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## Linguacultural competence of a university teacher as a factor in improving the quality of education: Experience of Makhambet Utemisov West Kazakhstan university

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### Abstract

The article touched upon the problem of improving the linguacultural competence of a university teacher as an integral part of his professional competence. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the need for a higher education teacher to possess linguacultural competence. It explores the concept of linguacultural competence, its components, and its impact on pedagogical practices. Special attention is given to how this competence facilitates more effective communication, promotes a tolerant educational environment, and improves students' intercultural awareness. The paper also explores the features of the linguacultural competence of teachers as one of the key factors in improving the quality of education in the context of a university multicultural educational space. The research study describes the examples of various types of educational and pedagogical activities at the Makhambet Utemisov West Kazakhstan University, analyzes the features of these processes and proposes the ways to solve problems of intercultural communication in the context of a modern Kazakhstani university. The article focuses on the personal and professional qualities of a teacher, which can significantly increase the effectiveness of the process of formation and development of linguacultural competence. Linguacultural training of a teacher is especially relevant for teaching language disciplines regardless of the form of education and category of students. This competence is a necessary quality for a teacher for successful communication in a multicultural environment.

**Keywords:** Competence, Competency, Higher education, Intercultural communication, Learning foreign languages, Linguacultural competence, Multicultural educational space, Quality of education, Quality of education, University teacher.

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**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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## **1. Introduction**

Modern society is dynamic and multifaceted, the pace of development of all spheres of human activity is quite high, as a result the need for training such a graduate of a comprehensive school, who is able to navigate easily the huge flow of information and productively build his professional activity, increases. In accordance with the new strategy for the development of education, a distinctive feature of the educational process at the university is the focus on the formation of the student's personality acquiring the qualities that will become the basis for his effective interaction with society.

Consequently, the main task of the university is to organize a favorable educational environment that promotes the development of the student's personal essence. The solution to this problem directly depends on the level of professional competence of the teaching staff. That is why high-quality professional training of the teacher, the formation of his philosophical and pedagogical position, key professional competencies are important. Successfully formed linguacultural competence of a teacher in the conditions of a multicultural society of the 21st century occupies a leading position among other competencies of the teacher. This quality allows him to organize effectively cross-cultural and interpersonal interaction with all participants in the educational process.

The phenomenon of globalization in the modern world, considered as an integration process in the linguistic and cultural spheres, as well as strengthening the interaction of cultures, determines the advancement to leading positions of issues of people's readiness for effective interaction, including the professional sphere, in the context of comprehensive activation of international contacts, integration of other values into the native cultural environment. The search for innovative solutions to the problems of mutual understanding and interaction of representatives of different cultures are of particular relevance for domestic science in the context of multilateral modernization of society and transformation of Kazakhstani culture.

The transformations that have taken place in Kazakhstan's higher education system in recent years affect not only its system, educational models and technologies. They directly concern the teacher who is responsible for training a future high-level specialist with integrated knowledge, skills and abilities, capable of effective work in his specialty and oriented in related fields of activity, ready for constant professional growth and mobility. Steady trends towards expansion of the professional activity of a teacher and its complication inevitably increase the requirements for the level of his professional competence. At the same time, for a teacher implementing the educational process in a multicultural environment, linguacultural competence is of great importance, ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the performance of his main professional tasks.

Solving the problem of training competitive qualified specialists, a higher education teacher must not only have extensive professional knowledge and skills, but also have a high level of general culture, the ability for conscious personal growth, professional responsibility, focus on overcoming social and professional stereotypes, and also have competent oral and written speech. In our research the emphasis will be on the linguacultural competence of a higher education teacher as an important component of his professional competence.

In the context of globalization, digitalization, and increasing academic mobility, the modern system of higher education is facing fundamentally new demands. Universities are becoming multicultural spaces where representatives of different languages, cultures, and worldviews interact daily. As a result, the role of the university teacher is being redefined: today, it is not enough to possess deep subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Equally important is the ability to function effectively in linguistically and culturally diverse environments. This ability is reflected in the concept of linguacultural competence.

