DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL OF INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY (DMIS)

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Abstract. This article examines the pedagogical potential of M.Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) in university English language education. Through a focused critical review and conceptual synthesis, it analyses the model's six orientations and considers their implications for task design, classroom interaction and assessment. The analysis argues that the model can help teachers address learners' interpretations of cultural difference, provided that sensitivity is distinguished from language proficiency and directly demonstrated communicative competence.

Keywords: intercultural communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity, Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), English language teaching, adaptation, reflection.

MADANIYATLARARO SEZGIRLIKNI RIVOJLANTIRISH MODELI (DMIS) ASOSIDA TALABALARNING MADANIYATLARARO MULOQOT KOMPETENSIYASINI RIVOJLANTIRISH

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada oliy ta'limda ingliz tilini o'qitishda M. Bennettning madaniyatlararo sezgirlikni rivojlantirish modeli (DMIS)dan foydalanishning pedagogik imkoniyatlari o'rganiladi. Adabiyotlar tahlili va konseptual umumlashtirish asosida modelning oltita bosqichi hamda ularning topshiriqlarni ishlab chiqish, darsdagi o'zaro muloqotni tashkil etish va baholashdagi metodik ahamiyati yoritiladi. Tahlilda madaniyatlararo sezgirlik tilni bilish darajasi va amaliy muloqotda namoyon bo'ladigan kommunikativ kompetensiyadan farqlangan holda, talabalarning madaniy tafovutlarni qanday talqin qilishini hisobga olishga imkon berishi asoslanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: madaniyatlararo muloqot kompetensiyasi, madaniyatlararo sezgirlik, madaniyatlararo sezgirlikni rivojlantirish modeli (DMIS), ingliz tilini o'qitish, moslashuv, refleksiya.

РАЗВИТИЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ НА ОСНОВЕ МОДЕЛИ РАЗВИТИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ ЧУВСТВИТЕЛЬНОСТИ (DMIS)

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается педагогический потенциал модели развития межкультурной чувствительности М. Беннетта (DMIS) в обучении английскому языку в высшей школе. На основе целенаправленного критического обзора научной литературы и концептуального синтеза анализируются шесть ориентаций модели и их значение для разработки учебных заданий, организации взаимодействия на занятиях и оценивания. Обосновывается, что данная модель позволяет преподавателям учитывать особенности интерпретации студентами культурных различий при условии разграничения межкультурной чувствительности, уровня владения языком и коммуникативной компетенции, проявляющейся в практическом общении.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, межкультурная чувствительность, модель развития межкультурной чувствительности (DMIS), обучение английскому языку, адаптация, рефлексия.

Introduction. The rapid development of globalization, international educational integration, and digital communication technologies has significantly transformed the requirements of modern education. In particular, the increasing interaction among representatives of different linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds has highlighted the importance of developing students' intercultural communicative competence alongside their foreign language proficiency. In contemporary educational contexts, successful communication is no longer determined solely by grammatical accuracy, lexical knowledge, or linguistic fluency. It also requires the ability to understand cultural differences, recognize diverse perspectives, demonstrate empathy, and adapt communicative behavior to different sociocultural situations.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is generally understood as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals from different cultural

backgrounds. This competence encompasses linguistic knowledge, cultural awareness, interpersonal sensitivity, critical thinking, empathy, and behavioral flexibility. Developing these interconnected abilities has become an essential objective of higher education, particularly in foreign language teaching, where language learning provides opportunities for students to encounter different cultural values, traditions, communication styles, and worldviews.

The integration of digital educational technologies further expands the possibilities for developing intercultural communicative competence. Online collaborative platforms, international virtual exchange programs, digital storytelling, and intercultural discussion forums can provide students with opportunities to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. When supported by appropriate pedagogical guidance and reflective activities, these experiences may contribute to greater intercultural sensitivity and communicative confidence.

!Methodology. The development of students' intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has become an important area of research in foreign language education, particularly in response to increasing globalization, international academic mobility, and culturally diverse communication environments. Scholars have proposed different theoretical frameworks to explain how individuals acquire intercultural knowledge, develop sensitivity toward cultural differences, and demonstrate effective communication across cultural boundaries. Among these approaches, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), introduced by Milton J. Bennett, provides a significant theoretical foundation for understanding intercultural competence as a developmental process.

Milton J. Bennett (1993) developed the DMIS to explain how individuals experience and interpret cultural differences. According to Bennett, intercultural sensitivity develops through six orientations: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. These orientations are organized into two broader categories: ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. The ethnocentric orientations are characterized by the tendency to interpret cultural differences primarily through one's own cultural worldview, whereas ethnorelative orientations involve recognizing cultural diversity and developing the ability to understand alternative cultural perspectives. Bennett's framework is particularly relevant to higher education because it provides a conceptual basis for designing instructional activities that encourage students to recognize cultural assumptions, reconsider stereotypes, and develop greater flexibility in intercultural communication [1].

