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## **EXPLORING ENGLISH LEARNERS' READINESS FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

*In the world of super-diversity, education for intercultural citizenship has acquired a special significance. Despite numerous reviews in the research literature that address the intercultural citizenship in foreign language (FL) education, very few studies have investigated the connections between language learners' motivation for studying a foreign language and their development of intercultural citizenship (IC). This study aims to bridge this gap by focusing on this relationship. For this purpose, quantitative data was collected from 407 students through an online questionnaire.*

*The results revealed that the respondents consider intercultural communication, travel, networking, and future prospects, as important motivations for learning English. Moreover, the participants reported having a diverse range of intercultural experiences and feeling prepared for intercultural communication and citizenship. However, when evaluating their English classes' effectiveness in preparing them for these aspects, the majority of students expressed that their EFL classes did not adequately equip them for high-level intercultural communication and citizenship. This research contributes to existing literature by investigating the connection between students' motivation to learn English and their intercultural communication and citizenship skills and behaviors. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to engage in purposeful and successful intercultural dialogue.*

*Key words: intercultural communication, intercultural citizenship, EFL students, motivation, factors.*

### **MAIN PROVISIONS**

The intercultural domain of foreign language teaching has led to the increased significance of intercultural citizenship as an important issue in FL education. Foreign language is one of the essential tools for fostering intercultural citizenship, since the FL class helps learners develop a thoughtful reaction when they encounter cultural differences [1].

Intercultural citizenship places an emphasis on globalization of arts, sciences, languages, technologies [2]. Cultural awareness, intercultural competence, experience through travelling, personal contacts, reflection on cultural expressions are the essential features of this type of citizenship. As observed by M.Porto, students engaged in learning foreign languages, “become intercultural mediators and develop criticality and reflexivity through awareness of the national basis of their views and presuppositions” [3].

Intercultural citizenship is a concept that involves both intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and a sense of belonging to a global community. In the late 1990s, M. Byram introduced a model for intercultural competence shifting FL education from solely focusing on communicative competence to ICC [4]. Researchers and educators worldwide have extensively explored ICC, including its components, as well as teachers' and students' attitudes and practices concerning its development. Intercultural citizenship builds upon ICC, emphasizing the following aspects: 1. Encouraging individuals to actively engage in intercultural experiences and reflect on

those experiences, while also promoting collaboration with others to achieve common goals; 2. Creating a cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral transformation within individuals, influencing how they perceive themselves and interact with members of different social groups [1].

Several studies have explored the fostering of intercultural citizenship, demonstrating its successful cultivation across different educational levels and among students of varying age groups [5-6]. These studies have focused on employing diverse pedagogical strategies to enhance students' awareness of intercultural citizenship [7]. Some of the strategies include fostering collaborative work among students, utilizing information and communication technologies, and encouraging intercultural encounters. A research conducted by I.Golubeva, M.Wagner and M.E.Yakimowski showed that students have a limited understanding of the concept 'intercultural citizen', and a systematic and a more detailed approach should be taken to develop a richer and more profound understanding [8]. According to research conducted by H. Han, students' views on intercultural citizenship are significantly shaped by the unique socio-historical context of national educational system, as well as by the prevailing values and beliefs present in society [9]. U.Lundgren analysed students' awareness of their own stereotypes and their sense of international identification [10]. E.Yamada and J. Hsieh proposed ideas on how to teach intercultural citizenship to students whose language and intercultural competences are limited [11]. M.Porto worked on students' criticality, reflection and self-evaluation as a way to enhance international identification [3].

## INTRODUCTION

In spite of many theoretical studies conducted in the field of intercultural citizenship education, little research is done to consider it from students' perspectives and to understand whether there is a connection between students' motivation for learning a foreign language and intercultural citizenship development. This research aims to examine the experiences of Kazakhstani students in learning English and their perceptions of intercultural citizenship factors. Specifically, the study is centered around the following aspects:

- students' motivation for learning English;
- the extent to which students perceive their EFL classes as effective in preparing them for intercultural communication and fostering a sense of IC;
- exploring any potential link (correlation) between students' motivation and their readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship.

