
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Development of Intercultural Competence in the Context of Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language in China: An Interactive Role-Playing Approach

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| ABSTRACT

This study addresses the importance of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching, offering effective pedagogical strategies for its integration. It focuses on significant intercultural experiences, cultural immersion, and exchange programs. Additionally, it provides recommendations to promote intercultural competence, including culturally relevant curricula and ongoing teacher training. The study presents an intercultural competence survey focused on migration and immigration and highlights how this competence not only enhances language skills but also fosters tolerance and open-mindedness, preparing students for a multicultural and globalized world.

| KEYWORDS

Teaching, intercultural competence, foreign languages, multiculturalism, mutual understanding.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

In a world characterized by globalization and multiculturalism, foreign language teaching cannot be limited to linguistic proficiency. It is imperative to incorporate a pedagogical approach that goes beyond words and grammatical structures. In this context, intercultural competence emerges as an essential component of comprehensive student education. This project focuses on the creation of innovative educational activities, specifically in the field of teaching Spanish as a foreign language in China, based on intercultural competence. This skill, which encompasses the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures and understand their perspectives, is presented as a crucial bridge to foster mutual understanding and respect in a culturally interconnected world (Byram, 2008).

Methodology

Instrument Design

Participants: The research involved 30 students learning Spanish as a second language in Mexico. Participants were aged between 18 and 25, with a balanced gender distribution.

Methodological Approach: A mixed-method approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative research focused on analyzing responses to explore emotional and attitudinal nuances towards cultural differences, while the quantitative research provided numerical data to identify patterns and trends.

Research Instrument: A comprehensive survey was designed, divided into two sections: one for immigrant students and another for native students of the host country. The questions addressed cultural, linguistic, religious, clothing, dietary, and gender role aspects within the context of migration and immigration.

Implementation on an Interactive Platform: The survey was implemented using online platforms such as Google Forms, providing each student with a unique link to access the questionnaire confidentially.

Response Analysis: The responses were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, offering a deep understanding of students' intercultural competence.

Implementation on an Interactive Platform.

The survey was implemented using online platforms like Google Forms, leveraging their accessibility and ease of use. Each student received a unique link to access the questionnaire individually. This approach ensured the confidentiality of responses and encouraged honest and unrestricted participation. Implementing the survey on an interactive platform not only simplified the process for participants but also facilitated efficient data collection and organization.

Response Analysis.

Response analysis was conducted rigorously using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' intercultural competence. The qualitative evaluation focused on analyzing the attitudes, perceptions, and reasoning expressed by participants. Special attention was given to open-mindedness, empathy, and respect toward diverse cultural practices and beliefs. On the other hand, the quantitative evaluation relied on carefully designed rating scales, providing numerical data to identify patterns and trends in participants' responses. This combined approach ensured a deep and detailed understanding of students' intercultural attitudes and behaviors.

Reaffirming the Importance of Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching.

In the context of foreign language education, intercultural competence is not just an educational supplement; it is a fundamental pillar in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world. Beyond providing students with linguistic and grammatical skills, this competence fosters an open and respectful mindset towards cultural differences. Through intercultural competence, students not only improve their communicative skills but also gain the necessary tools to navigate and thrive in complex intercultural settings. This not only promotes tolerance and mutual understanding but also contributes to the development of global citizens capable of addressing global challenges with empathy and wisdom.

Recommended Actions to Promote Intercultural Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom

Design Culturally Relevant Curricula: Integrating authentic cultural elements such as literature, music, film, and local traditions into the curriculum provides students with a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the culture associated with the language they are learning. This not only broadens their horizons but also fosters respect for diverse cultural expressions.

Foster Intercultural Interaction: Establishing partnerships with schools and communities in Spanish-speaking countries creates opportunities for meaningful cultural exchanges. Technology can facilitate connections with native speakers through virtual exchanges and online platforms, enriching classroom experience and promoting mutual understanding.

Integrate Experiential Learning: Hands-on activities in real cultural contexts, such as museum visits, participation in cultural festivals, and volunteer work, allow students to experience and understand cultural differences authentically. This not only reinforces intercultural competence but also fosters meaningful learning.

Develop Critical Awareness: Encouraging critical reflection on cultural differences challenges stereotypes and prejudices. By encouraging students to question their own beliefs and consider how cultural experiences shape their worldview, a deeper and more respectful understanding of cultural differences is promoted.

