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ENHANCING STUDENTS’ INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH TASKS ON NEGOTIATING CULTURAL MEANING IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOLKLORE

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Annotation. This conceptual-methodological study examines how tasks centred on negotiating cultural meaning can enhance students’ intercultural communicative competence in the teaching of English folklore.

Keywords: Intercultural communicative competence, cultural meaning, negotiation tasks, English folklore, task-based language teaching, cultural mediation, critical interpretation, reflective learning.

Аннотация. В данном концептуально-методологическом исследовании рассматривается, как задания, направленные на согласование культурных смыслов, могут способствовать развитию межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции студентов при изучении английского фольклора.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, культурный смысл, задачи на ведение переговоров, английский фольклор, обучение языку на основе выполнения задач, культурное посредничество, критическая интерпретация, рефлексивное обучение.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu kontseptual-metodologik tadqiqot ingliz folklorini o‘qitish jarayonida madaniy ma’nolarni kelishib olishga qaratilgan topshiriqlar talabalarning madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiyasini qanday rivojlantirishi mumkinligini tahlil qiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Madaniyatlararo kommunikativ kompetensiya, madaniy ma’no, muzokara vazifalari, ingliz folklori, vazifaga asoslangan til o‘qitish, madaniy vositachilik, tanqidiy talqin, reflektiv o‘rganish.

INTRODUCTION. Foreign-language education is increasingly expected to prepare learners for encounters in which linguistic accuracy alone cannot guarantee mutual understanding. Speakers interpret tone, silence, politeness, humour, obligation, family roles and acceptable disagreement through culturally shaped frames. A grammatically correct utterance can therefore fail pragmatically or relationally when interlocutors assign different

meanings to the same behaviour. This problem is especially relevant to future educators, whose professional responsibility includes interpreting cultural content and guiding others through difference rather than merely reproducing target-language forms.

Intercultural communicative competence offers an appropriate educational construct because it joins language use with attitudes, knowledge, interpretive skills, discovery, interaction and critical awareness. Byram’s model replaces the unattainable ideal of copying a native speaker with the more educationally defensible figure of an intercultural speaker who can interpret and relate perspectives¹. In a methodology course, this competence becomes visible when students justify an interpretation, listen to alternatives, revise a premature judgement and mediate meaning for a specific audience.

The national tradition of foreign-language methodology provides a compatible systemic foundation. Jalolov relates teaching objectives, content, principles, methods, means and exercises as mutually dependent components. From this perspective, a culturally rich text produces no automatic competence; it becomes educational content only through purposeful tasks and assessment². Hoshimov and Yoqubov likewise connect practical communication with educational and developmental aims, emphasising that exercise systems must move learners from reception toward independent speech activity³.

English folklore provides a productive environment for such movement. Its texts are compact but semantically dense. The conduct of a youngest child, a trickster, a stranger, a ruler or a supernatural helper is rarely meaningful only at plot level. Repeated formulas, warnings, rewards, punishments, food, domestic space, journeys and transformations carry assumptions about social order and acceptable conduct. A proverb condenses a judgement, a riddle organises categories, a nursery rhyme combines communal memory with sound play, and a legend joins place with belief. These features create a genuine need for interpretation.

Yet folklore is often taught through explanation followed by comprehension questions. The teacher supplies cultural facts, students locate information, and the lesson ends before perspectives have interacted. This approach confuses exposure with competence. Knowing that an item has a particular cultural association does not demonstrate the ability to negotiate its relevance, ambiguity or ethical implications. Cultural meaning is neither a secret code possessed by the teacher nor a completely subjective response. It is an evidence-based, historically situated and socially negotiated interpretation.

Kramsch’s account of language and culture supports this relational view. Learners do not simply travel from one stable cultural system to another; they construct a “third place” from which familiar and unfamiliar meanings can be examined⁴. Liddicoat and Scarino develop this position through a cycle of noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting. They treat intercultural learning as engagement with meaning-making practices rather than the accumulation of information⁵.

¹ Michael Byram, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*, Multilingual Matters, 1997, pp. 34–38

² Jamol Jalolov, *Chet til o‘qitish metodikasi, O‘qituvchi*, 2012, pp. 24–31

³ O‘. Hoshimov and I. Yoqubov, *Ingliz tili o‘qitish metodikasi*, Sharq, 2003, pp. 27–38

⁴ Claire Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 205

⁵ Anthony J. Liddicoat and Angela Scarino, *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 47–82

The phrase negotiation of meaning has a recognised place in second-language research, where it commonly describes interactional work used to resolve comprehension difficulty. The present study retains that interactive core but expands the object of negotiation. Students do not only clarify what words mean; they examine why participants interpret a symbol, action or moral differently and construct a warranted shared account without erasing disagreement. The task must therefore contain a perspective gap, require reciprocal contributions and culminate in a communicative product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural language education begins from the inseparability of language, culture and interpretation. Byram’s *savoirs* clarify the knowledge, dispositions and actions required of an intercultural speaker, while Kramsch explains the symbolic space in which learners reposition themselves. Liddicoat and Scarino add a pedagogical emphasis: learners notice culturally shaped practices, compare interpretations, reflect on their positioning and re-enter interaction with modified understanding. Taken together, these accounts show that competence is developmental and relational. It cannot be reduced to a quiz on cultural facts.

