

NATIONAL AND ETHNOPEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN
UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: *The paper examines the national foundations on which intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is developed in English language teaching in Uzbekistan, and shows how the ethnopedagogical tradition can serve as teaching material rather than as decoration. The study analyses three groups of sources: state documents on foreign language education, works of Uzbek pedagogy on national upbringing, and classical texts of the regional didactic tradition such as Qutadg'u bilig, Qobusnoma, Mahbub ul-qulub and Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq. The analysis shows a gap between the aim declared in educational policy and the way the aim is realised in the classroom. Policy requires a graduate able to communicate with representatives of other cultures; practice, especially in non-philology faculties, largely offers information about the countries of the target language and leaves the student's own culture outside the lesson. The paper argues that the ethnopedagogical tradition supplies exactly what is missing — ready material on forms of address, hospitality, politeness, refusal and advice, in*

which the student's own practice becomes an object of reflection and of explanation to a foreign partner. Three functions of ethnopedagogical material in the English lesson are distinguished: as content for comparison, as the subject of mediation tasks, and as the ground for critical cultural awareness. The paper concludes that the national dimension of ICC is not an addition to the international approach but the condition under which it works in a local classroom.

Keywords: *intercultural communicative competence; English language teaching; ethnopedagogy; national upbringing; Uzbek didactic tradition; own culture; mediation; non-philology students.*

Introduction

A student who learns English in Uzbekistan will use it mainly to represent his or her own side. An engineer explains a local technical practice to a foreign supplier; a doctor describes how patients here are usually treated; a guide answers a tourist's question about why a guest is seated in a particular place. In all these situations the student speaks not about Britain or the United States but about the world he or she comes from. This simple observation defines the problem of the present paper: a competence that is called intercultural cannot be built on one culture only.

The national framework of foreign-language education sets an aim of this kind. The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 on raising the quality of foreign-language learning, and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 312 of the same date, treat foreign languages as a means of participation in international professional and scientific communication, not as a school subject closed in itself ([lex.uz](#); [lex.uz](#)). Communication of this kind is always two-sided: it requires a speaker

who can present his or her own context as clearly as he or she understands the partner's.

In practice, however, the cultural part of the English lesson is usually filled with information about the countries of the target language — holidays, meals, sights, rules of behaviour. The student learns that in Britain people queue and speak about the weather, but is never asked to explain why in his or her own culture a guest is pressed to eat more, or how a refusal is softened. The result is a one-way picture of culture, in which one side is studied and the other remains invisible. In non-philology faculties, where the number of hours is small and the textbook is oriented to professional vocabulary, this imbalance is even stronger.

At the same time the national pedagogical tradition contains a large body of material that fits exactly this gap. The classical didactic texts of the region — Qutadg'u bilig, Qobusnoma, Mahbub ul-qulub, Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq — are devoted to the rules of speech and conduct: how to address an elder, how to receive a guest, when silence is better than speech, how to give advice without offending. Ethnopedagogy studies the same rules as they live in proverbs, customs and family upbringing. This material is normally used in the lessons of national upbringing, rarely in the English lesson, and almost never as material for intercultural work.

The aim of this paper is to determine the national and ethnopedagogical foundations on which intercultural communicative competence can be developed in English language teaching in Uzbekistan. Three tasks follow: to establish what the national educational framework requires; to show where present classroom practice falls short of that requirement; and to define the functions that ethnopedagogical material can perform in an English lesson.

Materials and Methods

The study is theoretical and descriptive; it analyses documents and texts and does not report experimental data. Three groups of material were used.

The first group comprises normative documents on foreign-language education in Uzbekistan, in particular Resolution No. PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 and Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 312 of the same date, taken as the statement of the aim that teaching is expected to serve.

The second group comprises works on national upbringing and ethnopedagogy in Uzbek pedagogical scholarship, together with the international works in which the place of the learner's own culture is defined — above all Byram's concept of critical cultural awareness and the mediation descriptors of the Companion Volume to the Common European Framework of Reference.

The third group comprises the classical didactic texts of the region: Yusuf Khos Hojib's *Qutadg'u bilig*, Kaykovus's *Qobusnoma*, Alisher Navoi's *Mahbub ul-qulub*, and Abdulla Avloniy's *Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq*, read specifically for the passages that regulate speech behaviour: address, greeting, hospitality, advice, refusal, silence.

The analysis proceeded in three steps. First, the aim stated in the normative documents was compared with the way cultural content is usually presented in the English lesson, in order to locate the gap. Second, the classical texts were read and the passages concerning speech behaviour were grouped by communicative situation. Third, each group was matched with the component of intercultural communicative competence it can serve and with a form of classroom work.

Two limitations apply. The description of present classroom practice is based on published methodological literature and on general observation, not on a survey, so it indicates a tendency rather than a measured state of affairs. The classical texts are used here as sources of cultural norms of communication; their textual and historical study belongs to other disciplines and is not attempted.

Results

The gap between the stated aim and the usual lesson

The aim stated in the national documents is communicative and two-sided, while the cultural content of the ordinary lesson is informational and one-sided. The documents describe a graduate who takes part in professional communication with foreign partners. Such participation requires the student to explain his or her own position, practice and context. The cultural material of the lesson, however, usually describes the life of the target-language countries and asks the student to remember it. Between the two there is a missing element: no task requires the student to put his or her own culture into English words for a listener who does not share it.

