DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH FILM-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Rakhmonova Dilnoza Mansur qizi

PhD Researcher, Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Abstract. Developing intercultural communicative competence is an essential objective of contemporary English language education, particularly in secondary schools, where learners begin to engage more actively with different cultural perspectives and forms of communication. Traditional language instruction often emphasizes grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation while providing limited opportunities to explore the cultural meanings underlying authentic communication. Film-based instruction offers an alternative approach by combining linguistic input with visual context, cultural practices, nonverbal communication, and realistic social interactions. This article examines the pedagogical potential of films in developing the intercultural communicative competence of secondary school students learning English as a foreign language. It discusses the theoretical foundations of intercultural competence, the educational value of audiovisual materials, practical strategies for integrating films into English lessons, and methods for assessing students' intercultural development. Particular attention is given to selecting age-appropriate films, designing pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities, and encouraging comparisons between English-speaking cultures and students' own cultural backgrounds. The article argues that structured film-based instruction can support cultural awareness, perspective-taking, critical thinking, pragmatic competence, and meaningful language use. It also emphasizes the importance of teacher guidance, inclusive representation, and reflective discussion to prevent cultural stereotyping and ensure pedagogically effective implementation.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, English language teaching, secondary school students, film-based instruction, intercultural awareness, audiovisual materials, cultural learning, communicative competence.

INTRODUCTION

English has become an important means of international communication in education, science, technology, business, and intercultural cooperation. As a result, English language teaching increasingly requires an approach that goes beyond the acquisition of grammatical structures and vocabulary. Learners need to understand how language functions in different social situations, how cultural values influence communication, and how misunderstandings can arise when people interpret the same behavior differently.

For secondary school students, these abilities are particularly significant. Adolescence is a period during which learners develop their identities, establish social relationships, and become more aware of differences between communities. English lessons can provide opportunities for students to explore other cultures while reflecting on their own traditions, values, and communicative practices. Such learning should not encourage students to regard one culture as superior to another. Instead, it should develop curiosity, respect, openness, and the ability to communicate appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural communicative competence is generally understood as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultural boundaries. It involves linguistic knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness, interpretative skills, attitudes of openness, and the capacity to critically examine cultural assumptions. A learner may possess considerable grammatical knowledge but still experience difficulties when interpreting indirect requests, humor, silence, gestures, politeness strategies, or culturally specific references. Therefore, effective English language education should integrate language learning with the interpretation of cultural meaning.

One educational resource that can support this integration is film. Films present language in meaningful contexts and combine spoken interaction with facial expressions, gestures, settings, relationships, and social conventions. Unlike isolated textbook dialogues, cinematic scenes can demonstrate how communication changes according to the relationship between speakers, their intentions, emotional states, and cultural expectations. Learners can observe not only what characters say but also how, when, and why they say it.

Film-based instruction can also create opportunities for discussion and reflection. Students may compare a character's behavior with familiar practices in their own communities, identify possible causes of misunderstanding, and consider alternative ways of responding. These activities encourage learners to interpret cultural situations rather than simply memorize information about a country.

Nevertheless, the educational value of films depends on how they are selected and used. Watching a film without structured activities does not automatically produce intercultural competence. Some films contain stereotypes, exaggerated cultural representations, complex language, or situations that are unsuitable for younger learners. Teachers therefore need to establish clear learning objectives and provide tasks that connect audiovisual content with linguistic development and critical cultural reflection.

The purpose of this article is to examine how film-based English language instruction can contribute to the development of intercultural communicative competence among secondary school students. The article focuses on the theoretical principles of intercultural learning, the pedagogical functions of films, classroom implementation strategies, assessment procedures, and practical challenges.

The study addresses the following objectives: to clarify the concept of intercultural communicative competence; to identify the educational features of authentic films; to propose a structured framework for film-based instruction; and

to explain how film activities can support students' linguistic, cultural, and reflective abilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence

The concept of communicative competence has developed considerably since the introduction of communicative approaches to language teaching. Hymes (1972) emphasized that knowing a language involves understanding not only its grammatical rules but also the social conditions under which particular forms of communication are appropriate. This perspective established an important foundation for teaching language as a socially situated activity.

