

DOI [https://doi.org/10.58442/3041-1831-2024-29\(58\)-10-23](https://doi.org/10.58442/3041-1831-2024-29(58)-10-23)  
UDC 378.016:81'243].011.2:008-024.63

**Leyla Atamova,**

PhD student in pedagogy at  
Azerbaijan University of Languages.  
Baku, Azerbaijan.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4126-420X>  
[leylaleyla67@yandex.com](mailto:leylaleyla67@yandex.com)

## THE IMPORTANCE AND WAYS OF DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

**Abstract.** Until the end of the 20th century, people of different languages faced gaps while learning other foreign languages. In order to bridge this global gap, the concept of “Intercultural Competence” was introduced into science as a competence that reflects the characteristics of two or more cultures through cognitive communication. As intercultural competence improves, the processes of international integration in the fields of science, culture, and business have led to the formation of multicultural societies. This also required people to enhance their personal potential and creativity. These changes began to be implemented in many educational systems. It must also be said that these new conditions revealed some shortcomings in the education system. For example, in the past, the cultural values of other societies were not taken into account enough, and the purpose of learning a new foreign language was only to communicate. Now, learning a new language also means thoroughly acquiring other cultures. The presented article briefly examines how scientific understanding about intercultural competence changes and how trade, mutual relations between countries contribute to the cultural exchange. It is mentioned in the article that mastering foreign languages is not enough for successful mutual communication, students should have knowledge about intercultural communication also. Effective intercultural communication has become a priority today due to its importance in understanding the world’s cultural diversity. It is also stated in the article that along with professional and communication skills, a university graduate should know the cultural characteristics of other nationalities. This allows them to interact with representatives of foreign cultures and to possess such qualities as tolerance, openness, and a willingness to communicate. To form intercultural communicative competence in students includes awareness of their native

culture. The article emphasizes all the essential aspects of developing intercultural competence in students and examines the prevailing methods for a deeper study of this issue.

**Keywords:** intercultural competence; a foreign language; communication skills; cultural exchange; respect and mutual understanding; culture; integration.

## **INTRODUCTION / ВСТУП**

**Statement of the problem / Постановка проблеми.** Since ancient times, people have strived to develop vocabularies to fill gaps in communication, and discovering new words has strengthened the bonds of intercultural competence. That connection was established through “language”, that is, language converted sounds into speech during communication. In addition, “language” was a tool for exchanging experiences and ideas. “Language is one of the most important and the most prominent way of communication. Also, the language can be a tool of communication and a part of social identification element of the culture” [1].

We are witnessing that the integration of the global economy intensively contributes to the cultural exchange of different countries of the world. Traveling to the interlocutor’s country, visiting theaters, concluding trade agreements, attending scientific and international conferences are examples of this. Until recently, the history of mankind was only the history of individual countries, peoples and cultures, but today everything that happens in the life of individual countries in one way or another affects life in other parts of the world. “All communication takes place in a culture, therefore the differences between cultures is the primary obstacle in intercultural communication. Different cultures are characterized by different languages, values, behaviors and attitudes towards aspects such as time (the importance of punctuality), context, customs, distance, non-verbal signs, etc.” [2, p. 265]. From this point of view, the role of foreign languages as a means of intercultural communication is quite obvious.

If we talk about intercultural communication, for the effectiveness of such communication, students must have knowledge that will provide an adequate understanding of the communication process of representatives of different cultures. Knowledge of a foreign language alone is not enough for successful intercultural communication. For successful mutual communication, one should take into account the compatibility and accuracy of words, and study linguistic phenomena such as the characteristic features of phraseological units. For example, “a black cat” in Russian culture brings misfortune, but in English

culture, “a black cat” symbolizes success and unexpected happiness. If such aspects are taken into account, there will be no confusion in mutual understanding and communication, and there will be a successful exchange of information. “Thus, the main goal of any communication process is the maximum complete and accurate reporting of information, knowledge and experience to the partner of communication. The subject of research in the field of intercultural communication is the study of the national and cultural specifics of communicative behavior of participants in the communication process, the formation of certain practical skills, knowledge, which would make it possible to understand representatives of foreign cultures speaking foreign languages, in other words, the formation of intercultural competence” [3, p. 232].

**Analysis of (major) recent research and publications / Аналіз (основних) останніх досліджень і публікацій.** The concept of competence was introduced by Chomsky in 1965. It is defined as “the speaker-hearer’s listener’s knowledge of his language.” Based on previous research, D. Hymes was the first to propose the term “communicative competence,” meaning “rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” [4, p. 287]. Rules of use are those that reflect the interdependence of language with the actual context of its use.