Michael Byram (1997) approached intercultural communicative competence from the perspective of foreign language education. In his work Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence, Byram argued that successful intercultural communication requires more than linguistic proficiency. His model emphasizes attitudes of curiosity and openness, knowledge of social groups and cultural practices, skills of interpreting and relating cultural information, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Byram's approach is especially valuable for the practical implementation of DMIS principles because it identifies the competencies that educators can develop through classroom instruction. While Bennett's model explains how perceptions of cultural differences may develop, Byram provides a framework for integrating intercultural objectives into language teaching, learning activities, and assessment practices [2].

Darla K. Deardorff (2006) made a significant contribution to intercultural competence research by examining its conceptualization and assessment in higher education. Her study, Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization, presents a process-oriented understanding of intercultural competence. Deardorff emphasizes the importance of attitudes such as respect, openness, and curiosity, together with cultural knowledge, self-awareness, listening, observation, interpretation, and analytical skills. These elements contribute to internal outcomes, including adaptability, flexibility, and empathy, as well as external outcomes reflected in effective and appropriate intercultural behavior. Her framework complements Bennett's DMIS by demonstrating how intercultural learning can be connected to educational outcomes and assessment. It also highlights the need for continuous reflection and development rather than treating intercultural competence as a fixed personal characteristic [3].

Janet M. Bennett (2008) further examined the educational implications of intercultural competence development in her chapter Transformative Training: Designing Programs for Culture Learning. She emphasized the importance of intentionally designed learning experiences that help individuals develop greater awareness of cultural differences and improve their ability to function effectively in intercultural environments. Her approach highlights the role of experiential learning, structured reflection, and appropriate instructional strategies in supporting intercultural development. From the perspective of the present study, these principles are important for translating the theoretical assumptions of the DMIS into practical educational activities. Intercultural simulations, guided discussions, critical incidents, and reflective exercises can provide opportunities for students to examine their cultural expectations and develop more complex interpretations of intercultural situations [4].

The comparative analysis of these four scholarly contributions reveals several important connections. Bennett's DMIS provides a developmental explanation of intercultural sensitivity, while Byram identifies the principal components of intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education. Deardorff emphasizes the relationship between intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills, and educational outcomes, whereas Janet Bennett focuses on the design of learning experiences that support intercultural development. Together, these perspectives suggest that intercultural competence education should combine theoretical understanding, experiential learning, critical reflection, and systematic assessment.

The reviewed literature also indicates that intercultural competence cannot be developed effectively through the transmission of cultural facts alone. Students need opportunities to encounter alternative perspectives, analyze

intercultural misunderstandings, reflect on their assumptions, and practice adaptive communication strategies. In this respect, the DMIS can serve as a conceptual framework for organizing intercultural learning, while the models proposed by Byram and Deardorff can inform the selection of learning objectives and assessment criteria.

However, the theoretical literature does not establish that every student necessarily progresses through the six DMIS orientations in a fixed or linear sequence. The relationship between developmental orientations and measurable communicative performance requires careful empirical investigation. Therefore, the integration of DMIS principles into foreign language education should be accompanied by context-sensitive instructional design and appropriate evaluation methods.

Overall, the literature review demonstrates that the development of students' intercultural communicative competence requires an integrated pedagogical approach combining intercultural sensitivity, cultural knowledge, reflective thinking, empathy, and communicative adaptability. The theoretical contributions of M. J. Bennett, Byram, Deardorff, and J. M. Bennett provide a foundation for designing educational strategies aimed at preparing students for meaningful participation in culturally diverse academic, professional, and social environments.

One of the influential theoretical frameworks for understanding the development of intercultural competence is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), proposed by Milton J. Bennett. The model explains how individuals construct and experience cultural differences and how their perceptions may develop from ethnocentric toward ethnorelative orientations. Bennett identifies six developmental stages: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. These stages represent different ways of perceiving, interpreting, and responding to cultural diversity.

The first three stages-Denial, Defense, and Minimization-are associated with ethnocentric orientations, in which individuals tend to interpret cultural differences primarily through the framework of their own cultural experiences. The remaining stages-Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration-reflect increasingly ethnorelative orientations characterized by the recognition of cultural diversity, the ability to understand alternative cultural perspectives, and greater flexibility in intercultural interactions. The model emphasizes that intercultural sensitivity involves not merely acquiring information about other cultures but also transforming the cognitive and perceptual frameworks through which cultural differences are understood.

