



## **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE ROLE OF NATIONAL-CULTURAL REALIA IN TEACHING THE UZBEK LANGUAGE**

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### **Abstract**

This article explores the importance of intercultural communication and the influence of national-cultural realia in the process of teaching the Uzbek language to foreign students. In today's globalized world, language education extends beyond linguistic competence and incorporates cultural awareness as a fundamental component of communicative competence. The research highlights how national-specific realities—such as traditions, customs, values, and historical references—serve as essential tools in shaping meaningful intercultural dialogue and understanding. Drawing on examples from Uzbek culture, the study examines how integrating realia into language instruction improves students' comprehension, engagement, and ability to interpret contextually rich expressions. The article emphasizes the necessity of culturally grounded language instruction to bridge the gap between learners' native perspectives and the sociocultural framework of the target language. The findings have implications for philological education, language pedagogy, curriculum design, and international education policies.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication, Uzbek language teaching, national-cultural realia, philological education, linguistic competence, cultural awareness, sociolinguistics, teaching methodology, foreign language acquisition, cross-cultural understanding.

## **МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ И РОЛЬ НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНЫХ РЕАЛИЙ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ УЗБЕКСКОГО ЯЗЫКА**

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### **Аннотация:**

В данной статье рассматривается значение межкультурной коммуникации и влияние национально-культурных реалий в процессе преподавания узбекского языка иностранным студентам. В условиях глобализирующегося мира языковое образование выходит за рамки исключительно лингвистической компетенции и включает культурную осведомлённость как неотъемлемый компонент коммуникативной компетентности. Исследование подчёркивает, что национально-специфические реалии — такие как традиции, обычаи, ценности и исторические отсылки — служат важными инструментами для формирования содержательного межкультурного диалога и взаимопонимания. На основе примеров из узбекской культуры анализируется, как интеграция реалий в процесс преподавания способствует лучшему пониманию учебного материала, вовлечённости учащихся и способности интерпретировать насыщенные контекстом выражения. В статье подчёркивается необходимость культурно обоснованного преподавания языка для преодоления разрыва между мировоззрением учащихся и социокультурной основой изучаемого языка. Полученные результаты имеют значение для филологического образования, методики преподавания, проектирования учебных программ и международной образовательной политики.

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурная коммуникация, преподавание узбекского языка, национально-культурные реалии, филологическое образование, лингвистическая компетенция, культурная осведомлённость, социолингвистика, методика преподавания, изучение иностранных языков, межкультурное понимание.

### **Introduction**

In the context of increasing globalization and cultural interaction, language teaching has become more than just a transmission of grammatical rules and vocabulary. It now encompasses the broader objective of fostering intercultural competence and understanding. The teaching of the Uzbek language, particularly to non-native speakers in a multicultural educational environment, demands a deeper awareness of how language and culture are intricately linked. Intercultural



communication plays a pivotal role in language acquisition, as it enables learners to interpret and navigate linguistic exchanges within their appropriate cultural context.

National-cultural realia—unique cultural elements such as traditional holidays, food, etiquette, historical symbols, and value systems—serve as vital channels through which the identity and worldview of a people are expressed. In the case of Uzbek, these realia provide essential insights into the lifestyle, social relationships, and norms that shape communication practices in Uzbekistan. By incorporating such elements into teaching materials and classroom interaction, educators can help students build meaningful associations with the language they are learning.

Moreover, realia serve as cognitive and emotional anchors, enhancing learners' motivation and engagement. When students recognize cultural references embedded in language use, they are more likely to grasp idiomatic expressions, understand pragmatic functions, and avoid communication breakdowns. This is particularly important in a culturally rich language like Uzbek, where many expressions are deeply rooted in historical and social contexts. Thus, the integration of national-cultural realia in Uzbek language teaching not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also prepares learners for effective and respectful cross-cultural interaction.

