

## DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH THE USE OF MEDIA EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** The significant advancement of globalisation, which has affected every sphere of activity, has increased the importance of intercultural competence in training future specialists. However, current research results indicate the insufficient effectiveness of this skill among university graduates, prompting scholars to search for new pedagogical methods to foster its development. Our study aimed to determine the critical stages of forming intercultural competence and the role of media education in its development. To achieve this goal, the following methods were used: literature review, analysis of the stages in forming intercultural competence, an experiment followed by statistical processing and comparison of test results, data visualisation, and summarisation of findings. Five stages of competence formation were identified: denial, defence, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The effectiveness of media education, particularly video lessons and video presentations, in developing intercultural skills was demonstrated. A strong positive correlation was found between the number of video presentations created by the student and positive responses in the test. Thus, media education positively impacts the formation of intercultural competence and, due to its characteristics, can be widely integrated into the educational process.

**Keywords:** Video lessons, Video presentations, Intercultural skills, Virtual exchange, Communication, Intercultural collaboration, Online lessons

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### 1 Introduction

With the advancement of globalisation, intercultural competence has gained significant importance due to the increasing prevalence of international cooperation, which requires knowledge of the culture and customs of one's partners. However, globalisation has influenced economic cooperation and shifted the development trajectory of all sectors, including education. Higher education institutions have faced changing demands regarding the nature of competences required in the labour market. This has led to a shift in the competence-based learning approach, bringing intercultural competence to the forefront. These changes have resulted in adjustments to thematic planning and schedules, which needed to adapt to societal demands quickly. At the same time, acquiring intercultural competence has proven to be a complex process, as evidenced by the insufficient level of knowledge among graduates and employers' dissatisfaction with new specialists who were not ready to apply the knowledge gained at university in practice.

Such changes in societal demands regarding the educational process have stimulated researchers to seek new approaches to teaching intercultural competence skills, as higher education institutions still lag in this area. In an era of rapid digitalisation and the growing use of its capabilities among young people, it is essential to consider media education's potential in achieving intercultural communication goals. In addition to student training, it is crucial to enhance the skills of teachers in teaching the basics of intercultural dialogue within the framework of

continuous professional development and introducing new teaching methods to improve the quality of education.

### 2 Literature review

The growing demand for intercultural competences among specialists has prompted universities to engage in activities in this area (Rawal & Deardorff, 2021). However, despite numerous attempts to meet these needs, there is a lack of proposed solutions in the literature due to the challenges of organising new teaching approaches and the complexity and inconsistency in defining the concept. Moreover, no studies have been found that statistically prove the effectiveness of various methods for achieving intercultural competence regarding academic, emotional, and social outcomes (Sabet & Chapman, 2023).

The definition of intercultural competence in modern literature varies and lacks a generally accepted meaning, which is a key factor in the complexity of the concept's construction. Deardorff (2020) describes intercultural competence as knowledge and skills related to cultural characteristics of communities aimed at achieving compromise in relationships between people despite socio-political, ethnic, economic, religious, and other differences. Fantini (2020) views intercultural competence in conjunction with linguistic competence, considering it an integral part. However, the author emphasises the impossibility of achieving a global level of intercultural competence, as it is impossible to comprehend all the diversity of world cultures. Therefore, the researcher focuses on openness, empathy, communication skills, cooperation, tolerance, and a willingness to learn new things. Schmidmeier et al. (2020) identify six elements of developed intercultural competence: interaction, communication, learning, cultural differences, mediated culture, and collaboration effectiveness. The authors studied the formation of intercultural communication in groups and conducted an analysis and survey in companies with multicultural staff.

Martorana et al. (2021) analysed defining intercultural competence and found that researchers also use synonyms for competence, such as intercultural education, learning, knowledge, and multiculturalism. More importantly, these skills share a common goal in multicultural societies, especially in European countries with high migration levels: fostering mutual respect regardless of cultural differences, establishing communication between people with different views, and promoting social justice and non-discrimination (Kryvoshein et al., 2022). Contini and Pica-Smith (2017) emphasised the difference between multiculturalism and interculturalism, arguing that multiculturalism pertains to public and political discourse, while interculturalism is considered at the micro-level, primarily concerning personal relationships. Lantz-Deaton and Golubeva (2020) differentiated between intercultural competence and cross-cultural competence, with the former describing relationships between people from different cultures, while the latter involves comparing different cultures without interaction between individuals.