Actions to Promote Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching

The effective implementation of these strategies requires ongoing commitment from educators and educational institutions to cultivate an inclusive and enriching classroom environment. Additionally, it is crucial to establish regular assessments to measure students' progress in terms of intercultural competence and to adjust strategies as needed to address the changing needs of the multicultural environment.

Evaluation Instrument

Objective

The primary purpose of the intercultural competence survey is to assess students' ability to understand and adapt in intercultural environments, promoting open-mindedness and mutual understanding. This evaluation focuses on migration and immigration—crucial areas for understanding intercultural complexities in a globalized world.

Activity Design

The interactive role-playing game provides an authentic framework for students to explore diverse cultural perspectives. The questions, carefully designed for both groups—migrants and natives of the host country—encourage deep reflection, thereby fostering cultural awareness and empathy toward others' experiences.

Interactive Platform

The qualitative evaluation will focus on in-depth analysis of student responses, exploring emotional and attitudinal nuances toward cultural differences. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach will quantify these attitudes, providing numerical data to identify patterns and trends. This combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods offers a complete picture of students' intercultural competence.

Response Analysis

In analyzing the responses provided by students, a variety of opinions and attitudes toward cultural integration by immigrants were observed. Most immigrant students expressed a willingness to learn the local language (100%) and adapt to the local diet (85.7%). However, there were divided opinions on adopting the host country's clothing (64.3% yes, 35.7% no) and participating in local religious activities (7.1% yes, 92.9% no). Regarding adopting the host country's customs, 64.3% agreed, while 35.7% preferred to maintain their own traditions.

On the other hand, natives of the host country showed a more flexible attitude toward immigrants. Most agreed that immigrants should learn the local language (100%) and adapt to the local diet (84.2%). However, opinions were divided on whether immigrants should adopt local clothing (42.2% yes, 57.9% no). Additionally, most respondents (52.6%) believed immigrants should have the option to speak their native language at home, while 47.4% said yes, but only if they wish.

Conclusions from the Responses

The results reflect the complexity of attitudes and beliefs toward cultural integration. Immigrants seem willing to adapt in terms of language and diet but show reluctance in areas such as clothing, religion, and customs. Conversely, natives of the host country demonstrate a more inclusive attitude, although there are areas where they prefer to respect the cultural diversity of immigrants.

Recommendations

Promote Education and Awareness: It is essential to create educational programs that promote mutual understanding and cultural awareness for both immigrants and natives of the host country. These programs may include workshops, talks, and events that highlight the importance of cultural diversity and mutual respect.

Facilitate Intercultural Dialogue: Safe spaces for intercultural dialogue should be created, where immigrants and natives can share their experiences and better understand each other's perspectives. These exchanges can help reduce prejudice and stereotypes.

Incorporate Interculturality into Education: Educational programs should integrate intercultural education into the curriculum, from early childhood to higher education. This may include teaching the history and culture of diverse communities, as well as activities that promote intercultural understanding and respect.

Promote Empathy: Fostering empathy is crucial. Educational programs and public campaigns can focus on immigrant life stories and promote empathy toward their challenges and achievements. This can help build a more understanding and supportive society.

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Appendix:

Survey Questions for Immigrant Students

What language would you speak at home?

- a) Language of your country of origin.
- b) Language of the host country.

Why?

Would you be learning the language of the host country?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

Why?

Would you adopt the clothing style of the host country?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

Why?

Would you participate in the religious activities of the host country?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

Why?

Would you adopt the customs of the host country?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

Why?

Would you adjust your diet to match the local food of the host country?

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

Why?

Survey Questions for Natives of the Host Country

Do you think immigrants should speak the language of your country at home?

- a) Yes, always.
- b) Yes, if they wish.
- c) No, it's their choice.

Why?

Do you think immigrants should learn the language of your country?

- a) Yes, it's important for integration.
- b) No, it's not necessary.

Why?

Do you think immigrants should adopt the clothing of your country?

- a) Yes, to respect local culture.
- b) No, they should dress as they wish.

Why?

Do you think immigrants should practice their religion or participate in the religious activities of your country?

- a) Yes, it's important for social harmony.
- b) No, they should follow their own beliefs.

Why?

Do you think immigrants should adopt the customs of your country?

- a) Yes, to integrate better.
- b) No, they should maintain their own traditions.

Why?

Do you think immigrants should adapt to the local diet?

- a) Yes, to fully participate in local culture.
- b) No, they should eat what they prefer.

Why?