

REVIEW

of the official opponent

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor Oksana Zabolotna

for the dissertation of Alona Rutkovska

“Formation of Intercultural Competence of School Students as Active Citizens of Cohesive Society at the English Lessons”

submitted for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)

Field of study: 01 Education

Specialty: 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences

Relevance of the dissertation topic and research

The dissertation's relevance is underscored by the current global context of cultural self-determination and globalization, impacting education and societal dynamics. It addresses the urgent need for intercultural competence among the younger generation, aligning with UNO, UNESCO, and Council of Europe priorities. The research critically evaluates Ukraine's educational reforms towards a more humanized, personality-focused approach, reflecting the national program "Education. Ukraine of the 21st Century" and relevant laws. The study also considers the integration of Ukraine into the European educational space, exploring the shift from traditional educational models to those meeting modern cultural and humanitarian needs. This research is significant for its exploration of cultural approaches in education, drawing on both Ukrainian and international scholarship, and highlights the gap in readiness of teachers and the education system for cultivating socially cohesive individuals. This aligns with the Council of Europe's focus on social cohesion and human dignity, making the research highly relevant and timely.

Definition of the research problem, scope and goals

The research problem centers on the need to form intercultural competence in school students, crucial for social cohesion in a multicultural society. It aims to integrate citizenship education with language learning, specifically English, to foster this competence. The scope covers teaching English in 9th-11th grades, intertwining language education with intercultural learning. The goal is to identify and implement pedagogical conditions that effectively develop students' intercultural competence, making them active, culturally-aware citizens. This research addresses the gap between current educational practices and the societal need for individuals skilled in intercultural communication and understanding.

Connection of the research with scientific programmes, plans, and topics

The dissertation work aligns with the scientific programs of the Departments of Pedagogy and Pedagogical Mastery and German Language Teaching Methods at Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University. It contributes to the themes “Improvement of Higher Pedagogical Foreign Language Education Quality through Reflective Study Processes” (state registration number 0120U101425) and “Training of Future Pedagogical Education Specialists Amidst Educational Transformations” (state registration number 0111U000098). The study was approved and refined by the Academic Council of the University, as documented in Minutes No. 9 (December 18, 2019) and No. 14 (April 15, 2021).

Evaluation of author’s contribution to knowledge and practice, reliability and novelty of the dissertation results

The author's contribution to knowledge and practice is relevant to this kind of research, offering a novel approach to integrating intercultural competence in school education, particularly through English language learning. The scientific novelty of the dissertation research is that as a result of the analysis of textbooks on various school subjects, it systematizes *for the first time* educational material of a country studies nature (using the example of Great Britain) and substantiates the content of intersubject connections of the subject “English language” and their role in the formation of intercultural competence of school students; a didactic model of intercultural competence as a system of knowledge, abilities and skills was developed; a model of the process of forming the intercultural competence of comprehensive school students as active citizens of a cohesive society is built, which is based on taking into account the social cohesion of society, modern aims of learning foreign languages, integration of foreign languages, the language learning process, age characteristics of school students, motives for their educational activities and areas of interest, active public position.

The research is grounded in a comprehensive analysis of pedagogical, linguistic, and didactic literature, and is informed by relevant regulatory documents. The developed didactic model is innovative, focusing on active citizenship and societal cohesion. The practical application of this research is evidenced by its implementation in various educational institutions. The reliability of the results is supported by experimental testing and a theoretical framework. The dissertation's interdisciplinary nature and its practical applicability in educational settings underscore its novelty and importance.

The main results obtained personally by the author

The author's personal contribution to the scientific and practical results presented in the dissertation is significant. All the scientific outcomes presented in the dissertation were

obtained independently by the author. In the article “Innovative Technologies in Teaching Foreign Languages” (Rutkovska & Rutkovsky, 2023), Alona Rutkovska attributes the identification of effective English language teaching content features based on the culture of the country whose language is being studied. In the article “Forming Students' Value Consciousness in the Multicultural Conditions of the Pedagogical University” (Rutkovska & Barantsova, 2020), the dissertation author identifies the interconnection between the development of a civic society and individual freedoms in a multicultural environment. In the article “Learning Foreign Languages in the Modern Informational Educational Environment” (Rutkovska, Rutkovsky & Konovalenko, 2022) the dissertation author attributes the definition of a competence-based approach, founded on interdisciplinary and integrated educational activity outcome requirements. In other publications, the primary material, its processing, and conclusions belong exclusively to the dissertation author.