Linguacultural competence refers to the integration of linguistic and cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable a person to engage in meaningful, respectful, and effective communication across cultures. For university teachers, such competence is critical not only for classroom communication but also for designing curricula that are sensitive to cultural differences, applying inclusive teaching methods, and forming students' intercultural sensitivity and global outlook.

The growing presence of international students, the expansion of joint educational programs, and the increasing popularity of English-medium instruction have further emphasized the importance of teachers' readiness to engage in cross-cultural interaction. Lack of awareness of cultural norms and communicative practices can lead to misunderstandings, reduced motivation among students, and even conflicts. Conversely, a high level of linguacultural competence fosters tolerance, mutual respect, and academic success.

Despite the increasing recognition of this issue, linguacultural competence remains an under-researched and often underestimated component of pedagogical professionalism in higher education. There is a pressing need to identify the specific ways in which it contributes to the quality of education, as well as to develop effective mechanisms for its formation and assessment in university teaching staff.

### *1.1. The Aim and Objectives of the Study*

The purpose of this article is to explore the role of linguacultural competence of university teachers as a key factor in enhancing the quality of higher education. To achieve this goal, the following objectives are addressed:

- To define the conceptual framework of linguacultural competence in the context of higher education;
- To analyze the impact of linguacultural competence on the effectiveness of pedagogical interaction;
- To identify conditions for the formation and development of linguacultural competence in university teachers;
- To formulate practical recommendations aimed at integrating this competence into educational policy and teacher training programs.

By addressing these issues, the article contributes to the ongoing discussion about educational quality assurance and professional development in the context of internationalization and cultural diversity.

## **2. Literature Review and Problem Statement**

The relevance of this topic is determined by the need to analyze the linguacultural competence of a teacher in typical communicative situations to implement effective communication between a teacher and a student. It is linguacultural competence that becomes a professionally significant characteristic of a teacher's personality helping to build effective relationships at different levels.

Modern research published in international databases emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural and linguistic aspects into the educational process. For example, research by Alshammari, M. A. points to the need to develop intercultural communication and linguistic and cultural competence as key elements of professional training of university teachers [1].

The term "competency" means "a set of interrelated qualities of a person (knowledge, abilities, skills etc.), specified in relation to a certain range of objects and processes, and necessary for high-quality productive activity. The term "competence" means a person's possession of the relevant competence, including his personal attitude to the subject of activity. According to Hammer, M. R., competency should be understood as "a predetermined requirement" for a person's training, and competence – "an already established personal quality" [2].

In addition, "competence" is understood as a special type of organization of subject-specific knowledge that allows making effective decisions in the relevant field of activity. In the field of education "competence" is interpreted as the quality of a person who has completed a certain level of education, expressed in the ability on its basis for successful (productive, effective) activity, taking into account its social significance and social risks that may be associated with it. In current terms, "competence" is considered as an independently realized ability of a person, based on acquired knowledge, intellectual and life experience, values and inclinations, which he developed as a result of cognitive activity and educational practice [3].

In order to implement a multifaceted study, we consider it appropriate to define the status of the central concepts for our study – "linguacultural studies" and "competence" – and, on the basis of a comprehensive scientific reflection, to determine the essence of the concept of "linguacultural competence". In psychological studies, "competence" is defined as the ability of an individual to interact effectively with people around in the system of interpersonal relations. In the pedagogical interpretation, "competence" is the possession by the teacher of the necessary amount of knowledge, skills and abilities that determine the formation of his pedagogical activity, pedagogical communication and the personality of the teacher as a bearer of certain values, ideals and pedagogical consciousness [4].

Linguacultural competence, in our opinion, can be considered both as an integral part of communicative and as a part of cultural competence of a person. In the first case, it is defined as the ability to select and implement programs of speech behavior of an individual depending on the situation and topic. In the second case, linguacultural competence is "a set of interconnected ideas about the general norms, rules, and traditions of verbal and non-verbal communication within the framework of a given linguistic culture."

Psychological and pedagogical literature provides a sufficient theoretical and experimental basis necessary for solving problems characteristic of the processes of educational practice in higher education, aimed at the formation of professional competence, including its linguacultural component. Following Shakya, R., Horsfall D., we understand linguacultural competence as "an integrative quality of the individual, including knowledge and skills related to the selection, assimilation, processing, transformation and use in practical activities of information about language and culture, experience of intercultural communication and personal qualities necessary for its successful implementation in the conditions of another linguaculture" [5].