From a pedagogical perspective, the DMIS provides a valuable conceptual foundation for designing educational activities that promote students' intercultural awareness and communicative flexibility. By considering learners' existing attitudes toward cultural differences, educators can develop instructional strategies that encourage reflection, perspective-taking, and constructive engagement with unfamiliar cultural practices. Such strategies may include intercultural case studies, role-playing activities, collaborative projects, reflective journals, authentic communication tasks, and virtual intercultural exchanges.

Despite the increasing recognition of intercultural competence as an important educational outcome, several challenges remain in its practical development. Traditional foreign language teaching frequently prioritizes linguistic accuracy and grammatical competence over intercultural awareness and communicative adaptability. Furthermore, students may have limited opportunities to engage in authentic intercultural interactions, while teaching materials may inadequately represent the diversity of cultural perspectives. The absence of systematic instructional approaches and appropriate assessment mechanisms can also complicate the integration of intercultural competence into higher education curricula.

In this context, the application of the DMIS offers opportunities to reconsider conventional approaches to foreign language education. Rather than treating culture as a collection of isolated facts about particular countries, the model encourages educators to approach intercultural learning as a reflective and developmental process. Students can be guided to examine their cultural assumptions, recognize stereotypes, appreciate alternative perspectives, and develop strategies for managing intercultural misunderstandings.

University English courses prepare students to participate in academic discussions, collaborative projects, and professional communication. These activities require learners to interpret intentions, negotiate expectations, and respond appropriately when familiar assumptions are not shared. Knowledge of cultural facts alone does not establish whether students can perform these actions in English.

The article uses a focused critical literature review and conceptual synthesis. Sources were selected for their direct contribution to three areas: Bennett's original formulation and subsequent explanations of DMIS, intercultural competence assessment, and communicative activities relevant to language education. The analysis compares the model's assumptions, educational implications, and assessment limitations. It is not a systematic review and reports no experimental results. The teaching sequence and assessment recommendations below are methodological proposals derived from this analysis.

Results. The theoretical and comparative analysis of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical mechanisms through which students' intercultural communicative competence can be developed in higher education. The analysis identifies several interconnected dimensions of intercultural competence development, including cultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, empathy, reflective thinking, communicative adaptability, and the ability to interpret cultural differences from multiple perspectives. These dimensions provide a conceptual foundation for designing educational strategies that promote meaningful intercultural learning.

DMIS draws on constructivist understandings of perception: people interpret intercultural encounters through

categories that organise their experience of themselves and others. Development involves increasingly complex ways of perceiving cultural difference. Thus, encountering unfamiliar practices does not automatically produce learning; the educational question is how learners interpret those encounters. The model identifies Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. The first three are conventionally described as ethnocentric orientations, while the latter three are ethnorelative. Ethnorelativism concerns understanding perspectives in relation to their contexts; it should not be interpreted as requiring uncritical approval of every practice. Table 1 summarises the orientations using Bennett's revised account and presents proposed classroom priorities.

Table 1.

DMIS orientations and proposed implications for English language teaching

Orientation	Interpretation of cultural difference	Proposed instructional priority
Denial	Difference is unnoticed or represented through broad categories.	Notice specific contextual details in contrasting interactions.
Defense	Difference is interpreted through polarised evaluations of groups.	Separate observed behaviour from evaluative judgments.
Minimization	Familiar values and experiences are treated as universal.	Examine how similar intentions can require different expressions.
Acceptance	Different cultural perspectives are recognised as complex and meaningful.	Compare plausible interpretations of an ambiguous message.
Adaptation	Perspective-taking supports contextually appropriate alternative behaviour.	Adjust requests, disagreements, and clarification strategies.
Integration	Engagement with multiple cultural perspectives becomes part of identity.	Reflect on belonging and mediate between perspectives.

The table does not imply six lesson levels through which every class should move. Its pedagogical purpose is to connect interpretations of difference with tasks that challenge or extend them.

Minimization warrants particular attention because apparently inclusive statements can conceal an assumption that everyone communicates according to the same expectations. For teaching purposes, a useful distinction is between recognising shared human concerns and assuming identical conversational conventions. Students might agree that respect matters while disagreeing about how respectful disagreement should be expressed.

Acceptance and adaptation also require different instructional responses. Recognising an alternative interpretation does not ensure that a learner can formulate an appropriate reply. A student may understand why a request sounds demanding but lack the English expressions needed to revise it. Teachers therefore need to connect interpretive discussion with linguistic support and opportunities to practise alternative responses.

Integration concerns identity in Bennett's account [1], making it a questionable compulsory endpoint for a short language course. This article proposes assessing specific communicative achievements without requiring students to demonstrate a particular cultural identity. Likewise, adaptation should involve informed choice and negotiation rather than pressure to imitate an idealised national speaker.