Later, communicative competence was studied by S. Savignon. She viewed it as the ability to actually function in a communicative environment in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt to the total amount of incoming information, both linguistic and paralinguistic, from one or more interlocutors [5, p. 130]. Communicative competence should include language skills or other skill that forms the basis of communication. Intercultural competence is the ability to successfully communicate with representatives of other cultures. This ability can be observed or developed from early ages.

It is widely accepted that language and culture are closely interrelated. In this regard, M. Bayram [6] emphasizes that since language and culture are mutually interdependent, their learning cannot happen separately from each other. Language is considered as communication between people with specific cultural norms, and culture is a complex concept that includes language.

For many bachelor’s and master’s degree graduates, professional cooperation with foreign partners plays an important role in the development of their qualifications. In this regard, acquiring intercultural competence skills becomes a fundamental requirement for students’ professional activities. All spheres of public life require specialists who can establish intercultural contacts. These professionals, on the one hand, must have knowledge of their own culture, and on the other hand, acquire knowledge and understanding of another culture. These qualities do not arise on their own. For this purpose, special training is

provided as part of university programs.

Intercultural competence involves confidence and creativity in action. The goals of developing this competence can be summarized as follows: to acquire knowledge about global concepts of culture; to understand the relationship between the orientation systems of one's own and other cultures; to develop and apply methods of formation intercultural competence; to learn the basics of intercultural cooperation in order to work in international organizations.

To form cultural and communicative competence in the context of teaching a foreign language at universities, steps should be taken in the following directions:

- 1) obtaining new knowledge about other cultures in a multicultural direction, respecting them and the ability to look at events not from one's own point of view, but from the point of view of another culture, and
- 2) understanding the values of another culture, the ability to interact with them, taking into account their norms and opinions.

### **AIM AND TASKS / МЕТА ТА ЗАВДАННЯ**

The *purpose* of the research is to study certain achievements and methods of developing intercultural competence in teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions.

The *tasks* of the study may be described as follows:

- to analyse the appropriate scientific literature in this field;
- to group strategies developing intercultural competence;
- to systemize proposals for resolving intercultural conflicts.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK / ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ**

In the field of multicultural education, a number of principles have been developed to guide international action. For example, multicultural education respects the student's cultural identity, provides the knowledge and skills necessary for active and full participation in the life of the community, and most importantly, fosters respect and mutual understanding between people, groups (ethnic, social, cultural or religious) and nations, providing knowledge and skills that promote solidarity, quality and intercultural education for all. "To succeed in intercultural communication, it is essential to have both linguistic and cultural competences" [7, p. 384].

It is also closely related to the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that the purpose of education is "to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, all racial or religious groups,..." [8, p. 22]. Therefore, UNESCO's basic principles on issues of

intercultural education state that intercultural issues of the international educational community should be allocated a special place in the documents of international standards and documents of international conferences.

Learning multiple languages certainly exposes students to several cultures. In this work, teachers play an extremely important role both in choosing what they teach and in developing knowledge and activities regarding different cultures. Preparing students and teaching staff to resolve intercultural conflicts is part of problem solving.

Large and medium-sized enterprises are increasingly using global development strategies and therefore need appropriate personnel. These personnel must have the basics of intercultural competence, since intercultural competence is the main competence formed in the process of preparation for international cooperation. The presence of this competence is manifested in personal development on the one hand and in the adaptation of communication and behavior styles on the other.

The formation of socio-cultural competence contributes to achieve goals, since in the process of acquiring socio-cultural knowledge when learning a new foreign language, the student's worldview expands and the general level of education increases. Thus, it optimizes the achievement of the main goals of foreign language teaching.

Consequently, the formation of intercultural competence is a complex, multidimensional and diverse process, depending on the intercultural situation. Intercultural competence remains a complex scientific topic with opposing views and approaches. Since culture is constantly changing, scientific views about intercultural competence are also changing. It is important to have the latest, the most up-to-date information to conduct research and practice in this area.