A teacher who has successfully developed linguacultural competence is characterized by solid scientific knowledge, has a holistic understanding of the cultural and historical development of both the native state and other sociocultural unities of people. Based on the acquired system of knowledge, such a teacher is able to organize successfully intercultural, inter-lingual and interpersonal interaction, acting as its direct participant. Active use of existing knowledge and skills in daily professional activities enables the teacher to carry out a high-quality selection and interpretation of information about linguacultural competence, which significantly improves the quality of the educational process.

The issues of the formation of communicative competencies and skills are disclosed in the works devoted to the theory of communication and the creation of a communicative culture, as well as its subcompetencies Moeller [6], Li [7] and Ter-Minasova [8].

It is also necessary to consider the term "linguacultural studies", which is today considered a fusion of several sciences (linguistics, ethnography, cultural studies, philosophy) and is defined as a new scientific direction with its own specific goals and objectives. At the same time, the analysis of scientific research devoted to the competencies of teachers [9] makes it possible to assert that the concepts of "competence" and "readiness" are not identical, but interrelated [9, 10].

Aspects of the linguacultural component of professional training of specialists are studied in the works of Liddicoat, Liddicoat and Scarino [11] and Martínez and Rodríguez [12]. The problems of linguacultural training in the psychological and social spheres are studied in the works of such scientists as Tervalon and Murray-García [13] and Shrestha [14]. The works of O'Hara and Pritchard [15] and Lee and Larke [16] reflect the importance of upbringing a tolerant attitude towards the world and the people around us [15, 16].

Linguacultural competence presupposes the presence of knowledge about the ways of representing the cultural values of the native culture in the native language, knowledge about how the values of the native culture can be reflected in

another culture and language. It should be focused on the uniqueness of language as a cultural and social phenomenon, and promote effective interaction in a multicultural society. It is linguistic and cultural education that play a leading role in the process of personality development, so language and culture, in turn, are forms of consciousness that reflect a person's worldview.

### 3. Materials and Methods of the Study

The study of the linguacultural competence of a teacher includes various methods, both qualitative and quantitative. These include observation of the teacher during classes, analysis of his teaching materials, questionnaires and interviews, as well as self-assessment of the teacher. The purpose of using these methods is to assess the teacher's ability to convey not only linguistic knowledge, but also the cultural characteristics of the language being studied, taking into account sociocultural and psychological aspects.

To explore the role of linguacultural competence of university teachers as a factor in improving the quality of education, a combination of theoretical and empirical research methods was employed. This mixed-methods approach made it possible to gain both a conceptual understanding and practical insights into the development and influence of linguacultural competence in the university environment.

As a part of theoretical methods we used comparative analysis – to examine and compare existing definitions of linguacultural competence presented in national and international pedagogical and linguistic literature. This analysis formed the basis for defining the theoretical framework and identifying indicators of linguacultural competence relevant to the goals of the study.

The empirical part of the study was conducted during the 2023-2024, 2024–2025 academic years and included the following methods:

#### 3.1. Questionnaire Survey

A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed among 80 university teachers and 150 students from five faculties of the University with diverse student populations. The questionnaire for teachers included items on their self-assessed level of linguacultural competence, participation in intercultural training, and use of culturally adaptive teaching strategies. The student questionnaire focused on their perception of teachers' cultural sensitivity, communication effectiveness in the classroom. Data were processed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, standard deviation) to identify dependencies between teachers' linguacultural competence and students' satisfaction and perceived educational quality (Appendix 1, 2).

