

**REVIEW**  
**for the dissertation on the theme:**  
**“Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through Project-  
Based Learning in English Language Teaching”**  
**by Smakova Kymbat Mauletkarimovna,**  
**submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) within the**  
**specialty 6D011900 "Foreign language: two foreign languages"**

**1. Relevance of the research topic and its relationship with the scientific and state programs**

The dissertation work of Smakova Kymbat Mauletkarimovna, is relevant to the currently significant issues in the theory and practice of foreign language teaching, particularly in the context of science and education in Kazakhstan, and is done in compliance with the necessity triggered by the state programs and project.

Due to the latest reforms in Kazakhstani educational system, particularly regarding the multilingualism and the cultural project “Trinity of Languages”, the English language teaching has received a significant role in the implementation of the State Language Policy in Kazakhstan. The strategic goals established in the cultural project “Trinity of Languages” and in the State Program on Education Development of Kazakhstan were aimed at mastering language proficiencies. Thus, the State Program and the cultural project triggered the necessity to promote the development of intercultural competence in not only higher education but in secondary education as well. The state curriculum of English Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) lessons in Kazakhstani secondary education emphasises the development of multilingual and multicultural citizens and contains culture-oriented topics with the focus on the foundation of the positive attitudes, openness to value own and other people’s culture, which refers to the necessity of the development of intercultural communicative competence (hereafter ICC).

Therefore, the interest in ICC development has widely recognized, promoting a considerable shift of the goals in foreign language education, in which the focus is now on acquiring a complex of abilities needed to interact effectively and appropriately with people of other linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the target language. Even though the significance of ICC is widely recognized around the world, the explorative study in this research reveals that teaching and practicing ICC in EFL classes in secondary education where English is as a medium of instruction (hereafter EMI schools) encounter challenges despite any teaching experience.

Considering the necessity triggered by the modern society and current situation in secondary schools, Project-Based Learning is promoted as one of the contemporary and learner-centered teaching methods that engage students into the constructivist process of the target language and can be productively applied in educational systems to assist learners to enhance the linguistic, social and intercultural competencies for today's labour market, hence integrate language skills into the content.

It is important to note that the assessment of learners' intercultural communicative competencies is one of the most challenging aspects in the research field of ICC and is still on the developmental stage.

In this regard, the author presents a model of the ICC development on the basis of High-Quality PBL and the assessment system of ICC development within the High-Quality PBL assessment tools that effectively align enriching linguistic and communicative competencies with promoting the appropriate interaction with people of cultural diversity.

Thus, the practical value of the research aimed at improving foreign language education in secondary schools, the challenges of developing and assessing intercultural communicative competence in EFL lessons reflects the relevance and the recognition of the necessity for conducting this research with the aim at fulfilling this research gap and identifying the effectiveness of PBL to the development of intercultural communicative competence and its assessment of high secondary students in the secondary education context.

## **2. Scientific results within the requirements for the dissertations**

This dissertation work achieved the following scientific results for the objectives posed for the research:

1. -the theoretical and methodological foundations of the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence on the basis of competence-based and learner-centered approaches were analysed and presented;
2. -the systematically important components of High-Quality PBL and the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL lessons in a secondary school were investigated and justified as a methodological approach for the ICC development;
3. - the current situation of teaching English for ICC through PBL, the extent of ICC integration and PBL implementation in EFL lessons in English medium secondary high schools were defined, the challenges EFL teachers face in developing students' ICC in EFL classes were investigated;
4. -a model of the process of Intercultural Communicative Competence development on the basis of High-Quality PBL of culturally oriented content was elaborated and experimentally tested in English lessons in a secondary school; the effectiveness of the provided model was statistically justified;
5. -the assessment system of Intercultural Communicative Competence development of learners on the basis of High-Quality PBL assessment tools was developed;
6. -the assessment tools of High-Quality PBL with blended approach of ICC assessment were analyzed and correlated, a model of the self-assessment tool and diagnostics of intercultural-communicative competencies on the basis of project based learning was developed.

## **3. The degree of validity and reliability of each scientific result (scientific statement), outcomes and conclusions of the doctoral student, formulated in the dissertation**

The dissertation research by Smakova K.M. was carried out on the basis of a sufficiently large number of scientific empirical sources and ensured by the correct



design of research methodology. The generalization of theoretical and practical data revealed in the research substantiates the obtained results:

**The reliability and validity of the first result** are achieved due to the review and analysis of the competence-based and learner-centered approaches as the theoretical and methodological foundations of the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence, which comprehensively reveals the peculiarities that lead to highly encouraged learner-centeredness and facilitated methodology originated in constructivist developmental theory.

**The reliability and validity of the second result** are determined by the structural analysis of the scientific literature and empirical studies for defining the systematic essential components of the Project-Based Learning approach for Intercultural Communicative Competence development as an inquiry-based and experiential approach that immerse learners in deep conceptual understanding and represents the constructivist educational philosophy indicating the practical and positive influence on academic performance, students' interests and motivation, and the deep learning of content. The essence of the key components of High-Quality PBL inherently implies the development of ICC sub-competencies.

