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Research Article

THE ROLE OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Marina I. Solnyshkina

Dr. Prof., Department of Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Teaching, Kazan Federal University, Russia

Parmonova Nasiba Amriddin Qizi

Teacher, Department of Foreign languages, Jizzakh branch of the National university of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

The realm of language education has increasingly recognized the intrinsic link between intercultural communication and the teaching of foreign languages. This synthesis not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also cultivates a broader understanding of cultural nuances, fostering global citizenship. This article delves into the multifaceted role of intercultural communication within the context of foreign language education, examining its implications for teaching methodologies, curriculum development, and learner outcomes.

KEYWORDS

Intercultural communication, foreign language education, intercultural competence, communicative language teaching (CLT), curriculum design in language teaching, language teaching methodologies, cultural sensitivity in language learning, assessment of intercultural competence.

Introduction

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In characterized bv global an era interconnectedness, the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries is more than a mere asset; it is a necessity. The teaching of foreign languages is at the forefront of this endeavor, serving not only as a medium for linguistic acquisition but also as a platform for intercultural exchange. Intercultural communication, defined as the sharing of information across different cultures and social groups, is pivotal in equipping learners with the skills needed to navigate diverse cultural landscapes.

METHODS

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. A survey was distributed to language teachers and students from various educational institutions. supplemented by in-depth interviews with selected participants. Additionally, a review of existing literature on communicative language teaching (CLT), intercultural competence, and curriculum design in language education was conducted to frame the study within the current academic discourse.

At the heart of intercultural communication in language teaching is the concept of intercultural competence. This encompasses the ability to understand and respect cultural differences, to recognize one's own cultural biases, and to effectively communicate in a way that is appropriate and effective across cultures. It involves a combination of knowledge, skills, and

attitudes that facilitate the interaction between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

"FLT has a central aim of enabling learners to use that language to interact with people for whom it is their preferred and "natural" medium of experience, those we call "native speakers", as well as in lingua franca situations where it is an estranging and sometimes disturbing means of coping with the world for all concerned.

FLT is therefore concerned with communication but this has to be understood as more than the exchange of information and sending of messages, which has dominated "communicative language teaching" in recent years. Even the exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context; it depends on the ability to decentre and take up the perspective of the listener or reader. But successful "communication" is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange [3]. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships. In this sense, the efficacy of communication depends upon using language to demonstrate one's willingness to relate, which often involves the indirectness of politeness rather than the direct and "efficient" choice of language full of information. That ways of being polite vary from one language and culture to another is widely known, but this is often reduced to the acquisition of particular formulae. Politeness is however only the visible symptom of a more complex phenomenon: the differences in beliefs, behaviours and meanings through which people interact with each other,

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differences which may be incompatible and contain the seeds of conflict unless relationships are maintained through politeness" [2, p.3].

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been instrumental in integrating intercultural communication into language learning. This approach emphasizes the importance of interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. It prioritizes the ability to communicate in real-life situations, underscoring the importance of cultural context in language use.

RESULTS

integration Effective of intercultural communication into foreign language teaching necessitates a deliberate curriculum design that goes beyond traditional linguistic objectives. It involves incorporating cultural content and intercultural encounters into the learning materials and activities. This could include the study of cultural artifacts, literature, media, and real-life scenarios that reflect the diversity of the target language's culture.

Teaching methodologies that foster intercultural focus communication on interactive and participatory activities. Role-plays, simulations, and discussion forums encourage learners to adopt multiple perspectives and engage in crosscultural dialogues. Technology plays a crucial role, offering access to authentic language use in diverse cultural contexts through social media, online forums, and multimedia resources.

Assessing intercultural competence involves evaluating learners' ability to apply cultural knowledge in communication, to demonstrate empathy and adaptability, and to reflect on their own cultural identity and biases. This requires a combination of formative and summative assessments, including self-assessment, peer review, and reflective journals, in addition to traditional language proficiency tests.

DISCUSSION

Integrating intercultural communication into foreign language teaching has profound implications for learners, educators, and the broader educational community. It prepares students not only to be linguistically proficient but also to be culturally sensitive and aware, capable of engaging in meaningful interactions across cultural divides. For educators, it necessitates ongoing professional development to cultivate their own intercultural competence and to effectively facilitate intercultural learning experiences.

Byram, M. and Feng, A. state that in intercultural communication, misunderstanding is much more likely to occur because the internal contexts, that is, the methods interactants use to perceive the situations and each other and the meanings they associate with the settings, can differ greatly from one culture to another. Thus, it is essential for language learners to be effective in culture learning [1].

In discussing whether there should be "content" as well as "method" in the cultural dimension of

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FLT, Michael Byram gave three simple examples of intercultural communication:

- between people of different languages and countries where one is a native speaker of the language used;
- · between people of different languages and countries where the language used is a lingua franca:
- and between people of the same country but different languages, one of whom is a native speaker of the language used [2, p. 22].

This serves as a reminder that foreign language teaching (FLT) always occurs within a specific type and the of Intercultural context, Communicative Competence (ICC) needed is somewhat influenced by this context. Additionally, if a person develops ICC through formal education, they are participating in a social institution whose goals and objectives are partially shaped by external societal influences [3].

Conclusion

The integration of intercultural communication into foreign language teaching is indispensable in preparing learners for the complexities of the globalized world. It transcends traditional language education by embedding cultural understanding and intercultural competence as core components of linguistic proficiency. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate across cultures becomes not just a desirable skill but a fundamental aspect of global citizenship. Thus, the future of language education lies in its ability to embrace and promote intercultural communication, fostering a generation of learners equipped to navigate and contribute to a diverse and multicultural world.

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