Canale and Swain (1980) subsequently described communicative competence through grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic dimensions. Their framework highlighted the importance of understanding language forms and using them appropriately in communicative situations. Although later models expanded this framework, its central implication remains relevant: successful communication requires more than grammatical accuracy.

In intercultural language education, Byram (1997) proposed a model of intercultural communicative competence that includes attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. These dimensions emphasize the learner's ability to approach unfamiliar cultural practices with curiosity, interpret cultural meanings, compare perspectives, and evaluate assumptions critically.

Byram's framework is particularly relevant to secondary school English teaching because students need opportunities to develop both communicative confidence and reflective cultural understanding. They should learn to ask questions about unfamiliar practices, consider explanations from different viewpoints, and avoid making broad conclusions based on individual experiences.

Deardorff (2006) also emphasized the importance of attitudes, knowledge, and skills in intercultural competence. Her work indicates that intercultural

learning involves internal changes, including greater adaptability and respect, which may lead to more effective interaction. These qualities cannot be developed through factual cultural instruction alone; they require activities that encourage reflection and engagement.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, including its Companion Volume, further supports the integration of plurilingual and intercultural dimensions into language education (Council of Europe, 2020). It encourages learners to develop mediation skills and to communicate across linguistic and cultural differences. From this perspective, the classroom becomes a place where students can examine meaning, negotiate understanding, and recognize cultural diversity.

The Role of Audiovisual Materials in Language Learning

Audiovisual materials combine verbal language with visual and auditory information. This combination can help learners understand meaning through contextual clues, including facial expressions, gestures, locations, objects, and relationships between characters. Films also expose learners to different speaking styles, accents, conversational rhythms, and pragmatic expressions.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that meaning is communicated through multiple semiotic modes, including images, written language, and other visual resources. Film-based language learning can therefore be understood as an opportunity to interpret communication through several interconnected modes rather than through speech alone.

Multimedia learning research suggests that appropriately coordinated verbal and visual information can support learning when the materials and cognitive demands are carefully managed (Mayer, 2021). However, complex audiovisual input may also overload learners if the language is too difficult or if too many new cultural details are presented simultaneously. Teachers should consequently select short, manageable scenes and provide appropriate scaffolding.

Authentic films are particularly valuable because they can present language as it is used in social and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, authenticity should not be interpreted as a requirement to use unmodified full-length movies. Selected excerpts, subtitles, vocabulary support, and guided viewing questions can make authentic materials more accessible to secondary school students without removing their communicative value.

Films as Resources for Intercultural Learning

Films portray relationships, family structures, social expectations, educational environments, professional interactions, celebrations, and everyday routines. Such representations can help learners recognize how communication is influenced by cultural context. A scene involving a disagreement, invitation, apology, or meeting may reveal differences in politeness strategies, turn-taking, directness, or the expression of emotion.

However, films do not provide neutral or complete representations of society. They are artistic and commercial products shaped by directors, screenwriters, actors, genres, and intended audiences. A character's behavior should not automatically be treated as representative of an entire national or linguistic community. Effective intercultural teaching therefore requires students to distinguish between an individual character, the fictional narrative, and broader cultural patterns.

Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) argue for an approach to language learning that emphasizes intercultural understanding, interpretation, and reflection. Their perspective supports classroom practices in which learners investigate cultural meaning and reconsider their own assumptions. Film discussions can provide an appropriate setting for these processes when teachers encourage evidence-based interpretation rather than unsupported generalization.

Thus, the pedagogical value of films lies not simply in presenting information about English-speaking societies but in developing learners' ability to

interpret cultural situations, ask meaningful questions, and communicate respectfully across differences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article employs a qualitative, conceptual approach based on the analysis of scholarly literature concerning intercultural communicative competence, audiovisual learning, and foreign language pedagogy. The discussion draws on established theoretical frameworks and examines their implications for secondary school English language instruction.

The methodological approach consists of three interconnected procedures. First, relevant theoretical concepts are examined to identify the main dimensions of intercultural communicative competence. Second, the pedagogical features of film-based instruction are analyzed in relation to linguistic input, cultural interpretation, and classroom interaction. Third, a practical teaching framework is developed by organizing film activities into pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing stages.

The proposed framework is intended for secondary school learners studying English as a foreign language. The activities may be adapted to different proficiency levels, depending on students' vocabulary, listening comprehension, prior cultural knowledge, and classroom resources. Short film excerpts are preferred when they provide a clearly identifiable communicative situation and sufficient opportunities for analysis.