### **Literature Review**

Scholarly research on intercultural communication in language education has grown significantly in recent decades, emphasizing the role of culture in effective linguistic interaction. Pioneers such as Michael Byram (1997) have underlined the importance of intercultural communicative competence as a core goal of language learning, highlighting attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for navigating cultural diversity. Claire Kramsch (1993) has similarly argued that language is inseparable from culture and that cultural context gives meaning to linguistic forms. Their frameworks have been instrumental in shaping modern approaches to foreign language instruction.

In the context of Central Asian languages, including Uzbek, the role of national-cultural realia in teaching has been addressed in various pedagogical studies. Uzbek scholars have pointed out the necessity of including proverbs, folklore, historical references, and ethnographic material in language curricula to reflect authentic



speech and worldview. Studies have also emphasized the role of cultural symbols in fostering emotional connection and enhancing memory retention. However, most research has been descriptive in nature, with relatively few empirical studies assessing the direct impact of cultural integration on learner outcomes. This article aims to bridge that gap by offering a methodological perspective and analytical reflection on best practices.

### **Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative approach to examine the role of national-cultural realia in the teaching of the Uzbek language within the framework of intercultural communication. The study is based on classroom observations, interviews with language instructors, and content analysis of selected teaching materials used in philological universities in Uzbekistan. Particular attention was given to how cultural elements were introduced, contextualized, and integrated into classroom practice.

Data were collected from four universities over two academic semesters. Language instructors specializing in teaching Uzbek to foreign students were selected through purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each instructor, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the inclusion of cultural content in their lessons. Classroom observations were recorded and analyzed to identify the frequency, types, and methods of presenting realia such as national holidays, customs, and traditional expressions.

Teaching materials, including textbooks, audiovisual resources, and supplementary materials, were also analyzed to determine the extent to which they incorporate culturally specific content. The analysis focused on both explicit cultural topics and implicit cultural cues embedded in dialogues, vocabulary, and exercises. Data triangulation was employed to ensure reliability by comparing insights across different sources.

The goal of this methodological approach is to offer a well-rounded picture of current practices, challenges, and pedagogical strategies related to intercultural teaching of the Uzbek language. It also aims to highlight practical recommendations for educators and curriculum developers working in multicultural language learning environments.



## **Discussion**

The findings from the classroom observations and instructor interviews reveal that national-cultural realia are indeed considered valuable pedagogical tools in the teaching of the Uzbek language, especially in philological institutions that serve international student populations. However, the degree of integration and the effectiveness of these realia vary significantly across institutions and individual instructors.

One of the most prominent observations was the positive effect of realia on student engagement. When instructors incorporated cultural materials—such as traditional Uzbek proverbs, discussions of Navruz celebrations, or the etiquette surrounding Uzbek hospitality—students responded with heightened interest and participation. Instructors reported that such elements helped demystify unfamiliar language structures and created opportunities for deeper interaction and discussion. For example, when learning idioms like “Qo‘shning bilan tinch bo‘l, hatto devoring past bo‘lsa ham” (“Live in peace with your neighbor, even if your wall is low”), students not only learned grammar but also grasped cultural values related to community and respect.

However, challenges were also noted. Some educators expressed difficulty in finding authentic and level-appropriate resources that presented cultural material without stereotyping or oversimplification. Furthermore, teachers mentioned that not all students possessed the same background knowledge, which sometimes led to confusion or misinterpretation. This underscores the importance of scaffolding—providing necessary background before introducing culturally dense material.

Another significant finding was the gap between the theoretical emphasis on intercultural competence in academic programs and the practical realities of teaching. While syllabi often mention the inclusion of cultural content, instructors are frequently left to design and implement such elements on their own, with minimal institutional guidance or training. This can lead to inconsistent practices and missed opportunities for deeper intercultural engagement.

In terms of methodology, the most effective practices observed included storytelling, use of multimedia (such as Uzbek music and video clips), student presentations on cultural topics, and structured reflection activities. These methods

allowed students to compare Uzbek cultural norms with their own, fostering a dialogic and analytical approach to intercultural understanding.