## **RESEARCH METHODS / МЕТОДИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

At the end of the 20th century, people speaking different languages faced gaps in learning other foreign languages. To bridge this global gap, the concept of “intercultural competence” was introduced into science as a competence that reflects the characteristics of two or more cultures through cognitive communication. As intercultural competence develops, processes of international integration occur in scientific fields, culture and business also lead to multicultural societies. This places demands on people to enhance their personal potential and creativity, and we must say that these new conditions have exposed some shortcomings in the education system. The purpose of learning a new foreign language was not only to communicate; now learning a new language is also a comprehensive mastery of other cultures. “Through the study of other languages,

students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use the language. In fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural context in which the language occurs” [9, p. 2].

By learning a new language, the students also improve the following characteristics:

- First of all, they study the cultural experience and culture of other peoples (this includes interpersonal relations, values and beliefs);
- Secondly, they acquire intercultural communication skills (this includes knowledge about interaction and conversation rules);
- Thirdly, they learn comprehensively about subjects such as history, geography, art in the education system of native speakers of a foreign language.

The main condition for developing of these characteristics is constant interaction with other nations. The ability to see similarities and differences in their culture, worldviews, values and beliefs is formed by communicating with native speakers of a foreign language. Interaction between cultures is necessary not only because people often travel abroad, but also because there are many changes in organizing work in enterprises and companies. But when you are in a foreign country, how should you communicate with people?, How should you behave according to their customs and traditions?

During communication, negotiations are used, first of all, to convey accurate information to foreign colleagues. The purpose of negotiations is to achieve agreement between the parties during interaction and business negotiations. The ability to conduct business negotiations should be one of the most important qualities of a specialist working in any field. In these negotiations, the parties often have opposing views, and the main task of interlocutors in this case is to end the negotiations with an agreement that meets their interests. Therefore, in order to conduct negotiations at a high-quality level, specialists must have professional intercultural competence. In addition, knowing the basics of logic and debate practice is also the main tool for conducting business communication with them, since a modern specialists must master certain negotiation strategies.

It is known that each culture has its own characteristics. In modern times, the development of the Internet has increased attention to intercultural behavior in business. At this time, business language, behavior during negotiations, speaking style, etc. are different for each country. For example, Japanese work on accuracy tables, the Chinese conduct their discussions quietly, without interrupting the colleague, while the Spanish, on the contrary, speak loudly. Negotiation is one of the professional qualities of every specialist. Certain types of knowledge are necessary for successful intercultural communication. They are as follows:

- Contextual knowledge is the knowledge derived from the individual and social experiences of the communicators, and is part of their general knowledge about the world;
- Interpersonal knowledge is a type of knowledge that reflects the discursive experience of the communicators and is necessary when generalizing events related to a certain conflict event.

It should also be noted that mastering the language does not guarantee its equal use in real communication situations. This is why every professional should know the negotiation strategies perfectly and recognize the basic characteristics of the other culture, as negotiation between cultures has become the need of our time.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS / РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

Summarizing all the above mentioned, we may come to the conclusion that the new generation needs a broader knowledge than that taught about world history in order to identify the differences and similarities between cultural groups. Many resources and books have been created for this purpose. The development of intercultural competencies, whether through sustainable professional education or lifelong learning, can ensure success even beyond traditional schooling.

While analyzing, assessing and improving intercultural competencies, aspects such as who is measuring, what are they measuring, what units of measurement are they using and what instruments are they measuring should be taken into account. With the necessary support of management and educational professionals at all levels, adapting pedagogical methods to the needs of students' daily lives will ensure that cultural dimensions will be recognized as the most important component of education for the sustainable development of the world.

The effectiveness of teaching intercultural competence is influenced by the content of the materials used, the teacher's worldview, and the basic principles and approaches.

Communicative skills are considered to be the basis for effective communication and interaction with people, this skill is a condition for the success of the future specialist in his professional and social activities. While learning communicative competence, we face two issues:

1. The learning process should be based only on real communication and not pay much attention to the form of the language.
- 2 The language system is important, and therefore attention should be paid to the implementation of formal language practice. The negative of this situation is that students learning a foreign are deprived of socio-cultural competence.

Therefore, when learning a foreign language within the communicative approach, both the consistency of the language and the content of the teaching materials where this consistency of language will be mastered are important.

One of the problems of the modern era is the lack of integrity of the worldview. Its solution is, first of all, the teacher's own worldview, knowledge of the system of objective criteria and guidelines that ensure the correct solution of problems. In addition, when teaching any subject, the teacher himself should know the content of the teaching material, the methods of organizing cognitive activity, since the teacher's personal opinion and attitude to the material being studied has a positive effect on the students' understanding of this subject. Therefore, it is important for a modern teacher, in addition to his knowledge, to have a high outlook and be able to analyze cultural and socio-political phenomena.

