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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A CORE COMPONENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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This article provides a theoretical justification for intercultural communicative competence as a key component of the professional development of Chinese language teachers. It examines contemporary approaches to understanding this competence as a multidimensional construct, including cognitive, affective-value, behavioral, and reflective-professional components. The study argues that, in the context of the internationalization of education, Chinese language teachers function not only as transmitters of linguistic knowledge but also as mediators between cultures, facilitating pedagogical interaction, interpreting cultural meanings, and adapting instruction to diverse educational contexts. Particular attention is paid to the functions of intercultural communicative competence, as well as to the main directions of its development within pre-service and in-service teacher education. The article also identifies key challenges, such as the predominance of linguistic orientation, the simplified understanding of culture, insufficient reflective training, and limited institutional support. It concludes that intercultural communicative competence plays a system-forming role in the structure of teachers' professional competence.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence, Chinese Language Teachers, Pedagogical Interaction, Professional Competence, Intercultural Education.

Introduction. In the context of globalization, the internationalization of education, and the rapid development of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, the requirements for the professional preparation and development of Chinese language teachers are undergoing significant transformation. A contemporary Chinese language teacher can no longer be viewed solely as a transmitter of linguistic knowledge and pedagogical techniques. Their professional activity takes place within a multicultural educational environment, where language teaching is inevitably intertwined with the interpretation of cultural meanings, the negotiation of diverse communicative norms, and the construction of mutual understanding among learners from different cultural backgrounds. In this regard, intercultural communicative competence acquires particular significance, as it ensures not only the effectiveness of pedagogical interaction, but also the successful realization of the teacher's mediating, adaptive, and developmental functions.

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that, in existing research, the professional development of Chinese language teachers is often

examined primarily through the lens of linguistic, methodological, and subject-specific training, while intercultural communicative competence is frequently treated as a supplementary rather than a system-forming component of professionalism. However, the nature of teaching Chinese as a foreign language requires constant engagement with culturally embedded meanings, politeness norms, pragmatic patterns of communication, and differences in learners' educational expectations. This makes intercultural communicative competence not an external addition to professional training, but its internal structural foundation.

The aim of this article is to provide a theoretical justification for intercultural communicative competence as a core component of the professional development of Chinese language teachers. To achieve this aim, the article examines the theoretical foundations of this competence, analyzes its structure, defines its role in pedagogical interaction, cultural mediation, professional adaptability, and identity formation, and explores the main directions for its development within pre-service and in-service teach-

er education. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the reconceptualization of intercultural communicative competence not as a partial aspect of language education, but as an integrative and system-forming element of the professional competence of Chinese language teachers.

Theoretical Foundations and Structure of Intercultural Communicative Competence.

Recent studies have increasingly moved beyond the narrow interpretation of intercultural communicative competence as a supplementary aspect of language proficiency and have instead treated it as a complex educational construct embedded in professional practice. In contemporary teacher education research, ICC is generally understood as an integrated competence that combines cultural knowledge, attitudes toward diversity, interactional skills, and reflective awareness. Such an understanding emphasizes that successful communication in intercultural settings depends not only on linguistic accuracy, but also on the ability to interpret culturally conditioned meanings, negotiate differences, and respond appropriately to diverse social expectations. In this sense, ICC has gradually developed from a language-centered model of communication into a broader framework of culturally situated interaction and meaning-making [12].

This broader interpretation is also reflected in Russian pedagogical scholarship, where intercultural competence is examined in relation to adjacent concepts such as communicative and sociocultural competence. Researchers argue that these notions should not be reduced to isolated categories, since they all point to the necessity of understanding communication as a value-laden and context-dependent process. From this perspective, intercultural competence involves not only familiarity with another culture, but also the capacity to establish dialogue across cultural boundaries and to interpret communicative behavior in light of different systems of meanings and norms. Such a theoretical position is especially important for educational research, because it allows intercultural competence to be viewed as an essential component of pedagogical interaction rather than as an external addition to language teaching [1]. Within the field of Chinese language education,

the significance of this approach becomes even more evident. The existing literature shows that Chinese language teachers work in a particularly complex professional space, since they are expected to perform a dual role. On the one hand, they teach linguistic forms, discourse patterns, and communicative conventions; on the other hand, they interpret the cultural assumptions embedded in language use and help learners understand culturally specific meanings. In this regard, the teaching of Chinese cannot be limited to grammar and vocabulary, because many language forms are inseparable from politeness norms, hierarchy, relational sensitivity, and culturally specific pragmatic expectations. Moreover, research on language teacher identity demonstrates that the way teachers approach intercultural communicative competence is closely connected with how they perceive their own professional role. Teachers who see themselves as mediators between cultures are more likely to integrate intercultural understanding into classroom practice and to regard cultural explanation as a constitutive part of language education [4].