Potential learning outcomes are organized into five areas: linguistic comprehension, pragmatic interpretation, cultural knowledge, intercultural attitudes, and reflective communication. These areas provide a basis for developing classroom tasks and assessment criteria.

Because the article is conceptual, it does not report an empirical classroom experiment or claim measured improvements in student performance. The proposed teaching framework requires implementation and evaluation in actual

educational settings to determine its effectiveness under specific classroom conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pedagogical Potential of Film-Based Instruction

The analysis of relevant literature suggests that film-based instruction can support intercultural communicative competence through several connected educational functions.

First, films provide contextualized linguistic input. Students hear expressions within meaningful interactions and can connect words with gestures, emotions, intentions, and situational circumstances. This can be particularly helpful when learners encounter idiomatic expressions, informal language, humor, indirect requests, or unfamiliar conversational patterns.

Second, films make nonverbal communication visible. Facial expressions, eye contact, physical distance, body posture, and gestures may influence how a message is interpreted. Students can examine how these features contribute to meaning and consider whether the same behavior might be interpreted differently in another context.

Third, films create opportunities for cultural comparison. Students may examine how characters greet one another, address teachers, respond to invitations, resolve disagreements, or interact with family members. Such comparisons encourage learners to identify similarities and differences without assuming that all members of a culture behave in the same way.

Fourth, film-based activities can develop perspective-taking. Students can consider why a character acts in a particular manner, what information the character possesses, and how another person might interpret the same action. This process supports empathy and helps learners recognize that misunderstandings may arise from differing expectations rather than deliberate disrespect.

Fifth, films can promote critical cultural awareness. Students may investigate how gender, age, social status, regional identity, or cultural traditions

are represented. They can question whether a portrayal is balanced, exaggerated, humorous, or stereotypical and support their interpretations with evidence from the scene.

These functions are interconnected. Linguistic comprehension supports cultural interpretation, while cultural reflection helps students understand why particular expressions and communicative strategies are used. The effectiveness of film-based instruction therefore depends on the integration of language practice, guided observation, and reflective discussion.

A Three-Stage Framework for Film-Based Instruction

A structured approach can help teachers transform film viewing into a purposeful learning activity. The proposed framework consists of three stages: pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing.

Pre-viewing activities prepare students for the linguistic and cultural content of the selected scene. The teacher introduces the context, identifies the communicative objective, and presents essential vocabulary or expressions. Students may discuss a question related to the situation, such as how people usually make requests, express disagreement, or respond to invitations in their own communities.

The purpose of this stage is not to provide students with a fixed interpretation of the scene. Instead, it activates prior knowledge and encourages learners to formulate hypotheses. For example, before viewing a scene involving a disagreement between classmates, students can predict which expressions might be considered polite or impolite and explain their reasoning.

While-viewing activities direct attention to specific linguistic and cultural features. Students may complete observation tables, identify examples of formal and informal language, record nonverbal signals, or answer questions about the characters' intentions. Short segments can be replayed to help learners notice details that may have been missed during the first viewing.

Teachers can use subtitles strategically. English subtitles may support learners who have difficulty understanding spoken language, while a second viewing without subtitles may encourage closer attention to listening and nonverbal communication. The choice should depend on the learning objective and students' proficiency rather than on a rigid rule.

Post-viewing activities encourage interpretation, discussion, and language production. Students compare their initial predictions with the scene, explain the characters' choices, and consider alternative responses. They may perform role-plays, rewrite dialogue, prepare short presentations, or participate in group discussions.

The teacher should ask questions that invite evidence-based reasoning. Instead of asking whether a character represents an entire culture, students can be asked which details support a particular interpretation and what additional information would be needed before making a broader conclusion.

This three-stage framework combines receptive and productive skills. Students listen and observe during viewing, then speak and write as they explain their interpretations. It also makes cultural learning explicit by requiring learners to identify, compare, and evaluate the cultural meanings presented in the scene.

Developing Pragmatic Competence through Film Scenes

Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use and interpret language appropriately in particular communicative situations. It includes understanding speech acts, politeness, implied meaning, conversational organization, and the relationship between language choices and social context.