Task-based language teaching provides the operational bridge between this construct and classroom activity. Ellis defines a pedagogical task through its primary focus on pragmatic meaning, the presence of a gap, learner choice of linguistic resources and a clearly identifiable outcome⁶. These criteria are important because many activities labelled “interactive” lack interdependence: students answer the same question one after another but do not need one another’s information or perspective. A negotiation task must make joint meaning necessary.

The cultural perspective gap differs from a simple information gap. In an information-gap task, participants possess different facts that can be combined. In a cultural perspective-gap task, they may share the same text but attend to different evidence, apply different assumptions or evaluate a character’s action through different norms. Completion does not require unanimous agreement. It requires participants to represent positions accurately, test them against textual and contextual evidence, and produce a mediated conclusion that records both convergence and unresolved tension.

Folklore scholarship reinforces the need for plurality. Zipes explains that fairy tales survive through retelling, adaptation and changing social use; they are neither timeless moral containers nor transparent records of national character⁷. Treating one printed version as a definitive cultural voice therefore contradicts the historical mobility of the genre. Tasks should compare versions, audiences or performances and ask what changed, for whom and with what effect.

Uzbek folklore research offers an equally important conceptual basis. Mirzayev and his co-authors describe oral art through collectivity, variation, tradition and performance, showing that genre meaning emerges within social use⁸. Safarov’s treatment of children’s

⁶ Rod Ellis, *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 9–16

⁷ Jack Zipes, *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*, Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 79–99

⁸ To‘ra Mirzayev, Omonulla Sobirov, Komil Imomov and Hamid Razzoqov, *O‘zbek xalq og‘zaki poetik ijodi, O‘qituvchi*, 1990, pp. 5–24

folklore foregrounds play, rhythm, repetition, dialogue and age-sensitive functions⁹. These principles enable comparison between English and Uzbek materials without claiming one-to-one equivalence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a conceptual-methodological design. Ten real, published core sources-five works by Uzbek scholars and five English-language works-were selected for their relevance to foreign-language methodology, intercultural education, task design and folklore theory. Analytical synthesis identified recurring constructs; pedagogical modelling converted those constructs into stages, teacher actions and learner products; comparative genre analysis tested whether the model could accommodate folktales, legends, ballads, rhymes, riddles and proverbs.

Four design constraints guided the analysis. First, the task had to contain a culturally meaningful problem rather than a decorative topic. Second, participants had to hold complementary evidence or defensible contrasting perspectives. Third, interaction had to change the product: work completed individually and merely read aloud did not qualify. Fourth, the outcome had to be observable, such as a jointly annotated meaning map, a mediated retelling, an advisory note for teachers or a comparison statement with evidence.

Texts were selected through six criteria: cultural density, linguistic accessibility, interpretive openness, availability of contextual information, relevance to future pedagogical practice and ethical suitability. Potentially troubling elements were not concealed, but the distinction between critical university study and adaptation for preschool children was maintained. Analysis focused on observable learner moves: noticing, questioning, evidencing, perspective-taking, clarification, reframing, mediation and reflection.

No empirical sample or statistical result is claimed in this article. Results refer to the instructional model produced through theoretical analysis. This boundary protects the validity of the work and establishes a transparent basis for a later controlled pedagogical experiment.

RESULTS

The main result is a six-phase Cultural Meaning Negotiation Task Cycle. Each phase generates a product needed by the next phase, thereby connecting interpretation with communicative action.....

Phase	Central question	Learner action	Product	ICC dimension
Encounter	What happens?	Read/listen and reconstruct context	Shared plot frame	Cognitive
Notice	What appears culturally marked?	Annotate language, symbols and conduct	Evidence cards	Cognitive–reflective
Open the gap	Why may this be read differently?	Adopt and represent perspectives	Perspective profiles	Affective

⁹ Oxunjon Safarov, O‘zbek xalq og‘zaki ijodi, Musiq, 2010, pp. 13–27

Negotiate	Which claims are warranted?	Clarify, challenge, concede and reframe	Negotiation record	Behavioural
Mediate	How can meaning be communicated responsibly?	Create an audience-specific explanation	Mediated product	Behavioural-cognitive
Reflect	How did my interpretation change?	Compare initial and final positions	Reflective note	Reflective

The encounter phase establishes a common text but delays authoritative explanation. Learners reconstruct events, identify the narrator and note uncertainty. During noticing, they mark culturally salient details: forms of address, hospitality, domestic roles, taboo, reward, danger, humour, supernatural agency or the moral framing of success. They classify each observation as explicit textual evidence, contextual information or personal inference. This separation reduces unsupported generalisation.