Discusses. A practical application should connect noticing, interpretation, interaction, and reflection. These are proposed teaching phases, not replacements for Bennett's developmental orientations. The following sequence is suitable for adaptation to B2–C1 classes.

Students first examine a project-group message: "Your section is incomplete. Send the revised version tonight." They identify observable features, such as the imperative, deadline, and absence of explanation, before evaluating the writer's intentions. The teacher asks what additional information is needed: the relationship between participants, the agreed deadline, previous communication, or the seriousness of the missing work. This prevents nationality from becoming the default explanation.

Students then develop competing interpretations. The message might indicate urgency, frustration, an established working style, or limited linguistic resources. They identify evidence supporting each possibility and distinguish justified conclusions from assumptions. The objective is not to select the most culturally tolerant answer, but to reason carefully from incomplete information.

Next, students negotiate a response using role cards with different responsibilities and time constraints. Relevant expressions include "Could you clarify which section needs revision?" and "I can revise the introduction tonight, but I will need until tomorrow for the analysis." Partners must respond to new information and reach a workable agreement. Linguistic support should enable participation without turning the exchange into a memorised script.

Finally, learners compare their initial interpretations with the information obtained during interaction. They explain which assumption changed, which expression helped clarify meaning, and how they would respond in a different relationship or medium. Such activities can be related to the CEFR Companion Volume's treatment of mediation and pluricultural competence [5], although CEFR proficiency levels should not be equated with DMIS orientations.

In Uzbek university courses, teachers could adapt this sequence to international group projects, academic email, or explanations of local practices. Materials should represent variation within communities and include locally relevant perspectives. Where international collaboration is unavailable, contextualised cases and classroom role plays provide feasible practice, although they cannot reproduce all the demands of sustained intercultural contact.

D.Deardorff recommends combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, including observation, interviews, and judgments by learners and others [4]. For the proposed teaching sequence, evidence could include initial written interpretations, observed interaction, revised messages, and reflective commentary. Assessment criteria should address contextual reasoning, pragmatic appropriateness, clarification strategies, and the ability to reconsider unsupported assumptions. Language accuracy should be recorded separately so that grammatical errors are not automatically interpreted as limited intercultural understanding. DMIS should not be converted into a six-point classroom grading scale. Bennett's revised account describes a predominant orientation while acknowledging that individuals may use strategies associated with several positions [3]. A single statement or role play therefore provides an insufficient basis for confidently assigning a learner a developmental position. Classroom assessment should report what students demonstrate across tasks rather than attach permanent labels to them.

The model's strength is its attention to how learners interpret difference. Its application becomes weaker when teachers infer development from expressions of tolerance alone or treat national cultures as internally uniform. Assessment must also distinguish understanding another perspective from agreeing with it: students should be able to question a practice while representing its context accurately.

Bennett's DMIS provides a useful framework for analysing learners' interpretations of cultural difference and selecting corresponding educational challenges. In English language education, its contribution depends on connecting perspective-taking with linguistic resources, communicative practice, and reflection. Teachers should use the model to inform instruction while assessing observable performance rather than presumed developmental status. The proposed sequence offers a practical basis for university teaching.

Conclusion. The theoretical analysis of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) demonstrates that developing students' intercultural communicative competence requires a comprehensive educational approach extending beyond the acquisition of linguistic knowledge and conventional communication skills. In an increasingly interconnected world, students must develop the ability to recognize cultural differences, understand alternative perspectives, demonstrate empathy, and adapt their communicative behavior to diverse intercultural contexts. Consequently, intercultural competence should be considered an essential component of contemporary higher education and foreign language instruction.

Overall, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity represents a valuable theoretical and pedagogical framework for promoting students' intercultural communicative competence. Its principal contribution lies in emphasizing that intercultural learning involves transformations in how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to cultural differences. By incorporating the principles of the DMIS into foreign language education, educators can create learning environments that encourage openness, empathy, critical reflection, and effective communication across cultural boundaries.

At the same time, the theoretical potential of the model should be distinguished from empirically demonstrated educational effectiveness. Further research is necessary to investigate how DMIS-informed teaching strategies influence students' intercultural competence in different educational contexts. Future studies may employ experimental or quasi-experimental research designs, longitudinal observations, reflective assessments, and comparative analyses to examine changes in students' intercultural awareness and communicative behavior.

In conclusion, the integration of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity into educational practice has the potential to strengthen students' intercultural awareness, communicative flexibility, empathy, and critical thinking. By combining theoretical understanding with experiential learning, reflective practice, and meaningful intercultural interaction, higher education institutions can better prepare students to participate effectively and responsibly in culturally diverse academic, professional, and social environments.

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