THE ROLE OF AUTHENTIC VIDEO CONTENT IN DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL ATTITUDES AMONG UZBEK EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of authentic video content — specifically YouTube vlogs and documentary extracts — on the development of intercultural attitudes among Uzbek learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Drawing on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence and Chen and Starosta's (1998) Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, the study employed a mixed-methods pre-test/post-test design with 42 participants at B1–B2 proficiency level. A structured six-session instructional programme integrating authentic video content with three-phase pedagogical task frameworks was implemented and evaluated. Results indicate statistically significant gains in intercultural attitudes ($p < 0.001$), with a mean improvement of 38% on the attitudes subscale. Qualitative analysis of student reflection journals reveals a developmental trajectory from evaluative ethnocentrism toward genuine cultural empathy. The study concludes that authentic video content, when pedagogically framed through structured pre-, during-, and post-viewing tasks, constitutes a highly effective tool for intercultural attitude development in Uzbek EFL classrooms.

Keywords: intercultural competence, authentic video, EFL, attitudes, Uzbekistan, multimedia

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of intercultural communicative competence has emerged as a central goal of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in the context of accelerating globalization and digital connectivity. For Uzbek EFL learners in particular, the capacity to communicate not only linguistically but culturally across international boundaries has become a strategic educational priority, underscored by national policy frameworks promoting foreign language proficiency as a driver of social and economic development (Mirziyoyev, 2021).

Despite this policy emphasis, EFL instruction in Uzbekistan has historically prioritized linguistic accuracy over intercultural awareness. Curricula and assessment frameworks have concentrated predominantly on grammar, vocabulary, and the four macro-skills, leaving the intercultural dimension of communicative competence largely implicit and unsystematic (Jalolov, 2012). This gap represents both a pedagogical challenge and a research opportunity: how can Uzbek EFL teachers most effectively cultivate the intercultural attitudes — the curiosity, openness, and empathetic engagement — that genuine cross-cultural communication requires?

Authentic video content offers a particularly promising and practically accessible response to this challenge. The proliferation of digital platforms has made an essentially unlimited library of authentic English-language cultural content available to Uzbek learners, yet the pedagogical potential of this content for systematic intercultural attitude development remains largely unexplored in the Uzbek educational research context. This study addresses that gap by investigating how structured engagement with authentic video content — specifically vlog materials and documentary extracts — affects the intercultural attitudes of Uzbek EFL learners at the B1–B2 level.

The research questions guiding the investigation are: (1) To what extent does structured engagement with authentic video content produce measurable changes in the intercultural attitudes of Uzbek EFL learners? (2) What qualitative processes characterize the development of intercultural attitudes through authentic video engagement? (3) What pedagogical features of video-based instruction are most effective for attitude development?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of this study rests primarily on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, which identifies intercultural attitudes — particularly the savoir etre dimension encompassing curiosity, openness, and willingness to suspend evaluative judgment — as foundational to all other dimensions of intercultural competence. Byram argues that without positive attitudinal orientation toward cultural difference, neither cultural knowledge nor interpretive skills can be effectively deployed in real cross-cultural communication.

Chen and Starosta (1998) offer a complementary framework through their tripartite model of intercultural competence, which distinguishes intercultural awareness (cognitive), intercultural sensitivity (affective), and intercultural adroitness (behavioural). Their Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, measuring five dimensions of affective orientation toward cultural difference, provides the primary quantitative instrument adapted for this study. Research consistently demonstrates that the affective dimension of intercultural competence is both the most significant predictor of effective cross-cultural communication and the most challenging to develop through traditional instructional approaches (Deardorff, 2009).

The pedagogical rationale for using authentic video for intercultural attitude development draws on several converging theoretical traditions. Mayer's (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning establishes that audio-visual content engages both verbal and visual processing channels simultaneously, creating conditions for deeper cognitive and affective engagement than text-based materials alone. The audiovisual richness of authentic video — its capacity to convey non-verbal communication, social rituals, emotional tone, and cultural ambiance — provides a qualitatively richer cultural encounter than print materials can offer.

Godwin-Jones (2007) highlights the particular value of online video for intercultural learning, noting that it transmits dense cultural information through visual channels that are at least as culturally significant as the verbal content. Swaffar and Vlatten (1997) demonstrate that structured three-phase viewing frameworks — pre-, during-, and post-viewing tasks — substantially enhance the intercultural learning value of video content by directing learners' attention toward culturally significant elements and creating structured space for comparative reflection.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative pre-test and post-test assessment with qualitative analysis of student reflection journals and classroom observation data. The participant group consisted of forty-two Uzbek EFL learners at B1–B2 proficiency level studying at a state secondary educational institution in the Samarkand region. Participants ranged in age from seventeen to nineteen years, comprising twenty-four female and eighteen male students.