In addition to defining intercultural competence, achieving its effectiveness is difficult, as evidenced by employers' dissatisfaction with specialists' intercultural relationship skills within teams and with foreign partners (Dias et al., 2020). Therefore, introducing new approaches to developing this competence is essential for educators. Braslauskas (2021) highlights creativity as one of the most effective methods for developing intercultural skills, as creativity enables the generation of new ideas and solutions to atypical problems. Thus, creativity fosters openness, a desire to learn about new cultures, and flexibility, which form the foundation for intercultural interaction. Liang and Schartner (2020) studied the positive impact of mixed intercultural classes on developing intercultural communication and teamwork skills.

In the era of technological advancement, the question arises about using technological capabilities to develop intercultural competence. O'Dowd and Dooley (2020) described the positive impact of virtual learning, which includes incorporating telecommunication with international students into linguistic curricula at universities. Ferreira-Lopes et al. (2021) described high academic intercultural achievements among business school students in Spain and the Netherlands, who virtually collaborated within curricula throughout the semester. Monika et al. (2020) argue that social media's capabilities have significantly expanded society's intercultural outlook and contributed to developing intercultural competence in students. Shadiey et al. (2023) studied the potential of videos shot using drones to enhance the perception of knowledge related to another country's culture. The use of drones for obtaining video materials was explained by the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers conducted a video exchange between students in China and Indonesia and evaluated the survey results. Students positively evaluated this experience, noting the high-quality landscape characteristics, sounds, and visual effects, which gave the feeling of being present at the filming location.

The analysis of recent literature on intercultural competence revealed many publications, including original studies and reviews, confirming the topic's relevance. However, most studies did not provide specific recommendations for implementing practical pedagogical approaches; instead, they stimulated discussions and further research in this area.

The study aimed to identify the main stages of intercultural competence formation and the role of media education in its development.

### 3 Research methods

We conducted a review of recent literature on the state of development of intercultural competence and identified gaps in this research area. The main stages of forming intercultural skills were highlighted, and recommendations for pedagogical approaches were provided for each stage. An experimental

pedagogical study was conducted by forming three group participants, consisting of 60 university students studying a course on intercultural interaction using different methodologies. The students were randomly assigned to groups, with 20 respondents in each group. The research adhered to the principles of pedagogical ethics and personal data anonymity. All students gave their consent to participate in the study. The first group was the control group (n=20), which studied the course traditionally without modern media education tools. In addition to the methodological recommendations, lectures, and practical sessions developed within the curriculum, students in the second group (n=20) were provided access to short video lessons. In the third group (n=20), the curriculum included creating video presentations on the lesson topics. Academic performance evaluation included a test on the course material, consisting of 95 questions, each with one correct/positive answer. To avoid random correct answers, most of the questions were open-ended. The test results were presented as a diagram and compared between groups using Student's t-test. In the third group, a correlation was identified between the number of video presentations created by the student and their academic performance. The research results were compared with data from contemporary studies, and the findings were summarised.

### 4 Results

The rapid increase in the role of international cooperation has placed additional demands on the education system, particularly in training specialists with well-developed intercultural thinking. This has led to the search for practical approaches to developing this skill. However, assessing the essence of forming intercultural interaction competence became necessary to identify effective methods. The study of interculturality began in the 1980s due to the challenges of adapting migrant students to European schools. Today, however, the concept of interculturality has expanded significantly, as globalisation has increased knowledge about other cultures, migration, tourism, and international relations in business, education, science, and other sectors. Figure 1 presents the stages of forming intercultural competence.

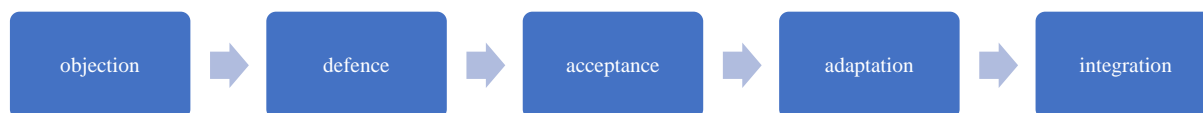


Figure 1. Intercultural competence development process

Source: compiled by the author based on (Sabet & Chapman, 2023; Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva, 2020)

When encountering a new culture for the first time, a person goes through a stage of denial, during which the new culture is not perceived as acceptable but rather as something unfamiliar, illogical, and incomprehensible. In our time, denial is not as pronounced and can be observed in its purest form among children who have migrated to another country suddenly without prior exposure to its culture. This stage is blurred and unclear among students because young people are often exposed to tourism, social media, and learning about foreign cultures through music, films, literature, and art. The next stage involves defending one's culture by contrasting it with the other. At this stage, the highest level of motivation for learning the customs and traditions of another culture is observed. The next stage, identified by the authors, is acceptance, where empathy, tolerance, and understanding of other people's culture come to the forefront. The fourth stage involves adapting one's behaviour to the customs of the studied culture, and the fifth stage, integration, includes incorporating cultural characteristics and values of another country into one's own, thus forming multicultural behaviour and worldview.

