



BUSINESS GAMES AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FOR DEVELOPING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN LINGUISTICS EDUCATION

LOS JUEGOS DE NEGOCIOS COMO HERRAMIENTA PEDAGÓGICA PARA EL DESARROLLO DE LA COMPETENCIA INTERCULTURAL EN LA EDUCA-

Tatiana Zhukova^{1,3*}

E-mail: tatianazhu@mail.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2184-4814>

Vladislava Martynova²

E-mail: vmartynova@mymail.academy

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6797-1456>

Zhang Wen^{3*}

E-mail: zhwen@mymail.academy

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7631-7712>

Karine Apresyan³

E-mail: kgapresyan@fa.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8948-3269>

Ruslan Ozarnov³

E-mail: r.v.ozarnov@mymail.academy

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4414-3452>

¹ National University of Science & Technology (MISIS), Russia.

² Darya Vysotsky's Tutoring agency, Russia.

³ Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Russia.

*Corresponding autor

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of business games, particularly business theatre, as a pedagogical strategy for developing cross-cultural competence among linguistics students of Generation Alpha. In response to global shifts and reduced access to authentic intercultural experiences, the study implemented a structured game-based learning module within a university-level foreign language course. A systemic approach was used to design and evaluate immersive role-play scenarios reflecting real-world intercultural challenges. The pedagogical experiment demonstrated significant improvement in students' cultural awareness, adaptability, and communication skills. Results showed 60% of participants achieved a high level of cross-cultural competence after the intervention. The findings underscore the value of active learning methods in fostering critical intercultural understanding, particularly in digital-native student cohorts. Business theatre proved effective in bridging theory and practice, promoting empathy, and preparing future linguists for multicultural professional environments.

Keywords:

Education, cross-cultural competence, business theatre, generation alpha, immersive learning.

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina el uso de juegos de negocios, en particular el teatro empresarial, como estrategia pedagógica para desarrollar la competencia intercultural en estudiantes de lingüística de la Generación Alfa. En respuesta a los cambios globales y al acceso limitado a experiencias interculturales auténticas, el estudio implementó un módulo de aprendizaje estructurado basado en juegos dentro de un curso universitario de lenguas extranjeras. Se empleó un enfoque sistémico para diseñar y evaluar escenarios de juego de roles inmersivos que reflejaban desafíos interculturales reales. El experimento pedagógico demostró una mejora significativa en la conciencia cultural, la adaptabilidad y las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes. Los resultados mostraron que el 60 % de los participantes alcanzó un alto nivel de competencia intercultural tras la intervención. Los hallazgos subrayan el valor de los métodos de aprendizaje activo para fomentar



la comprensión intercultural crítica, especialmente en las cohortes de estudiantes nativos digitales. El teatro empresarial demostró ser eficaz para conectar la teoría con la práctica, promover la empatía y preparar a los futuros lingüistas para entornos profesionales multiculturales.

Palabras clave:

Educación, competencia intercultural, teatro empresarial, generación alfa, aprendizaje inmersivo.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of developing cross-cultural competence in linguistics education cannot be overstated in today's globalized and interconnected world. As societies become increasingly diverse and communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries intensifies, the capacity to understand, respect, and interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds has become an essential professional and social skill. In particular, graduates of linguistics and foreign language programs are expected not only to master the linguistic system of a language but also to possess a profound awareness of the cultural and pragmatic dimensions that shape communication. Without this competence, even highly proficient speakers risk miscommunication, misunderstanding, or cultural insensitivity in their interactions. Therefore, higher education institutions are challenged to design innovative pedagogical models that combine linguistic expertise with cultural intelligence, empathy, and adaptability.

In this context, the teaching of linguistics and foreign languages must evolve beyond traditional paradigms that emphasize grammar, vocabulary, and translation. While such components remain essential, they do not fully prepare students for the complexities of real-world communication, which involves navigating implicit cultural codes, nonverbal cues, and differing worldviews. Conventional approaches often rely heavily on lectures, memorization, and written exercises, which tend to promote passive learning rather than active engagement. Consequently, many students graduate with strong linguistic knowledge but limited ability to apply it in authentic, culturally diverse contexts. To address this gap, educators must integrate methods that encourage active participation, experiential learning, and the development of intercultural awareness through direct practice.

One of the most promising tools to achieve this goal is the use of business games in education. Business games represent an interactive and experiential learning strategy that simulates real-life professional or social scenarios where communication, negotiation, and cultural understanding play crucial roles. In linguistics and foreign language education, they allow students to step into the roles

of professionals, entrepreneurs, diplomats, or educators operating in multicultural environments. This method transforms the classroom into a dynamic learning space where theory and practice merge, providing students with the opportunity to apply their linguistic skills in realistic and context-rich situations. Moreover, business games promote collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, and reflection—key elements for the development of cross-cultural competence.