The study proposes a **hypothesis** suggesting a link between students' motivation to learn English and their readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship. By investigating intercultural communication and citizenship through the lens of students' perspectives, this research may enhance theoretical understanding of the issue under consideration and provides valuable insights for future studies.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research focuses on the following research questions:

RQ 1. What factors define students' motivation for learning English?

RQ 2. Do students feel ready for intercultural communication and citizenship?

RQ 3. Is students' motivation for learning English linked to their readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship?

The present study involved 407 participants, comprising non-English majors. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 21 years old.

The study analyzed data collected through an online questionnaire which consisted of two sections. Section 1 gathered background information about the participants. Section 2 focused on students' responses in regard to their motivation to learn English and their perceptions of intercultural citizenship factors. Overall, section 1 contained 5 questions that gathered information

about the participants' gender, age, major, place of study and number of years in higher education. Section 2 included 20 items which were based on a 5-point Likert Scale identifying the level of the students' agreement or disagreement with a certain item and 3 multiple response questions. The data collected were analyzed using statistical methods, specifically employing the SPSS Statistics v.29 program. The article presents some pedagogical implications which may be helpful for teachers in their foreign language classes.

#### *Validity*

The questionnaire's validity was determined based on two criteria: (a) content validity, which was assessed through expert evaluation; and (b) comprehension validity, which was established through a pilot study to ensure that respondents understood all the questions. The panel of 7 experts were selected based on the following criteria: (a) expertise on intercultural education and foreign language education; (b) professional experience in higher educational institutions. The experts were invited to assess the questionnaire by attaching a value within a 5-point Likert scale for each of the 36 items which were initially included in the questionnaire, and by evaluating the formulation of the questions. The key criteria for questionnaire evaluation included clarity, pertinence, and adequacy. As the result of this process, there was a reduction from 36 questions to 23. The comprehension validity of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study where 35 students participated. The students were asked to provide feedback on their understanding the questions. This helped to ensure that the questionnaire was clear and comprehensible to the target audience.

#### *Reliability*

To assess reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was employed (Table 1). A Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for most research purposes.

Table 1 - Coefficient Alpha Reliabilities

Section	Coefficient alpha	Number
Motivation	0.917	7
Readiness for IC	0,910	11
English classes and IC	0. 838	2

Cronbach's alphas of 0.92, 0.91 and 0.84 indicate a high degree of internal consistency among the items used in the questionnaire.

## RESULTS

### *RQ 1. What factors define students' motivation for learning English?*

Most of the participants rated their English language proficiency as intermediate (38%), followed by upper-intermediate (31%), pre-intermediate (17%), and advanced (14 %). 87 % of the students reported that they use English outside of FL classes. In terms of the ways students use English, leisure activities prevailed with 64 %. Use of English for studying subjects not related English language classes ranked second with 16 %, travelling was mentioned by 15%, and English as a means of communication with friends – by 5 %. Table 2 shows students' motivation for studying English.

Table 2 - Motivation	Mean	SD
1 Learning English will enable me to interact with speakers of English.	4,6355	,53891
2 English will allow me to travel to various countries and enhance my understanding of different cultures.	4,5421	,61859
3 English will allow me to connect with individuals from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.	4,5981	,52950
4 English will provide me with global connections and networking opportunities.	4,5981	,54703
5 English will allow me to participate in cross-cultural exchanges and activities.	4,5421	,61859
6 I will need English for further study.	4,5794	,63003
7 I will need English for my future career.	4,5794	,63003

Overall, the mean values suggest that the participants consider various factors related to intercultural communication, travel, networking, and future perspectives as significant motivations for engaging in English language learning.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the findings from the questionnaire revealed that students have various intercultural experiences, where intercultural contacts via social media (45%), having international friends (44%) and traveling abroad (36 %) prevail. 6 % of the students reported on the importance of getting intercultural experience through participation in overseas and academic mobility programs.