Films provide examples of pragmatic features that may be difficult to understand through textbook explanations alone. For example, a character may express disagreement indirectly, respond to criticism with humor, or communicate dissatisfaction through silence and facial expression. The literal meaning of the words may not fully explain the speaker's intention.

Teachers can develop pragmatic awareness by selecting scenes involving greetings, apologies, requests, refusals, invitations, compliments, or disagreements. Students can identify the speaker's intention, examine the expression used, and discuss how the listener responds.

A useful activity involves comparing two possible dialogues for the same situation. Students first analyze the original film dialogue and then create an alternative version using a different level of formality or directness. They discuss how the changes might influence the relationship between the speakers.

For example, students may compare a direct request with a more indirect form. They can discuss which version may be appropriate in a particular context and why the relationship between speakers matters. The objective is not to classify one style as universally correct but to recognize that appropriateness depends on context, relationship, intention, and cultural expectations.

Such activities connect grammar and vocabulary with communicative purpose. They also prepare learners to use English more flexibly when interacting with people whose expectations differ from their own.

Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Perspective-Taking

Intercultural awareness involves recognizing that cultural practices and interpretations vary and that individuals may understand the same event in different ways. Film-based instruction can support this awareness by exposing students to unfamiliar situations and encouraging them to interpret those situations carefully.

A productive classroom activity is the cultural observation chart. Students record a scene's setting, participants, communicative purpose, verbal expressions, nonverbal behavior, and possible cultural implications. They then distinguish between directly observable details and their own interpretations.

This distinction is essential because students may initially interpret unfamiliar behavior through assumptions formed in their own cultural environment. A person who avoids direct disagreement, for example, may be

perceived as uncertain or evasive by one observer and as considerate by another. Guided discussion can help learners recognize that interpretation is influenced by social expectations.

Perspective-taking activities may also involve rewriting a scene from another character's point of view. Students explain how different experiences, social roles, or expectations might affect the character's understanding of the interaction. This encourages learners to consider alternative explanations before judging another person's behavior.

Comparisons between English-speaking communities and Uzbek cultural contexts can make learning particularly meaningful. Students may investigate similarities and differences in greetings, family communication, classroom interaction, hospitality, expressions of respect, and the use of formal language. However, teachers should avoid presenting either Uzbek culture or English-speaking cultures as internally uniform. Regional, generational, social, and individual differences should be acknowledged.

The purpose of comparison is to develop intercultural flexibility rather than to produce a list of fixed cultural rules. Students should understand that cultural knowledge can guide interpretation but does not determine how every individual behaves.

Selecting Appropriate Films for Secondary School Students

The choice of film is one of the most important factors in the successful implementation of film-based instruction. Teachers should consider linguistic difficulty, cultural relevance, age suitability, educational objectives, duration, and the availability of reliable subtitles.

Short excerpts are often more practical than full-length films because they allow students to focus on a limited number of communicative situations. A two- to five-minute scene may provide sufficient material for analyzing politeness, gestures, relationships, or misunderstandings without placing excessive demands on classroom time.

The linguistic level should correspond to learners' proficiency. Scenes containing highly specialized vocabulary, rapid dialogue, strong accents, or extensive cultural references may require additional preparation. Teachers can provide glossaries, contextual explanations, or guiding questions while preserving the original communicative features.

Cultural diversity should also be considered. English is used in many societies, and intercultural competence should not be limited to representations of the United States or the United Kingdom. Where suitable materials are available, teachers may include different English-speaking communities and international interactions.

At the same time, film selection requires critical evaluation. Commercial cinema may reproduce stereotypes, oversimplify social problems, or present unusual behavior as typical. Teachers should encourage students to examine who is represented, whose perspectives are emphasized, and whether alternative viewpoints are available.

Ethical and legal considerations are equally important. Educational use should comply with applicable copyright rules, institutional policies, and platform licensing conditions. Materials should also be appropriate for students' ages and the school's educational objectives.

Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Assessing intercultural communicative competence requires more than testing vocabulary and grammar. Students may understand cultural facts but struggle to interpret an interaction or respond appropriately in a communicative situation. Assessment should therefore address both language performance and cultural reasoning.

A practical assessment framework can include five dimensions:

Linguistic comprehension: the ability to understand key expressions and follow the main meaning of a scene.

