

REVIEW
of the official opponent

PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor
Maryana Natsiuk
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

1. Relevance of the dissertation topic and research

The dissertation addresses a highly relevant issue of the formation of school students' intercultural competence and fostering active citizenship in a cohesive society through English lessons.

The significance of the research is undeniable, particularly, in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural world, where individuals must communicate across cultural boundaries, understand diverse cultural nuances, and manage conflicts arising from cultural differences. This need has been further amplified by the recent appalling events which has led to significant Ukrainian migration and unpredictable changes in the educational landscape. One notable aspect is the cultural adaptation process of Ukrainian schoolchildren and the expected shift in their cultural attitudes upon their return to Ukraine. In this light, cultural education is viewed as mandatory and as a sign of high intellectual cultural development. Moreover, culturally-aware Ukrainian citizens are essential for active participation in the state and community building or rebuilding. As the analysed scientific work proves, such schoolchildren's qualities as active position, cultural awareness, tolerance, responsibility, democratic attitudes should be of special focus for educators. Therefore, examining these issues from both theoretical and practical perspectives is vital for contemporary Ukrainian pedagogy. In the introduction to the thesis paper, the author effectively underscores the relevance of this topic, highlighting the importance of intercultural competence within the framework of modern educational programs and civic education initiatives.

2. Definition of the research problem, scope and goals

The research problem is clearly defined, with a comprehensive scope and well-defined objectives. The author considers research and experimental work on the development of school students' intercultural competence aiming at educating them as active citizens of a cohesive society in the conditions of a multicultural environment and intercultural communication in English lessons, taking into account civic skills, abilities and virtues. This goal is pursued through seven well-structured objectives outlined in the Introduction, providing a clear roadmap for the research. The completion of these objectives has yielded significant insights.

The author has thoroughly analysed the key concepts from a wide range of perspectives. Significant achievements include a grounded analysis of the terms 'educational paradigm' and 'competence' (p. 42, continued on p. 48), and the distinction between model, technology, and system (pp. 148-150). The concepts of a citizen and civic education have been profoundly analyzed, tracing their origins from ancient Greek philosophy through the Roman perspective, Enlightenment ideals, and the transition of Ukrainian philosophical and educational positions across historical periods. Additionally, the concept of communication, including its characteristics and types, is well-developed. The analysis of communicative competence is particularly profound, resulting in the presentation of an original and well-developed model. Determining the definition and structure of intercultural competence is both a cornerstone and a formidable challenge of this work. The exploration of intercultural competence led to the identification of its components, their detailed description, and the design of a model for developing active citizens.

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

The dissertation is firmly grounded in relevant scientific programs and educational plans, demonstrating a profound connection to contemporary educational initiatives.

The author exhibits a comprehensive understanding of the legislative backdrop, detailing documents that advocate intercultural movements in Ukraine referencing numerous documents integral to the advancement of the intercultural education in the country and provide legislative support for civic education.

The author demonstrates awareness of current educational projects and program that determine modern Ukrainian educational space, among which the following programs have been considered “Intercultural Cities” Program which have been influencing Melitopol’s life, the large-scale Project “Education for Democracy in Ukraine”, which is part of the Transatlantic Civil Society Support Program supported by the governments of the United States and the European Union, the international project "The PEN PAL Project".

The research was conducted in alignment with the thematic plan of scientific research of the Department of Pedagogy and Pedagogical Mastery and the Department of Teaching Methods of German Languages at Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University. It contributes to the topics “The Improvement of the Quality of Higher Pedagogical Foreign Language Education as a Result of Reflection in the Study Process” (state registration number 0120U101425) and “Training of Future Specialists of Pedagogical Education in Conditions of Educational Transformations” (state registration number 0111U000098). The study's topic received approval from the Academic Council of Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Minutes No. 9, dated December 18, 2019) and was further refined with the Council's subsequent approval (Minutes No. 14, dated April 15, 2021).

4. Evaluation of author’s contribution to knowledge and practice, reliability and novelty of the dissertation results. The main results obtained personally by the author.

