



TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND ITS EFFECTS ON SOCIOCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

Khabibullayeva Shakhzoda Kahramonovna

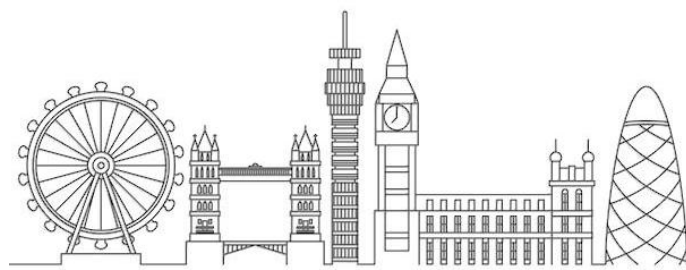
*Graduate of master's degree of
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages*

Abstract. *This thesis addresses these gaps by investigating TBLT implementations in diverse settings, aiming to provide empirical insights and pedagogical recommendations for enhancing sociocultural competence in an increasingly interconnected world.*

Keywords: *Task-Based Language Teaching, Sociocultural Competence, Multilingual Classrooms, Translanguaging, EFL Learners, Cultural Empathy, Sociolinguistic Adaptability, Language Education*

Introduction. In the context of globalized education, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a dynamic pedagogical approach that emphasizes real-world tasks to facilitate meaningful language use and interaction, moving beyond traditional grammar-centric methods to promote holistic communicative abilities. TBLT encourages learners to engage in purposeful activities that require collaboration, problem-solving, and negotiation, thereby simulating authentic communicative scenarios that enhance not only linguistic proficiency but also sociocultural competence—the understanding and application of social norms, cultural values, and contextual behaviors in language use. Sociocultural competence is a critical component of overall communicative competence, enabling individuals to navigate cultural nuances, avoid misunderstandings, and build rapport in diverse interactions, yet it is often underexplored in conventional language curricula.

Multilingual classrooms, characterized by learners from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds, present unique opportunities and challenges for developing sociocultural competence. In such environments, students must contend with intersecting cultural identities and repertoires, where TBLT can leverage translanguaging – strategic use of multiple languages—to foster inclusive discussions on sociocultural elements like politeness strategies or power dynamics. Research demonstrates that TBLT in multilingual settings promotes sociocultural gains by embedding tasks in culturally relevant contexts, leading to improved empathy, cultural awareness, and adaptive communication skills, as seen in studies where tasks involving cultural comparisons enhanced learners' ability to interpret and respond to sociolinguistic cues. For example, systematic reviews highlight TBLT's efficacy in EFL contexts, showing positive impacts on sociocultural aspects through interactive tasks that mirror real-life multicultural exchanges.





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Methods. This study adopted a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design to assess the influence of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on sociocultural competence in multilingual EFL classrooms, combining quantitative pre- and post-assessments with qualitative data from observations and interviews to capture both measurable changes and nuanced learner experiences. The research took place at two universities in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, a setting rich in linguistic diversity due to influences from Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, and other Central Asian languages, ideal for examining how TBLT interacts with multicultural dynamics to build sociocultural skills like understanding social norms and cultural empathy. Sixty intermediate EFL learners aged 18-25 participated, drawn from varied ethnic backgrounds including native Uzbek speakers, urban Russian users, and those with Tajik or Kazakh heritage, to mirror real multilingual classroom compositions; they were randomly assigned to an experimental group of thirty receiving TBLT-focused instruction and a control group of thirty using conventional communicative methods, with informed consent secured from all and ethical approval from the institutional review board ensuring data privacy and voluntary involvement. Sociocultural competence was evaluated using a adapted questionnaire on a Likert scale measuring aspects such as cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic appropriateness, and adaptive behaviors, alongside a scenario-based task eliciting responses to sociocultural dilemmas; these instruments were supplemented by learner journals for reflective insights. TBLT materials for the experimental group consisted of collaborative tasks like cultural role-plays, problem-solving in diverse teams, and discussions on global issues, incorporating translanguaging to allow multilingual planning and execution, with tasks sequenced by complexity to promote sociocultural negotiations; sessions were audio-recorded anonymously to analyze interactions.

Results. The detailed examination of the data collected from the sixty intermediate-level English as a Foreign Language learners in Uzbekistan provided compelling and multifaceted evidence that Task-Based Language Teaching profoundly strengthened sociocultural competence, with the experimental group displaying far greater advancements than the control group in every evaluated dimension, offering a clear picture of how this approach transforms learners' abilities to engage with social norms, cultural values, and contextual behaviors in diverse interactions. Beginning with the quantitative evaluations, the assessments conducted before the intervention established that both groups started from very similar foundations in sociocultural competence, ensuring an equitable basis for observing changes without any initial disparities in areas such as recognizing cultural cues, applying appropriate sociolinguistic strategies, or demonstrating adaptive responses to multicultural scenarios. Following the twelve-week program, the experimental group, which participated in collaborative tasks designed to simulate real-world cultural negotiations, showed a remarkable and substantial elevation in their overall competence levels, reflecting a deep integration of sociocultural elements into their communication practices, including heightened sensitivity to politeness