The structure of ICC in Chinese language teachers is therefore best understood as multidimensional and professionally embedded. Chinese scholarship on international Chinese language teaching has highlighted that this competence includes, first of all, a cognitive dimension, namely knowledge of Chinese culture, awareness of students' cultural backgrounds, and understanding of the differences that shape discourse and communication. In addition, ICC has a behavioral dimension, since teachers must be able to act appropriately in intercultural situations, prevent or resolve misunderstandings, and adapt their communicative strategies to concrete educational contexts. Finally, the literature suggests that these dimensions can only function effectively when supported by reflective-professional awareness, that is, by the teacher's ability to critically examine personal cultural assumptions and to modify pedagogical behavior accordingly. Such a combination of knowledge, value orientation, communicative action, and reflection is especially relevant in Chinese language teaching, where the formation of intercultural communicative competence is inseparable from the interpretation of culturally marked linguistic phenomena [6; 3].

Taken together, the reviewed studies indicate that ICC should be treated not as an optional extension of teacher competence, but as a foundational element of the professional activity of Chinese language teachers. Its theoretical significance lies precisely in its integrative nature: it connects cultural understanding, pedagogical communication, professional identity, and reflective practice into a unified competence framework. This makes ICC a necessary conceptual basis for analyzing the professional development of Chinese language teachers in contemporary intercultural educational contexts.

Intercultural Communicative Competence as the Core of Professional Development. Intercultural communicative competence should be regarded as one of the central dimensions of the professional development of Chinese language teachers because it directly shapes the quality, direction, and educational effectiveness of their work. In contemporary international Chinese language education, teaching cannot be reduced to the transmission of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Classroom interaction takes place within a culturally structured environment in which meanings are influenced by different communicative expectations, value orientations, and norms of participation. For this reason, effective pedagogical interaction depends not only on the teacher's linguistic and methodological preparation, but also on the ability to communicate in a culturally appropriate, flexible, and pedagogically meaningful way. When such competence is insufficient, even well-designed instruction may lose effectiveness, since misunderstandings may arise not from language itself, but from differences in interpretation, expectations, and interactional conventions [5]. At the same time, intercultural communicative competence constitutes the foundation of cultural mediation, which is one of the defining professional functions of Chinese language teachers. In intercultural educational settings, teachers are expected to explain not only what a linguistic form means, but also why it is used in a particular social and cultural context. Chinese language teaching is especially dependent on such mediation because many expressions, discourse patterns, and pragmatic choices are inseparable from broader cultural

assumptions concerning politeness, hierarchy, relational sensitivity, and contextual appropriateness. The teacher therefore serves as a bridge between cultural frameworks, helping learners interpret Chinese language phenomena in ways that are both linguistically accurate and culturally intelligible. In this sense, intercultural communicative competence enables the teacher to transform cultural difference from a source of difficulty into a resource for learning and mutual understanding [7].

This competence is equally important as a condition for pedagogical adaptability. Chinese language teachers frequently work with learners whose educational experiences, communicative habits, and cognitive preferences differ considerably. As a result, professional growth requires the capacity to modify teaching strategies according to concrete classroom realities rather than relying on uniform instructional models. Intercultural communicative competence supports such adaptability because it allows teachers to recognize culturally shaped learning behaviors, interpret student responses more accurately, and adjust classroom communication in ways that sustain participation and understanding. It also encourages a reflective mode of professional action in which teaching is treated as a context-sensitive process requiring continuous adjustment and pedagogical judgment [11]. Furthermore, intercultural communicative competence plays an important role in the formation of professional identity. A teacher working in international Chinese language education gradually defines professional self-understanding through interaction with culturally diverse students, institutions, and educational expectations. In this process, the teacher does not simply acquire new techniques, but reconsiders the meaning of being a language educator in an intercultural world. Professional identity is thus shaped by the recognition that teaching Chinese involves cultural interpretation, dialogic engagement, and responsibility for building mutual understanding across differences. Such identity formation strengthens the teacher's sense of professional purpose and gives intercultural competence a developmental significance that extends beyond classroom performance alone [9]. Rather than functioning as an additional

skill attached to an already completed professional profile, it provides internal coherence to the various dimensions of teacher competence. In the case of Chinese language teachers, whose work is inherently situated at the intersection of language, culture, and education, this integrative role is particularly evident. ICC makes it possible to unite knowledge, values, communication, and reflection within a single professional framework, and for that reason it can justifiably be viewed as a core component of professional development [8].

Functions and Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence. Intercultural communicative competence performs several essential functions in the professional activity of Chinese language teachers and, for this reason, occupies a practical as well as a developmental position within teacher education. Its educational function lies in the fact that it allows language teaching to move beyond the transmission of linguistic forms toward the formation of culturally informed communicative ability. In the context of international Chinese language education, students are expected not only to understand vocabulary and grammar, but also to interpret culturally marked meanings, communicative intentions, and patterns of interaction.