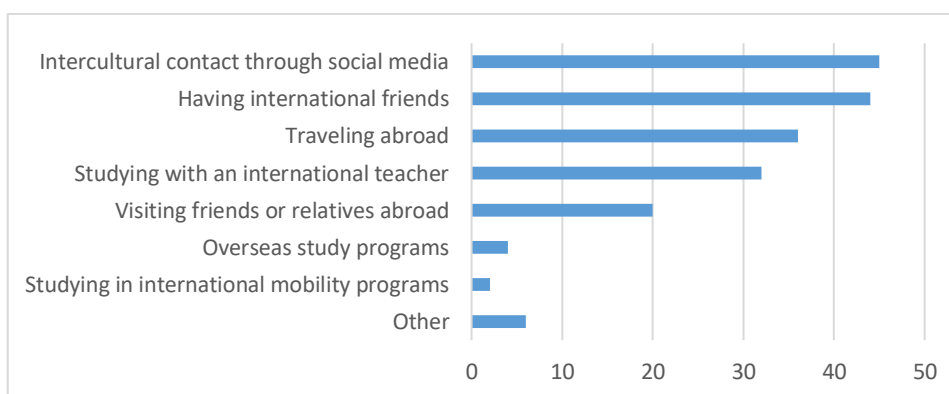


Figure 1 – Students' intercultural experiences (%)

*RQ 2. Do students feel ready for intercultural communication and citizenship?*

To find out whether students feel ready for intercultural communication and citizenship, they were asked two questions which were adapted from the questionnaire by W.Baker and F.Fang [12]: “Do you believe you are adequately prepared for intercultural communication and citizenship?” and “To what extent do you feel your English classes have equipped you for intercultural communication and citizenship?”. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Students' readiness for IC

	Mean	SD
8 Do you believe you are adequately prepared for intercultural communication and citizenship?	3,5607	1,08313
9 To what extent do you feel your English classes have equipped you for intercultural communication and citizenship?	2,8533	1,18795

The mean score for students' readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship is 3.56, indicating a moderate level of readiness for these areas. Concerning the students' viewpoints on the efficacy of EFL classes, the mean value of 2.85 indicates that students believe their English classes have provided a lower level of preparation. Overall, the data obtained indicates a potential

gap between students' expectations and their actual experiences in their English classes regarding intercultural communication and citizenship. Further analysis and exploration of this gap may help identify specific factors contributing to these perceptions and inform strategies for improvement.

*RQ 3. Is students' motivation for learning English linked to their readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship?*

The third research question concentrated on identifying the essential factors influencing intercultural communication and citizenship. W. Baker and F. Fang have extensively examined these factors [12]. Notably, previous research findings indicate that while most of the participants are acquainted with the concept of intercultural citizenship, they identify themselves as intercultural citizens only sometimes. The participants also experienced confusion when asked to provide qualities and responsibilities of an intercultural citizen [13].

Table 4 – IC factors	Mean	SD
10 Taking an active stance in addressing global social issues	3,8692	,75341
11 Taking an interest in global social issues	3,8879	,85038
12 Speaking English	4,0841	,89148
13 Speaking other foreign languages	3,9813	,80072
14 Experience of intercultural communication	4,0935	,72075
15 Acquiring knowledge about various cultures	4,1215	,73601
16 Travelling and getting experience	4,1308	,68796
17 Understanding and showing respect for cultural differences	4,0935	,72075
18 Learning about various cultures	4,1028	,85710
19 Empathizing with people from other countries	3,8785	,82084
20 Staying informed of current issues that impact international and intercultural relations	4,1028	,69952

The mean for each of the statements in Table 4 ranged from 3,86 to 4,13, which shows a general agreement to the importance of all the intercultural citizenship factors. The participants unanimously recognize the significance of learning English and other foreign languages as crucial components for becoming an intercultural citizen. Furthermore, such important factors as comprehending diverse cultures and acquiring intercultural communication skills were also emphasized by the respondents. However, a slight preference to travelling over other factors is evident. This inclination might be attributed to participants' perception that acquiring intercultural citizenship is closely linked to gaining cross-cultural experience through international travel.

To explore the potential correlation between students' motivation for learning the English language and their readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was calculated (Table 5).

Table 5 – Pearson's correlation

Motivation for English language learning	Readiness for IC	
	Pearson's correlation	,224
Sig. (2-tailed)	0,020	
N	407	

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson correlation between the two sections revealed that there is a significant relationship between students' motivation for English language learning and their readiness for communication and citizenship on the intercultural level ( $r=,224$ ,  $p\text{ value}<0,05$ ). Thus, students who are motivated to learn English are more interested in developing their intercultural skills and intercultural citizenship behaviours. The correlation results contribute to the acceptance of the hypothesis of the study.

