

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: STRATEGIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. *In the era of globalization, the primary goal of learning English has shifted from achieving native-like fluency to developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). This paper explores the integration of cultural dimensions into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. It analyzes the role of "Cultural Intelligence" in preventing pragmatic failure and fostering mutual understanding between diverse speakers. By examining Byram's ICC model, the study proposes practical classroom strategies—such as role-playing, critical incidents analysis, and digital storytelling—to enhance students' ability to navigate cross-cultural nuances. The research concludes that language education must go beyond grammar and vocabulary to produce globally competent communicators who can negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries.*

Keywords: *Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), EFL, Cultural Awareness, Sociolinguistics, Pedagogical Strategies, Global Communication.*

Language is not a mere set of grammatical rules; it is a vessel for culture. In contemporary higher education, teaching English as a "Lingua Franca" necessitates a shift toward Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). ICC is the ability to understand and interpret foreign cultures while reflecting on one's own cultural identity. For students at institutions, developing this competence is crucial for professional success in a multicultural world. Without ICC, even a grammatically perfect speaker may face "pragmatic failure"—misunderstandings caused by cultural differences in communication styles.

Theoretical Framework: Byram's ICC Model

The most widely accepted framework for ICC is Michael Byram's model, which consists of five essential "Savoirs" (knowledges):

1. **Savoirs (Knowledge):** Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices.

2. **Savoir être (Attitudes):** Curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

3. **Savoir comprendre (Skills of interpreting and relating):** The ability to interpret a document or event from another culture and relate it to one's own.

4. **Savoir apprendre/faire (Skills of discovery and interaction):** The ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and operate it in real-time communication.

5. **Savoir s'engager (Critical cultural awareness):** The ability to evaluate critically, on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, and practices in one's own and other cultures.

Methodology: Pedagogical Strategies for the Classroom

To transform theory into practice, we propose a **Task-Based Intercultural Approach**. This methodology focuses on active student engagement rather than passive cultural lecturing.

Critical Incidents Technique

Students are presented with "critical incidents"—short stories describing a cross-cultural misunderstanding.

- **Activity:** Students analyze why the misunderstanding occurred and suggest linguistically and culturally appropriate alternatives.
- **Objective:** To develop *Savoir comprendre* (interpreting skills).

Digital Storytelling and Virtual Exchange

Leveraging technology to connect students with native and non-native English speakers worldwide.

- **Activity:** Using platforms like Flip or Zoom to engage in "Virtual Exchange" projects with international peers.
- **Objective:** To practice real-time interaction (*Savoir faire*).

The Comparative Rubric

To measure progress, we utilize a comparative scoring system that evaluates not just language accuracy, but **Pragmatic Appropriateness (PA)**.

Criteria	Traditional Focus	Intercultural Focus
Vocabulary	Definition and Spelling	Connotations and Taboos
Grammar	Syntax and Tense	Politeness Levels (Honorifics)
Communication	Information Exchange	Relationship Building & Empathy

Discussion: The Role of the Teacher as a Cultural Mediator

Implementing ICC requires the teacher to move away from being the "source of all knowledge" and instead become a Cultural Mediator.

- **Challenges:** The risk of stereotyping ("All British people are...") must be addressed. Teachers should emphasize cultural diversity within English-speaking countries (USA, UK, Canada, Australia, etc.) and the role of English in non-native contexts (Uzbekistan, Singapore, India).

- **Impact:** Students who possess high ICC demonstrate higher levels of empathy and are less likely to experience "culture shock" during international mobility programs.

The development of Intercultural Communicative Competence is the cornerstone of 21st-century language education. It empowers students to become "intercultural speakers" who can mediate between their own culture and the target culture. For the future English teachers of Uzbekistan, mastering ICC is not an elective skill but a professional necessity. By integrating cultural intelligence into the curriculum, we ensure that our students are not only fluent in English but also wise in their global interactions.

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