

**FACTORS OF INTRODUCING THE CULTURE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE IN
DEVELOPING SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPETENCE****Begimqulova Mahliyo,
Farhodov Ozodjon,
Baxriyeva Nafisa**The students of SamSIFL
Scientific Supervisor: **S.U.Rasulova**
Acting Associate Professor, PhD of SamSIFL

Annotation: This article explores the key factors influencing the introduction of the target language culture in the process of developing socio-cultural competence among foreign language learners. The study highlights the relationship between linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness, emphasizing the importance of authentic materials, intercultural communication, and teachers' cultural mediation. Recommendations for language teachers are also provided to enhance students' socio-cultural competence effectively.

Keywords: socio-cultural competence, intercultural communication, target language culture, language teaching, cultural awareness.

In the era of globalization, the mastery of a foreign language extends far beyond the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. It encompasses an understanding of how people think, behave, and communicate within different social and cultural contexts. Therefore, modern language education focuses not only on linguistic competence but also on the development of socio-cultural competence — the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with speakers of other languages in various cultural situations. The integration of the target language culture into language teaching has become a central goal of communicative language teaching (CLT) and intercultural education. This integration allows learners to view language as a living system that reflects the values, traditions, and worldviews of its speakers. According to Byram (1997)[1], successful language learners are not only competent users of linguistic structures but also intercultural mediators who can bridge cultural gaps and promote mutual understanding.

Socio-cultural competence plays a crucial role in developing learners' communicative ability. It helps students interpret linguistic nuances, idiomatic expressions, and gestures that are deeply rooted in cultural background. For instance, understanding English phrases such as “small talk,” “mind your own business,” or “How are you?” requires cultural insight beyond literal translation. Hence, language without culture becomes mechanical and disconnected from real-life communication. Furthermore, introducing cultural elements in language education encourages open-mindedness, tolerance, and empathy — skills that are essential in multicultural societies and international communication. Learners develop a sense of global citizenship and learn to appreciate both their own and foreign cultures, which aligns with the objectives of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past few decades, the concept of socio-cultural competence has become a central issue in foreign language teaching and learning. The earliest foundations were laid by Dell Hymes (1972) [1;293] who proposed the notion of communicative competence — the ability not only to produce grammatically correct sentences but also to use them appropriately

in social contexts. Hymes' model was a turning point in language pedagogy, emphasizing the social and functional aspects of communication.

Later, Canale and Swain (1980) refined this concept, identifying four components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence[3;47]. Their framework demonstrated that communication involves more than linguistic accuracy; it requires sensitivity to social norms, politeness conventions, and cultural expectations.

Building on these ideas, Byram (1997)[1] introduced the model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which highlights the learner's ability to mediate between cultures. According to Byram, intercultural competence includes five key components: attitudes (curiosity and openness), knowledge (of social groups and practices), skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. This model remains one of the most influential frameworks in cultural language education.

Kramsch further developed the idea of "the cultural dimension" in language learning, arguing that language and culture are inseparable (1993)[4]. She emphasized that culture is not simply a collection of facts about traditions and customs but a dynamic system of meanings that shapes how people perceive the world. Kramsch also warned against teaching culture superficially — as isolated "cultural tips" — and advocated for deep intercultural reflection.

In recent years, many scholars have studied practical methods for integrating cultural content into the classroom. Seelye (1993)[5] suggested a set of "cultural goals" that include developing cultural awareness, tolerance, and empathy. More recent research stresses that cultural integration should be embedded in all aspects of language instruction — from curriculum design and materials selection to assessment and teacher training.

Contemporary studies in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in non-native contexts (for example, Asia and Central Asia) have also demonstrated that students often possess strong linguistic competence but lack cultural fluency (Yashima, 2009; Chen & Starosta, 2018)[6;163]. This gap limits their ability to communicate effectively in real intercultural settings. As a result, researchers call for the inclusion of authentic cultural content, intercultural projects, and digital tools to foster socio-cultural awareness and communicative competence.

In summary, the reviewed literature confirms that socio-cultural competence is not a separate skill but an integral component of communicative competence. It develops through continuous exposure to the target language culture, critical reflection, and intercultural experiences. However, despite substantial theoretical and methodological progress, there remains a need for practical strategies tailored to specific educational contexts such as Uzbekistan, where language education is rapidly internationalizing but often lacks sufficient intercultural depth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight that the development of socio-cultural competence in foreign language learning is largely determined by several interrelated factors, including teachers' intercultural awareness, the use of authentic materials, learners' attitudes, and the integration of technology.

1. Teachers as Cultural Mediators- One of the most significant findings is that teachers play a central role as cultural mediators. Their knowledge, attitudes, and ability to interpret the target culture directly influence students' understanding. Teachers who actively incorporate cultural discussions, real-life examples, and intercultural comparisons in their lessons create a more engaging and meaningful learning environment. For instance, teachers who use classroom

debates or role-plays based on real cultural scenarios (such as greetings, politeness norms, or social etiquette) report higher student engagement and empathy development. However, the study also reveals that many teachers still focus predominantly on linguistic accuracy, while cultural content is treated as supplementary. This gap suggests the need for specialized training in intercultural communication and culture-based pedagogy within teacher education programs.

