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**Aspect of integrating intercultural competence into English
as a foreign language instruction**

**Аспекти впровадження міжкультурної компетенції
у викладання англійської мови як іноземної**

Summary. *In the changing context of global language learning and teaching, there has been a notable recognition of the substantial importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in education. This acknowledgment arises from the expanding use of English as a global means of communication, emphasizing the crucial link between language and culture in modern language instruction. Intercultural communication has become increasingly important and unavoidable as people from different cultures and nations interact. To achieve intercultural understanding, it is imperative to reshape educational framework, emphasizing the significance of intercultural competence – the ability to*

understand the emotions, thoughts, perspectives, and behaviors of others. As learners encounter a variety of global cultures in their foreign language studies, foreign language education places a strong emphasis on the development of intercultural competence.

The main objective of the article is to discuss the significance of integrating intercultural competence into the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. The authors describe the diverse perspectives and lack of a universally agreed-upon definition of ICC, which can lead to confusion among educators regarding what ICC entails and how to teach it effectively.

In addition, EFL instructors may have varying levels of understanding and preparedness in teaching ICC. The work emphasizes that some teachers might focus more on transmitting cultural facts rather than fostering intercultural reflective skills among students. There is a need to align teacher perceptions and practices with the goals of ICC education.

The research also discusses the challenge of assessing ICC, which encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness. Finding appropriate assessment methods that comprehensively evaluate these aspects is essential for monitoring students' progress.

Integrating ICC into EFL instruction requires equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and pedagogical approaches. Pre-service teacher education and ongoing professional development programs should include ICC training to address classroom challenges effectively.

Key words: *intercultural communicative competence, EFL teaching, education, culture.*

Анотація. *У сучасному мінливому контексті вивчення та викладання іноземних мов, все більше усвідомлюється важливість міжкультурної комунікативної компетенції (МКК) в освіті. Це усвідомлення пов'язане з розширенням використання англійської мови як міжнародного засобу спілкування, що свідчить про важливий зв'язок між мовою та культурою в сучасному навчанні іноземним мовам. Міжкультурна комунікація стає все більш важливою і незамінною, оскільки люди з різних культур і націй взаємодіють між собою. Для досягнення міжкультурного взаєморозуміння необхідно переосмислити освітні концепції, підкресливши важливість міжкультурної компетенції – здатності розуміти емоції, думки, погляди та поведінку інших людей. Оскільки під час вивчення іноземної мови учні знайомляться з різноманітними світовими культурами, навчання іноземної мови приділяє особливу увагу розвитку міжкультурної компетентності.*

Основна мета статті – розглянути важливість інтеграції міжкультурної компетенції у сферу викладання англійської мови як іноземної. Автори вказують на різноманітні точки зору та відсутність загальноприйнятого визначення поняття МКК, що може призвести до виникнення непорозуміння серед викладачів щодо того, що таке міжкультурна компетенція та як її ефективно викладати.

Окрім того, вчителі англійської мови можуть мати різний рівень розуміння та підготовленості до викладання МКК. У дослідженні підкреслюється, що деякі педагоги можуть зосереджуватися більше на передачі культурних фактів, ніж на розвитку міжкультурних рефлексивних навичок

у студентів. Існує потреба привести сприйняття і практику вчителів у відповідність до цілей освіти в галузі МКК.

У дослідженні також обговорюється проблема оцінювання МКК, яка охоплює знання, навички, ставлення та культурну обізнаність. Пошук відповідних методів оцінювання, які всебічно охоплюють ці аспекти, має важливе значення для контролю прогресу студентів.

Впровадження МКК у викладання англійської мови передбачає забезпечення викладачів необхідними знаннями та педагогічними підходами. Підготовка вчителів та програми підвищення кваліфікації повинні включати навчання з питань МКК для ефективного вирішення проблем у навчальному процесі.