Ultimately, the discussion confirms that integrating national-cultural realia significantly enhances language acquisition and intercultural sensitivity. However, it also highlights the need for structured support, better materials, and teacher training to ensure that cultural instruction is effective, respectful, and pedagogically sound.

### Main Part

The integration of national-cultural realia into the teaching of the Uzbek language involves multiple layers of pedagogical planning and execution. Realia in this context refers to culturally embedded content—traditional practices, symbolic artifacts, historical references, etiquette norms, folklore, and idiomatic expressions—that reflect the values and worldview of the Uzbek people. This content is not merely supplementary; rather, it functions as a bridge that connects learners to the communicative and cultural logic of the target language.

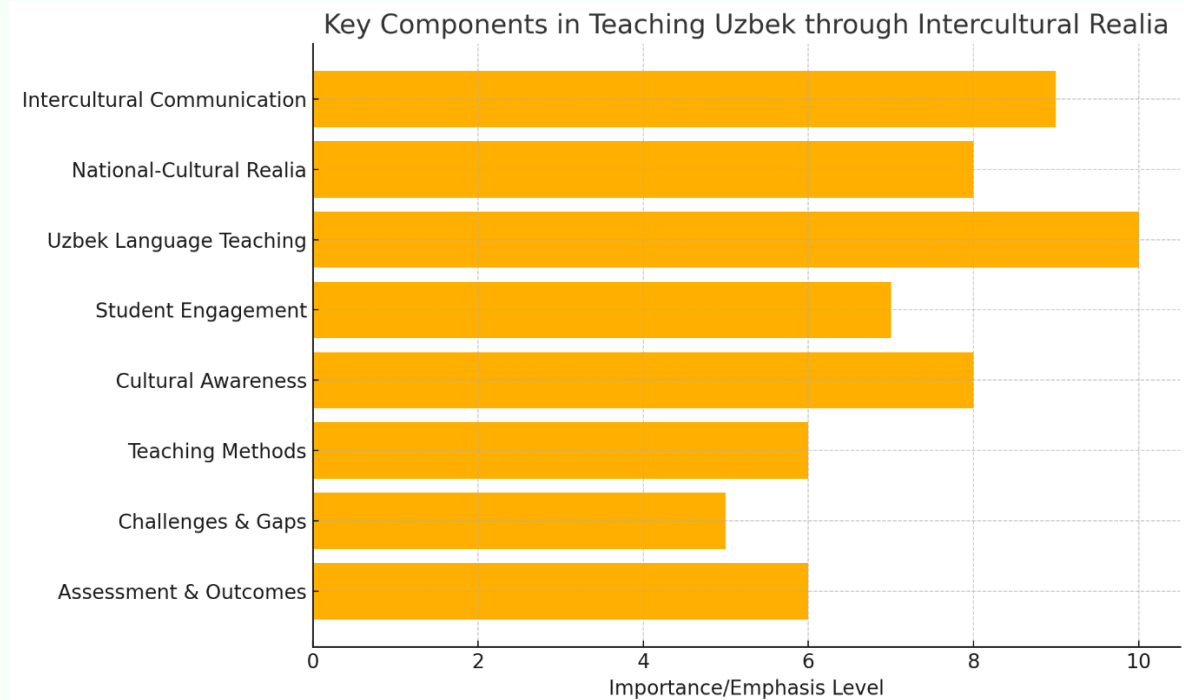


Figure 1. Presents the core components emphasized in the study. The chart highlights that Uzbek language teaching, intercultural communication, and national-cultural realia are the most prominent aspects, while areas such as assessment and challenges are less developed but still relevant.



