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TASK-BASED METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES AND COMMUNICATIVE TASK SYSTEM FOR DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASSES

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Abstract: This article focuses on methodological strategies and a communicative task system based on the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching elements in English speaking classes. The study addresses the need to organize speaking instruction in a way that develops pre-service English teachers' intercultural communicative competence through purposeful tasks, interaction, cultural problem-solving and reflection. The research is based on theoretical analysis, methodological design and classification of communicative tasks. The results present a task system consisting of pre-task cultural activation, task performance, intercultural interaction, language and culture focus, feedback and reflection stages. The article proposes task types such as intercultural role-play, case study, problem-solving discussion, information-gap tasks, opinion-gap tasks, mediation tasks and reflective speaking tasks. It is argued that TBLT elements make speaking classes more meaningful because students use English to solve culturally relevant communicative problems rather than simply reproduce language forms. The proposed task system may be applied in teacher education programmes to develop cultural knowledge, intercultural attitudes, interaction skills, critical cultural awareness and professional-pedagogical understanding.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, communicative tasks, speaking classes, intercultural communicative competence, pre-service English teachers, methodological strategy, reflection.

Introduction

Speaking classes are one of the most productive contexts for developing intercultural communicative competence because they require learners to use language in real-time interaction. In oral communication, students need to choose appropriate vocabulary, follow pragmatic norms, react to the interlocutor, manage misunderstanding and express attitudes respectfully. These features make speaking classes a natural environment for intercultural learning.

However, speaking instruction does not automatically develop intercultural communicative competence. If speaking activities are limited to general questions, memorized dialogues or topic-based monologues, students may improve fluency but may not learn how to deal with cultural ambiguity, stereotypes, different politeness norms or intercultural conflict. Therefore, speaking classes need a task system that connects language use with cultural interpretation and communicative problem-solving.

Task-Based Language Teaching provides an effective methodological basis for this purpose. In TBLT, language is learned through meaningful tasks in which learners use the target language to achieve a communicative outcome (Nunan, 2004). Ellis argues that a task should involve primary focus on meaning, a communicative gap, learner reliance on their own linguistic resources and a clearly defined outcome (Ellis, 2003). Willis also emphasizes that task cycles create opportunities for preparation, interaction, reporting and language focus (Willis, 1996). These features correspond well to the development of intercultural competence, which also requires experience, interaction and reflection.

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The aim of this article is to design and justify a system of methodological strategies and communicative tasks based on TBLT elements for developing intercultural communicative competence in pre-service English teachers' speaking classes.

Methods

The study employs theoretical analysis, methodological synthesis and task design. The theoretical basis includes TBLT principles (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004), intercultural communicative competence models (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006), communicative competence theory (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980) and intercultural language teaching (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

The task system was developed according to the following criteria: meaningfulness, cultural relevance, communicative outcome, interaction, learner autonomy, reflection and professional-pedagogical applicability. Each task type was selected because it can activate one or more components of intercultural communicative competence: cultural knowledge, cultural attitudes, intercultural skills, critical cultural awareness and professional-pedagogical understanding.

The study does not present statistical experimental data. Its purpose is methodological: to propose a structured system of speaking tasks that may later be used in experimental teaching and assessment.

Results

The result of the study is a task-based methodological system for developing intercultural communicative competence in speaking classes. The system consists of six stages: cultural activation, task preparation, task performance, intercultural interaction, language-and-culture focus, and reflective feedback.

Stage	Main purpose	Possible classroom activities
1. Cultural activation	To activate prior knowledge and introduce cultural context	Brainstorming, prediction, image or quotation discussion, cultural association map
2. Task preparation	To clarify communicative goal, roles and expected outcome	Vocabulary support, role distribution, task planning, model dialogue analysis
3. Task performance	To use English for solving a culturally meaningful communicative problem	Role-play, case discussion, problem-solving, information exchange
4. Intercultural interaction	To negotiate meaning and respond to different cultural viewpoints	Clarification questions, agreement/disagreement strategies, mediation dialogue
5. Language-and-culture focus	To notice pragmatic forms, politeness strategies and cultural meanings	Analysis of expressions, speech etiquette comparison, teacher feedback
6. Reflective feedback	To evaluate personal learning and intercultural behaviour	Reflection sheet, peer feedback, self-assessment, oral summary

The first stage, cultural activation, prepares students for the task by connecting the topic with their own cultural experience and prior knowledge. This stage may include questions such as "How do

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people show respect in your culture?" or "What behaviour may be misunderstood by foreign visitors?" Such questions create a bridge between personal experience and intercultural learning.

The second stage, task preparation, helps students understand the communicative goal. In TBLT, preparation is not a teacher explanation of grammar only; it is a planning stage where learners understand what they must achieve. For example, students may be asked to prepare for a role-play in which they must resolve a misunderstanding between an international student and a local teacher. They receive the situation, roles and expected outcome, but they must choose their own language resources.

The third stage, task performance, is the central stage of the task cycle. Students work in pairs or groups and use English to achieve a meaningful outcome. The focus is primarily on meaning, which is one of the key principles of task-based instruction (Ellis, 2003). In intercultural speaking tasks, the outcome may be a solution, agreement, explanation, comparison, advice or mediation strategy.