The more citizens interact with representatives of different cultures, the more successful international relations will be. The development of intercultural competence at the highest level also forms the intercultural students' education which includes personal qualities, knowledge and attitudes that contribute to the cognitive system.

The development of intercultural competence should be formed during secondary school period since "the secondary school is the most important institution with the necessary potential for the formation of intercultural competence of students" [10, p. 70].

At the final stage of teaching foreign languages to high school students, language and communicative speech practice are systematized, and work on intercultural education and tourism skills of schoolchildren are developed. In the process of formation of intercultural competencies of high school students, methods of interactive technologies should be widely used to ensure dialogue and interaction.

Some experiments on intercultural competencies were carried out and certain results were obtained:

- high school students learn to build a general hierarchy of values, compare intercultural similarities and differences;
- they have a tolerant attitude towards representatives of other cultures and relate their views to the system of views of others, they realize the point of view of representatives of another culture and show a friendly attitude towards them;
- knowing the rules and formulas of speech etiquette, they adequately apply them in an environment of intercultural contact.

The goal of creating an intercultural association is to achieve the development of an individual that would allow him to go beyond the limits of his culture without losing his cultural essence. The constant and rapid development



of communication processes in the modern world has prompted the creation of many new studies in the field of culture and communication.

Teachers are also very interested in the problems of intercultural communication, national mentality and communicative behavior, since issues related to the culturally determined laws of communication through language are resolved here.

The material of linguoculturalology, a science that studies the interaction of language and culture, is only the specific verbal and non-verbal signs used in communication, as well as texts, quasi-texts, and ritualized communicative behavior strategies that go beyond the limits of the concepts of “speech” or “discourse”.

The speaker’s intercultural competence is distinguished by high, intermediate and low levels:

- a low level, realized by a lack of communication skills;
- an intermediate level, realized in a limited set of communication competencies (for example, everyday and professional levels);
- a high level of communication with a foreigner in his language directly or indirectly (through books, press, movies, internet, etc.). This level covers the speech of people who are fluent in their native tongue and any foreign language and are familiar with the culture of both languages.

To form intercultural competence, as we have mentioned, requires the processing and active assimilation of large amounts of material, which is impossible with the traditional organization of the educational process. The main condition for improving the quality of education and more efficient use of teaching time is the use of modern educational technologies (mainly, computers). It will also help in the proper organization of teaching-research activities of students. First of all, this is abstract research activity where the process of forming a professional structure of thinking at the university can take place and the real creative activity of students can be realized.

Nowadays the way to increase personal competence and achieve success is to communicate with foreign speakers. The formation of intercultural competence in the process of teaching a foreign language and culture is the focus of scientists’ attention. Culture is a complex concept that defines the system of value of a society. Besides, intercultural competence is one of the most frequently used concepts in the modern education system, which appears mainly in the field of literature and linguistics. In linguistics, intercultural communication is defined as a direct or indirect exchange of information between people belonging to different cultures. For intercultural competence to be successful, the following criteria must be met:

- have perceptive ability;

- be open to studying foreign cultures;
- be able to eliminate stereotypes;
- comply with etiquette standards.

The changes taking place in the world today require students to increase the level of their intercultural competence. Therefore, a special role is given to the subject of foreign languages in universities. By mastering a foreign language, a person assimilates the cultural experience and living conditions of another nation, thereby forming his view of the world and his relationships with people. It should also be noted that it is necessary to be familiar not only with the language, but also with the mentality of the nation speaking this language, so that during communication the participant can put himself in the place of the interlocutor and understand the logic of the other person's behavior.

In the process of developing intercultural competence, the comparative study of cultures takes an important place, that is, the ability to relate one's own culture to another culture. The ability to see differences and similarities in cultures, in the worldview of native speakers, in norms, values and belief systems are formed. "Our identities are formed in a variety of ways. As we grow, we develop characteristics and personality traits that set us apart as individuals. Some of those are biological, such as skin color, height, hair color, etc. We may be shy or outgoing, enjoy playing sports or prefer computer games. Each of us has a personal identity which develops and changes over time. Some of our individual characteristics we develop on our own, but many aspects of our personality and preferences develop through contact with others" [11, p. 2].