Ключові слова: *міжкультурна комунікативна компетенція, викладання англійської мови як іноземної, освіта, культура.*

Introduction. The academic literature on the topic reveals a consensus among various papers regarding the critical significance of integrating intercultural competence within the domain of English as a foreign language instruction. M. Choudhury (2013) points to the imperative for EFL educators to infuse cultural elements into their pedagogy, positing that such an approach is instrumental in cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence [7]. N. Tvalchrelidze's investigation (2014) underscores the invaluable contribution of culturally-sensitive English language teaching to augmenting students' awareness of diverse cultural dimensions [24]. In K. Göbel and A. Helmke's study (2010), a noteworthy focal point centers on the essential role played by teachers' personal intercultural experiences in shaping the efficacy of intercultural instruction [15]. L. Huang's research (2023) posits that incorporating cultural metacognition into instructional design can significantly bolster the development of learners' intercultural competence within EFL classrooms [17]. S. Achieng (2023) undertakes an investigation into various teaching methodologies that prove effective for EFL instructors [1]. This exploration encompasses communicative, task-based, and intercultural approaches, along with an examination of how technology can contribute to improving learning results. These scholarly works reinforce the importance of integrating intercultural competence into the realm of EFL instruction describing various approaches and factors that significantly impact this integration. The article aims to highlight the importance of incorporating intercultural competence into the field of field of EFL instruction.

Results and discussion. *The notion of intercultural competence.* There are diverse perspectives when it comes to defining intercultural competence. Given that intercultural communication takes place among individuals who speak different languages and hold distinct interpretations of words and concepts, additional skills become necessary. In this

context, learners are not only anticipated to grasp the correct structures of the language they are studying but also to grasp how to employ these structures effectively in specific social contexts within the target language environment, ensuring that their communication is not only appropriate but also coherent and strategically effective for native speakers. E. Saghar suggests that learners are exposed to an entirely new language and a fresh approach to perceiving reality, resulting from the amalgamation of language and culture [21].

Intercultural competence encompasses a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral abilities and traits that facilitate effective and appropriate interactions in various cultural contexts [2, p. 122]. According to R. Wiseman, intercultural communicative competence is the collection of emotions, intentions, needs, and motivations associated with the anticipation of or actual engagement in intercultural communication [26, p. 4]. M. Byram points to the importance of acquiring intercultural competence by suggesting that the confines of the classroom can be somewhat transcended through learning experiences beyond its borders, where the teacher still plays a role [6]. Within such encounters or interactions beyond the classroom, the teacher can shape and influence learning opportunities, fostering learner independence within a structured yet diverse environment.

M. Byram notes that learners who have achieved autonomy in learning can enhance their intercultural competence through practical application [6, p. 35]. He breaks down the process of acquiring intercultural competence into three distinct phases: the classroom, fieldwork, and independent experiences. In the classroom, under the guidance of the teacher, learners acquire the skills necessary for understanding cultural meanings and effectively expressing their efforts in this regard. The combination of pedagogical structure and educational objectives, often determined through negotiation between the teacher and students, fosters the development of interaction skills. However, the effectiveness of this development relies on students' ability to reflect upon and further refine their knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on prior training in independent learning.

Given the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of intercultural competence, various models have emerged from different perspectives on the subject, including the models proposed by M. Byram (1997) [6], A. Fantini (2000) [13], and Deardorff (2006) [10]. These models offer different frameworks for understanding and cultivating intercultural competence.

Fantini's model, as illustrated in Figure 1, encompasses four key components: awareness, attitudes, skills, and knowledge. It bears

resemblance to M. Byram's intercultural components. Although A. Fantini does not place a strong emphasis on language in his intercultural model, he asserts that the ability to speak the host language fluently is crucial for enhancing one's intercultural competence [12]. Furthermore, the scholar explains that awareness, which in turn leads to self-awareness and reflection, serves as a guiding path toward deeper cognitive understanding, improved skills, and more positive attitudes [13]. Simultaneously, these aspects of intercultural competence contribute to the enhancement of awareness, creating a cyclical and mutually reinforcing process [13, 2000, p. 29].
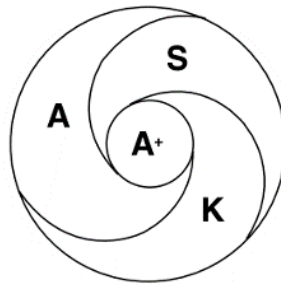
A+: Awareness; A: Attitudes; S: Skills; K: Knowledge