2. Use of Authentic Materials and Cultural Resources- The inclusion of authentic materials — such as films, newspapers, songs, and social media — emerged as one of the most effective methods for introducing the target culture. Students exposed to authentic texts and multimedia resources demonstrated improved comprehension of both language and cultural context. They were able to identify subtle pragmatic differences, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references more accurately. For example, using film excerpts or short video clips in class allowed learners to observe non-verbal communication styles, gestures, and social behavior typical of native speakers. This confirms Kramsch's (1993) argument that language and culture must be experienced together rather than taught separately.

3. Learners' Motivation and Attitudes- Learners' motivation toward the target culture strongly affects their socio-cultural development. Students who expressed curiosity about the daily life, traditions, and social values of English-speaking countries showed more rapid progress in cultural understanding and pragmatic competence. Conversely, those with ethnocentric attitudes or low interest in cultural learning tended to rely on literal translation and faced more communication difficulties. Positive motivation can be enhanced through interactive activities, such as intercultural projects, virtual exchanges with foreign peers, and participation in online cultural forums. These approaches encourage students to take ownership of their cultural learning process.

4. The Role of Technology in Cultural Learning- Modern technologies provide a powerful platform for cultural immersion. Through digital media, students can engage with authentic content, communicate with native speakers, and explore real-world cultural contexts. The use of online platforms like YouTube, podcasts, and virtual tours enables learners to “experience” culture beyond classroom boundaries. For example, project-based learning through international collaboration (such as eTwinning or virtual exchange programs) has proven to improve both language proficiency and intercultural sensitivity. This aligns with the findings of the Council of Europe (2020)[7], which recommends integrating digital intercultural activities into modern curricula.

5. Classroom Environment and Interaction Patterns- The classroom atmosphere also contributes significantly to developing socio-cultural competence. A tolerant, student-centered environment encourages open dialogue, cultural curiosity, and respect for diversity. Teachers who create opportunities for peer interaction, group work, and reflective discussions foster empathy and awareness among students. In contrast, traditional teacher-centered methods limit students' ability to express themselves and analyze cultural differences critically. Therefore, adopting communicative and task-based approaches is essential for building a dynamic and culturally rich learning experience.

Overall, the results confirm that language and culture are inseparable in effective communication. Introducing the target language culture enhances students' ability to understand not only “what to say” but also “how, when, and why to say it.” The findings also suggest that socio-cultural competence develops gradually through consistent exposure, guided reflection, and intercultural interaction. For the Uzbek EFL context, integrating culture into language education should be a priority. Curriculum designers should balance linguistic and

cultural objectives, while teachers should be provided with professional training focused on intercultural communication. Additionally, technological integration can help overcome limited exposure to native environments by bringing authentic cultural experiences into the classroom. In conclusion, the discussion supports the view that socio-cultural competence is a vital component of communicative competence. Developing it requires a holistic approach — one that combines teacher expertise, authentic materials, learner engagement, and modern technology. Through this, language learning becomes not merely an academic subject but a bridge between people, societies, and cultures.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that developing socio-cultural competence is a fundamental aspect of modern foreign language education. Language cannot be separated from culture, as each linguistic element reflects the values, beliefs, and behavioral norms of its speakers. The effective introduction of the target language culture enables learners not only to communicate accurately but also appropriately and respectfully within intercultural contexts. The analysis has shown that several key factors contribute to the successful formation of socio-cultural competence. Among them, the teacher's role as a cultural mediator is of utmost importance. Teachers who integrate cultural discussions, authentic materials, and intercultural comparisons help students develop both linguistic and cultural awareness. Moreover, the use of technology and digital media allows learners to access authentic cultural experiences and interact with native speakers beyond classroom boundaries.

Learners' motivation and openness toward other cultures also play a decisive role. When students approach language learning with curiosity and empathy, they become capable of understanding deeper cultural meanings, avoiding stereotypes, and fostering mutual respect. A student-centered classroom that values cultural diversity and encourages reflection can significantly enhance this process. For the Uzbek context, where English is taught as a foreign language, integrating cultural aspects into curricula remains a pressing necessity. Language programs should adopt a holistic approach that combines linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural learning objectives. Teacher training institutions must also include intercultural communication modules to prepare educators for culture-based teaching.

In conclusion, the development of socio-cultural competence through the introduction of the target language culture leads to more meaningful and authentic communication. It prepares learners not only as proficient users of a foreign language but as globally minded individuals capable of understanding and appreciating cultural diversity. By fostering intercultural awareness in language education, we take a significant step toward building mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence in a globalized world.

REFERENCES:

1. Byram, M. Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence. Multilingual Matters. 1997
2. Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings*. Penguin. –293.
3. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1> –47.
4. Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press.



5. Seelye, H. N. (1993). Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication (3rd ed.). National Textbook Company
- Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (2018). Intercultural Communication Competence: A Synthesis. Routledge.
6. Yashima, T. (2009). International posture and the ideal L2 self in the Japanese EFL context. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self. Multilingual Matters.-163
- Council of Europe. (2020). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume. Council of Europe Publishing.