

OPEN PEER REVIEW

Study of the Growth of Intercultural Skills Among Iranian Students of the German Language

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction clearly outlines the relevance of intercultural skills in the context of foreign language learning. However, the discussion on "the importance of intercultural skills" could be more nuanced. You may want to elaborate on the challenges learners face without these skills, especially in the context of misunderstandings and cultural clashes. A stronger emphasis on specific case studies or examples where intercultural skills were pivotal could enhance the argument's depth.

The phrase "creating a suitable platform for enhancing intercultural skills" could be clarified. What specific type of "platform" are you referring to—an educational framework, a digital tool, or an in-person program? Providing examples or a clearer definition of what this platform entails will give the reader a better sense of your study's objectives.

The section on cultural awareness provides a solid foundation. However, the term "accurate understanding of other cultures" may be overly simplistic, as intercultural competence is often about navigating differences rather than attaining an "accurate" understanding. Consider rewording to reflect a more dynamic, fluid nature of cultural understanding. A reference to contemporary intercultural models would enhance this discussion.

In the discussion of "communication skills" and their role in international collaborations, it would be useful to cite specific studies or examples from intercultural communication research to back your claims. For instance, studies on intercultural negotiations or conflict resolution in multinational teams could be referenced.

In defining cultural sensitivity, the phrase "understanding and responsiveness to the emotions, needs, and behaviors" is somewhat broad. It would be helpful to more precisely define "needs" and "behaviors," potentially drawing on specific

frameworks of cultural sensitivity (e.g., Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity). This will make the concept more concrete and measurable.

The link between cultural sensitivity and conflict resolution is critical but could be elaborated. Perhaps provide examples of how cultural sensitivity has been used successfully to resolve conflicts in multicultural settings. Case studies or empirical research on conflict management in diverse teams would strengthen this claim.

The mention of "a significant impact of intercultural background knowledge on learners' reading skills" could benefit from a deeper discussion of how this knowledge translates into practical language skills. Does the improvement in reading skills stem from a better understanding of the cultural context, or does it improve linguistic abilities directly? Clarifying this will help link the study's results more directly to the topic of intercultural skills.

While you mention "the role of multilingual learning in intercultural growth," the discussion could benefit from more details on the mechanisms through which multilingualism promotes intercultural competence. Consider elaborating on how learning multiple languages may affect learners' ability to navigate cultural nuances.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

While the need for intercultural skills is well-articulated, the sentence "These skills include recognizing and respecting cultural differences..." could benefit from a more detailed breakdown of the three components of intercultural competence (cultural awareness, interaction, and sensitivity) before the actual discussion. Consider rephrasing to introduce these components more explicitly to guide the reader's expectations for the upcoming sections.

The critique of "current educational programs focusing more on grammatical and lexical aspects" is valid but lacks citation to support the claim. It would be helpful to provide data or studies that highlight this gap in the Iranian context, particularly how a narrow focus on language mechanics can hinder intercultural competence development. You may also want to discuss specific examples of such educational programs.

While you mention "modern educational tools and practical experiences," the link between these tools and cultural awareness is not fully developed. You could expand this by providing examples of how modern tools (e.g., online cultural simulations or virtual exchanges) have been shown to enhance intercultural understanding in other studies.

The section introduces cultural interaction effectively, but the sentence "successful cultural interaction requires strong communication skills" could be expanded. You might include more specifics on the types of communication skills needed—e.g., non-verbal communication, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. This would help readers understand what specific skills are central to intercultural interaction.

The description of content analysis is somewhat vague. You mention evaluating "the content of various chapters," but the criteria for assessing cultural information are not clearly defined. Could you specify what particular aspects of the content were analyzed (e.g., representation of cultural symbols, language used in cultural descriptions, etc.)? Providing a clear framework will help validate your analysis.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.