

INNOVATIVE METHODS OF DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: *This research focuses on innovative methods for developing intercultural competence within the process of teaching English. The study analyzes modern approaches aimed at enhancing learners' cultural sensitivity, tolerance, and communicative competence in the context of global communication.*

Keywords: *English language, intercultural competence, innovation, double tree method, analytical thinking, method, vocabulary, national-cultural connotation.*

The development of cultural competence enables learners to respect other nations, understand and compare their cultural specificities. Analytical thinking and communication skills are strengthened as students express their ideas, engage in reasoning, and acquire an understanding of international diplomatic relations. Thus, this method does not only develop intercultural competence in the process of language learning but also broadens learners' general worldview and makes the lesson more engaging and effective through interactive activities.

Integrating national-cultural components into foreign language teaching requires the creation of new and appropriate tools to ensure successful acquisition. Modern methodology distinguishes three types of lexical units that possess varying degrees of national-cultural markedness and reflect the semantics inherent in a particular cultural sphere. These include:

Background vocabulary – lexical items that denote phenomena and objects familiar across different cultures, yet differ in usage and function in each language;

Connotative vocabulary – words that may share similar denotational meanings but differ in semantic nuances, which are shaped by the historical and cultural development of a nation;

Realities (culture-specific items) – objects and phenomena characteristic of one specific country and unknown or nonexistent in other cultures¹⁶.

The sociocultural component of foreign language teaching plays a significant role in engaging students in intercultural communication and acquainting them with the achievements of national culture within the broader development of human civilization, as it constitutes an integral part of national culture.

For example, in linguocultural studies classes, students become familiar with the geographical location and social structure of the United Kingdom and explore the culture of English-speaking countries.

¹⁶ Гальперин, И.Р. Текст как объект лингвистического исследования. – М.: Едиториал УРСС, 2005. – 144 с

The literature of the target language also serves as an effective tool for developing sociocultural competence. Works of English fiction function as an invaluable source of sociocultural information. As a part of national culture, English artistic literature reflects the sociocultural reality of its society and therefore encompasses various components of national culture.

While reading works of English literature, students acquire essential linguistic knowledge about aesthetics, artistic culture, art, as well as the life and creative heritage of renowned classical and contemporary figures of art, thereby contributing to the development of their sociocultural competence¹⁷.

In modern pedagogical science, video materials are regarded as an effective tool for teaching foreign languages and developing sociocultural competence. A video material is an auxiliary instructional resource used during the learning process, functioning through audio and visual technologies to deliver speech information via the human sensory system—specifically through the channels of seeing and hearing. Instruction through video materials is based on the principle of visual perception, which is one of the key didactic principles.

Due to the combination of visual, auditory, and motor-perceptual channels, learning material is memorized more quickly and effectively compared to content presented solely in oral or written form¹⁸. Similarly, folklore in the form of proverbs and fairy tales represents an engaging and effective means of developing sociocultural competence.

Through these concise expressions, learners become familiar with phraseological units whose meanings are often understood only by native speakers; they also gain insight into the lifestyle and traditions of a people, as proverbs may contain historical and archaic elements—*realia* reflecting the culture and historical period in which they were created. Moreover, such materials provide opportunities to compare the learners' own culture with that of the target language. Many proverbs and idiomatic expressions have equivalents in other languages, though their meanings may be conveyed through different lexical forms. Indeed, folk wisdom is universal, but each language expresses such ideas in its own unique way.

Developing cultural competence in English language teaching is important not only for language acquisition but also for fostering students' ability to understand and respect different cultures. Such an approach enhances learners' global communication skills and promotes intercultural understanding.

The “Double Tree / Two Trees” method is a visual tool that helps students connect their prior knowledge with newly acquired information during the learning process. The methodology is represented by two trees:

¹⁷ Елизарова, Г.В. Культура и обучение иностранным языкам. – СПб.: КАРО, 2005. – 352 с.

¹⁸ Михайлова, С.В. Использование видеоматериала как средства формирования социокультурной компетенции в процессе обучения иностранному языку / С.В. Михайлова, О.В. Михайлова // Филологические науки. Вопросы теории и практики. – 2014. – № 10-1 (40). – С. 143–146.

Left tree: Contains students' existing knowledge, experiences, and cultural concepts.

Right tree: Includes new cultural elements, cultural aspects reflected in the English language, and connections between them.

Using this method, the teacher can achieve the following goals:

- developing learners' ability to compare their own culture with the culture represented in English;
- explaining and practicing English phraseological units, customs, traditional holidays, or cultural norms during classroom activities;
- fostering intercultural communication and empathy among students.

Practical example: During a lesson, learners explore cultural elements such as Thanksgiving or Halloween. On the left tree, they list comparable Uzbek holidays, traditions, and values. On the right tree, they write English cultural practices, historical contexts, and associated phraseological units. As a result, students compare the two cultures and draw general conclusions. Thus, the "Double Tree" method enables learners to develop cultural competence visually and interactively while studying the language. This methodology is especially effective when combined with discussions, role plays, and group work.

Left Tree (Uzbek Holidays)	Right Tree (Halloween)
Navruz – celebrates the arrival of spring; associated with family and neighborhood traditions, during which people express respect, kindness, and good wishes to one another	Halloween – celebrated at the end of October; people wear costumes, collect sweets, or decorate their houses.
Eid al-Adha (Qurbon Hayit) – a religious holiday marked by family gatherings, charitable giving, and acts of compassion.	Halloween – not religious; centered more on folklore and entertainment. The tradition of "trick or treat" (giving sweets or facing a playful trick) is practiced.
Purpose: strengthening family unity, ensuring social cohesion, promoting moral values.	Purpose: engaging in fun activities, exploring spooky imagery, and fostering creativity and folkloric elements.

Didactic materials and methodological support play a crucial role in developing cultural competence in English language teaching. Didactic resources such as textbooks, teaching manuals, multimedia tools, and interactive tasks guide learners toward understanding the intrinsic connection between language and culture.

Through didactic support, learners are able to:

- correctly interpret cultural context while communicating in English;
- compare the customs, traditions, and values of different countries;
- enhance their ability to use the language in real-life situations;

reduce cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings.

At the same time, integrating didactic resources with interactive methods-such as role plays, discussions, and project-based learning-greatly increases the effectiveness of cultural competence development among students.

Consequently, didactic support in English language teaching contributes not only to the acquisition of linguistic knowledge, but also to a deeper understanding of cultural concepts and the formation of intercultural communication skills.

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