Fig. 1. Fantini's IC Model (2000) [13]

Awareness, in essence, serves as a catalyst for the growth of other intercultural competence (IC) components, while simultaneously benefiting from their development. A. Fantini argues that engaging in communication and becoming acquainted with individuals from different languages and cultures within a supportive environment is a pathway to enhancing IC. It is important to recognize that IC is often a long-term and ongoing process, as noted by A. Fantini [13], D. Deardoff [10], and M. Byram [6]. A. Fantini acknowledges that IC evolves over time, although there may be periods when it plateaus or regresses. He suggests, that positive interactions with other worldviews create opportunities for individuals to undergo a shift in perspective and develop an appreciation for both the diversity and commonalities among human beings [14, p. 32].

Apart from the three elements of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as in Byram's and Fantini's models, this research-based pyramid model of IC (see figure 2) has two additional separate elements of internal outcomes and external outcomes.
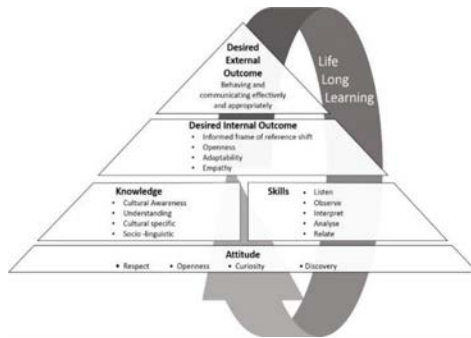
Fig. 2. Deardorff's Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (2006) [10]

D. Deardorff emphasizes the need to move beyond the conventional, surface-level understanding of culture, which often revolves around aspects like food, rituals, and customs. She asserts that nearly all definitions of intercultural competence include more than knowledge since knowledge alone does not suffice to constitute intercultural competence. Furthermore, the linguist argues that relying solely on knowledge is insufficient for the development of intercultural competence [9, p. 15]. The cultivation of intercultural thought skills is becoming increasingly vital compared to simply acquiring factual knowledge.

According to D. Deardorff, five assessment approaches for evaluating intercultural competence may be outlined as follows:

1. Direct Evidence – Learning Contracts: These involve negotiations between teachers and students about what specific aspects will be learned, how they will be learned, the timeline for learning, evidence of learning, and the actions taken as a result of learning.

2. Direct Evidence – E-Portfolios: E-portfolios consist of various elements, such as term papers, photos, and other documentation that reflect students' learning.

3. Direct Evidence – Critical Reflection: This approach includes activities like journaling, blogging, and reflection papers, which allow students to reflect on their intercultural experiences and learning.

4. Direct Evidence – Performance: Observing students' performance in intercultural situations is a direct way to assess their intercultural competence.

5. Indirect Evidence: This typically involves surveys and inventories from the learner's perspective, gathering insights into their perceptions and attitudes regarding intercultural competence [9, p. 74–75].

D. Deardorff concludes that assessing intercultural competence as an outcome of learning is not only possible but increasingly necessary [9].

This is particularly relevant as postsecondary institutions aim to graduate students who are globally prepared. With a consistent conceptual framework and methodology rooted in the literature, the foundation of intercultural competence can lead to realistic expectations and observable results in student learning.

Intercultural communicative competence and its components. Intercultural communicative competence, recognized as a vital skill for individuals in the 21st century, has been defined in multiple ways. One such definition states that ICC involves the capacity to communicate proficiently in cross-cultural settings and engage appropriately within diverse cultural environments.

D. Deardorff offers a definition of intercultural competence as the capacity to communicate in a proficient and suitable manner within intercultural contexts, drawing from one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes [9, p. 94]. She suggests that Byram's definition is highly suitable for educational purposes.

