

DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN
RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH THE AUDIOVISUAL METHOD

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This article examines how audiovisual instruction can be systematically used to develop intercultural communicative competence in Russian language education. The study employs a qualitative methodological design based on content analysis of recent scholarship on intercultural language education, audiovisual input, multimedia learning, and Uzbek language-teaching research. The results propose a five-stage instructional model—cultural noticing, contextual decoding, comparison, interaction, and mediation/reflection—and a set of criteria for selecting audiovisual materials. The model positions video not merely as a source of linguistic input but as a mediated cultural event in which language, social roles, non-verbal behaviour, values, and pragmatic choices can be jointly analysed and transformed into communicative practice.

Introduction

Contemporary language education increasingly treats communication as more than accurate grammar and vocabulary use. Learners interact with speakers who may differ in social norms, expectations, values, communication styles, and interpretations of politeness. For this reason, intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has become

a major objective of foreign and second language education. Byram defines ICC as a combination of linguistic interaction and the ability to interpret, relate, discover, interact, and critically reflect on cultural meanings [1]. The 2020 CEFR Companion Volume similarly expands language education toward mediation, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and the learner's role as a social agent [2].

Russian language teaching in Uzbekistan operates in a multilingual and culturally diverse environment. Learners may encounter Russian in education, professional communication, media, tourism, online interaction, and interpersonal contacts. In such contexts, a grammatically correct utterance may still be pragmatically inappropriate if the learner does not understand forms of address, social distance, turn-taking, intonation, humour, indirectness, gesture, or culturally embedded references. Intercultural competence therefore cannot be treated as an optional "culture component" added after linguistic material; it must be integrated with language use.

Audiovisual resources are particularly suitable for this purpose because they represent language together with visual context, social roles, facial expressions, gesture, prosody, setting, and interactional timing. Liddicoat and Scarino argue that intercultural language learning requires learners to notice, interpret, compare, reflect, and act across cultural perspectives rather than simply accumulate factual information about another culture [3]. Video can make these processes observable. However, the pedagogical value of audiovisual materials depends on how they are selected, scaffolded, discussed, and transformed into interaction.

The purpose of this study is to develop a methodological model for using audiovisual materials to foster ICC in Russian language teaching. The research questions are: (1) Which intercultural dimensions of audiovisual input are pedagogically relevant in Russian language instruction? (2) How can audiovisual content be transformed into a sequence of intercultural communicative tasks? (3) Which selection and assessment criteria are appropriate for this type of instruction?

Materials and Methods

The study uses a qualitative, theory-informed methodological design. The material consisted of publications from 2012–2026 addressing intercultural communicative competence, CEFR-based language education, audiovisual input, multimedia learning, and recent Uzbek research on foreign/Russian language methodology. Sources were selected when they met at least one of three criteria: they provided a recognised conceptual model of ICC; they synthesised empirical evidence on audiovisual language learning; or they represented methodological work conducted in Uzbekistan and therefore helped contextualise the proposed framework.

The analysis proceeded in four steps. First, key components of ICC were extracted from Byram's revised model and from CEFR descriptors related to mediation, pluricultural space, and interaction [1; 2]. Second, findings on audiovisual input and on-screen text were reviewed to identify how video can support comprehension and language learning [4; 5]. Third, Uzbek methodological sources were examined to determine locally relevant emphases, including audiovisual instruction, authentic materials, and intercultural competence [6–9]. Fourth, the identified components were synthesised through pedagogical modelling into an instructional sequence and an audiovisual-content selection matrix.

The proposed model is conceptual rather than experimental. No artificial participant data or invented learning gains are reported. “Results” therefore refers to the methodological constructs generated through source synthesis: the five-stage ICC cycle, content-selection criteria, task types, and observable learning indicators.

Results

The analysis identified five intercultural dimensions that can be systematically developed through audiovisual materials in Russian language teaching. The first is pragmatic meaning: how speakers perform requests, disagreement, apology, invitation, refusal, advice, or criticism. The second is sociolinguistic choice: forms of address, register, politeness, social distance, and role relations. The third is non-verbal communication: gesture, gaze, facial expression, personal space, and timing. The fourth is cultural interpretation: the ability to recognise that behaviour can have more than one plausible cultural explanation. The fifth is mediation and critical reflection: the capacity to explain a cultural practice to another person without stereotyping or reducing it to a fixed national trait.

On this basis, a five-stage audiovisual ICC model was developed. Stage 1, cultural noticing, asks learners to observe selected linguistic and non-linguistic details before making judgments. Tasks may include identifying forms of address, moments of interruption, intonation shifts, gestures, spatial relations, or visible institutional practices. The aim is disciplined observation rather than immediate evaluation.

Stage 2, contextual decoding, links observed features to the communicative situation. Learners answer questions such as: Who has greater institutional authority? What is the speaker trying to achieve? Why is a direct or indirect form used here? Which visual cues change the interpretation of the words? At this stage, lexical and grammatical work is integrated with pragmatic interpretation.

Stage 3, comparison, invites learners to relate the observed Russian-language interaction to communication patterns familiar from their own experience. Comparison

must avoid simplistic statements such as “Russians always...” or “Uzbeks always...”. Instead, tasks focus on tendencies, contexts, and alternative interpretations. Learners may compare two possible ways of making a request, greeting a teacher, expressing disagreement, or negotiating a service problem.

Stage 4, interaction, transforms observation into performance. Learners participate in role-plays, scenario completion, video-response tasks, or group problem-solving in which they must adapt language to roles and goals. The activity should modify at least one variable from the source video—age, status, setting, purpose, or relationship—so that students cannot merely reproduce memorised lines.