The foundations for the formation of intercultural competence are laid in secondary school. Teaching a foreign language develops students' communication skills. In addition to learning a new language, having knowledge about the socio-cultural characteristics of representatives of the target language makes communication with native speakers easier. Therefore, in addition to general information about the country of the language being studied, teachers during lessons introduce students to the national and cultural characteristics of social and speech behavior of native speakers of this language, customs and traditions, and etiquette rules.

## **CONCLUSIONS / ВИСНОВКИ**

The modern social situation is characterized by a high level of dynamism and tension. Economic globalization, political integration and improved communications create the need for people to develop deep feelings for their own and other cultures and to function successfully and tolerate each other in

intercultural dialogue. The expansion of international relations creates the need for the new approaches in the content and organization of the educational process in society, as well as in the assessment of its results.

The following strategies can be presented summarizing the pedagogical technology aimed at developing intercultural competence:

1. Analysis of cultural texts, their explanation and reflection in books, determination of cause-and-effect relationships of cultural manifestations, environmental protection contribute to cultural studies.

2. The ability to initiate and support intercultural communication, helps to master verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, eliminates negative stereotypes of another culture.

3. Develop a sense of sensitivity and empathy towards people of other cultures.

**Future Research Directions Prospects for further research in this direction / Перспективи подальших досліджень у цьому напрямі.** As cultures are constantly changing, so does the scientific understanding about intercultural competence. It is important to have the latest information in this field for research and practice. Along with this competence, adequate information about the activity strategies of other cultures accelerates the initiation and development of intercultural relationships.

Nowadays, intercultural communication is carried out almost exclusively via the Internet. It plays an important role in regulating relations within the country and between countries. Therefore, a special role is given to the subject of “foreign language” in the educational system. Any foreign language is the intersection of cultures.

Research shows that any investment in the development of intercultural education programs is a significant investment in the future. To implement this project, it is necessary to comply with the conditions for the formation of training personnel, their methodological and didactic training and the organization of the educational process at a high-quality level.


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## **ВАЖЛИВІСТЬ ТА ШЛЯХИ ФОРМУВАННЯ МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ПРИ НАВЧАННІ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ**

**Атамова Лейла Октай,**  
аспірант з педагогіки  
Азербайджанського університету мов.  
Баку, Азербайджан.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4126-420X>  
[leylaleyla67@yandex.com](mailto:leylaleyla67@yandex.com)

**Анотація.** До кінця 20-го століття люди різних мов стикалися з прогалинами під час вивчення інших іноземних мов. Щоб подолати цей глобальний розрив, у науку було введено поняття «Міжкультурна компетентність» як компетентність, що відображає характеристики

двох або більше культур через когнітивне спілкування. У міру вдосконалення міжкультурної компетентності процеси міжнародної інтеграції у сферах науки, культури та бізнесу призвели до формування мультикультурних суспільств. Це також вимагало від людей підвищення їхнього особистого потенціалу та креативності. Ці зміни почали впроваджуватися у багатьох освітніх системах. Слід також сказати, що ці нові умови виявили деякі недоліки у системі освіти. Наприклад, у минулому, культурні цінності інших суспільств не враховувалися достатньо, і метою вивчення нової іноземної мови було лише спілкування. Тепер вивчення нової мови також означає глибоке вивчення інших культур. Представлена стаття коротко розглядає, як змінюється наукове розуміння міжкультурної компетентності та як торгівля, взаємовідносини між країнами сприяють культурному обміну. У статті зазначається, що для успішного взаємного спілкування недостатньо володіти іноземними мовами, учні також повинні мати знання про міжкультурну комунікацію. Ефективна міжкультурна комунікація сьогодні стала пріоритетом через її важливість для розуміння культурного розмаїття світу. Також у статті зазначено, що поряд з професійними та комунікативними навичками випускник університету повинен знати культурні особливості інших національностей. Це дозволяє їм взаємодіяти з представниками іноземних культур і володіти такими якостями, як толерантність, відкритість, готовність до спілкування. Формувати в учнів міжкультурну комунікативну компетентність передбачає усвідомлення рідної культури. У статті наголошено на всіх суттєвих аспектах формування міжкультурної компетенції в учнів та розглянуто переважаючі методи глибшого вивчення цього питання.

**Ключові слова:** міжкультурна компетентність; іноземна мова; комунікативні навички; культурний обмін; повага і взаєморозуміння; культура; інтеграція.

#### **TRANSLATED AND TRANSLITERATED / ПЕРЕКЛАД, ТРАНСЛІТЕРАЦІЯ**

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*Стаття надійшла до редакції  
29 липня 2024 року*

