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Bridging Cultural Differences through Online Language Teaching: Insights from Nine Years of Practice

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Abstract

This study explores how online English language teaching can foster intercultural understanding among learners from Europe and Asia. It is based on nine years of teaching experience and adopts a qualitative, classroom-based approach, drawing on learner feedback, classroom observations, and participation in culturally focused speaking clubs.

A key element of the practice is the use of speaking clubs on cultural differences, where learners discuss topics such as communication styles, educational systems, social norms, and cultural traditions. These sessions go beyond information exchange and encourage participants to compare perspectives, reflect on their own cultural assumptions, and engage in meaningful dialogue with peers from different backgrounds.

Unlike contexts where cultural or ideological discussions may lead to comparison or implicit competition, the English language learning environment provides a neutral space centered on communication. This shared linguistic focus reduces defensive attitudes and supports more open and respectful intercultural interaction.

The findings suggest that such practices enhance intercultural awareness, broaden learners' perspectives, and foster a sense of cultural closeness. In many cases, learners demonstrate increased curiosity about other cultures and a willingness to explore them beyond the classroom context. The study highlights the role of language education as a bridge for reducing cultural barriers and promoting global understanding.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Online Language Teaching, Speaking Clubs, Cultural Awareness, Qualitative Research, Global Competence