M. Byram defines Intercultural Communicative Competence as encompassing knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; are used to discover or interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self [cited in 10, p. 248]. The scholar also highlights the significance of ICC, particularly in the context of English as a lingua franca, emphasizing that learners cannot possibly acquire information about all the diverse national identities and societies they may encounter (see Figure 3). He argues that learners should instead focus on equipping themselves with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to navigate experiences they may encounter during a period of residence in another country or interactions with individuals from different nations within their own society.
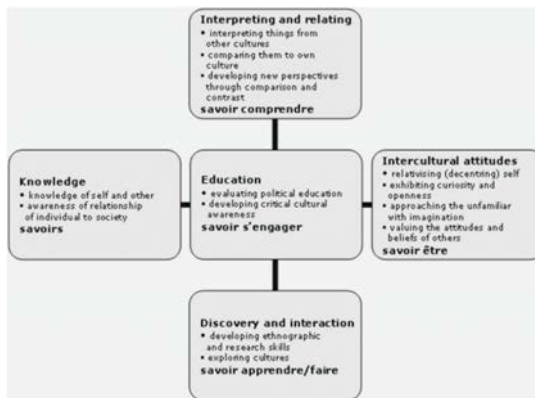

Fig. 3. Model of ICC (Byram, 1997) [6]

M. Byram outlines the components of Intercultural ICC as follows [6, p. 57–64]:

I. Intercultural <u>attitudes</u>. This component encompasses attitudes and beliefs, and it involves demonstrating enthusiasm, tolerance, and a willingness to temporarily suspend one's own cultural biases. The objectives of this component include: a) willingness to actively seek out or embrace opportunities for engagement on an equal footing with others; b) interest in exploring alternative perspectives regarding the interpretation of familial or unfamiliar phenomena, both within one's own culture and other cultures, including cultural practices; c) willingness to question the values and positions inherent in cultural practices and products within one's own environment; d) readiness to experience the various stages of adaptation and interaction with another culture during a period of residence; e) willingness to engage with the conventions and rituals of verbal and nonverbal communication and interaction.

II. <u>Knowledge</u> encompasses information about various aspects of everyday life, societies, nonverbal behaviors, and the historical background of a culture. It also involves an understanding of how cultural context influences interactions. The objectives of this knowledge component include: a) understanding the historical and contemporary relationships between one's own country and the country of one's interlocutor; b) familiarity with the methods of establishing contact with interlocutors from another country, including travel and relevant institutions that facilitate contact or help in resolving problems; c) awareness of the different types, causes, and processes of misunderstandings that may arise between interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds; d) knowledge of the national historical events and the ways these events are perceived and interpreted from the perspective of other countries; e) understanding the national historical events of one's interlocutor's country and how they are perceived from one's own country; f) awareness of the national definitions of geographical spaces within one's own country and how they are viewed from the perspective of other countries; g) familiarity with the national definitions of geographical spaces in one's interlocutor's country and how they are perceived from one's own country; h) knowledge of the processes and institutions of socialization in both one's own country and one's interlocutor's country; i) understanding social distinctions and their primary markers within one's own country and in the country of one's interlocutor; j) awareness of institutions and how they are perceived, which have an impact on life in one's own country and in the country of one's interlocutor, and which shape and influence the relationships between them; k) knowledge of the processes of social interaction in the country of one's interlocutor.

This knowledge component equips individuals with a deep understanding of various aspects of culture, society, and history, which is essential for effective intercultural communication and interaction.

III. Interpreting and relating involve the ability to recognize ethnocentric viewpoints within texts or situations, describe their origins, identify areas of confusion and dysfunction in relationships, and explain these issues within the context of each cultural system at play. The objectives for this component include: a) the ability to identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and provide an explanation of their sources; b) the skill to recognize areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction within an interaction and provide an explanation for these issues from the perspective of each of the cultural systems involved; c) the capacity to mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena.