#### 3.2. Classroom Observation

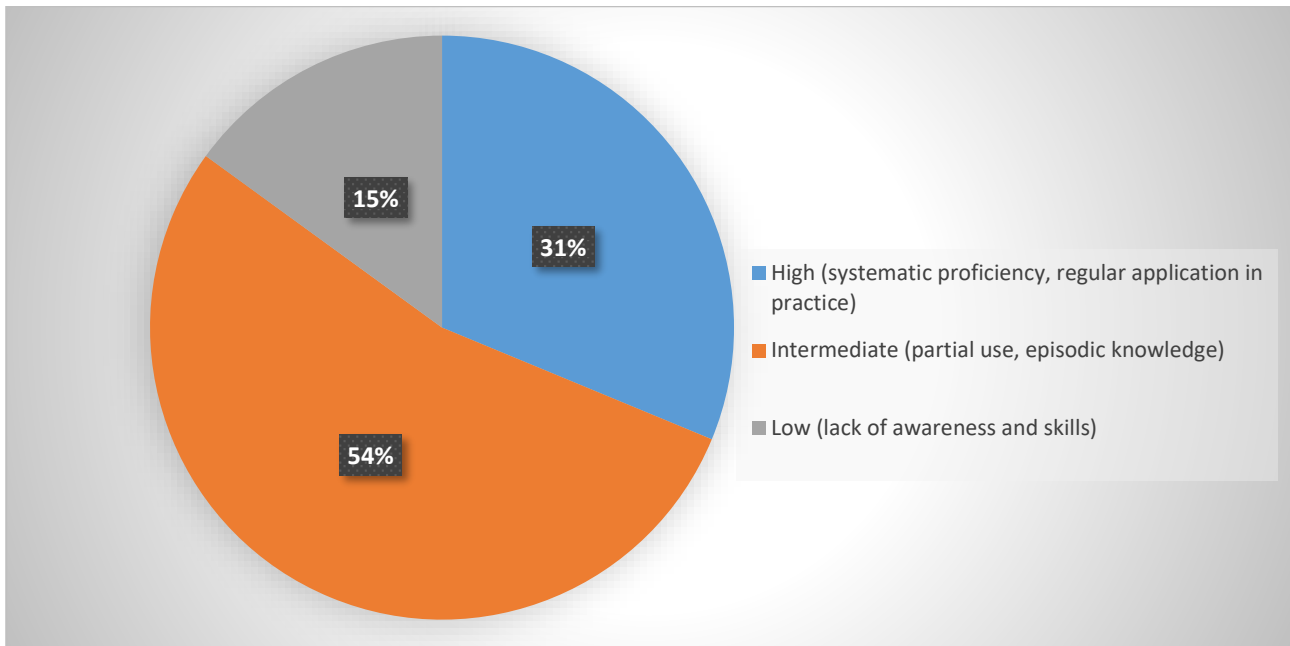
Ten classroom sessions across different disciplines (language, social sciences, and international relations) were observed to analyze real-time teaching behavior related to intercultural communication. An observation checklist based on previously defined indicators of linguacultural competence was used to ensure consistency and objectivity. Playing a number of role games, creating your own specific text, story or history, the process of dramatization of your own story in the student community represent a whole range of integrated means that unite a number of disjointed pieces of information, socio-cultural and cross-cultural studies, capable of arousing the interest of the university community. This may be writing a script based on your own cultural images, video implementation of the script, transforming the script into a play with its subsequent staging on the university stage, scientific-research search for a cultural image in an authentic text, etc.

Cultural dramatization also includes interpretation of the authentic text. For example, the organization of reproductive activity can be carried out with the help of the following educational situations presented in the "tasks-instructions": situations of rational memorization and meaningful reproduction of the information received; situations of understanding the systemic features of the educational material according to the model, etc.

**Table 1.**

Self-assessment of teachers' level of their linguistic and cultural competence (n = 80).