The present study focuses on exploring the pedagogical potential of business games as a tool for developing cross-cultural competence among linguistics students. Its purpose is to demonstrate that, beyond being a form of entertainment or motivation, these games can serve as structured educational instruments that foster intercultural learning outcomes. Specifically, the research seeks to achieve three main objectives: first, to analyze the conceptual and structural components of cross-cultural competence from the standpoint of leading theoretical models; second, to examine the pedagogical and psychological foundations that justify the integration of business games into linguistics education; and third, to propose a practical model of a business game adapted to university-level foreign language courses.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the introduction of a “business theatre” model, a hybrid form of educational simulation that combines gamified activities, role-playing, and dramatization to create immersive learning experiences. This approach resonates strongly with Generation Alpha's learning preferences, which favor interactive, technology-enhanced, and visually engaging environments over traditional didactic methods. By simulating intercultural business negotiations, multilingual teamwork, or cross-border project collaborations, the business theatre allows students to confront realistic communication challenges, develop empathy, and practice flexibility in intercultural interactions.

From a theoretical perspective, this research situates game-based learning within the broader framework of systemic and competency-based education. It builds upon Vygotskian sociocultural theory, experiential learning, and the dialogic principle of Bakhtin, emphasizing that meaningful learning occurs through interaction, reflection, and participation in social contexts. Business games operationalize these ideas by engaging students in authentic communicative exchanges that require not only linguistic precision but also emotional intelligence, adaptability, and an appreciation for cultural diversity. Thus, they become an effective means of integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of intercultural competence.

The practical significance of the study is reflected in its potential to guide educators in designing, implementing,

and evaluating business game activities for linguistics and language programs. The proposed model includes clear learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and adaptable frameworks that can be tailored to different linguistic and cultural contexts. For example, instructors can design scenarios that involve cross-cultural team projects, intercultural conflict resolution, or the launch of multilingual business ventures. Through such simulations, students can experiment with language use, learn to manage communication barriers, and develop strategies for achieving mutual understanding in multicultural environments.

Furthermore, this approach contributes to addressing one of the key deficiencies identified in current pedagogy: the lack of systematic, experiential strategies for cultivating cross-cultural competence. While many curricula recognize the importance of intercultural learning, few provide structured methodologies for achieving it in practice. Business games offer a concrete, replicable solution that aligns with modern educational paradigms, including constructivism, active learning, and digital pedagogy. Their adaptability also makes them suitable for online or hybrid learning environments, expanding access to intercultural training even in virtual classrooms.

The integration of business games into linguistics education represents a transformative shift in how cross-cultural competence can be developed in higher education. By immersing students in realistic, problem-based, and culturally diverse scenarios, educators can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This method not only enhances motivation and engagement but also prepares students to become culturally responsive communicators capable of thriving in global professional and academic contexts. Ultimately, fostering cross-cultural competence through innovative pedagogies such as business games is essential for equipping future linguists with the skills and attitudes required to navigate and contribute meaningfully to the multicultural realities of the 21st century.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Authors used the following materials: theoretical foundations of cross-cultural competence development, research on active learning methodologies, and studies on business games in education. We chose the systemic approach as the leading one for the purposes of the present research. This approach considers any system (object) as a set of interconnected elements with defined inputs (resources), outputs (goals), connections with the external environment, and feedback mechanisms. Its essence lies in implementing the requirements of general systems theory, where each research object is examined both as a complex system and as an element of a broader system.

The approach emphasizes self-organization, integrity, and relative autonomy of systems, enabling modeling of interactions within socio-cultural contexts.

For our research, the systematic approach proves particularly valuable as it:

- 1) Reveals the structural mechanisms of cross-cultural competence formation
- 2) Provides operational frameworks for analyzing business game components
- 3) Facilitates direct comparison between traditional and innovative teaching methods.

We conceptualize the process of developing cross-cultural competence through business games as an educational system comprising interconnected components: pedagogical objectives, game scenarios, student interactions, and competence assessment. This systemic perspective allows examination of how globalization processes influence modern educational practices, particularly in linguist training. The literature review combines theoretical analysis of cross-cultural competence models with empirical studies of active learning applications. The theoretical foundations explain key concepts, while empirical data supports practical implementation strategies and identifies areas requiring further investigation. This dual approach ensures comprehensive understanding of business games' potential in developing intercultural communication skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the most significant trends in the development of modern education, the following should be noted:

According to research data examining the development of globalization from 1870 to 2021, the global community is currently experiencing a phase of "slowbalisation" (Zhou et al., 2025). This situation has a negative impact on the conditions for the development of modern education and underscores the importance of fostering cross-cultural competence under these new circumstances.