The development of these abilities empowers individuals to effectively interpret and navigate intercultural interactions, ultimately assisting in bridging gaps in understanding and communication between diverse cultural perspectives.

IV. Skills of discovery and interaction pertain to learners' abilities to swiftly gain an understanding of a new cultural context and effectively communicate with members of international cultures, drawing upon their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. This component also involves learners' capacity to explore information about historical and contemporary aspects of foreign and their own cultures. The objectives for this skill set include: a) the ability to elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values from documents or events and construct an explanatory framework applicable to other phenomena; b) the skill to identify significant references within and across cultures; c) the ability to recognize both common and divergent patterns of interaction, verbal and nonverbal, and negotiate an appropriate application of these patterns in specific situations; d) the competence to utilize a suitable combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real-time interactions with interlocutors from different countries and cultures, taking into consideration one's level of familiarity with the country, culture, and language, as well as the degree of difference between own culture and the other.

Developing these abilities helps individuals to quickly adapt to new cultural settings, effectively engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and navigate intercultural interactions with sensitivity and competence.

Integrating ICC into EFL instruction. With the phenomenon of globalization, there is a growing population of non-English speaking students engaging in the study of English as a second or foreign language [20]. It is essential to acknowledge that these students come from diverse

cultural backgrounds, inevitably bringing their own cultural influences into their English learning environments. Consequently, EFL instructors play a pivotal role in not only enhancing students' communication skills but also nurturing their intercultural knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and awareness. This preparation enables students to appreciate and develop an understanding of both their own culture and that of others.

Scholars emphasize the importance of teachers not attempting to alter learners' values. Instead, he emphasizes the significance of fostering reflection as a means of promoting ICC within the classroom. In this context, learners are encouraged to engage in self-reflection, allowing them to first examine their own perspectives and beliefs, which serves as a foundational step in developing an awareness and appreciation of other cultures.

When integrating intercultural communicative practices into English as a Foreign Language classes, several crucial factors should be considered. One of the primary factors is teachers' cognition concerning ICC and its teaching, which includes their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. It is imperative to recognize that what teachers know, perceive, believe, and think greatly influences their teaching practices [3].

However, despite the willingness of EFL teachers to incorporate intercultural competence into their teaching environments, there remains a degree of confusion surrounding the meaning and concept of ICC, as noted by L. Sercu [23]. Many teachers mistakenly believe that teaching ICC involves simply transmitting their own intercultural knowledge to their students, rather than facilitating the development of intercultural reflective skills among their learners.

A review of existing studies on teachers' cognition about ICC in EFL contexts, conducted by Gong et al., reveals that teachers often perceive teaching ICC as equivalent to providing cultural facts [16]. They tend to be more familiar with the culture associated with the target language and consequently focus primarily on linguistic aspects rather than intercultural aspects. Moreover, studies have highlighted a significant discrepancy between teachers' recognition of the importance of ICC and their actual classroom practices. Although teachers acknowledge the significance of ICC in EFL teaching, they often struggle to fully integrate it into student learning activities. This indicates that there is still ongoing debate regarding the extent to which teachers comprehend the concept of ICC and how effectively they can implement it within the classroom.

Teachers' understanding of ICC and how to teach it is shaped significantly by their life experiences. The development of teachers' ICC knowledge and pedagogical approaches is a pivotal factor in successfully incorporating ICC into English language teaching classrooms. It's essential to recognize that teachers' concepts and perceptions of culture are heavily

influenced by their prior experiences, including what they learned at home and in school when they were language students themselves.

Teachers often fail to realize that their own cultural knowledge is still limited and primarily based on their past experiences as language learners. Consequently, their approach to intercultural communicative teaching tends to be more intuitive and imitative, as observed by M. Borg [5]. This suggests that teachers may inadvertently rely on their own past language learning experiences and cultural exposure when attempting to teach ICC, rather than utilizing a more comprehensive and structured pedagogical approach.

