

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN THE FORMATION OF INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Reymova Myassar Jen'isbaevna

Karakalpak university named after Berdakh

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Language plays a fundamental role in the development of intercultural communication among university students in the modern globalized educational environment. Universities have become multicultural spaces where students from different linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds interact daily. Effective communication in such settings depends largely on language competence, cultural awareness, and the ability to understand diverse perspectives. This article examines the role of language in shaping intercultural communication among university students and analyzes how multilingualism, foreign language learning, and intercultural competence contribute to successful academic and social interaction. The study also explores the challenges students face in intercultural communication, including language barriers, stereotypes, and cultural misunderstandings. Special attention is given to the role of English as an international language of academic communication and its influence on intercultural interaction in higher education institutions. The article highlights the importance of integrating intercultural

communication strategies into university curricula to promote tolerance, cooperation, and global citizenship among students. The findings demonstrate that language is not only a tool for transmitting information but also a medium for cultural exchange, identity formation, and mutual understanding.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, globalization has significantly transformed higher education systems throughout the world. Universities increasingly attract students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, creating multicultural academic environments where intercultural communication becomes an essential component of educational and social interaction. In such contexts, language serves as the primary instrument through which individuals express ideas, share cultural values, and establish interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the study of the role of language in the formation of intercultural communication among university students has become highly relevant in contemporary educational research. Intercultural communication refers to communication between people representing different cultures, languages, and social traditions. Successful intercultural communication requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness, tolerance, empathy, and the ability to interpret cultural differences appropriately. University students frequently participate in intercultural interactions through academic mobility programs, international conferences, exchange projects, and multicultural classrooms. These experiences provide opportunities for personal growth and cultural exchange but may also create communication difficulties caused by language barriers and cultural misunderstandings.

Language is closely connected with culture because it reflects social norms, traditions, values, and patterns of thinking. Through language, students gain access to the cultural knowledge and worldviews of other communities. Foreign language learning, particularly English as a global lingua franca, has become an important means of promoting intercultural competence among university students. Researchers emphasize that language education should include cultural dimensions to help students communicate effectively in multicultural environments. Modern universities aim to prepare students for participation in an interconnected global society. Consequently, educational institutions increasingly focus on developing intercultural communicative competence alongside professional skills. This article investigates how language contributes to the formation of intercultural communication

among university students, examines the major challenges in intercultural interaction, and discusses the role of higher education in promoting effective communication across cultures.

Main Body

Language is one of the most important elements in the process of intercultural communication because it enables people from different cultural backgrounds to exchange information, ideas, and emotions. In university environments, communication among students often occurs in multilingual and multicultural contexts where language functions not only as a means of interaction but also as a bridge between cultures. Intercultural communication among university students contributes to academic cooperation, social integration, and personal development. One of the primary functions of language in intercultural communication is the transmission of cultural values and social norms. Every language reflects the history, traditions, and worldview of its speakers. When university students learn foreign languages, they also learn about the cultural practices and communication styles associated with those languages. This process helps students develop intercultural awareness and respect for cultural diversity. Researchers note that multilingual students actively negotiate language norms and adapt communication strategies in multicultural academic settings. [1]

English has become the dominant language of international communication and higher education. Many universities use English as the medium of instruction in international programs and academic exchanges. As a result, English plays a central role in facilitating communication among students from different countries. The use of English enables students to participate in global academic discussions, access international research, and establish intercultural relationships. However, the dominance of English may also create inequalities between native and non-native speakers. Some students experience difficulties expressing complex ideas or participating confidently in discussions due to limited language proficiency. Intercultural communicative competence is an important concept in modern language education. It refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with representatives of other cultures. This competence includes linguistic skills, sociocultural knowledge, empathy, critical thinking, and adaptability. Universities increasingly integrate intercultural communication training into language courses to help students develop these abilities. Role-playing activities, group discussions, international projects, and collaborative learning methods are commonly used to improve students' intercultural competence.

Despite the advantages of intercultural communication, university students often encounter various challenges. Language barriers remain one of the most common problems

in multicultural educational environments. Students with insufficient language skills may feel isolated or excluded from academic and social activities. Misunderstandings may also arise due to differences in communication styles, gestures, politeness norms, and cultural expectations. For example, direct communication may be considered appropriate in some cultures but impolite in others. Such differences can lead to confusion, stereotypes, and conflicts if students lack intercultural awareness.[2]

Another important issue is the influence of stereotypes and prejudice on intercultural interaction. Students may develop preconceived opinions about people from other cultures based on media representations or limited experiences. These stereotypes can negatively affect communication and reduce mutual trust. Therefore, universities should create inclusive educational environments that encourage dialogue, cultural exchange, and respect for diversity. Intercultural activities such as international student clubs, cultural festivals, and exchange programs help students overcome stereotypes and develop positive attitudes toward other cultures. Technology and digital communication have also transformed intercultural interaction among university students. Social media platforms, online learning environments, and virtual exchange programs enable students to communicate with peers worldwide. Digital communication increases opportunities for intercultural learning and collaboration. However, online interaction may also create challenges related to language interpretation, cultural sensitivity, and communication etiquette. Students must therefore develop digital intercultural competence to communicate effectively in virtual multicultural environments.

The role of teachers and educational institutions is crucial in promoting intercultural communication. Teachers should encourage open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, and active participation in multicultural discussions. Language teaching should include authentic cultural materials and real-life communication situations. Universities should support multilingual education policies and provide opportunities for students to engage in intercultural experiences both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, academic mobility programs such as student exchanges and international internships significantly contribute to the development of intercultural communication skills. Students participating in mobility programs gain direct experience interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Such experiences improve language proficiency, cultural adaptability, and interpersonal communication skills. Studies show that international educational experiences increase students' confidence and global awareness.[5] Thus, language plays a multidimensional role in the formation of intercultural communication among university

students. It facilitates knowledge exchange, cultural understanding, social integration, and professional development in multicultural educational settings.

Conclusion

The role of language in the formation of intercultural communication among university students is extremely significant in the context of globalization and internationalization of higher education. Modern universities represent multicultural communities where students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact continuously. In such environments, language becomes more than a simple communication tool; it functions as a medium for cultural exchange, mutual understanding, identity formation, and social integration. The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that effective intercultural communication requires both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness. University students need the ability to understand cultural differences, interpret diverse communication styles, and respond appropriately in multicultural interactions. Foreign language education, especially the study of English as an international language, contributes substantially to the development of intercultural communicative competence. Through language learning, students gain access not only to linguistic knowledge but also to the traditions, values, and perspectives of other cultures. The article also highlights several challenges associated with intercultural communication in higher education. Language barriers, stereotypes, cultural misunderstandings, and unequal communication opportunities may negatively influence students' academic performance and social adaptation. These challenges indicate the importance of creating inclusive educational environments that support diversity, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue. Universities should implement educational programs that encourage students to participate actively in intercultural activities, collaborative projects, and international exchange programs.

In conclusion, language serves as the foundation of intercultural communication among university students. It enables individuals to establish meaningful relationships, share knowledge, and cooperate effectively in multicultural contexts. Developing intercultural communicative competence through language education is essential for fostering mutual respect, cultural understanding, and peaceful coexistence in modern society. Universities should continue supporting multilingualism, intercultural dialogue, and international collaboration to prepare students for successful participation in an increasingly interconnected world. The promotion of intercultural communication through language education ultimately contributes to the creation of more tolerant, inclusive, and globally aware academic communities.

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