The Uzbek language is deeply intertwined with its cultural context. Unlike languages with global institutionalization like English or Spanish, Uzbek carries specific historical and sociocultural meanings that are often implicit in everyday expressions. For example, forms of greeting in Uzbek ("Assalomu alaykum", "Yaxshimisiz?") are not just polite exchanges but encode hierarchical relationships, respect for elders, and communal harmony. Without an understanding of these cultural codes, learners may acquire grammatical accuracy but fail to communicate appropriately or meaningfully.

In classroom settings, the deliberate inclusion of such realia provides both cognitive and emotional entry points into language learning. Textbooks and syllabi that include cultural texts, dialogues reflecting real-life Uzbek interactions, or sections on customs and traditions allow students to contextualize grammar and vocabulary. For example, when learning imperative structures, students can be asked to simulate scenarios such as market bargaining or making traditional dishes, where commands and requests are naturally embedded in the cultural script.

Moreover, teachers often use visual and auditory realia—videos of cultural events, recordings of Uzbek music, or images of historical monuments—to stimulate discussions and foster a multisensory learning environment. Such resources not only make learning more engaging but also deepen retention through associative memory. When a student learns the word “doira” (a traditional Uzbek drum) not just as a lexical item but through experiencing its sound and cultural context, it becomes more memorable and meaningful.

Peer learning and comparative discussions also play an important role. Encouraging students to compare Uzbek cultural norms with those of their native countries promotes reflection, empathy, and tolerance. For instance, discussing Uzbek hospitality rituals and comparing them with hospitality customs in other cultures leads to a richer understanding of pragmatic language use, such as making polite refusals or accepting invitations.

Nevertheless, the incorporation of cultural realia should not be superficial or tokenistic. Teachers must ensure that the materials used are authentic, relevant, and respectful. Oversimplified or exoticized portrayals of Uzbek culture can reinforce stereotypes or cultural misunderstandings. Therefore, educators need training in intercultural pedagogy and access to well-curated, academically sound teaching materials.



Assessment strategies also need to evolve to reflect intercultural learning. Rather than relying solely on grammar tests or vocabulary quizzes, assessments could include reflective essays, cultural comparison presentations, or role-plays that require students to navigate realistic social interactions in Uzbek. These tasks not only test linguistic knowledge but also intercultural adaptability and awareness.

In sum, the main body of evidence supports the idea that national-cultural realia are indispensable in teaching the Uzbek language effectively. When these elements are well-integrated into the curriculum, they enrich the learning experience, support communicative competence, and prepare students to engage respectfully and intelligently with Uzbek-speaking communities.

## **Conclusion**

The teaching of the Uzbek language in philological universities, particularly to international students, requires more than just linguistic instruction. It necessitates a comprehensive approach that incorporates the cultural dimensions of language use. This study has demonstrated that national-cultural realia play a critical role in developing not only linguistic competence but also intercultural communicative skills. Through the integration of cultural artifacts, traditional practices, and social norms into classroom activities and materials, students gain deeper insight into the ways language functions within a particular cultural context.

Findings from the observations and interviews confirm that students respond more positively and meaningfully to language lessons that include culturally embedded content. These elements foster motivation, improve retention, and enhance learners' ability to use language appropriately in real-life contexts. However, the research also reveals the challenges that teachers face in sourcing authentic materials, maintaining cultural accuracy, and aligning instruction with intercultural goals. Without adequate institutional support and pedagogical training, the integration of realia remains inconsistent and often dependent on individual initiative.

To advance intercultural language teaching in the Uzbek context, several steps are necessary. First, language programs should explicitly include cultural objectives in their curricula and provide instructors with practical frameworks and resources. Second, teacher education should emphasize intercultural pedagogy and prepare educators to address cultural differences sensitively and effectively. Finally,



assessment systems should be diversified to include tasks that evaluate cultural understanding alongside linguistic proficiency.

Ultimately, the inclusion of national-cultural realia transforms language instruction from a mechanical process into a culturally immersive experience. It prepares learners not just to speak Uzbek, but to live and think within its cultural logic. This approach not only strengthens cross-cultural communication but also contributes to mutual respect, empathy, and global citizenship.

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