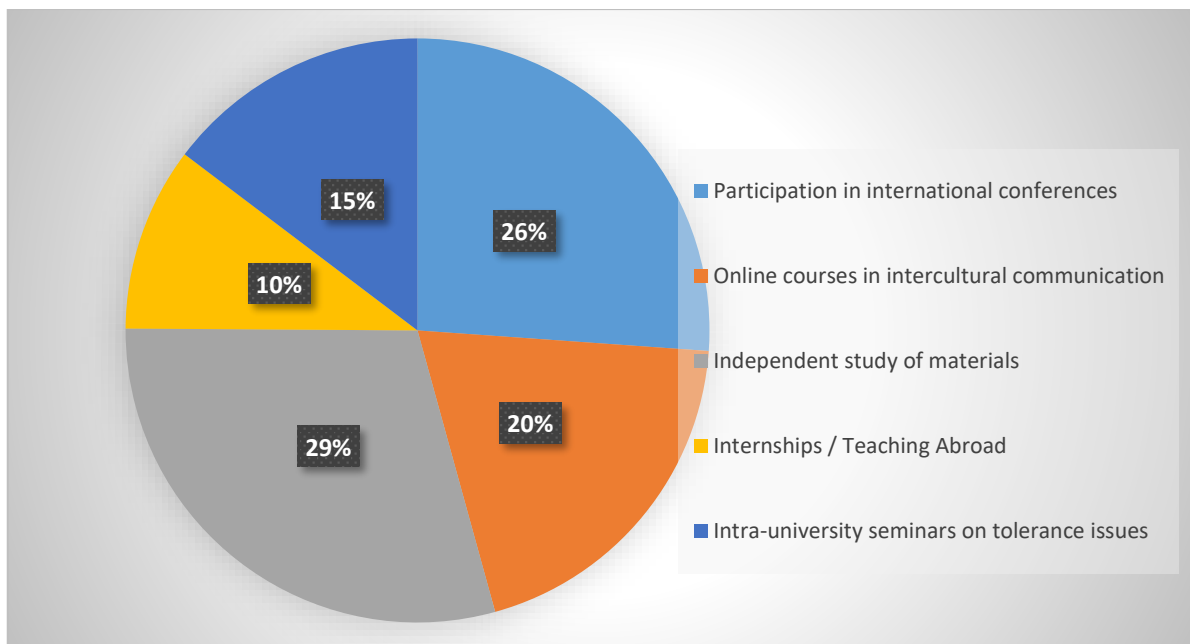
Level of linguistic and cultural competence	Number of teachers	% of total
High (systematic proficiency, regular application in practice)	25	31.2%
Intermediate (partial use, episodic knowledge)	43	53.7%
Low (lack of awareness and skills)	12	15.1%



**Figure 1.**  
Self-assessment of teachers' level of their linguistic and cultural competence.

**Table 2.**  
Forms of development of linguistic and cultural competence used by teachers.

Forms of advanced training	Number of participants	% of total
Participation in international conferences	64	26.1%
Online courses in intercultural communication	48	19.6%
Independent study of materials	72	29.4%
Internships / Teaching abroad	25	10.2%
Intra-university seminars on tolerance issues	36	14.7%



**Figure 2.**  
Forms of development of linguistic and cultural competence used by teachers.

**Table 3.**

Students' assessment of teachers' level of intercultural sensitivity (n = 150).

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
The teacher respects the cultural features of students	78.0%	15.3%	6.7%
The teacher adapts the communication style depending on the cultural background of the students	64.7%	21.3%	14.0%
The teacher encourages discussion of cultural differences in the learning process	59.3%	25.3%	15.4%
I feel comfortable communicating with the teacher regardless of my cultural background.	82.0%	12.7%	5.3%

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study offer compelling evidence that linguacultural competence plays a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of university instruction and enhancing the quality of the educational process.

The analysis of teacher self-assessments (Table 1) revealed that only about one-third (31.2%) of respondents consider their level of linguacultural competence to be high. The majority of teachers (53.7%) indicated a moderate level, while nearly one-fifth (15.1%) acknowledged a low level of preparedness to function in multicultural settings. This discrepancy indicates the presence of a “competence gap” that may negatively influence classroom communication and learning dynamics, especially in institutions with a significant number of international or culturally diverse students.

Table 2 demonstrates that although a number of teachers undertake independent efforts to enhance their intercultural awareness and attend international conferences (26.1%), participation in formal programs such as university-led workshops or international academic exchanges remains relatively low. This finding suggests the need for a shift from informal and fragmented efforts toward structured institutional support for competence development. It confirms the viewpoint of scholars such as Guilherme [17] who emphasize the importance of integrating intercultural training into professional development systems at the university level [17, 18].

As shown in Table 3, students generally perceive their teachers as culturally respectful and inclusive. Notably, 82.0% of respondents stated that they feel comfortable communicating with their instructors regardless of cultural background, and 78.0% confirmed that their cultural identity is respected in the classroom. However, a smaller percentage of students (59.3%) reported that their teachers actively promote intercultural dialogue in class. These results underline the importance of not only acquiring knowledge about other cultures, but also developing didactic tools and methods to create inclusive, culturally responsive learning environments. These findings call for a systematic approach to embedding linguacultural competence into institutional policy and professional development.