**The reliability and validity of the third result** are beyond any doubt since the author's findings have been confirmed by conducting the explorative study of the mixed-method research paradigm with 103 EFL teachers from 57 secondary schools with English-medium instruction. The research was conducted by establishing the triangulation of data collection process employing qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The qualitative data was analyzed according to J. Hatch's typology, whereas the quantitative data was statistically analyzed with the SPSS program. The reliability in quantitative analysis was validated with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

**The reliability and validity of the fourth result** are confirmed by the detailed analysis of the essential components of foreign language education and the methodological principles of Intercultural Communicative Competence development for elaborating a process model of Intercultural Communicative Competence development through High-Quality PBL, including the methodological principles, interventional and procedural phases. The elaborated model was experimentally tested, and the effectiveness was evidenced and substantiated by employing the appropriate theoretical and empirical research method using the thematic and statistical data analysis.

**The reliability and validity of the fifth result** are based on the thorough study of the scientific literature and empirical works on the assessment system of Intercultural Communicative Competence development and assessment tools in High-Quality PBL. The author has developed the assessment system of Intercultural Communicative Competence development of learners on the basis of High-Quality PBL assessment tools.

**The reliability and validity of the sixth result** are confirmed by the correlation of the assessment tools of High-Quality PBL with blended approach of ICC assessment for developing a model of the self-assessment tool and diagnostics of the development of Intercultural-Communicative Competencies, which was

experimentally tested. The obtained data and results were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The qualitative data was analyzed according to the thematic analysis, whereas the quantitative data was statistically analyzed with the SPSS program, statistical significance was confirmed by the Paired Samples T-Test.

#### **4. The degree of novelty of each scientific result (statement), the conclusion of the doctoral student, formulated in the dissertation**

The first result is relatively new since, on the basis of the thorough analysis of the scientific literature, the author determines the theoretical and methodological foundations for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence in foreign language teaching in secondary education.

The second result is new since it is ensured by the fact that for the first time, the core components of the High-Quality PBL were analyzed for the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence of learners in secondary education in the Kazakhstani context.

The third result is obviously new since for the first time the current situation regarding the extent of integrating and developing ICC aspects and the challenges in assessment of the ICC development, the extent of project-based learning implementation in EFL lessons in secondary school with English-medium instruction has been investigated.

The fourth result is new since for the first time a phased process model of Intercultural Communicative Competence development through Project-Based Learning, as well as the High-Quality PBL- project of culturally oriented content, have been elaborated in accordance with the key components and methodological principles of Foreign Language Education for students of secondary schools;

The fifth result is new, as the assessment system of Intercultural Communicative Competence development and the assessment tools of High-Quality PBL have been presented in sufficient detail. The assessment system of Intercultural Communicative Competence development of learners in secondary school on the basis of High-Quality PBL assessment tools has been developed.

The sixth result is new since for the first time the High-Quality PBL assessment tools have been correlated with the blended approach of ICC assessment, thereby the a model of the self-assessment tool and diagnostics of the development of Intercultural-Communicative Competencies was elaborated and experimentally tested in the secondary school with English-medium instruction.

#### **5. Practical and theoretical significance of the scientific results**

The theoretical significance of the research lies in the fact that the theoretical and methodological foundations, the principals, the process model and the assessment tools of Intercultural Communicative Competence development on the basis of High-Quality PBL will make a significant contribution to the foundations of the foreign language education. The research can serve as the basis for the development of learners' ICC for EFL teachers from secondary education.

The practical significance of the dissertation is determined by the fact that the elaborated experiential High-Quality PBL project within the ICC development and the blended approach of assessment based on High-Quality PBL assessment tools can be used for the promotion and enhancing the learners' ICC development and



its assessment, and can be used as a guidance for EFL teachers in secondary education as well as for other subjects and pre-service teachers programmes. The practical value of the research is also applicable in the practice of in-service programs of the development of theoretical and practical courses of the ICC development.

#### **6. Remarks and suggestions for the dissertation**

There were no significant shortcomings in the content of the dissertation. Emphasizing the topicality and the significance of Smakova Kymbat research under the title “Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through Project-Based Learning in English Language Teaching”, it is necessary to focus on some remarks:

1. It would be better to change the title of paragraph 1.1(p.17) from “Paradigm Shift in Foreign Language Education: From Competence-Based Education to Communicative Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence” to the following one: “Shaping Intercultural Communicative Competence in the framework of Communicative Approach and Competence-Based Education”, since there was no any shift or change in foreign language education paradigm concerning competence-based education;

2. p.21 the last passage: ...In this respect, the competence-based approach is a method ...The notion “approach” can't be treated as the method;

3. p.153, 3.3 Assessment of Intercultural Communicative Competence Development within High-Quality PBL, passage 2 concerning the students' performances within 5 criteria- one of the criteria in rating students' performances should be not simply presentation skills, but presentation skills including analyses and reasoning.

The above-mentioned remarks in no way detract from the theoretical and practical value of the dissertation by Smakova K.M. and do not affect the overall positive impression of the research.

#### **7. Compliance with the content of the dissertation within the requirements of the Rules for the awarding of the academic degrees**

The dissertation by Smakova Kymbat Mauletkarimovna entitled “Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through Project-Based Learning in English Language Teaching” submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) within the specialty 6D011900 "Foreign language: two foreign languages" fully complies with the requirements of the Rules for the awarding of the academic degrees, has an internal unity, all sections are interconnected and is presented as a logically completed independent scientific research.

Smakova K.M. deserves the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree within the specialty 6D011900 "Foreign language: two foreign languages".

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