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Foreign Language Teaching in the Context of Language-Culture Relations

Abstract

Foreign language teaching has increasingly been viewed as a multidimensional process that extends beyond the acquisition of grammatical knowledge to include the development of communicative and cultural competence. Within the context of language–culture relations, language is not only a system of rules but also a carrier of cultural meanings, values, and social practices. This study examines the role of culture in foreign language teaching and emphasizes the interdependent relationship between linguistic and cultural components in the learning process. It highlights that effective language instruction requires integrating cultural elements such as traditions, beliefs, and discourse patterns to enhance learners' communicative competence and intercultural awareness. Furthermore, the study discusses the importance of authentic materials and context-based teaching approaches in facilitating meaningful learning experiences. The findings suggest that incorporating cultural content into language teaching improves learners' motivation, supports the development of intercultural communicative competence, and enables more appropriate language use in real-life contexts. Consequently, foreign language education should adopt a holistic approach that considers both linguistic structures and cultural dimensions as essential components of successful language learning.

Keywords: *foreign language teaching, language–culture relations, communicative competence, intercultural communication, authentic materials, context-based teaching, cultural competence*

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Dil–mədəniyyət əlaqələri kontekstində xarici dil tədrisi

Xülasə

Xarici dil tədrisi getdikcə yalnız qrammatik biliklərin mənimsənilməsi deyil, həm də kommunikativ və mədəni kompetensiyanın inkişafını əhatə edən çoxşaxəli bir proses kimi qiymətləndirilir. Dil–mədəniyyət əlaqələri kontekstində dil yalnız qaydalar sistemi deyil, eyni zamanda mədəni mənalar, dəyərlər və sosial təcrübələrin daşıyıcısıdır. Bu tədqiqat xarici dil tədrisində mədəniyyətin rolunu araşdırır və öyrənmə prosesində dil və mədəni komponentlər arasındakı qarşılıqlı asılılığı vurğulayır. Araşdırmada göstərilir ki, effektiv dil tədrisi kommunikativ kompetensiyanın və mədəniyyətlərarası şüurun inkişaf etdirilməsi üçün ənənələr, inanclar və diskurs nümunələri kimi mədəni elementlərin tədrisə inteqrasiyasını tələb edir. Bundan əlavə, tədqiqat autentik materialların və kontekstəsaslı tədris yanaşmalarının mənalı öyrənmə təcrübələrinin formalaşdırılmasındakı əhəmiyyətini müzakirə edir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, mədəni məzmunun dil tədrisinə daxil edilməsi öyrənənlərin motivasiyasını artırır, mədəniyyətlərarası kommunikativ kompetensiyanın inkişafını dəstəkləyir və real həyat kontekstlərində dilin daha uyğun istifadəsinə imkan yaradır. Buna görə də, xarici dil təhsili uğurlu dil öyrənməsinin əsas komponentləri kimi həm dil strukturlarını, həm də mədəni ölçüləri nəzərə alan vahid yanaşmanı mənimsəməlidir.

Açar sözlər: *xarici dil tədrisi, dil və mədəniyyət əlaqələri, kommunikativ kompetensiya, mədəniyyətlərarası kommunikasiya, autentik materiallar, kontekstəsaslı tədris, mədəni kompetensiya*

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Introduction

Language is the primary tool through which individuals establish and maintain social relations, and shared languages contribute to the formation of nations by shaping collective social structures. Civilization, encompassing both material and spiritual values, is largely reflected through language, as it carries the history, customs, beliefs, and ways of life of a society. In this sense, language functions both as a carrier and a structuring element of civilization. Language and civilization develop in a reciprocal relationship, and both play a central role in shaping individual and social identity. Therefore, language learning should not be limited to grammatical competence but also include the interpretation of cultural and civilizational meanings (Babayev, 2022). In language teaching, cultural elements help learners understand behavioral patterns and develop intercultural empathy. However, it is not possible to cover all cultural components within instructional time; thus, the selection of teaching materials becomes crucial. Written and visual texts, particularly literary works, serve as important carriers of cultural meaning. For this reason, language education should aim to develop both communicative competence and cultural awareness.

Research

13.1. Theme of the topic

The language of every society is shaped by the elements it interacts with throughout its history. This relationship between language and socio-cultural life draws attention to the link between language and culture. The role of education in this relationship cannot be ignored. Especially considering the cultural aspect of language teaching, the planning to be carried out in the teaching process must be carefully selected in terms of language, culture, and education. It is a fact that education offered in foreign language teaching, taking cultural differences into account, will improve the quality of teaching and learning. This study focuses on the position of the cultural aspect of language in teaching and learning in relation to communicative competence; it is limited within the framework of principles that emphasize the cultural element in the context of understanding and recognizing language in foreign language teaching.