The findings of this study provide substantive evidence that linguacultural competence is the main factor influencing the quality of education in higher educational institutions. The data obtained through questionnaires and classroom observations highlight key trends in the development, application, and impact of this competence in university settings.

Recognizing linguacultural competence as an essential component of pedagogical professionalism can contribute to more inclusive, engaging, and globally relevant higher education. This, in turn, will enhance institutional quality, improve student satisfaction, and better prepare graduates for success in a multicultural world. By recognizing linguacultural competence as a core professional standard, universities can enhance not only pedagogical effectiveness, but also foster more cohesive and globally competent learning communities.

Given the complexity and growing importance of linguacultural competence in contemporary higher education, several directions for future research can be proposed as well:

##### 4.1. Student Outcomes and Learning Performance

While the present study explored student satisfaction, further research is needed to investigate how teachers' linguacultural competence affects specific academic outcomes, including learning achievement, critical thinking development, and intercultural attitudes among students.

##### 4.2. Disciplinary Perspectives

Since teaching practices and cultural dynamics may vary significantly across disciplines (e.g. humanities vs. engineering), it would be beneficial to conduct discipline-specific studies on how linguacultural competence is enacted and received in different academic fields.

##### 4.3. Digital and online learning environments

With the increasing prevalence of online and hybrid education, future research should explore how linguacultural competence manifests in virtual classrooms and what digital strategies educators use to foster intercultural engagement and inclusion.

##### 4.4. Assessment Tools and Measurement Models

There is a need to develop and validate standardized tools for reliably assessing the linguacultural competence of university instructors. Such instruments would enable more consistent evaluation and benchmarking at institutional and cross-national levels.

By pursuing these research directions, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of linguacultural competence in education and inform the development of evidence-based policies and practices in higher education institutions worldwide.

## 5. Conclusions

The present study has highlighted the role of linguacultural competence in enhancing the quality of education within higher education institutions. It has been demonstrated that a university teacher's ability to navigate and mediate between diverse cultural frameworks is not only a matter of personal or professional enrichment, but a fundamental pedagogical asset that directly impacts student satisfaction, inclusion, and educational outcomes.

The study has underscored the critical importance of linguacultural competence as a key dimension of university teaching professionalism and as a determinant of educational quality in increasingly diverse academic environments. The empirical findings provide strong evidence that the degree of a teacher's linguacultural awareness and adaptability directly influences student comfort, engagement, and satisfaction with the learning process.

Thus, linguacultural studies perform one of the primary educational tasks – the formation of a modern tolerant ethno-cultural consciousness. This consciousness, in which knowledge, understanding, respect for the culture and languages of other cultures, especially neighboring ones, located in the same multicultural educational environment.

Despite the growing multiculturalism of university classrooms, the findings reveal that many educators still operate with limited or moderate levels of linguacultural competence. This gap points to an urgent need for systematic efforts to promote intercultural awareness and skills through institutional training programs, international collaboration, and reflective teaching practices.

The positive correlation between high levels of teacher competence and student satisfaction further confirms that the cultivation of such competence should be considered a strategic priority for universities seeking to improve the quality and global relevance of their academic offerings.

Despite the acknowledged importance of this competence, the data reveal a substantial proportion of university educators who rate their own linguacultural preparedness as average or low. Moreover, institutional mechanisms for fostering such competencies remain insufficiently developed or underutilized, relying heavily on individual initiative rather than systematic policy. This suggests a need for more structured, institutionalized approaches to professional development in this area.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of integrating linguacultural competence into broader educational policy frameworks and teacher qualification standards. Only through comprehensive and sustained initiatives can institutions prepare their teaching staff to meet the demands of culturally diverse learning environments and equip students with the intercultural competencies needed in an increasingly interconnected world.