## DISCUSSION

One of the effective strategies for intercultural competence and citizenship development is considered to be an intercultural encounter which takes place when one interacts with someone from another linguocultural community. In modern academic realia this becomes not a difficult task to complete, since Kazakhstani universities tend to invite foreign professors to give lectures and practical classes or teach foreign languages. Furthermore, the number of international students accessing higher education in Kazakhstan appears to be increasing. Foreign professors and foreign students bring their languages, cultures, and perspectives to class.

The following pedagogical sequence may be offered to implement in the FL classroom to promote students' intercultural competence and citizenship (Table 6). The sequence has several stages which are presented in the table below.

Table 6 - Stages of intercultural encounters

Intercultural encounter 1	Intercultural encounter 2	Action in the community	Reflection
<b>Stage 1: Preparation</b>			
Activating students' knowledge about the culture of the visitor	Preparing for the visit	Making presentations on cultural tips	Discussing cultural similarities and differences
<b>Stage 2: Visit</b>			
Visit of guest	Visit of guest	Making short videos, Instagram/ Facebook posts	Sharing knowledge with the university community Preparing other students for intercultural encounters
Taking action	Sharing knowledge with peers	Posting on social media, collecting the feedback	Sharing knowledge with the university community Preparing other students for intercultural encounters

The preparation stage can be conducted in the form of discussion which helps understand what knowledge students have about culture in general and about the culture of an intercultural visitor, in particular. Students may be asked to brainstorm the concept of culture, to prepare a list of questions related to cultural practices and perspectives of a guest as well as their expectations from the visit. Prior to the visit, the guest prepares some cultural activities to conduct in class. During Stage 2 the visitor may speak on specific aspects of his/her own culture confirming/disconfirming information students have learned prior to the visit. While listening to the guests, students may be asked to compare their views about the culture with the information presented by the speaker. After the encounter, it is necessary to conduct an activity aiming at helping students recognize their original ideas and views about the visitor's culture and whether these have changed after speaking with him/her. The following step is to ask students to create presentations providing tips on what foreigners should know about a particular culture and to reflect on cultural information which was new for them. The purpose of this stage is to cultivate students' cultural awareness and enhance their understanding of cultural distinctions. As part of the community action plan, students can be asked to create short videos and write posts which may be uploaded on social media and then used by other teachers in their FL classes.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research results demonstrate that students exhibit strong motivation for learning English. Moreover, the participants have a diverse range of intercultural experiences and

express readiness for intercultural communication and citizenship. Nevertheless, the majority of students expressed dissatisfaction when evaluating the effectiveness of their English classes in preparing them for intercultural communication and citizenship, suggesting that their EFL classes do not sufficiently cover these aspects. One potential approach to address this gap would be to reconsider the intercultural dimensions of FL education and make them more practice-oriented, specifically through integrating computer-mediated intercultural communication activities into language curricula. There is a certain discrepancy between how students evaluate their own readiness for intercultural communication and their negative evaluation of EFL classes. To better understand this discrepancy, a follow-up study should be conducted, employing a qualitative research method such as interviews with students.

#### INFORMATION ON FINANCING

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### **Студенттердің мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынасқа және мәдениетаралық азаматтыққа дайындығын зерттеу**