13.2. The problem of the research

As a means of transmission across generations and cultures, language, along with the culture in which it is shaped, plays a decisive role in shaping the individual/social relationships and identities of people and societies. At the heart of the language teaching and learning process should be an awareness of this interconnectedness between language and culture, as well as the grammatical process and structure of the language. In this sense, more emphasis should be placed on the relationship between language and culture in language teaching, and cultural elements should be given more weight in language teaching plans, taking into account the decisive role of culture in language. This study, which draws attention to the importance of the historical and social accumulations within the social structures to which languages belong in foreign language learning and teaching, answers the following questions:

1. What is the role of the cultural approach within communicative language teaching, and how does intercultural dialogue based on cultural comparison shape the language–culture relationship?
2. How does comparing learners' native culture with the target culture contribute to critical thinking, student motivation, and the development of communicative competence in foreign language learning?
3. Why is the selection of course content and teaching materials important in a culture-centered approach, and how does it support multiculturalism and the development of intercultural competence?

13.3. The aim of the Study

In language teaching and learning, another element as important as the structural rules and regulations of the target language is its culture. Learning the target culture through the target language within the context of that society's living environment is the way to fully discover the cultural aspect of the language. Through communication established in this way, the comprehension of linguistic conceptions within the social communication environments to which the target language and culture belong will be facilitated. Furthermore, the student will be able to understand the differences between

their own language and culture and the social groups within the target language in a bidirectional manner. The aim of this study is to determine the place of language, which has a central importance in the formation of culture, in foreign language teaching in terms of cultural transmission.

13.4. The Method of the Study

This study first involved a literature review of research on cultural elements in language teaching. Subsequently, aspects related to language teaching, education, and culture, compiled from relevant research, were evaluated within the language-culture-education framework, specifically focusing on foreign language teaching. Finally, the findings were presented using a critical methodology.

2. Language and Culture

Language is a complex system that ensures familiarity between people, develops within the framework of its own laws and has a social character. Each language appears not only as a means of communication, but also as a structure that formalizes an internalized civil identity. In this respect, the reason why language is a "means of understanding" stems from its functions of both creating and expressing meaning. Language is the main means through which people express their feelings and thoughts, and for this reason it is closely connected with thought. Without language, the development of neither thought nor society is possible. This feature shows that language plays an important role in both individual and social development.

Language, as a multifaceted system, also fulfills the functions of affiliation, belonging and social identity. The process of mutual influence between languages is natural and inevitable. This influence sometimes manifests itself in the form of verbal exchange, sometimes in the form of the formation of structural elements, and helps the development of languages. Language is used not only to convey information, but also to implement various social and communicative functions. The consultation process includes asking questions, evaluating, giving orders, and other forms of social interaction (Ngo Cong-Lem, 2025). There is a strong and inseparable relationship between language and civilization. Civilization includes all material and spiritual values created by humans, and language serves as the main medium through which these values are expressed and transmitted. The parallel development of language and civilization throughout history demonstrates that they cannot be considered separately. Culture represents a holistic system of religious, moral, legal, aesthetic, and economic elements, all of which shape social identity. In this sense, language is not only a means of communication but also a fundamental component of cultural and civilizational continuity.

Culture is a phenomenon that humans create and that also shapes humans, and it is in a reciprocal relationship. Humans produce culture, and culture shapes humans. Therefore, culture should be considered as a holistic structure encompassing human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Culture plays a decisive role in the formation of nations. People united around a common language, traditions, and values form a social unity. At the same time, culture can develop through interaction with other societies and incorporate new elements. This process is a natural result of intercultural exchange.

Nations shape their languages according to their needs and cultural levels. There is a reciprocal relationship between culture and civilization; civilization arises from culture, and culture develops within social conditions while preserving its essential character. In this context, language, as a fundamental element of civilization, has a strong relationship with all areas of human life, especially history, art, and literature. Language and culture are closely interdependent: language both reflects and transmits culture, ensuring social cohesion and the continuity of cultural values across generations. Changes in culture influence language, while linguistic changes can also reshape cultural expression. As cultural beings, humans develop their identity through social learning, and language plays a central role in this process by mediating cultural transmission. Each language carries unique cultural codes that appear at phonological, structural, and semantic levels, meaning it should be understood within its own cultural context. Therefore, language and culture are inseparable, with language functioning as the main vehicle through which culture is preserved and developed.