Content, style and structure of the text

The dissertation by Alona Rutkovska is well-structured, methodical, and comprehensively addresses the topic of intercultural competence in educational settings. The content is organized into three main chapters, each delving into specific aspects of the subject. The first chapter lays the theoretical groundwork, discussing concepts like culture and intercultural interaction, and the evolution of citizenship education. The second chapter focuses on the psychological and pedagogical conditions necessary for developing intercultural competence. The third chapter presents the research and experimental work conducted, including the development of a pedagogical model and the outcomes of this experimental work. The dissertation is meticulous in its approach, offering a detailed exploration of the subject matter, and culminates with conclusions that highlight the key findings and implications of the research.

The dissertation is well-written and formatted according to the requirements. The style of presentation in the dissertation makes the research materials accessible for understanding, although sometimes the author uses expressions that are not entirely typical for English academic style. In her work, Aliona Rutkovska adhered to the principles of academic integrity.

Discussion points and comments on the dissertation

While generally positively evaluating the scientific and practical significance of the results obtained by the dissertation author, certain discussion points and comments should be highlighted, as well as some wishes expressed:

- The chapter “The essence of the concepts “culture” and “intercultural interaction” draws on a wide range of sources, including prominent educators and theorists, which strengthens its arguments. However, some references, such as those to specific paradigms or models, could benefit from more recent studies to reflect ongoing developments in educational theory.
- The format of the list of references raises concerns because it does not adhere to any of the citation styles specified in regulatory documents for dissertations. Even if we consider this an attempt to comply with DSTU 2015, it is unclear why the entire list is translated into English without preserving the original titles in Ukrainian (or in transliteration). This approach may complicate the verification and search for cited sources, reduce the accuracy of references, and potentially mislead readers regarding the primary sources of information.
- On page 57, the author mentions the analysis of a series of regulatory documents, describing them in a generalized manner without providing properly formatted references. This omission makes it unclear which specific documents were used as the basis for the analysis. Given that standards, curricula, and model programs can vary significantly by year, authorship, and other factors, the lack of precise

citations raises concerns about the accuracy and verifiability of the information presented.

- On page 57, Ms. Rutkowska, presents what is termed as her definition of "Intercultural Competence." However, the information provided more closely resembles a list of components associated with intercultural competence rather than an original definition crafted by the author. The outlined elements represent fundamental aspects of the concept, yet, they present a descriptive enumeration of key features rather than a concise, author-defined interpretation or synthesis.
- A notable concern regarding the dissertation is that out of 277 cited sources, only 30 were published in the last five years which raises questions about the research base for the dissertation. In rapidly evolving fields, reliance on up-to-date literature is crucial for capturing the latest developments, theories, and empirical findings. The limited number of recent sources could potentially limit the dissertation's engagement with current debates, methodologies, and findings in the field.
- Upon reviewing the model presented in the dissertation, it has been noted that some components of the model are not fully expounded upon in the text. Without it, it is not clear enough what the rationale is behind the inclusion of these elements and the conclusions drawn by the author regarding their impact. For the model to be effective and for the dissertation to present a strong case, each component of the model should be clearly linked to specific findings or theoretical frameworks addressed in the research. This would provide a clearer understanding of the model's components and the role they play in achieving the overarching goal of the dissertation, which is the development of intercultural competence in comprehensive secondary school students as active citizens.

However, the expressed remarks and discussion points do not negate the positive assessment of the scientific level of the dissertation work.

Correspondence of the dissertation to the specialty and the profile of the specialized academic council

On the basis of the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that in terms of its relevance, the significant amount of research carried out, scientific novelty, the reliability of the results obtained, the validity of the conclusions, the structure of the paper, the dissertation by Alona Rutkovska "Formation of Intercultural Competence of School Students as Active Citizens of Cohesive Society at the English Lessons" submitted for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD), field of study: 01 Education, specialty: 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences meets the requirements of the "Procedure for awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and canceling the decision of the one-time specialized academic council of the institution of higher education, scientific institution on awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy", approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated January 12, 2022 No. 44. The author of the dissertation Alona Rutkovska deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences.

Opponent:

*Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences,
Professor of Foreign Languages Faculty,
Pavlo Tychyna Uman State
Pedagogical University, Professor*



ZABOLOTNA, Oksana

*I certify the signature
Acting Rector*



GEDZYK, Andriy