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*Соңғы жылдары мәдениетаралық азаматтықты дамытуға, студенттерді мақсатты және табысты мәдениетаралық диалогқа дайындауға бағытталған білімге көбірек көңіл бөлінуде. Мәдениетаралық азаматтықтың құрамдас бөлігін тілдік білім беруге кіріктірудің маңыздылығы туралы көптеген зерттеулерге қарамастан, олардың өте азы шет тілін үйренуге деген мотивация мен мәдениетаралық азаматтықты дамыту арасындағы байланысты зерттейді. Сандық деректер онлайн сауалнама арқылы жиналды, оған тілдік емес мамандықтардың 2-3 курсының 407 студенті қатысты. Алынған мәліметтер студенттердің ағылшын тілін үйренуге деген мотивациясының жоғары екендігін көрсетті. Қатысушылар ағылшын тілін үйренудің маңызды мотивтері ретінде мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас, саяхат, болашақ мансап перспективаларымен байланысты әртүрлі факторларды қарастырады. Қатысушылар өздерін мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас пен азаматтыққа дайын сезінеді. Дегенмен, ағылшын тілі сабақтарын бағалау кезінде респонденттердің көпшілігі мәдениетаралық коммуникацияға және мәдениетаралық азаматтыққа дайындыққа жеткіліксіз назар аударғанын атап өтті. Зерттеу студенттердің мотивациясы мен олардың мәдениетаралық дағдылары мен мәдениетаралық азаматтықты дамыту арасындағы байланысты зерттеу арқылы зерттеу мәселесіне қатысты бар теорияларға үлес қосады. Бұл зерттеудің практикалық маңыздылығы мынада: алынған мәліметтерді шет тілі мұғалімдері студенттерді мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынасқа және мәдениетаралық азаматтыққа дайындауда пайдалана алады.*

*Кілт сөздер: мәдениетаралық азаматтық, түсінік, студенттердің мотивациясы, білім беру, мәдениет, тіл.*

Материал 09.08.2023 баспаға түсті

### **Изучение готовности студентов к межкультурной коммуникации и межкультурному гражданству**

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*В последние годы образованию, направленному на развитие межкультурной гражданской ответственности обучающихся, на их подготовку к успешному межкультурному диалогу, уделяется всё большее внимание. Несмотря на многочисленные исследования, посвященные важности интеграции компонента межкультурного гражданства в языковое образование, в очень немногих из них рассматривается связь между мотивацией к изучению иностранного языка и развитием межкультурной гражданской ответственности обучающихся. Настоящее исследование направлено на изучение данной связи.*

*Количественные данные были собраны при помощи онлайн анкетирования, в котором приняли участие 407 студентов 2-3 курсов неязыковых специальностей. Полученные данные показали, что мотивация студентов к изучению английского языка высока, участники считают различные факторы, связанные с межкультурным общением, путешествиями, перспективами будущей карьеры значимыми мотивами для изучения английского языка. Участники чувствуют себя готовыми к межкультурному общению и гражданству. Однако, при оценке занятий английского языка большинство респондентов отметили их недостаточную направленность на подготовку к межкультурному общению и межкультурному гражданству. Исследование вносит свой вклад в существующие теории, относящиеся к проблеме исследования, через изучение связи между мотивацией студентов и развитием их межкультурных навыков и межкультурной гражданской ответственности. Практическая значимость данного исследования заключается в том, что полученные данные могут быть использованы преподавателями иностранных языков при подготовке студентов к межкультурному общению и межкультурному гражданству.*

*Ключевые слова: межкультурное гражданство, представления, мотивация, студенты, образование, культура, язык.*

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## **ҚАЗАҚ ТІЛІН ҮЙРЕТУДЕ ҰЛТТЫҚ БРЕНДТЕРДІ ҚОЛДАНУДЫҢ ТИІМДІЛІГІ**

*Ұлттық бренд – ұлттың материалдық-рухани құндылығы, мәдениетінің бір бөлігі, мемлекеттің имиджі. Кез келген ел үшін оның әлемде қалай қабылданатыны, оның жетістіктері мен сәтсіздіктері, мәдениеті, халқы, салт-дәстүрі, өндірілген тауарлары ұлттық бренд ретінде қалай көрінетіні аса маңызды. Бұл мәселе тілді үйретуде де үлкен мәнге ие. Ол үшін, алдымен, брендті анықтау, тілді оқытуда брендтерді қолданудың маңызын нақтылау қажет.*

*Зерттеудің мақсаты – шетелдік студенттердің қазақтың ұлттық брендтері туралы аялық білімдерін анықтау арқылы ұлттық брендтердің тілді үйретудегі маңызын айшықтау. Бренд арқылы оқытудың тиімділігін негіздеу үшін эксперименттік жұмыстар жасалды. Ол үшін авторлардың түсірген бейнесабақтары қашықтан оқыту жағдайында Түркістан қаласындағы Қожжа Ахмет Яссауи атындағы қазақ-түрік университетінде оқып жатқан шетелдік студенттерге ұсынылды. Мақалада жазылған мәліметтерді тіл*