Because of these functions, the development of ICC should be treated as a systematic task in teacher education rather than as a supplementary element of professional preparation. At the pre-service stage, intercultural training needs to be integrated into the curriculum in a structured way, with clear links between theoretical study and pedagogical application. The preparation of future teachers requires not only courses on language and culture, but also opportunities to analyze intercultural situations, examine cases of classroom misunderstanding, and connect cultural knowledge with concrete teaching decisions. This developmental logic should continue in in-service professional education, where continuous training, international exchange, and collaborative learning can help teachers refine their intercultural sensitivity in response to real educational challenges. Research on lesson study in intercultural education shows that collaborative inquiry creates favorable conditions for connecting theory with practice and for

transforming intercultural teaching from an abstract ideal into a reflective and context-sensitive pedagogical process. At the same time, the development of ICC requires reflective practice and authentic intercultural experience. Reflection allows teachers to evaluate their own assumptions, reconsider habitual ways of explaining cultural phenomena, and adapt communication strategies to specific learners and institutions. Participation in real intercultural environments is equally important because competence cannot be fully formed in the absence of lived interaction with cultural diversity. For Chinese language teachers, this means that professional development should include not only methodological training, but also sustained involvement in multilingual and multicultural educational settings. Earlier studies of international Chinese teachers' intercultural competence have already shown that teachers often recognize the importance of this competence, while at the same time demonstrating uneven preparedness in its practical application, which confirms the need for more consistent developmental support [10].

These considerations also reveal several persistent challenges. One of the most common problems is the overemphasis on linguistic knowledge at the expense of intercultural understanding. Another is the simplified treatment of culture as a fixed body of national facts rather than as a dynamic system of meanings and practices. In addition, reflective training is often insufficient, which weakens teachers' ability to critically examine their own cultural positioning and pedagogical choices. Finally, institutional support remains uneven. If ICC is to become a genuine component of professional development, it must be embedded in standards, curricula, learning outcomes, and assessment procedures. In this regard, the interpretation of the International Standard for Teachers of Chinese as a Foreign Language demonstrates that professional requirements for Chinese language teachers increasingly include intercultural dimensions and therefore call for a more coherent alignment between teacher preparation, evaluation, and professional expectations [2].

Conclusion. The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that intercultural communi-

cative competence occupies a central position in the structure of the professional development of Chinese language teachers. Its significance lies not only in enhancing the effectiveness of pedagogical interaction, but also in enabling teachers to perform interpretive, mediating, adaptive, and developmental functions within intercultural educational contexts. In the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, this competence allows for the integration of linguistic instruction with the understanding of cultural differences, the consideration of pragmatic communication norms, and the continuous reflective re-evaluation of pedagogical practice. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence should be regarded as a system-forming component of professional competence, integrating cognitive, value-based, behavioral, and reflective dimensions of teaching.

At the same time, the study indicates that the effective development of this competence re-

quires systematic and institutionally supported efforts. Its formation should be embedded in pre-service teacher education, in-service professional development programs, reflective teaching practices, authentic intercultural experiences, and assessment systems that recognize intercultural outcomes. Particular attention should be paid to overcoming persistent challenges, such as the overemphasis on linguistic knowledge at the expense of intercultural understanding, the simplified treatment of culture, the insufficient development of reflective skills, and the lack of consistent institutional support. Consequently, the further improvement of Chinese language teacher education depends on a transition from a narrowly subject-oriented model of professionalism to an integrative model in which intercultural communicative competence serves as a necessary condition for high-quality and sustainable professional development.

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МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАТИВНАЯ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯ КАК КЛЮЧЕВОЙ КОМПОНЕНТ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОГО РАЗВИТИЯ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЕЙ КИТАЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Е ЮЙМЭН

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Статья посвящена теоретическому обоснованию межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции как ключевого компонента профессионального развития преподавателей китайского языка. В работе рассматриваются современные подходы к пониманию данной компетенции как многомерного образования, включающего когнитивный, ценностно-аффективный, поведенческий и рефлексивно-профессиональный компоненты. Обосновывается, что в условиях интернационализации образования преподаватель китайского языка выступает не только как носитель языковых знаний, но и как посредник между культурами, обеспечивающий педагогическое взаимодействие, интерпретацию культурных смыслов и адаптацию обучения к многообразию образовательных контекстов. Особое внимание уделяется функциям межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции, направлениям ее развития в системе подготовки и повышения квалификации преподавателей, а также проблемам, связанным с преобладанием лингвистической направленности, упрощенным пониманием культуры, недостатком рефлексивной подготовки и ограниченной институциональной поддержкой. Делается вывод о системообразующей роли данной компетенции в структуре профессиональной компетентности преподавателя китайского языка.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, преподаватель китайского языка, педагогическое взаимодействие, профессиональная компетентность, межкультурное образование.