The process of disintegration within the global scientific community has significantly impacted the education sector, leading to reduced student mobility and the forced isolation of the domestic education system. In recent years, a trend toward the isolation of scientific communities has emerged. For instance, in March 2022, ETS, the organizer of international language proficiency exams such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System), restricted access to these exams for individuals from Russia and Belarus. It is well known that many linguistics students relied on these exams to certify their language proficiency

and pursue research or academic activities abroad, particularly in European countries - a possibility that is now effectively eliminated.

Additionally, specialists in linguistic research have encountered challenges due to restricted access to a wide range of authentic materials authored by foreign scholars. Foreign language instructors to develop essential competencies, including cross-cultural competence, among linguistics students, have traditionally used these resources. In March 2022, major scientific databases such as *Scopus* and *Web of Science* blocked access to research data from most international publications for researchers in Russia and Belarus. This restriction reduced the volume of accessible scientific information by 97.5%, placing specialists in an extremely difficult position. Consequently, the exchange of knowledge, findings, and achievements in linguistics has been hindered due to the disruption of intercultural dialogue, underscoring the pressing need to develop cross-cultural competence among students in this field.

This fragmentation poses significant risks for Generation Alpha, who may lack exposure to diverse perspectives and collaborative problem-solving experiences essential for developing cross-cultural competence. As digital natives, Generation Alpha students are highly adept at navigating virtual environments and leveraging technology for learning. However, their reliance on digital platforms often limits their interactions to curated content or algorithm-driven social media, which can reinforce echo chambers and stereotypes rather than fostering genuine intercultural understanding. Without meaningful exposure to authentic multicultural interactions, their perception of cultural diversity may remain superficial, focusing on idealized notions of inclusivity and equity rather than the nuanced realities of cross-cultural dynamics.

Furthermore, the rapid deceleration of globalization has also affected the development of joint educational programs previously available to students from universities across different countries. Due to deglobalization trends, foreign institutions have been compelled to isolate access to their educational systems. For example, Herzen State Pedagogical University in Saint Petersburg suspended collaborations with Jagiellonian University in Poland, the University of Freiburg in Germany, and the international consortium "University of the Arctic." This situation highlights the potential decline in the domestic scientific and educational potential within the field of linguistics.

Another significant indicator of the negative impact of deglobalization on linguistics is the growing uncertainty regarding the relevance of studying certain foreign languages. Key motivating factors for linguistics students, such as opportunities for employment abroad, collaboration, and

participation in joint research activities, have become unattainable due to the complex geopolitical climate (Zhou et al., 2025). The domestic education system has shifted its focus toward strengthening national identity, as evidenced by Russian President Vladimir Putin's August 2024 decree establishing the "Council under the President of the Russian Federation for the Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Supporting the Russian Language and the Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation" (President of the Russian Federation, 2024a). This policy, combined with strained relations with some European countries, has negatively influenced the demand for linguists proficient in specific foreign languages, such as French or German, in the professional market.

Nevertheless, despite the trend toward the disintegration of the international space, the process of globalization, though slowed, has not been entirely interrupted, as it merely shifts its vector. For Generation Alpha, who are digital natives, globalization has further amplified their access to information through online platforms. However, this access often lacks depth and authenticity, leading to superficial cultural understanding. This paradox – hyper-connectivity without meaningful intercultural engagement – underscores the need for innovative pedagogical tools for fostering cross-cultural competence. Meanwhile, specialists continue to study the characteristics of cross-cultural competence development. This is evidenced by the establishment of a new strategy for scientific and educational cooperation between Russia and countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, as well as efforts to increase the number of international students. Specifically, "by 2030, the number of foreign students enrolled in higher education programs at Russian higher education institutions and scientific organizations should reach no less than 500,000 individuals" (Dyudyukina, 2022; President of the Russian Federation, 2024b; Rarenko, 2023).

Another factor that influenced the weakening of integration within the international scientific community was the consequences of COVID-19. In particular, research activities in the field of linguistics were significantly impacted by the widespread necessity for social isolation, which substantially narrowed the range of opportunities for participation in international exchange programs, internships, and subsequent employment. This led to the forced separation of scientific and educational experiences.

Moreover, the concept of "cultural myopia" is currently widespread, characterized as the perception of reality and the behavior of others through the lens of stereotypical notions about people of different ethnicities. An analysis of the experience gained during the global struggle with COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of overcoming communicative and cultural barriers by taking into account fundamental cultural differences.