This gap has a practical consequence. A student who has only studied a foreign way of life has no language for his or her own. When a foreign partner asks why a decision is made in a particular way, or why a guest is treated so, the student falls silent not for lack of grammar but for lack of prepared material.

What the ethnopedagogical tradition offers the English lesson

The classical didactic texts of the region regulate precisely those areas of behaviour in which intercultural misunderstanding usually arises. Read with a methodological eye, they give ready communicative situations.

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Situation	Where the tradition treats it	What the student does in English	Which component of ICC it serves
Forms of address and greeting	Qutadg'u bilig; Qobusnoma	Explains who is addressed how, and why; compares with English forms of address	Knowledge; skills of comparison
Receiving a guest	Qobusnoma; customs of hospitality	Describes the order of receiving a guest to a partner who does not know it	Mediation of concepts
Giving advice without offending	Mahbub ul-qulub; Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq	Rewrites a direct English instruction as advice, and the reverse	Skills of interpreting and relating
Refusal and indirect speech	Proverbs; family upbringing practice	Analyses a case where an indirect refusal was read as agreement	Critical cultural awareness
Speech and silence, measure in words	Qutadg'u bilig; Mahbub ul-qulub	Discusses why the same pause is read as respect by	Attitudes; decentring

Situation	Where the tradition treats it	What the student does in English	Which component of ICC it serves
		one side and as doubt by the other	
Respect for the elder, order of speaking	Qobusnoma; Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq	Explains the rule to a partner and names its equivalent in the partner's practice	Mediation of communication

Three functions of national material

The analysis shows that ethnopedagogical material can perform three distinct functions in an English lesson, and that these functions are ordered by difficulty.

As **content for comparison**, local material gives the second term without which comparison is impossible. A lesson about English politeness formulas becomes intercultural only when the student's own formulas stand beside them.

As **the subject of mediation tasks**, local material gives the student something to explain. The task is not to translate a proverb but to make an unfamiliar practice understandable to a partner — which is mediation of concepts in the sense of the Companion Volume.

As **the ground for critical cultural awareness**, local material allows the student to look at his or her own habit from outside and to see it as one possible rule among others. This is the component Byram places at the centre

of the competence, and it cannot be developed on foreign material alone, because a habit that was never one's own costs nothing to examine.

Discussion

The use of national material in the English lesson carries a risk that must be named directly: the lesson may turn into a second course of country studies, this time about one's own country. If the student is merely asked to retell customs and praise them, nothing intercultural happens — only the direction of the one-sided description changes. Three conditions keep the work on the right side of that line.

The first condition is that local material always appears in a pair. A custom is introduced together with the foreign practice it is compared with, and the lesson ends with a question about the difference, not with a conclusion about which side is better. Comparison, not demonstration, is the form of work.

The second condition is that the student's task is to explain, not to praise. Mediation means making a practice understandable to someone who does not share it, which requires the student to name the reason behind the custom. A student who can say why a guest is pressed to eat has done intercultural work; a student who says that hospitality here is the best in the world has not.

The third condition is that the analysis includes cases of failure. The most productive material is the misunderstanding: an indirect refusal taken for consent, a modest answer taken for lack of competence, a long preamble taken for evasion. Such cases show the student that a rule he or she considered natural is in fact local, which is the beginning of critical cultural awareness.

For non-philology students this work has an additional advantage. It does not require extra hours, because it is built on the professional topics already in the programme: the same unit on a business letter, a presentation or

a meeting can carry a mediation task about a local practice. It also does not depend on the presence of a foreign partner, which makes it available in groups where online exchange cannot be organised.

Finally, the approach needs a caution of scholarly kind. The classical texts were written in other centuries and describe the norms of their time; not every rule in them corresponds to present-day behaviour. They are used here as sources of the tradition in which the student's communicative habits were formed, not as a description of how students behave today. The connection between the historical norm and present practice is itself a question the student can usefully be asked.

Conclusion

The analysis leads to four conclusions.

1. The national framework of foreign-language education sets a two-sided communicative aim, while the cultural content of the ordinary English lesson remains one-sided and informational; this is the gap that the national dimension of intercultural work must close.

2. The classical didactic tradition of the region — Qutadg'u bilig, Qobusnoma, Mahbub ul-qulub, Turkiy Guliston yoxud axloq — and the ethnopedagogical material of proverbs and customs regulate exactly those areas of speech behaviour in which intercultural misunderstanding arises, and are therefore usable as teaching material in English.

3. This material performs three functions, in order of difficulty: it supplies the second term for comparison, it gives the student something to mediate, and it provides the ground on which critical cultural awareness can be developed.

4. The work is kept intercultural by three conditions: local material always appears paired with a foreign practice, the task is to explain rather than to praise, and cases of failed communication are analysed rather than avoided.

The national dimension is thus not an addition to the international approach but the condition under which that approach functions in a local classroom. The next step of the research is the design of a set of mediation tasks built on this material for non-philology students, and their trial in ordinary course conditions.

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