Financial English, Business English, English for Law, English for Engineers, etc.; the department of German and Romance languages and translation, with foreign language teachers and instructors who give lectures and workshops on theoretical and practical language study, however, in English only, and with translation – looking into the English to Ukrainian and Ukrainian to English translation; the department of foreign philology and translation focuses on practical courses of language teaching and acquisition and covers such languages as German, French, English, Spanish, Polish, Czech among the others.

One approach that has gained popularity in recent years is task-based language teaching (TBLT), which focuses on providing learners with opportunities to engage in real-life communication and meaningful language use. TBLT has been suggested as a way to integrate multicultural education into FLT, as it can provide learners with opportunities to engage with different cultures and perspectives. For example, Gao and Zhang (2018) argue that TBLT can be used to promote intercultural competence and understanding of different cultures by including tasks that involve interaction with speakers from different cultural backgrounds [19]. Similarly, Suleiman and Mappin (2019) suggest that TBLT can be used to help learners develop intercultural competence by providing opportunities for interaction and negotiation of meaning with speakers from different cultures [27].

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach to foreign language teaching that emphasizes the use of real-life communication and meaningful language use through tasks. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach to foreign language teaching that emphasizes providing learners with opportunities to engage in real-life communication and meaningful language use through tasks. TBLT has gained popularity in recent years as a way to integrate multicultural education into FLT, as it can provide learners with opportunities to engage with different cultures and perspectives.

TBLT can be particularly effective in promoting intercultural competence and understanding of different cultures because it involves learners in authentic language use, often in the context of real-world scenarios (Fig. 1. *Task-based approach for multicultural education in foreign language teaching*). This allows learners to encounter and interact with speakers from different cultural backgrounds, giving them a chance to develop intercultural communicative competence by negotiating meaning and navigating cultural differences.

Moreover, TBLT is learner-centered, allowing learners to take an active role in their own language learning process. This approach allows learners to bring their own experiences and perspectives to the classroom, which can help promote diversity and cultural exchange in the language classroom.

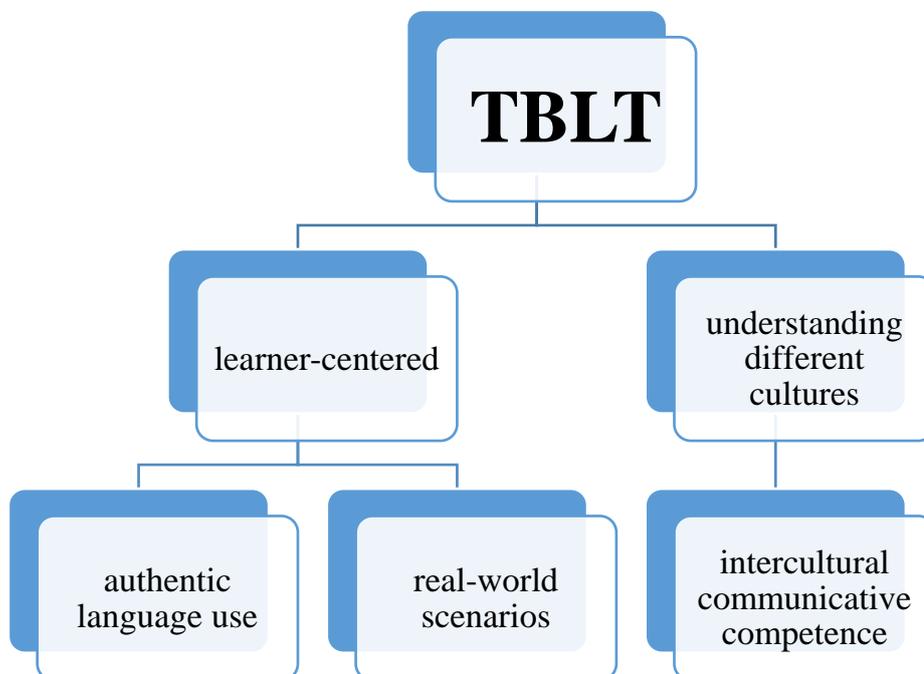


Fig. 1. Task-based approach for multicultural education in foreign language teaching

The key characteristics of TLT include (Fig. 2. *The key characteristics of TBLT*):

- (i) Communication-focused: TBLT emphasizes providing learners with opportunities to use the target language in real-life communication situations, focusing on communication and meaning over form and accuracy.
- (ii) Task-based: TBLT involves the use of tasks, which are activities that require learners to use the target language to achieve a specific goal. Tasks should be authentic and relevant to learners' interests and experiences.

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- (iii) Learner-centered: TBLT encourages learners to take an active role in their own learning process, promoting learner autonomy and providing opportunities for learners to reflect on their learning.
- (iv) Focus on meaning and form: TBLT balances the focus on communication and meaning with attention to language form and accuracy. Learners should be provided with opportunities to notice and reflect on language forms as they use the language in communication.
- (v) Integrated language skills: TBLT integrates the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in task activities, allowing learners to develop their language proficiency holistically.

Emphasis on intercultural communicative competence: TBLT provides learners with opportunities to engage with speakers from different cultural backgrounds, promoting intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures.

