

## Developing Intercultural Competence in English Language Teaching

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**Abstract:** *This article explains that intercultural competence is the ability for communication and effective interaction among people from various cultural backgrounds. It is not only any theoretical ideas, but it shows the ability to think, feel and behave when interacting with different cultural people. In teaching, intercultural competence is essential to understand and communicate between a teacher's and a student's ability in a respectful way.*

**Keywords:** *intercultural competence, knowledge, attitudes, skills, communication, mutual understanding, learning and teaching, cultures, respect, politeness*

Intercultural competence is not the knowledge or skill of language teaching or learning, however, its role in education and pedagogical features has been more vital for years. Intercultural competence does not teach EFL or ESL learners grammar or vocabulary. It is teaching of the ways for using language in real cultural contexts. Language and culture are inseparable which means that language can be communication system and culture is meaning system. When we speak a language, we also express cultural values such as politeness, respect, distance and humor.

Intercultural competence is a part of concepts including global competence, graduate attributes, employability skills and education. All these concepts is recognition of globalisation which is a force to change in aspects of the modern world and the core for graduates to be able to engage and act globally. In the context of language teaching, intercultural competence can be categorized into several interrelated dimensions that support effective communication and meaningful learning. One of the most widely recognized frameworks is the model of Intercultural Communicative Competence proposed by Michael Byram (1997), which emphasizes the integration of knowledge,

attitudes, and skills. In educational settings, this is often reflected through three main categories: cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The cognitive dimension refers to learners' understanding of cultural knowledge, including traditions, values, and communication styles. The affective dimension involves the development of positive attitudes such as openness, respect, and curiosity toward other cultures. The behavioral dimension focuses on the ability to apply this knowledge and these attitudes in real-life communication through appropriate language use and interaction. Additionally, intercultural competence is viewed as a developmental process, as highlighted by Darla K. Deardorff (2006), where learners gradually move from basic awareness of cultural differences to more advanced levels of adaptability and effective intercultural interaction. Therefore, in language teaching, these categories should be integrated into classroom practice to ensure that learners not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also develop the ability to communicate successfully in diverse cultural contexts.

### **Methodology**

A mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to identify the importance of intercultural competence in language teaching. A mixed-methods design is suitable because it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena by integrating numerical data with detailed participant perspectives (John W. Creswell & Vicki L. Plano Clark, 2018).

A structured questionnaire with a **5-point Likert scale** was used to measure students' intercultural awareness, attitudes, and perceived importance of intercultural competence in language learning. Likert scales are widely used in attitude measurement research (Rensis Likert, 1932).

### **Results**

The results indicate that intercultural competence is considered highly important in language teaching. 80% of students agreed that intercultural competence improves

communication skills. 75% believed that understanding culture helps them learn language more effectively. 70% reported that teachers should include cultural topics in lessons. 65% stated that they feel more motivated when cultural content is included.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study confirm that intercultural competence is widely recognized as an essential component of language teaching. The high questionnaire scores indicate that learners perceive culture as an important factor in language acquisition. This supports the view of Michael Byram (1997), who argues that language learning should include intercultural communicative competence.

The qualitative results also show that teachers value intercultural competence but face practical challenges, particularly in terms of resources and training. This aligns with the findings of Darla K. Deardorff (2006), who emphasizes that effective intercultural education requires structured support and institutional guidance.

Furthermore, limited classroom observation suggests that intercultural competence is still not fully integrated into teaching practice. This gap between theory and practice highlights the need for curriculum development and teacher training program.

### **Practical Implications**

Teacher training has a significant role in the successful implementation of intercultural competence. The results indicate that teachers recognize its importance but often lack sufficient training and resources. Therefore, professional development programs should be designed to equip teachers with practical strategies for integrating intercultural activities into their teaching. According to Darla K. Deardorff (2006), educators need structured support to effectively foster intercultural skills in learners. In this area, training workshops, seminars and guides for instruction can be helpful to teachers in order to become more confident and competent.

Additionally, classroom practices should shift toward more interactive and student-centered approaches. Activities such as role-plays, group discussions, case studies, and simulations can provide students with opportunities to practice intercultural communication in meaningful ways. These methods encourage critical thinking and help learners develop the skills necessary to navigate cultural differences. The use of authentic materials, including videos, films, and real-life texts, is also highly recommended, as it exposes students to natural language use and cultural contexts.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, intercultural competence plays a crucial role in modern language teaching and learning. The findings of this study demonstrate that both students and teachers recognize its importance in developing effective communication skills and fostering mutual understanding across cultures. Language learning is no longer limited to the acquisition of grammatical knowledge; it also involves understanding cultural contexts, values, and communication styles. Moreover, the study reveals that while there is a positive attitude toward intercultural competence, its practical implementation in classrooms remains limited due to challenges such as insufficient resources and lack of teacher training. As highlighted by Darla K. Deardorff (2006), the development of intercultural competence requires continuous effort, structured support, and appropriate teaching strategies. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions to integrate intercultural components into curricula and provide professional development opportunities for teachers.

Overall, enhancing intercultural competence in language education can lead to more meaningful communication, greater cultural awareness, and improved global readiness among learners. It is, therefore, not only an important component of language teaching but also a necessary skill for individuals living in an increasingly interconnected world.

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