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The Development of Intercultural Competence in Primary School Students in The Process of Learning Vocabulary.

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Abstract: This article explores the development of intercultural competence in primary school students through the process of vocabulary learning. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, fostering intercultural skills has become essential for students to navigate a globalized world. The study analyzes various instructional methods that enhance vocabulary acquisition while simultaneously promoting an understanding of cultural contexts. Emphasis is placed on integrating multicultural resources, interactive learning activities, and collaborative projects that encourage dialogue among students from different backgrounds. The findings suggest that a focused approach to vocabulary teaching—integrated with cultural awareness activities—significantly enhances students' intercultural competence, leading to improved communication skills and greater appreciation for diversity. This research contributes to the broader discourse on effective pedagogical strategies in Primary Education and highlights the importance of intercultural education in developing well-rounded, empathetic individuals.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, Vocabulary learning, Primary education, Multicultural education, Pedagogical strategies, Cultural awareness, Diversity, Language acquisition, Student engagement, Global education.

1. Introduction

Modern education requires students not only to know the language but also to be able to interact effectively in a multicultural environment. This is particularly important in the context of globalization, where children are increasingly exposed to different cultures, traditions, and value systems. The development of intercultural competence in elementary school students has become an integral part of the educational process, and vocabulary learning is one of the key aspects of developing this skill. A language's vocabulary not only reflects lexical units but is also closely linked to the cultural characteristics and worldview of its speakers. The goal of this study is to analyze the role of vocabulary in forming intercultural competence among young learners. When learning vocabulary, especially in a foreign language, students can not only enhance their language skills but also broaden their horizons, gaining an awareness of the peculiarities of other cultures.

Intercultural Competence is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures. It includes knowledge about the traditions and characteristics of different peoples, the ability to perceive and respect differences, and communication skills in intercultural contexts. For younger students, the development of this competence takes place through vocabulary learning, as words and expressions always carry cultural information.

Learning foreign languages at the elementary level involves not only acquiring new words and grammatical structures but also familiarizing students with the culture of the country whose language is being studied. An important part of this process is the

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contextualization of vocabulary—linking new words to specific cultural realities, which helps students better understand and retain their meaning.

2. Materials and Methods

The following methods were used for this study:

- Literature review – a survey of existing scientific works on the issue of intercultural competence and its connection with vocabulary development.
- Experimental research – conducting vocabulary lessons with intercultural components, which include the study of words related to cultural and traditional features.
- Content analysis of educational materials – analysis of texts used in teaching vocabulary in terms of their cultural significance and potential contribution to the development of intercultural competence.
- Observation – observing elementary school students during lessons aimed at developing lexical and intercultural competence.

Incorporating elements of intercultural communication into vocabulary teaching allows younger students to master not only the mechanisms of translation and word adaptation but also deeper aspects of intercultural differences. Thus, vocabulary learning becomes an essential tool for forming intercultural competence.

3. Results

Studies have shown that vocabulary plays a key role in the development of intercultural competence in younger students. Including lexical units related to different cultures in the educational process allows children not only to learn new words but also to become aware of the differences and similarities between cultures. In particular, using lexical units that describe traditions, customs, holidays, and daily life in other cultures fosters openness and tolerance among students.

The experiment revealed that students who are introduced to the cultural aspects of the language during vocabulary learning demonstrate better results in understanding and interpreting texts, as well as in their ability to engage in dialogue with speakers of other cultures. It is important to note that integrating intercultural elements into vocabulary teaching requires teachers to have special knowledge and preparation, as well as the use of appropriate methods and materials.

To effectively develop intercultural competence in younger students through vocabulary learning, various pedagogical techniques and methods can be used.

- Use of authentic materials. Authentic texts (e.g., songs, stories, film clips) and everyday dialogues are excellent sources for learning vocabulary in context. Exposure to such materials helps students not only learn new words but also understand their real-life usage, promoting intercultural awareness.

- Integrating cultural elements into vocabulary lessons. Special lessons can be organized where students learn about the cultural features of different countries. For instance, while studying vocabulary related to holidays, students can learn about the traditions and customs associated with specific holidays in different cultures, such as Christmas in England, Chinese New Year, or Hanukkah in Israel.

- Role-playing and game methods. Role-playing games where students engage in tasks related to different cultural situations can also be an effective tool for developing intercultural competence. For example, when simulating shopping experiences, children can learn about the traditions of commerce in different countries and the vocabulary used in these situations.

- Project-based activities. Projects where children research various cultural phenomena not only broaden their horizons but also develop skills in working with

information, drawing conclusions, and presenting their findings. For instance, a project could focus on the traditional cuisine of different countries, holidays, music, or folk crafts.

4. Discussion

Developing intercultural competence through vocabulary can be effectively achieved using several approaches. First, context is essential, where lexical units actively interact with cultural aspects. For example, when studying words related to holidays, students can be presented with information about the traditions of other countries, supported by photos, videos, or stories from native speakers. Second, it is important to use game-based methods, allowing students to immerse themselves in cultural situations and practice the language in context.

Moreover, vocabulary often serves as a bridge for forming empathy and understanding of others. Realizing how different cultures express emotions, relate to family, work, and leisure helps students see that, despite differences, there is much in common between people.

A key aspect is also the role of the teacher, who should not only be a language instructor but also a guide to another culture. This requires teachers to continually update their knowledge of other countries and peoples, use modern educational technologies, and employ effective methods.

Incorporating intercultural competence into vocabulary teaching requires active involvement from the teacher in organizing the learning process. It is important that the teacher not only imparts knowledge but also serves as a guide to different cultures, using vocabulary as a tool for this task. Lessons should not be confined to textbooks but should include elements of real life, so students can see how language functions in different contexts.

For example, a lesson on vocabulary related to "family" can go beyond just translating words into another language. Students could explore how different cultures use various terms to describe family members, including the forms of address and respect that vary depending on cultural traditions.

The combined quantitative and qualitative results indicate that integrating intercultural education into vocabulary learning significantly enhances both vocabulary acquisition and intercultural competence among primary school students, supporting the need for pedagogical reforms in multicultural educational settings.

5. Conclusion

Thus, studying vocabulary within the context of intercultural competence is an important tool for developing young students' knowledge, skills, and values, which will help them effectively interact with people from different cultures. It is crucial that the educational process focuses not only on language skills but also on developing students' social and cultural awareness, which is necessary for successful intercultural communication in a globalized world.

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