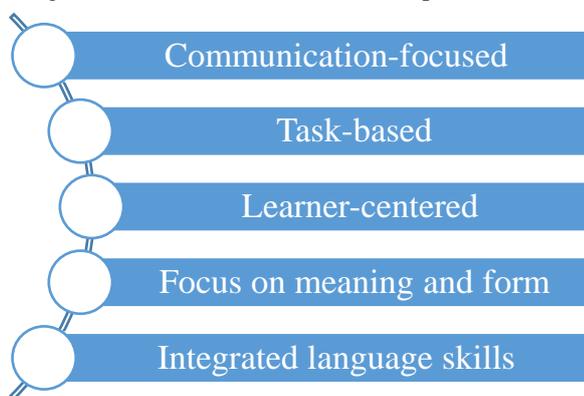


Fig. 2. The key characteristics of TBLT

According to class observations and comments by students in a foreign language classroom, these key characteristics make TBLT a promising approach for integrating multicultural education into FLT and learning, as it allows students – learners, to engage in authentic communication, promotes intercultural communicative competence, and encourages them to take an active role in their own learning process. These are remarkable aspects in foreign language learning.

At the same time, there are certain reservations and constraints about the approach. Majority of foreign language instructors argue how fast and efficiently foreign language competence may develop. By recognizing the change in FLT and motivation of the students to engage in learning, the successful results point to hard work and time-consuming procedures as to the implementation of the new ideas in the educational settings. Therefore, it is important to note that implementing TBLT effectively can require changes in teaching materials, teacher training, and classroom practices. The reflective practice of foreign language teachers and instructors in a comprehensive agreement leads to the understanding that teachers need to be trained to design tasks that promote intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures, and they may need to adjust their teaching style to allow for more learner autonomy and negotiation of meaning. Additionally, teachers may need to adapt or create new teaching materials to incorporate multicultural education into TBLT activities.

In summary, TBLT can be a noteworthy approach for integrating multicultural education into FLT, as it allows learners to engage in authentic communication and encounter speakers from different cultural backgrounds, promoting intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures. From this perspective, incorporating multicultural education into FLT through the use of TBLT can be a promising approach to help learners develop intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures.

Following the discussed above and the findings of the survey, interviews and class observations in reflective practice to communicate the experience with TBLT and share opinions, it is necessary to provide a list of recommendations that might serve well for enhanced quality in multicultural education for foreign language teaching and learning.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a popular approach to foreign language teaching that emphasizes the use of tasks or activities that simulate real-life language use situations. Multicultural education in foreign language teaching is concerned with providing learners with a deeper understanding and appreciation of other cultures, in addition to developing language proficiency. In this context, here are some recommendations for using TBLT in multicultural education for foreign language teaching:

- (i) Incorporate authentic materials and tasks that reflect the diversity of cultures and experiences of learners [13; 21]. For example, you can use materials that feature culturally diverse characters or settings, or tasks that require learners to explore and compare cultural differences.
- (ii) Encourage collaboration and interaction among learners from different cultural backgrounds [25]. Group work and pair work activities can promote cross-cultural communication and foster a sense of community and inclusiveness.

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- (iii) Provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their own cultural background and values, as well as those of others [21]. Reflection activities can help learners develop intercultural competence, which is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures.
- (iv) Scaffold tasks and activities appropriately to ensure that all learners can participate and succeed, regardless of their cultural background or language proficiency [28]. This may involve providing additional support or modifying tasks to make them more accessible.
- (v) Evaluate learner performance based on both language proficiency and intercultural competence [25]. Assessment can be integrated into task-based activities, and may include both formative and summative measures.

These recommendations aim to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of other cultures, while also developing language proficiency through task-based language teaching. By incorporating these strategies into the language curriculum, learners can develop the skills they need to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures.

CONCLUSION

The studies conducted by researchers from Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and France highlight the role of multicultural education in foreign language teaching (FLT). However, there are some differences in the emphasis and approaches taken by researchers from different countries. For example, Ukrainian and Spanish researchers emphasize the need for multicultural education in FLT to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and promote intercultural communicative competence. In contrast, Polish researchers focus on the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in FLT and call for the integration of multicultural education into language instruction. Similarly, German researchers highlight the role of multicultural education in increasing students' motivation and intercultural competence. Therefore, while the studies from different European countries agree on the importance of multicultural education in FLT, there are some differences in the specific aspects of FLT and the emphasis given to certain skills and competencies. By contrasting these studies, it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of the role of multicultural education in FLT and the different approaches that can be taken to promote intercultural communicative competence and understanding of different cultures.

The research findings based on class observations, interviews with foreign teachers and instructors, students, and administrators upon their reflections lead to conclude that despite the challenges faced in a foreign language classroom with teaching and learning foreign languages, TBLT can be a fairly effective tool. The main recommendations to see to smooth implementation of the methodology arrive at the five bullet points: to use authentic materials and tasks that reflect the diversity of cultures and experiences of learners; to encourage collaboration and interaction among learners from different cultural backgrounds; to provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their own cultural background and values, as well as those of others; to scaffold tasks and activities appropriately to ensure that all learners can participate and succeed, regardless of their cultural background or language proficiency; and to evaluate learner performance based on both language proficiency and intercultural competence. More studies can be carried out and in a wider variety of contexts to see how the methodology applies and which other benefits and challenges it may bring.

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