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### THE INFLUENCE OF INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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**Abstract:** *This article examines how intercultural interaction influences the development of foreign language communicative competence among students in higher education. Drawing on recent empirical and theoretical studies in intercultural communication and foreign language teaching, it argues that communicative competence cannot be developed in isolation from meaningful intercultural contact. Instead, it emerges through dynamic interaction involving cognitive, social, and affective mechanisms. The article synthesizes findings from studies on intercultural communicative competence (ICC), classroom diversity, telecollaboration, and culturally responsive teaching, demonstrating that intercultural interaction is a core developmental condition for effective language use in real communicative contexts.*

**Key words:** *Intercultural interaction, communicative competence, foreign language learning, affective factors, self-efficacy, motivation, language anxiety, cultural awareness, social interaction, intercultural competence.*

In contemporary foreign language education, communicative competence is no longer defined solely as grammatical accuracy or lexical knowledge [11]. Instead, it is understood as the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in socially and culturally diverse contexts. In this regard, intercultural interaction has become a central pedagogical and research concern, as it provides the authentic environment in which language is not only

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learned but actively used. Studies in the field consistently show that students develop stronger communicative abilities when they are exposed to real or simulated intercultural communication rather than isolated linguistic practice [1]. Therefore, understanding the role of intercultural interaction is essential for explaining how communicative competence develops in multilingual and multicultural educational settings.

#### **Intercultural interaction as a developmental mechanism**

Recent research emphasizes that intercultural interaction is not merely an additional component of language learning but a fundamental mechanism that drives competence development [12]. Empirical findings show that both the quality and frequency of intercultural interactions significantly influence learners' communicative development, with quality of engagement playing a more important role than simple exposure [2]. When students actively participate in intercultural communication, they are required to interpret meanings, negotiate understanding, and adapt their linguistic behavior to different cultural expectations. This process transforms language learning into a socially situated activity in which competence emerges through practice rather than memorization [13]. In this sense, intercultural interaction functions as a bridge between linguistic knowledge and communicative performance.

#### **Cognitive and social dimensions of interaction**

The development of communicative competence through intercultural interaction is closely linked to cognitive and social processes [3]. Cognitively, students engage in interpreting unfamiliar cultural meanings, comparing linguistic structures, and adjusting their communication strategies according to context. This enhances their ability to process language dynamically rather than statically. Socially, interaction with culturally diverse peers fosters cooperation, negotiation of meaning, and shared understanding [14]. Classroom-based studies show that culturally diverse learning environments

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naturally promote adaptability and communicative flexibility, as students must continuously adjust their discourse to different interlocutors. In this way, intercultural interaction creates a learning space where cognition and social behavior operate in constant integration [4].

#### **Affective factors and communicative development**

Affective factors play a crucial role in the development of foreign language communicative competence, especially in intercultural interaction, where learners face not only linguistic challenges but also cultural and emotional demands [15]. These factors influence students' willingness to communicate, their confidence, and the overall quality of participation in communicative activities.

One of the key elements is motivation, which determines how actively students engage in intercultural communication. Learners with strong integrative or intrinsic motivation are more likely to participate in real interactions, take communicative risks, and persist despite difficulties, which directly supports the development of communicative competence [5]. Closely related to motivation is self-efficacy, a concept developed by Альберт Бандура, which reflects learners' belief in their ability to communicate successfully. Higher self-efficacy leads to more active participation, while low confidence often results in avoidance of speaking situations [17].

Another important factor is language anxiety, which can negatively affect performance by creating fear of mistakes or negative evaluation, particularly in intercultural settings. However, supportive and collaborative learning environments can significantly reduce this anxiety and encourage more active communication [6]. In addition, empathy and openness toward cultural differences enhance students' ability to understand others, interpret meanings correctly, and adapt their communicative behavior appropriately.

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Thus, affective readiness becomes an essential condition for successful communicative performance in multilingual settings.

#### **Digital intercultural interaction and telecollaboration**

In recent years, digital environments have expanded opportunities for intercultural interaction through telecollaboration and online communication platforms [7]. Studies show that virtual interaction with international peers enhances both intercultural awareness and communicative competence. Students engaged in online intercultural exchanges demonstrate improved perspective-taking abilities, greater linguistic flexibility, and increased confidence in communication [16]. These findings suggest that digital interaction replicates many of the cognitive and social benefits of face-to-face communication while also providing additional flexibility and accessibility. As a result, technology-mediated intercultural interaction has become an important [8].

The synthesis of research findings indicates that intercultural interaction should be understood as a multidimensional process that integrates cognitive, social, and affective mechanisms [9]. Communicative competence does not develop through isolated language practice but through continuous engagement in culturally diverse communicative contexts. Interaction encourages learners to actively construct meaning, negotiate understanding, and adapt to varying cultural expectations. This aligns with widely accepted intercultural competence models, which emphasize knowledge, skills of interaction, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness as interconnected components of competence development [10]. Therefore, intercultural interaction serves as both the context and the driving force of communicative growth.

The analysis demonstrates that intercultural interaction plays a decisive role in the development of foreign language communicative competence. It functions as a complex mechanism that integrates cognitive processing, social

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engagement, and emotional involvement. Whether in traditional classrooms or digital environments, meaningful interaction with culturally diverse individuals significantly enhances learners' ability to use language effectively and appropriately. Consequently, foreign language education should prioritize the creation of interactive, culturally rich learning environments that promote authentic communication. Future research may further explore how different types of intercultural interaction—face-to-face, virtual, and hybrid—contribute to specific dimensions of communicative competence development.

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