2.1. The Role of Communicative Competence in Language Teaching and Learning

It is accepted that civilization is an important factor in people's behavior and in the language they use. Common words, expressions and communicative practices exist within every civilization. Language is not only a system of grammatical records, but also the carrier of social and civil life. It

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is not enough to explain the existence of vocabulary only with the structural conditions of the language, because the value system, lifestyle and civil experience of the society play an important role in the formation of lexical units. Language and civilization develop in mutual relations. Language appears as both the carrier and formatter of civilization. In this respect, language education cannot be considered separately from the elements of civilization. Because language includes not only words and sentence structures, but also idioms, proverbs, metaphors and other forms of literary expression. These elements show the social and cultural depth of the language and determine how it is used in real life. Communicative competence, as defined by Hymes, includes both linguistic knowledge and the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. In this process, cultural competence plays a key role by helping learners understand and compare their own culture with the target culture. Integrating cultural elements such as proverbs, idioms, stories, and other oral traditions supports both language skills and cultural understanding. Therefore, effective language learning requires not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language in real-life situations. As a result, language and civilization are inseparable concepts and should be taken into consideration together in foreign language education. This approach develops both the communicative skills and the mental awareness of the students and strengthens their recognition and creative thinking ability.

2.2. Approaches, Methods And Techniques For Cultural Transmission in Language Teaching

With the increasing focus on communication-based interaction skills in language teaching today, it is observed that language teaching is shifting towards methods and approaches that develop social skills. The constructivist approach plays an important role in this process; the cultural diversity of personal, public, educational, and professional fields (Liu, 2022) in language teaching makes the language-culture relationship more visible. These fields offer individuals learning a foreign language a broad learning environment, both linguistically and culturally. Foreign language learning also encompasses learning the value system, lifestyle, and culture of the society where the target language is spoken (Sabirova, 2025). Cultural traces of language are seen in many areas, from daily life to art, from family relationships to entertainment culture. While the Communicative Approach aims for the individual to use the target language in a manner similar to native speakers, the Intercultural Communication approach aims for the student to establish a connection between their own culture and the target culture. In this process, the language learner learns not only a new language but also a different way of thinking and living. Success in intercultural communication requires skills such as behavior, knowledge, interpretation, interaction, and cultural awareness. Cultural awareness, in particular, enables the individual to analyze similarities and differences by comparing their own culture with the target culture (Ismayilli, 2025).

The relationship between language and culture is addressed with a holistic approach, especially in the context of language teaching. While traditional approaches generally transmit cultural elements through texts, cross-cultural communication-focused approaches consider language and culture together. According to this understanding, language learning is not only the acquisition of grammatical knowledge but also a communicative and cultural acquisition process (Mammadova, 2022). Language is a fundamental tool that shapes both the intellectual and social development of human beings. Humans are not born knowing language; language is acquired through education along with the processes of hearing, perceiving, and expressing. Therefore, language learning is a long and gradual process and plays a decisive role in the socialization of the individual (Zhou, 2024). Since the transfer of knowledge and skills in the education process takes place through language, language is also the fundamental tool of learning. Language is also a communication system that brings individuals together and enables the formation of social structures (Tokhirjonova, 2025). Every language reflects the cultural identity of the society to which it belongs and possesses its own unique cultural codes (Babayev, 2023). These codes manifest themselves at the phonetic, structural, and semantic levels of the language. Therefore, each language should be evaluated within its own cultural context. In conclusion, language and culture are two inseparable elements. Language is the fundamental tool that carries and shapes culture; culture, in turn, gains continuity among generations through language.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, foreign language teaching cannot be limited to the transmission of grammatical structures alone; it must be understood as a comprehensive process that integrates both linguistic and cultural dimensions. The study demonstrates that language and culture are inseparable elements, each shaping and reinforcing the other within the process of communication and social interaction. Therefore, effective foreign language education requires a holistic approach in which cultural awareness is developed alongside communicative competence. The findings highlight that incorporating cultural elements into language teaching not only enhances learners' understanding of the target language but also promotes intercultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and meaningful communication. Through the comparison of native and target cultures, learners gain deeper insight into different worldviews, which strengthens their ability to use language appropriately in diverse social contexts. Furthermore, the careful selection of teaching materials and the use of authentic, context-based approaches play a crucial role in achieving these objectives. Such practices increase learners' motivation and engagement while supporting the development of intercultural communicative competence.

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