Students who come to study in another country experience all the stages above, which is why higher education institutions should promote the development of intercultural competence among teachers to facilitate the adaptation of foreign students by

providing them with a step-by-step guide for each stage of forming interculturality. Teacher training courses should be included in the planning of continuous professional development. At the same time, continuous professional development programmes should involve educators, psychologists, philosophers, linguists, subject matter experts, and, where applicable, historians.

Students studying in their own country do not go through the denial stage and begin acquiring intercultural skills by defending or contrasting their culture with a foreign one. In our opinion, the absence of the denial stage is one factor that negatively affects the motivation to study foreign cultures because students do not understand why they need this knowledge or how they will use it in the future. Therefore, to develop intercultural competence, it is essential to conduct motivational and introductory sessions, foster cooperation with foreign universities, organise joint conferences, exchange programmes, and internships, and, depending on the university's academic focus, engage foreign companies for informational discussions.

The stages of acceptance and adaptation are most important for the practical application of intercultural skills because they determine behaviour and the tolerant perception of foreign cultures. All students should master intercultural skills at the

acceptance stage since tolerance towards different cultures forms the foundation of human rights and is an integral component of modern democratic society. Therefore, intercultural competence should be inherent in all students, and to achieve this, it is necessary to broaden students' horizons and involve them in interaction with foreign partners. It is important to note that many university partner institutions or companies collaborating with universities increase the chances of developing intercultural perspectives among students and teachers.

The adaptation stage is crucial for establishing intercultural cooperation and communication. Group work, particularly with international students, is an effective method to reach this stage. Virtual exchanges and joint international online lessons, which gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rawal & Deardorff, 2021), have shown promising results. However, adaptation is most effectively achieved through informal communication and meetings, which cannot be conducted remotely. We believe the best forms for experience exchange with informal communication are symposiums and conferences with limited participants. At the same time, large-scale events and long-term internships can be stressful and, as a result, may negatively affect the further development of intercultural interaction.

The integration stage is characteristic of employees in companies with multicultural staff or those who have worked in another country for a long time, as well as students who have studied abroad for an extended period. The integration stage reverses after returning from another country, as it is unnecessary to integrate into a culture outside its borders. However, a knowledge base of behaviours for practical intercultural cooperation remains.

Intercultural competence is significant in various fields and should be promoted in higher education institutions. However,

international educational cooperation and conferences are not always accessible to many students, making it essential to assess the potential of digital technologies, particularly media education, for its development. Two approaches were studied to determine the effectiveness of media education methods: video lessons (group 2) and video presentations (group 3). Thus, the educational course included lectures, practical sessions, video lessons, and video presentations. Group 1 was the control group (n=20), where only lectures and practical sessions were used. In group 2 (n=20), lectures, practical sessions, and additional video lessons were used. In group 3 (n=20), the curriculum included lectures, practical sessions, and video presentations, which the students prepared themselves. The "Basics of International Communication" course (Appendix 1) was identical for all groups regarding the thematic and methodological content of the lecture and practical material. The video lessons were provided as thesis-based reviews of the material covered in the lectures and practical sessions and were only available to group 2 students for self-study. Video presentations were mandatory for group 3 students; however, students could choose the topics and number of presentations to complete. The only requirement was to present the videos to the group, followed by a question-and-answer session and discussion.

A course focused on developing intercultural competence was created to evaluate the effectiveness of the video lessons and presentations. To avoid differences in motivation levels among students, the elective course did not affect overall academic performance. The test included sections on theoretical knowledge, signs of loyalty, and behavioural characteristics of the students. Positive responses were considered and compared between the groups using Student's t-test, with a significance level of  $p < 0.05$  (Table 1).

Figure 2 shows the average rates of positive responses in the groups.