The research also highlights the positive perception of inter-culturally competent teachers by students, as well as the strong correlation between high levels of linguacultural competence and student satisfaction. These findings emphasize the practical implications of teacher training, suggesting that investment in intercultural development has a direct and measurable return in terms of educational outcomes and institutional reputation. It also proposes practical recommendations for universities, such as integrating intercultural training into professional development frameworks, encouraging academic mobility, and creating inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogical environments.

Going forward, it is imperative that university leadership, policymakers and teachers recognize linguacultural competence not as an optional enhancement, but as a core requirement for effective teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Equally important is the development of robust assessment tools and longitudinal studies to further explore the dynamics of competence development and its long-term impact on learning.

In conclusion, linguacultural competence is not a peripheral or optional skill – it is central to the mission of modern education. Its development must be viewed as a continuous, collective responsibility of individual educators, academic institutions, and educational policymakers alike. Fostering linguacultural competence among university educators will not only improve teaching and learning processes but also strengthen universities' capacity to serve as globally-oriented institutions that prepare students for success in a multicultural and interconnected world.

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## Appendix 1.

### Questionnaire

#### Self-Assessment of University Teachers' Linguacultural Competence

##### General Information:

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Academic Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Languages Taught: \_\_\_\_\_
  1. Do you understand the cultural background of the countries whose language you teach?
  2. How familiar are you with cultural norms, traditions, and values of native speakers of the language you teach?
  3. Do you include cultural content (history, art, customs, etc.) in your lessons?
  4. How confident are you in recognizing cultural differences in classroom interactions?
  5. Do you adapt your teaching methods depending on students' cultural backgrounds?
  6. Have you ever received training in intercultural communication or linguacultural competence?
  7. Do you use authentic cultural materials (films, literature, media, etc.) in your teaching?
  8. How often do you encourage students to compare and reflect on cultural differences?
  9. Do you assess students' linguacultural competence as a part of your evaluation methods?
  10. How important do you consider the development of linguacultural competence in foreign language education?
  11. Do you feel that your own linguacultural competence needs improvement?
  12. What challenges do you face in integrating cultural content into your language teaching?
  13. In your opinion, what are the most effective ways to improve a teacher's linguacultural competence?
  14. Have you ever participated in international exchange programs, academic mobility, or cultural immersion experiences?
  15. How often do you reflect on your own cultural biases or assumptions when teaching?
  16. How confident are you in discussing sensitive cultural topics (e.g., stereotypes, cultural taboos) in the classroom?
  17. Do you collaborate with colleagues from other cultural or linguistic backgrounds in your teaching or research?
  18. Would you be interested in attending professional development workshops focused on linguacultural competence?
  19. Do you integrate cross-cultural case studies or real-life cultural scenarios in your lessons?
  20. In your view, how does linguacultural competence influence a teacher's overall teaching effectiveness?



## **Appendix 2.**

### **Student Questionnaire**

#### **Perception of Teachers' Cultural Sensitivity and Communication Effectiveness**

##### **General Information:**

21. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
22. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
23. Faculty: \_\_\_\_\_
24. Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_
25. Course: \_\_\_\_\_

##### **Cultural Sensitivity (Items 1–10):**

1. My teacher respects the cultural backgrounds of all students.
2. My teacher includes examples from different cultures in classroom materials.
3. My teacher avoids stereotypes when discussing different cultures.
4. My teacher encourages students to share their cultural experiences.
5. My teacher is open to learning about cultures other than their own.
6. My teacher handles cultural misunderstandings with sensitivity and care.
7. My teacher treats all students fairly, regardless of their cultural background.
8. My teacher acknowledges the importance of cultural diversity in the classroom.
9. My teacher shows interest in students' native languages or traditions.
10. My teacher adapts teaching methods to accommodate cultural differences.

##### **Communication Effectiveness (Items 11–20):**

11. My teacher explains concepts clearly and in an understandable way.
12. My teacher listens actively when students speak.
13. My teacher encourages open communication in the classroom.
14. My teacher uses language that is easy for all students to understand.
15. My teacher checks for understanding during lessons.
16. My teacher responds to students' questions respectfully and helpfully.
17. My teacher creates an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves.
18. My teacher uses examples and explanations that are culturally appropriate.
19. My teacher is aware of non-verbal cues in communication.
20. My teacher communicates high expectations for all students, regardless of background.