The fourth stage, intercultural interaction, requires students to negotiate different cultural perspectives. This stage is important because intercultural competence develops not only from learning facts about other cultures but also from experiencing the complexity of communication. Students learn to ask clarification questions, avoid direct judgment, express disagreement politely and reformulate messages to prevent misunderstanding.

The fifth stage, language-and-culture focus, connects communicative experience with linguistic and pragmatic analysis. The teacher draws attention to useful phrases, politeness markers, discourse strategies, turn-taking, indirect requests and culture-specific meanings. This stage prevents TBLT from becoming unstructured conversation and helps students develop conscious control over both language and intercultural behaviour.

The sixth stage, reflective feedback, transforms the speaking task into learning experience. Students evaluate what they learned about culture, communication and themselves. Reflection is especially important for intercultural learning because learners need to reconsider assumptions and stereotypes. This corresponds to Byram's component of critical cultural awareness and Deardorff's process-oriented view of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006).

System of Communicative Tasks

The proposed system includes seven main task types. Each task type is connected with specific components of intercultural communicative competence.

Task type	Description	ICC component developed
Intercultural role-play	Students act in culturally different roles and solve a communicative situation	Interaction skills, pragmatic appropriateness, empathy
Case-study discussion	Students analyse a real or simulated intercultural misunderstanding	Critical cultural awareness, problem-solving, cultural interpretation
Problem-solving task	Students propose solutions to a culturally sensitive classroom or social problem	Mediation, tolerance, collaborative decision-making
Information-gap task	Students exchange different cultural information to complete a common	Cultural knowledge, questioning skills, negotiation of meaning

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Task type	Description	ICC component developed
	outcome	
Opinion-gap task	Students discuss different values and viewpoints respectfully	Attitudes, openness, respectful disagreement
Mediation task	Students explain one cultural practice to representatives of another culture	Intercultural mediation, explanation strategies, professional-pedagogical understanding
Reflective speaking task	Students orally reflect on what they learned and how their assumptions changed	Self-awareness, critical reflection, professional growth

Sample Communicative Tasks

Task 1. Intercultural role-play: "A Misunderstanding at a University Seminar." One student plays an Uzbek student who expects direct teacher guidance; another plays a British lecturer who expects independent critical discussion. The task outcome is to agree on how the student can participate more actively without feeling disrespectful. The focus is on clarification, polite explanation and negotiation of expectations.

Task 2. Case-study discussion: "Indirect Refusal." Students read a short situation in which an English-speaking guest says "That sounds interesting, maybe another time," while an Uzbek student interprets it as real interest. Students discuss what caused the misunderstanding and prepare a short explanation of indirect refusal strategies.

Task 3. Mediation task: "Explaining a Local Tradition." Students explain an Uzbek cultural practice, such as hospitality rituals or respect for elders, to an international visitor in clear and culturally sensitive English. The outcome is a short oral explanation that avoids stereotypes and uses audience-friendly language.

Task 4. Reflective speaking task: "What Changed in My View?" After completing a discussion about stereotypes, students give a two-minute reflection on one assumption they reconsidered and one communication strategy they will use in future intercultural interaction.

Discussion

The proposed task system shows that TBLT elements can be effectively adapted to intercultural aims in speaking classes. The main advantage of TBLT is that it creates a need for communication. Students speak not because they are asked to demonstrate grammar, but because they need to solve a problem, explain a cultural practice, negotiate a misunderstanding or reach a decision. This makes speaking more purposeful and closer to real-life communication.

Another advantage is that TBLT provides a natural structure for integrating language and culture. Cultural input appears before the task, cultural interaction occurs during the task, and cultural reflection follows the task. Thus, culture is not presented as isolated information. It becomes part of communicative action.

For pre-service English teachers, these tasks also have professional value. When students participate in intercultural tasks, they experience methods that they may later adapt for their own pupils. This strengthens the professional-pedagogical component of intercultural communicative competence. Future teachers learn not only what intercultural communication is, but also how to organize it pedagogically.

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The task system also supports formative assessment. During role-plays and discussions, the teacher can observe students' ability to ask clarification questions, show respect, use appropriate politeness strategies, avoid stereotypes and mediate between perspectives. Peer feedback and reflection sheets can make these indicators visible to students.

Nevertheless, the successful implementation of task-based intercultural speaking activities requires careful classroom management. Tasks should be culturally sensitive, suitable for students' language level and clearly connected to learning outcomes. The teacher must prevent superficial cultural comparison and guide students toward respectful analysis rather than judgment. In this respect, reflection and feedback are not optional additions but essential parts of the task cycle.

Conclusion

Task-Based Language Teaching elements provide a strong methodological basis for developing intercultural communicative competence in English speaking classes. The proposed task system includes cultural activation, task preparation, task performance, intercultural interaction, language-and-culture focus and reflective feedback. This sequence allows students to use English meaningfully while developing cultural knowledge, respectful attitudes, interaction skills, critical awareness and professional-pedagogical understanding.

The system of communicative tasks includes intercultural role-play, case-study discussion, problem-solving, information-gap, opinion-gap, mediation and reflective speaking tasks. These tasks help transform speaking classes from general fluency practice into intercultural learning environments. The article concludes that TBLT-based methodological strategies are especially appropriate for teacher education because they develop both students' own intercultural communicative competence and their ability to organize similar learning experiences in future pedagogical practice.

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