Stage 5, mediation and reflection, asks learners to explain a culturally marked episode to a third party, reformulate it in neutral language, or reflect on how their initial interpretation changed. This stage is important because ICC includes the ability to create shared understanding between perspectives, not merely to imitate native-speaker behaviour.



Stage	Core learner action	Typical audiovisual task	Observable indicator
1. Noticing	Observe without premature judgment	Mark forms of address, gestures, pauses, tone	Identifies relevant verbal/non-verbal cues
2. Decoding	Interpret cues in context	Explain why a phrase/gesture fits the situation	Connects language choice with role and purpose
3. Comparison	Relate perspectives	Compare two ways of performing the same speech act	Avoids categorical stereotypes; offers contextual explanations
4. Interaction	Act in a modified scenario	Role-play, video reply, group negotiation	Adapts register, strategy, and behaviour to context
5. Mediation/reflection	Build shared understanding	Explain the episode to another audience; reflective note	Reformulates meaning and acknowledges multiple perspectives

A second result concerns audiovisual-content selection. Not every authentic video is pedagogically useful. Materials should contain a recognisable communicative event, manageable linguistic density, observable cultural/pragmatic cues, and sufficient contextual information for interpretation. They should also avoid presenting a single behaviour as representative of an entire culture. When sensitive social topics are used, the task design should encourage evidence-based interpretation and comparison rather than moral ranking.

The evidence base for using audiovisual input is substantial. Montero Perez's state-of-the-art review shows that audiovisual input can support comprehension and learning in areas including vocabulary, grammar, and listening, with outcomes influenced by factors such as on-screen text and learner proficiency [4]. Sutton and Webb's 2026 meta-analysis, based on 56 experiments and 1,954 participants, found a positive overall contribution of audiovisual input to L2 learning and also showed that video category can moderate outcomes [5]. These findings support the use of audiovisual materials but also caution against treating "video" as a uniform intervention.

Uzbek scholarship provides additional contextual support. Umarov's work on the audiovisual method in Russian language teaching emphasises listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, cultural context, and learner motivation [6]. Tleumuratova discusses multimedia-based development of intercultural communicative competence, indicating the relevance of multimodal resources for culture-oriented language education [7]. Xalilova and Turapova highlight authentic materials as a means of bringing real-life contexts and intercultural content into foreign-language teacher education [8]. Jalolov's methodological framework, although broader than audiovisual teaching, remains important because it treats method, material, exercise, and communicative goal as an integrated instructional system [9].

From these sources, three categories of audiovisual tasks were derived. The first category is analytical: identifying speech acts, register, cultural references, or visual cues. The second is transformative: retelling from another perspective, rewriting subtitles, changing the social relation between speakers, or mediating the episode for someone unfamiliar with the context. The third is productive: role-play, video response, mini-debate, problem-solving, or a student-created micro-video. Effective ICC instruction normally moves from analytical to transformative and then to productive work.

Discussion

The proposed model treats audiovisual material as a cultural event rather than a decorative illustration. This distinction is important because traditional "culture teaching" can easily become factual and static: holidays, food, landmarks, famous people, or lists of etiquette rules. Such knowledge can be useful, but ICC requires learners to interpret interaction under conditions of ambiguity. A short video in which a student addresses a lecturer, a customer negotiates a complaint, or friends disagree about plans can reveal more about pragmatic choices than a page of decontextualised rules.

Byram's revised ICC framework places critical cultural awareness and mediation alongside knowledge and interaction [1]. The five-stage model operationalises these ideas through video: noticing prevents premature stereotyping; contextual decoding develops pragmatic interpretation; comparison creates awareness of one's own communicative assumptions; interaction turns knowledge into performance; mediation/reflection develops the ability to bridge perspectives.

The model is also consistent with the CEFR's action-oriented perspective [2]. Learners are not asked only to "know culture" but to perform tasks as social agents. Audiovisual input becomes especially valuable when it leads to a communicative

product: a negotiated solution, an explanation, a reformulation, or a new dialogue. This prevents the lesson from ending at comprehension questions.

Multimedia learning principles must nevertheless be respected. Mayer demonstrates that more media does not automatically produce better learning; unnecessary information can overload processing [10]. For ICC instruction, this means the teacher should select short, focused segments and direct attention to a limited number of cultural and linguistic cues. A five-minute scene with two carefully designed questions can be more productive than a twenty-minute video accompanied by a long list of factual questions.

The study has several limitations. It is a methodological synthesis rather than an experimental test. The framework should therefore be empirically examined with Russian learners at different proficiency levels. Future research could compare the model with a content-only video approach and measure changes in pragmatic interpretation, interactional appropriateness, mediation performance, and reflective complexity. It would also be useful to investigate how same-language captions, bilingual subtitles, and no-text conditions affect intercultural noticing at A2, B1, and B2 levels.

Conclusion

Audiovisual instruction can contribute to intercultural communicative competence in Russian language education when video is treated as an integrated source of linguistic, pragmatic, social, and cultural information. Its pedagogical value lies not simply in authenticity but in the opportunity to observe interaction, interpret context, compare perspectives, practise adaptive communication, and mediate meaning.

The five-stage model developed in this study—cultural noticing, contextual decoding, comparison, interaction, and mediation/reflection—provides a structured pathway from observation to intercultural action. It is compatible with Byram's ICC framework, the CEFR action-oriented approach, contemporary research on audiovisual input, and Uzbek methodological work on audiovisual and authentic materials. For practical implementation, teachers should use short, purposeful video segments, avoid essentialist cultural generalisations, design tasks that require interpretation and adaptation, and assess not only linguistic accuracy but also contextual appropriateness, perspective-taking, and mediation.

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