The perspective gap is then deliberately opened. Groups receive different role cards: narrator, character, contemporary child, parent, historian, educator or adapter. A card does not dictate an answer; it directs attention to a legitimate concern. In negotiation, students must use four discourse moves: request clarification, cite evidence, revoice another position fairly and formulate a provisional synthesis. The teacher tracks interaction but avoids closing meaning prematurely.

The assessment framework contains four dimensions. Cultural interpretation measures the distinction between evidence and assumption. Dialogic disposition measures openness, respectful challenge and fair representation of another view. Communicative negotiation measures clarification, elaboration, repair and synthesis. Reflective mediation measures audience awareness, ethical adaptation and documented change in the learner’s own position. Evidence is collected from the negotiation transcript, group product, individual reflection and a transfer task using a new folklore genre.

DISCUSSION

The proposed cycle changes the status of folklore in the English lesson. Instead of functioning as an attractive container for vocabulary, it becomes a site where language is needed to manage interpretive difference. This distinction is methodologically important. Ordinary comprehension can be completed by recovering the teacher’s preferred answer; negotiation requires students to make claims accountable to evidence and responsive to other participants. The learning outcome is therefore not simply “understanding the tale” but learning how understanding is constructed, tested and communicated.

Negotiation also protects against essentialism. Questions such as “What do English people believe?” encourage a single text to stand for a whole society. The cycle instead asks what this version makes meaningful, what historical or performance context supports the reading, and how another version changes it. Culture is treated as discourse and practice-patterned, socially recognisable and contestable-rather than a list of national attributes. This

distinction should be explicitly modelled by the teacher because students may otherwise interpret comparison as ranking.

The use of Uzbek folklore scholarship is not supplementary. Principles of variation, performance and children’s oral play provide an epistemological safeguard and a pedagogical resource. When English and Uzbek texts are compared, the unit of comparison should be a function or problem-warning, hospitality, cleverness, obligation, social authority-not the assumption that two national cultures possess internally uniform equivalents. Functional comparison can reveal both resemblance and difference while respecting variation within each tradition.

For preschool education students, the mediation phase is decisive. A culturally informed university interpretation cannot simply be delivered to children. Students must redesign language, length, emotional intensity and participation while preserving enough cultural texture for genuine learning. If every unfamiliar feature is removed, adaptation becomes cultural erasure. If historical violence or exclusion is retained without framing, adaptation becomes ethically careless. The requirement to justify changes makes this professional judgement visible.

Assessment must preserve the processual character of competence. A group product alone can conceal unequal participation; an individual test can miss interactional ability. Multiple evidence sources are therefore required. A transcript shows clarification and repair, the product shows mediation, the reflective note shows repositioning, and the transfer task tests whether the student can apply principles beyond the rehearsed text. Rubric profiles should be reported by dimension because high cultural knowledge can coexist with weak dialogic behaviour.

Implementation presents challenges. Students need sufficient language to disagree, qualify and synthesise; sentence frames may initially scaffold these moves. Texts require reliable provenance and age-sensitive ethical review. Time limits must prevent discussion from becoming diffuse. Role cards must open attention without stereotyping identities. Teachers also need calibration examples so that assessment criteria are applied consistently. Digital tools may support shared annotation or recording, but the intellectual architecture of the task remains more important than the platform.

The model requires empirical validation. A future study could use experimental and control groups, pre- and post-performance tasks, blinded rating, inter-rater reliability and delayed transfer assessment. Quantitative change across cognitive, affective, behavioural and reflective components should be integrated with qualitative analysis of negotiation episodes. Particular attention should be paid to whether students move from unsupported national claims toward qualified, evidence-based interpretations and whether that change transfers to their own preschool lesson designs.

CONCLUSION

Tasks on negotiating cultural meaning provide a theoretically coherent way to enhance students’ intercultural communicative competence through English folklore. Their defining features are a culturally significant interpretive problem, a genuine perspective gap, reciprocal dependence, evidence-based dialogue and an audience-oriented outcome. These

features distinguish negotiation from serial opinion sharing and turn folklore into a medium for purposeful language use.

The six-phase cycle-Encounter, Notice, Open the Gap, Negotiate, Mediate and Reflect-integrates intercultural objectives with task-based methodology. Its task taxonomy and assessment indicators connect cultural interpretation to communicative behaviour and professional mediation. For prospective preschool teachers, the approach is particularly valuable because it requires them to move between critical adult inquiry and responsible adaptation for young learners.

The study contributes a methodological proposition rather than fabricated evidence of effectiveness. Subsequent pedagogical experimentation should test the model under transparent conditions and examine both measurable development and the quality of classroom discourse. Even before such validation, the framework provides a structured basis for designing English folklore lessons in which cultural meaning is investigated collaboratively, represented responsibly and revised reflectively.

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