The author's significant contributions to both knowledge and practical applications are undeniable. The dissertation presents reliable and novel findings, with several noteworthy contributions that deserve special recognition:

- a. *Interdisciplinary Approach*: Alona Rutkovska's most remarkable contribution is applying an interdisciplinary approach to enhance students' intercultural skills and promote active citizenship. Within this framework, the author has analyzed textbooks across various school subjects (including history, geography, foreign literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology), systematizing for the first time educational material of a country studies nature. This includes substantiating the content of intersubject connections of the subject "English language" and their role in fostering the intercultural competence of school students.
- b. *Wide Range of Approaches and Methods*: the choice of the communicative approach aligns with contemporary trends in foreign language teaching. The personally-oriented approach proves beneficial both for implementing civic education and developing students' intercultural competence. The dissertation thoroughly discusses and recommends various methods for developing intercultural competence for training active citizens, specifically, analysis of specific situations, "brainstorming", methods of educational and thematic discussion, training, and round table.
- c. *Model for Communicative Competence*: An outstanding feature of the dissertation is the presentation of a model for communicative competence. The originality of the model and the robust foundation of its constituents stand out as key strengths.
- d. *Model of Intercultural Competence*: The dissertation contributes significantly by designing the model for the process of shaping intercultural competence among comprehensive school students as active members of cohesive societies. This model's practical significance lies in its content and structure, which were established through a rigorous analysis of various educational aspects. Factors such as students' psychological growth, needs, motivation, the definitions of intercultural competence, civic competence structure, recent pedagogical and methodological findings, and the identification of precise knowledge, skills, and abilities contributed to building the model of intercultural competence.
- e. *Practical Contributions and School Collaboration*: Practical impact is prominently demonstrated through collaborations with schools, such as Gymnasium No. 22 in Melitopol, and the initiation of the international project "The PEN PAL Project." This project engaged students from secondary and senior schools in China and Ukraine, including Oriental Cambridge International School (Shenyang) and Melitopol Gymnasium No. 22. These significant contributions are reflected in 22 publications, including 4 articles in specialized professional journals, 11 in international conference proceedings, 4 in Google Scholar-indexed conference collections, 2 articles in a collection of scientific articles for students and post-graduate students at Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, and 1 article in a foreign collection of scientific articles based in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Collaborative articles acknowledge Alona's vital role,

particularly in material collection, competence approach definition, content development for teaching English through culture, and drawing comprehensive conclusions.

5. Content, style and structure of the text.

The content and structure of the research work are logical and coherent. The author navigates through various educational paradigms, concepts, and historical perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of intercultural competence from pedagogical, psychological, social, and methodological angles. A standout aspect of this work is the presentation of pertinent conclusions and the consistent summarization of previously presented information throughout the entire text, ensuring its cohesiveness and coherence. The overarching conclusions capture the essence of the research and correspond to the stated objectives.

6. Areas for improvement.

- a. *Concept analysis.* While the research work demonstrates a profound analysis of terminology, it overlooks certain essential concepts. For instance, the term 'culture' remains inadequately defined, though it has over 200 different definitions from various perspectives and fields of study. The single definition found on page 35 may not suffice, given that such a global concept requires deeper exploration.
- b. *Terminology inconsistencies.* The terms inconsistencies have been observed throughout the dissertation. For example, it is unclear whether the author refers to a 'cultured person' or a 'cultural person' (pages 33-34). Similarly, the terms 'personally-oriented educational paradigm' and 'personality-oriented educational paradigm' are used interchangeably (page 40).
- c. *Defining intercultural competence.* The assertion that intercultural competence is not sufficiently developed in scientific literature can only be partially agreed upon. The concept of intercultural competence indeed evolves and acquires new meanings over time. However, the dissertation fails to consider M. Byram's model of intercultural competence, which could significantly contribute to the research objectives. Furthermore, incorporating the perspectives on intercultural competence from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) in both 2001 and 2020 editions which is a core European document for teaching foreign languages development would enhance the understanding and presentation of this competence.

. Conclusion

The author skillfully merged the objective of developing students' intercultural competence, which primarily involves communication with individuals from foreign countries, with the goal of nurturing students' active citizenship, which is centered around engaging with their native heritage, domestic interactions, and problem-solving within their own culture. The common foundation for these seemingly divergent processes was identified as the cultivation of respect, tolerance, and responsibility, all of which are equally crucial for both inner and outer forms of communication.

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.

Reviewer/Opponent: Maryana Natsiuk

Scientific degree - PhD in Pedagogy

scientific title – Associate Professor

position, institution - Higher Educational Private University "Dnipro Humanitarian University

Signature



Maryana Natsiuk

I certify the signature

Stamp