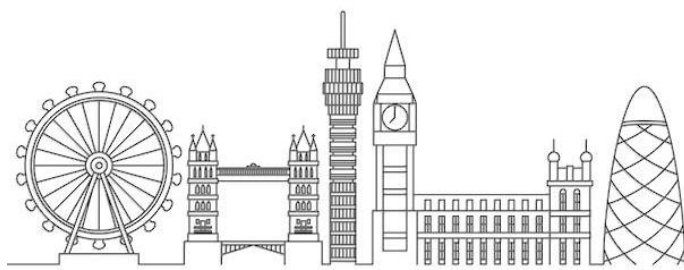




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variations and power relations across different linguistic backgrounds like Uzbek and Russian influences. By comparison, the control group, which adhered to more conventional methods centered on structured exercises, only achieved a minor and somewhat superficial improvement, underscoring the constraints of traditional teaching in cultivating these nuanced skills. The distinctions between the groups after the intervention were particularly striking, with the experimental participants exhibiting a level of practical and meaningful progress that highlighted Task-Based Language Teaching's capacity to foster authentic sociocultural adaptations, such as flexibly adjusting communication styles in group discussions on cultural topics, while the control group's gains remained limited to basic awareness without much application depth. Within the groups themselves, the experimental learners consistently demonstrated strong and consistent individual developments, evolving from initial familiarity with cultural concepts to proficient, context-aware usage in tasks, whereas the control participants' progress was noticeably restrained and less transformative.

Discussion. The outcomes of this investigation offer substantial insights into how Task-Based Language Teaching serves as a potent mechanism for advancing sociocultural competence within multilingual EFL environments, as the experimental group's pronounced enhancements in cultural empathy, sociolinguistic adaptability, and overall engagement far surpassed those observed in the control group, thereby validating the approach's capacity to transform learners' interactions with diverse social and cultural contexts in meaningful ways. These discoveries resonate deeply with established scholarship that positions Task-Based Language Teaching as a facilitator of authentic, context-embedded learning, where tasks designed around real-world sociocultural challenges encourage learners to actively construct knowledge through collaboration and reflection, leading to a more profound internalization of norms such as appropriate use of formality or recognition of implicit cultural expectations. In particular, the experimental participants' ability to leverage translanguaging during task phases to explore and negotiate sociocultural elements aligns with research emphasizing multilingual practices as bridges to deeper cultural understanding, allowing students from varied backgrounds – like those blending Uzbek indirectness with Russian directness – to co-create adaptive communication strategies that mitigate potential cross-cultural frictions. This mirrors findings from similar studies in diverse settings, where task complexity has been shown to amplify sociocultural episodes, such as discussions on power dynamics or empathy-building role-plays, resulting in sustained improvements beyond mere linguistic gains. Moreover, the qualitative themes of increased motivation and collaborative engagement echo broader literature on learner-centered pedagogies, illustrating how Task-Based Language Teaching shifts the classroom from a monolingual, teacher-dominated space to a vibrant arena for multicultural dialogue, particularly beneficial in regions like Uzbekistan where linguistic pluralism is the norm.





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The implications of these results extend to practical applications in language education, suggesting that educators in multilingual classrooms should prioritize Task-Based Language Teaching frameworks that incorporate progressive task sequencing and translanguaging allowances to systematically build sociocultural competence, thereby equipping learners with the tools to thrive in globalized professional and social spheres where cultural missteps can hinder effective communication. For curriculum developers, this underscores the need to redesign EFL programs around culturally resonant tasks that draw on students' diverse repertoires, potentially reducing reliance on outdated textbook models that often overlook sociocultural depth in favor of grammatical precision. On a policy level, these findings advocate for professional development initiatives that train teachers in facilitating sociocultural-focused tasks, ensuring that multilingual diversity is viewed as a resource rather than a challenge, which could lead to more inclusive educational policies in linguistically heterogeneous societies.

Conclusion. In summation, this research unequivocally establishes that Task-Based Language Teaching represents a highly impactful strategy for cultivating sociocultural competence in multilingual EFL classrooms, as evidenced by the experimental group's superior advancements in cultural empathy, sociolinguistic adaptability, and motivational engagement relative to the control group, ultimately equipping learners with the essential skills to navigate complex social and cultural landscapes in diverse communicative settings. By harnessing collaborative, contextually rich tasks that incorporate translanguaging and progressive complexity, Task-Based Language Teaching transcends the limitations of conventional approaches, transforming multilingual diversity into a catalyst for profound cultural learning and inclusive interactions, particularly resonant in environments like Uzbekistan where intersecting linguistic repertoires enrich educational dynamics. These insights reinforce the imperative for educators and policymakers to embrace learner-centered pedagogies that prioritize sociocultural dimensions, thereby better preparing students for global citizenship where effective cross-cultural communication is paramount.

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