Table 1. Statistical evaluation of the results

Comparable groups	Student's t-test	Reliability indicator, p
Group 1 (control) / Group 2 (video lessons)	5,53	<0,01
Group 1 (control) / group 3 (video presentations)	7,05	<0,01
Group 2 (video lessons)/ group 3 (video presentations)	1,89	0,03

Source: compiled by the author

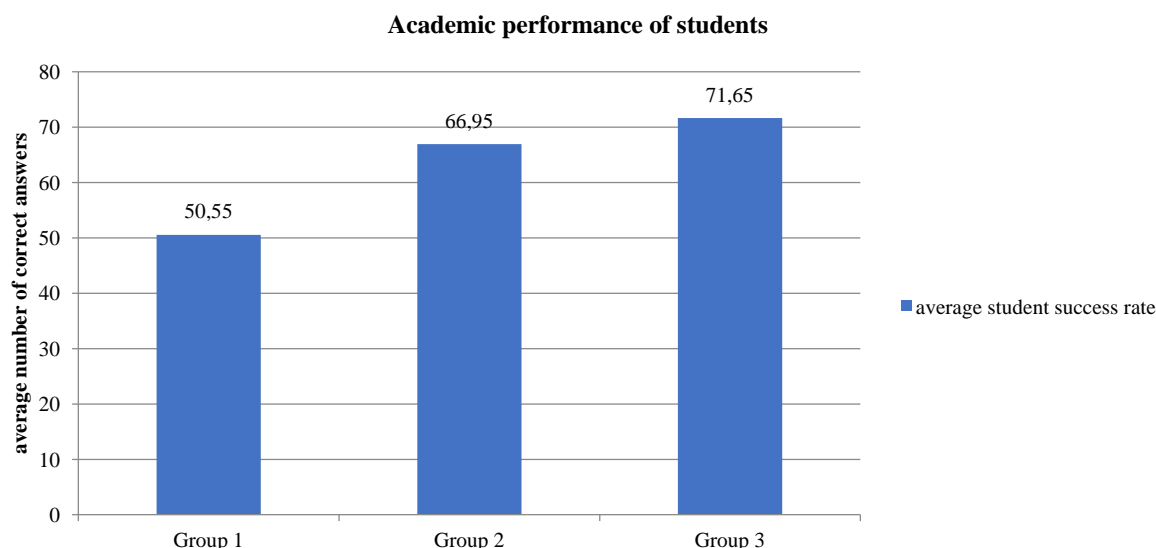


Figure 2. Comparison of academic performance in groups with different teaching methods

Source: compiled by the author

As seen in Figure 2, the lowest results were demonstrated by Group 1 (control group), in which modern media education tools were not used. The results of Group 1 differed significantly from those of Groups 2 (video lessons) and 3 (video presentations), as

confirmed by the value of Student's t-test, indicating the effectiveness of media education for developing intercultural competence. Group 2 (video lessons) showed significantly higher results, indicating the positive impact of video lessons on

the development of intercultural skills due to visualisation, self-study, and the ability to review material according to students' needs.

The highest test results were demonstrated by Group 3 (video presentations), whose results were significantly different from both Group 1 (control group) and, to a lesser extent, Group 2 (video lessons). In Group 3, students prepared and presented video presentations on the topics, which indicates the positive role of the video presentation method in visualisation, fostering creativity, the ability to conduct quality research, select critical points from a large amount of information, and summarise results.

Table 2. Determining the correlation between academic performance and the number of presentations created by students

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Number of correct answers																			
85	86	65	67	67	69	68	69	72	75	76	75	72	87	61	68	66	65	65	75
Number of presentations created																			
12	11	5	4	6	5	7	2	7	9	5	5	7	8	6	3	5	7	7	11

Source: compiled by the author

Thus, the study's results indicate the positive impact of media education on the development of intercultural competence, specifically through video lessons and video presentations. Moreover, the effectiveness of video presentations increases with the number of presentations created by students. Unlike costly international internships, conferences, and visits, these media education methods can be applied to many students without requiring significant resources or increasing teachers' workload. Furthermore, the creation of video lessons by teachers may yield positive results similar to the creation of video presentations in Group 3; however, this assumption requires statistical validation and could be considered a prospect for future research.

## 5 Discussion

The results of the literature analysis pointed to the stages of intercultural competence development and the importance of understanding pedagogical approaches to improve them. Acquiring skills in tolerance, loyalty, empathy, understanding, and behavioural changes in the paradigm of respect for another culture forms the foundation of intercultural competence (Sabet & Chapman, 2023). Understanding the stages of the structure of intercultural competence development is essential for university lecturers who deal with many international students in today's globalised educational environment.