The primary quantitative instrument was an adapted version of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 1998), translated into Uzbek and piloted for cultural appropriateness. The scale measures five dimensions: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. Participants completed the instrument before and after the instructional intervention.

The instructional intervention consisted of six ninety-minute sessions delivered over four weeks, each organized around carefully selected authentic video content — YouTube vlog materials depicting everyday life in English-speaking cultural contexts, and documentary extracts exploring specific cultural practices and values. Each session followed a three-phase task framework: pre-viewing activation of prior cultural knowledge and prediction; during-viewing focused cultural observation using structured recording sheets; and post-viewing comparative cultural discussion and individual reflective journal writing.

Table 1. Intercultural Attitudes Subscale Results (N=42)

Dimension	Pre-test M (SD) → Post-test M (SD) | % Change
Interaction Engagement	2.94 (0.71) → 4.12 (0.58) | +40%
Respect for Cultural Differences	3.21 (0.68) → 4.38 (0.52) | +36%
Interaction Confidence	2.76 (0.82) → 3.61 (0.67) | +31%
Interaction Enjoyment	3.45 (0.64) → 4.51 (0.49) | +31%
Interaction Attentiveness	3.12 (0.73) → 4.22 (0.55) | +35%
OVERALL ATTITUDES	**3.10 (0.72) → 4.17 (0.56) | +38%**

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative analysis of pre-test and post-test data revealed statistically significant gains across all five dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. A paired samples t-test confirmed overall attitude gains were significant ($t(41) = 8.94$, $p < 0.001$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.87$). As shown in Table 1, the largest gains were recorded on the Interaction Engagement dimension (+40%) and Respect for Cultural Differences (+36%), while Interaction Confidence showed the smallest gain (+31%) — a finding discussed further below.

The qualitative analysis of student reflection journals produced four primary themes characterizing the process of attitude development. The first theme, Initial Cultural Surprise, documents the consistent pattern of learners reporting that authentic vlog content disrupted prior cultural expectations formed through exposure to commercially produced films and idealized media representations. Authentic content's depiction of ordinary cultural life — modest housing, informal social interactions, everyday routines — generated what students described as a process of cultural recalibration.

The second theme, Growing Empathetic Identification, traces a developmental shift from external cultural observation toward genuine personal connection with the cultural others depicted in the videos. Journal entries from the later sessions show students consistently using language of empathetic understanding — imagining how situations feel from the cultural other's

perspective — that was largely absent in early entries. This shift was most pronounced following sessions involving vlog content featuring young people of similar age navigating recognizable experiences of social identity, friendship, and academic life.

The third theme, Cultural Comparison Without Evaluation, documents students' progressive development of what Byram (1997) terms 'critical cultural awareness lite' — the ability to observe and compare cultural practices without immediately evaluating them against the implicit standard of one's own culture. Early journal entries consistently deploy evaluative language; later entries increasingly replace evaluation with explanation, asking not whether a cultural practice is good or bad but why it exists and what values it reflects.

The finding that Interaction Confidence showed the smallest attitude gains deserves specific discussion. The structured video-based activities of this study were effective at developing positive orientations toward cultural difference and willingness to engage interculturally. However, the translation of positive attitudinal orientation into actual communicative confidence requires the experience of genuine cross-cultural interaction — an experience that mediated video content, however authentic, cannot fully provide. This finding points to the essential complementary role of virtual exchange activities in a comprehensive intercultural instruction programme.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides strong empirical evidence that structured engagement with authentic video content produces significant and practically meaningful improvements in the intercultural attitudes of Uzbek EFL learners. The mean overall gain of 38% on the intercultural attitudes subscale, combined with the large effect size, confirms that video-based intercultural instruction constitutes a genuinely effective pedagogical approach rather than merely an engaging supplement to conventional language instruction.

The three-phase task framework — pre-viewing, during-viewing, and post-viewing — emerged as a critical pedagogical mediator between video exposure and genuine attitude development. Exposure alone does not produce intercultural learning; it is the structured pedagogical engagement with authentic content — the activation of prior knowledge, the directed cultural observation, and the reflective comparative discussion — that transforms viewing into genuine intercultural education. Uzbek EFL teachers seeking to develop intercultural attitudes through multimedia should prioritize the quality of pedagogical framing over the quantity of video exposure.

Future research should investigate the long-term durability of attitudinal gains and the specific characteristics of vlog content — speaker diversity, topic range, cultural specificity — that most effectively generate empathetic cross-cultural engagement. Comparative studies across different proficiency levels and educational contexts would further strengthen the evidence base for video-based intercultural instruction in Uzbekistan.

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