Within teachers' pedagogical expertise, their comprehension of assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence plays a pivotal role in successfully incorporating ICC into EFL instruction. Assessment, designed to measure the degree to which learners achieve ICC objectives, should encompass ICC domains such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness, as advocated by M. Byram [6]. This perspective underscores the notion that ICC assessment entails a simultaneous evaluation of linguistic, communicative, and intercultural elements [25].

Therefore, it is imperative to select appropriate assessment methods that effectively gauge these diverse ICC components. M. Byram emphasizes the necessity of conducting ongoing assessments to monitor ICC development over time. In this context, EFL educators can employ tools such as reflective self-assessment and portfolios, which enable them to identify students' existing competencies and guide their further progress [6].

To develop students' intercultural communicative competencies, authentic assessment and performance-based evaluation can also be deployed. These evaluation methods require students to demonstrate meaningful intercultural communicative tasks, as noted by N. Lazarevic [18] and Marwa et al. [19]. Consequently, ICC assessment aims to elicit performance and make informed judgments on their comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application to determine their progress, identify areas for improvement, and identify strategies for facilitating further advancement. Teachers' knowledge of ICC assessment is an integral component of successfully integrating ICC into EFL teaching. Appropriate assessment methods should comprehensively address the various aspects of ICC, offering valuable insights into students' advancement and guiding their development as intercultural communicators.

Considering that the development and evolution of teachers' cognitive abilities are strongly influenced by their initial teacher education and professional experiences [4], the inclusion of ICC training in both

EFL pre-service teacher education and ongoing teacher professional development programs proves essential. These initiatives serve to equip teachers with ICC knowledge and continuously enhance their pedagogical knowledge related to ICC. Moreover, the introduction and augmentation of ICC in these programs can effectively address various classroom challenges, including issues related to classroom diversity, literacy, and interactions with different social groups.

To achieve this, it is imperative that ICC training becomes an integral part of the EFL teacher education curriculum and ongoing professional development programs. Research by A. Sevimel-Sahin suggests that explicit instruction on ICC should be incorporated into ELT undergraduate programs to bolster pre-service teachers' cultural knowledge [22, p. 145]. Similarly, workshops and seminars within teacher professional development programs can serve as opportunities to refresh and provide fresh insights into ICC knowledge and pedagogical approaches for EFL teachers.

In exploring the participation of EFL teachers in study groups, the research discovered that such groups contribute to a transformation in teachers' understanding of ICC and their instructional practices [8, p. 81]. These study groups create a professional space that encourages collaborative dialogues and reflective practices among teachers, ultimately leading to more intercultural-communicative efforts within the classroom. Thus, incorporating ICC training into both pre-service teacher education and professional development programs for EFL teachers is essential. These initiatives empower teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively promote intercultural communicative competence among their students, ultimately benefiting the diverse and dynamic learning environments they work in.

Conclusion. The cultivation of intercultural competence has emerged as a critical element in the sphere of language education, particularly in the context of English as a foreign language instruction. This article has examined the multifaceted dimensions of ICC, highlighting its intricate nature and the diverse perspectives that surround its definition. The authors have explored the challenges faced by educators, ranging from the confusion surrounding ICC to the necessity of aligning teacher perceptions and practices with the goals of ICC education. Furthermore, the article points to the paramount importance of assessment in monitoring students' progress in ICC development, emphasizing the need for comprehensive evaluation methods that encompass knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural awareness. Effective assessment strategies not only evaluate student growth but also inform educators on areas requiring further attention. The article accentuates the significance of incorporating

ICC training into both teacher education and ongoing professional development programs. Equipping EFL teachers with the necessary knowledge and pedagogical approaches for ICC empowers them to foster intercultural competence effectively within diverse classrooms. In a rapidly globalizing world where cross-cultural communication is the norm rather than the exception, nurturing intercultural competence in language learners has never been more critical. It is through these efforts that teachers can prepare their students to become effective cross-cultural communicators, capable of handling the complexities of our interconnected and culturally diverse world. As we continue to evolve in our understanding and teaching of ICC, we contribute to a more inclusive, understanding, and harmonious global society.

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