According to our research results, media education plays a vital role in developing intercultural competence. This can be explained by media education's ability to increase engagement in learning and the accessibility of materials through the visualisation of topics, making learning more concrete (Winoto, 2020). We also observed that the increase in academic performance when using video lessons was supported by literature which describes the positive impact of video materials on the perception of new knowledge (Fiorella et al., 2020). Christensen et al. (2020) characterised video lessons as a fast and resource-efficient method of media education. However, the authors emphasise the importance of an individual approach when selecting media education tools, as it is necessary to consider the specific perception of different media tools depending on the students' professional orientation (Fiorella et al., 2020).

The results of our research were confirmed in the literature, as the positive impact of video presentations on the development of intercultural competence is explained by the positive effect of creativity on the achievement of this skill (Braslauskas, 2021). Another aspect is the combination of communication, presentation, and intercultural interaction skills observed in Group 3 through the presentation of videos, discussions, and responses to questions on the topic. This combination of the three skills is in high demand among employers (Sonnenschein & Ferguson, 2020). The development of intercultural and communication skills is also positively influenced by group

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the correlation between positive test responses and the number of video presentations created in Group 3. The data used to determine the correlation are presented in Table 2. Spearman's rank coefficient  $r_{xy}$  for this sample is 0.79, with a significance level of  $p < 0.01$ , indicating a strong positive correlation between the number of video presentations created and positive test responses.

learning, including in intercultural and physical classrooms (Liang & Schartner, 2020; De Hei et al., 2020).

Among other effective media education methods that influence the development of intercultural competence is international joint online learning (Hackett et al., 2023). The test results of the joint group of students from the Netherlands and the USA were higher than those of the control group when assessed by the Cultural Intelligence Scale and the Intercultural Personality Questionnaire. Furthermore, this joint learning promoted student mobility and increased their motivation for exchange programmes in other countries (Liu & Shirley, 2021). Today, despite globalisation, the percentage of students who undergo internships or study abroad remains low, at around 10% (Teichler, 2019). While authors recognise studying abroad as the most effective method for developing intercultural competence, as students are immersed in the culture of the country where they are interning and interact with students from other countries in dormitories, there are also challenges (Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Llopis, 2022). The negative aspect of this method is the stress and prolonged adaptation, which may persist throughout the internship, especially if the internship is short-term, resulting in a counterproductive effect that ultimately reduces motivation for further intercultural interaction. Therefore, before planning international internships, students should acquire intercultural skills, particularly communication, including language proficiency, basic knowledge of the culture, and behavioural characteristics of the country they plan to study.

## 6 Conclusions

After conducting a literature review on intercultural competence, many studies were identified, confirming its relevance. However, differences in the interpretation of the concept of interculturality were found, explaining the complexity of the skill's structure. Through an analysis of the stages of intercultural competence development, the main principles for developing the ability were determined, based on which recommendations were developed for action algorithms at different stages. The positive impact of media education, particularly video lessons and, to a greater extent, the creation of video presentations, on developing intercultural skills was proven. Due to the low cost and high demand for the proposed media education methods, it is recommended that they be used to teach large groups of students.

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#### Primary Paper Section: A

#### Secondary Paper Section: AM, AJ

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**Appendix 1**  
**Course syllabus for “Basics of International Communication”**

**Topic 1:** The role of international communication in modern society. Areas of application of international communication.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 2:** International communication as the foundation of intercultural competence. The concept, content, and significance of interculturality.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 3:** Language and culture in international relations. Basics of verbal and non-verbal communication.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 4:** Fundamentals of business communication in the context of intercultural interaction.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 5:** Features of business communication in Western European countries. Business intercultural communication in France, Germany, and Belgium.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 6:** Features of business communication in Eastern European countries.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 7:** Fundamentals of business communication in Scandinavian countries.  
Lecture.  
Practical session.

**Topic 8:** Features of business communication in Southern European countries.  
Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 9:** Business communication features in English-speaking countries: USA, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 10:** Features of business interaction in Arab countries.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 11:** Fundamentals of office management and international relations in East Asian countries: Japan, China, India.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 12:** Fundamentals of business communication in Latin American countries.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 13:** Comparison of intercultural communication in different countries of the world. Comparison of business communication features in the G7 countries.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 14:** Comparison of intercultural interaction in G20 countries.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 15:** Analysis of the effectiveness of intercultural communication between European states within the European Union.  
Lecture.

Lecture.

Practical session.

**Topic 16:** Summary session. Critical business etiquette rules in different countries. Round table creation to simulate intercultural interaction between different countries.  
Practical session.

Practical session.

Practical session.