Pragmatic interpretation: the ability to identify communicative intentions, politeness strategies, implied meanings, and nonverbal signals.

Cultural interpretation: the ability to explain possible cultural influences while distinguishing observation from assumption.

Perspective-taking: the ability to consider alternative viewpoints and explain why participants may interpret an interaction differently.

Reflective communication: the ability to discuss cultural differences respectfully, provide evidence, and avoid unsupported generalizations.

Teachers may assess these dimensions through observation charts, reflective journals, short presentations, role-plays, written responses, and group discussions. A rubric can describe performance at different levels, from identifying basic details to providing nuanced interpretations supported by evidence.

Assessment should focus on the quality of students' reasoning rather than whether they reproduce a teacher's preferred cultural interpretation. Since intercultural situations may permit several reasonable explanations, students should be encouraged to justify their conclusions and recognize uncertainty.

Reflection is particularly valuable because learners may gradually become more aware of their assumptions. After viewing a film, students can write about what surprised them, which initial ideas changed, and what questions remain unanswered. Such reflections help teachers identify areas requiring further instruction.

However, a single classroom activity cannot establish a stable level of intercultural competence. Assessment should be continuous and based on multiple tasks over time. Where teachers seek to evaluate the effectiveness of a film-based program, they should collect baseline and follow-up evidence and consider students' linguistic proficiency, previous cultural knowledge, and learning conditions.

Challenges and Pedagogical Considerations

Despite its potential benefits, film-based instruction presents several challenges. One difficulty is the cognitive load created by simultaneous listening, reading subtitles, observing gestures, and interpreting cultural information. Students with limited proficiency may focus entirely on understanding words and miss important contextual details.

Teachers can address this problem by dividing a scene into short segments, pre-teaching essential vocabulary, using targeted questions, and allowing repeated viewing. The amount of support can gradually decrease as students become more confident.

Another challenge is the risk of stereotyping. Students may interpret the behavior of one fictional character as a universal feature of a national culture. Teachers should explicitly distinguish individual behavior from broader social patterns and invite students to consider alternative examples and explanations.

Access to audiovisual technology may also vary across schools. If projectors, reliable internet connections, or individual devices are unavailable, teachers can use legally accessible offline clips, printed transcripts, still images, or teacher-prepared dialogue extracts. Although these alternatives cannot reproduce every feature of film viewing, they can preserve some opportunities for contextualized cultural analysis.

Teachers may also face time constraints and difficulties aligning film activities with curriculum requirements. The solution is to select scenes that support specific language objectives rather than treating films as unrelated entertainment. A carefully chosen excerpt can reinforce listening, speaking, vocabulary, pragmatics, and intercultural awareness within one lesson sequence.

Finally, teachers need appropriate professional preparation. They should be able to select relevant scenes, formulate open-ended questions, facilitate respectful discussion, and recognize cultural bias. Professional development in intercultural pedagogy and audiovisual materials can therefore strengthen the quality of film-based English instruction.

CONCLUSION

Film-based English language instruction offers meaningful opportunities to develop the intercultural communicative competence of secondary school students. By combining authentic or contextually rich language with visual information, nonverbal behavior, and social interaction, films can help learners understand how meaning is shaped by cultural expectations and communicative contexts.

The theoretical discussion indicates that film-based instruction can support several dimensions of intercultural competence, including pragmatic interpretation, cultural awareness, perspective-taking, critical reflection, and communicative flexibility. Its educational value becomes more apparent when films are integrated into structured learning sequences rather than used solely for entertainment.

The proposed framework organizes classroom work into pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing stages. These stages help students prepare for a scene, observe selected linguistic and cultural features, and interpret the interaction through discussion and language production. Cultural comparison, role-play, reflective writing, and evidence-based analysis can further connect classroom learning with students' own experiences.

Successful implementation requires careful film selection, appropriate linguistic scaffolding, age-sensitive content, critical attention to stereotypes, and assessment that considers both language and cultural reasoning. Teachers should also recognize that intercultural competence develops gradually and cannot be measured reliably through a single task.

In conclusion, film-based instruction can contribute to a more communicative, reflective, and culturally responsive approach to English language teaching. Further empirical research involving secondary school classrooms is needed to investigate how different film-selection criteria, viewing strategies, and assessment methods influence learners' intercultural development over time.

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