This challenge is particularly relevant in the context of Generation Alpha, the cohort born from 2010 onward, who are now entering educational systems (Zierock et al., 2025). As digital natives, Generation Alpha students are highly adept at navigating virtual environments and leveraging technology for learning. However, their reliance on digital platforms often limits their exposure to authentic multicultural interactions, making them more vulnerable to misconceptions about cultural diversity and inclusion.

Generation Alpha's upbringing in an era dominated by digital communication has created a paradox: while they are more connected than any previous generation, they often lack firsthand experiences with cultural diversity. This disconnect can lead to a superficial understanding of inclusivity, where cultural differences are acknowledged but not deeply understood or appreciated. For instance, their interactions with diverse cultures are frequently mediated through social media or curated content, which may reinforce stereotypes rather than dismantle them. This vulnerability highlights the urgent need for educators to integrate pedagogical tools that foster genuine cross-cultural competence. Business games, virtual simulations, and scenario-based learning offer immersive environments where Generation Alpha students can engage with real-world intercultural challenges, helping them move beyond stereotypes and develop a nuanced appreciation for diversity.

Furthermore, this generation places a high value on inclusivity and equity, reflecting broader societal trends toward diversity and social justice. However, without adequate exposure to meaningful intercultural experiences, their understanding of these concepts may remain abstract or idealized. By incorporating interactive methodologies like business theatre, educators can bridge this gap, enabling Generation Alpha students to practice adaptive communication, contextual flexibility, and reflective practice in culturally diverse settings. These skills are essential for preparing Generation Alpha to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world, where cultural misunderstandings can have significant personal and professional consequences.

Thus, the consequences of the pandemic highlight the need for transformative approaches in linguistics education, including in fostering cross-cultural competence among Generation Alpha learners (McKeever et al., 2021).

Insufficient attention to the development of materials for fostering cross-cultural competence

Despite the evident importance of cross-cultural competence and the heightened research interest in its development within the field of linguistics, there is a lack of mechanisms and tools for fostering Generation Alpha

students' skills in analyzing the characteristics of various ethnic groups and cultures (for instance, foreign language instructors face the issue of restricted access to a range of authentic materials by overseas authors).

in the development of modern education significantly influence the process of forming and developing cross-cultural competence among Generation Alpha linguistics students, particularly amid a noticeable decline in the study of other cultures. In this regard, educators must carefully select teaching methods, adapting chosen instructional materials for foreign language classes with the aim of preparing future linguistics professionals for effective cross-cultural communication in a multinational professional environment.

Cross-cultural competence and its component structure

The development of cross-cultural competence holds particular significance in the university learning process. Cross-cultural competence represents an individual's ability to fully integrate into a multicultural society through interaction based on a deep understanding of differences - both between the characteristic features of various cultures in general and within the context of one's own ethnic heritage as compared to the culture associated with the foreign language being studied.

Based on the research of (Earley & Ang, 2003; Feola et al., 2024; Osmushina et al., 2023), and other scholars, the following structural components of cross-cultural competence can be identified: a profound awareness of the significance of cultural diversity; readiness for integration into a culturally diverse society; adoption of a flexible position towards continuously changing cultural contexts; and the ability to identify one's national identity within the context of cultural diversity (Earley & Ang, 2003; Feola et al., 2024; Osmushina et al., 2023).

1. A profound awareness of the significance of cultural diversity. This component includes knowledge about the characteristics and specifics of other cultures, as well as an individual's recognition of their own national identity in comparison with other participants in cross-cultural communication (Earley & Ang, 2003).
2. Readiness for integration into a society characterized by cultural diversity. By readiness, we mean the individual's ability to effectively adapt their communicative tools and strategies in accordance with the demands imposed by the prevailing cultural context (Osmushina et al., 2023).
3. Adopting a flexible position towards continuously changing cultural contexts. In this case, the focus is on the need to regulate one's own reactions and existing behavioral patterns, adapting them in accordance

with the requirements dictated by the specific cultural characteristics of individuals.

4. The ability to find one's national identity within the context of cultural diversity. It is important to understand that the development of cross-cultural competence, based on the understanding of the global cultural worldview through comparison, is impossible without an individual's awareness of their own origins and position in a multicultural society (Feola et al., 2024). Clearly, it is essential not only to identify the characteristic features of various cultures but also to clearly recognize one's stance in evaluating cultural reality, one's national identity, and how it does or does not influence the course of cross-cultural communication.

Moreover, an important aspect of cross-cultural competence is its connection with emotional intelligence, which enables the effective recognition and regulation of emotions in intercultural interactions. Research indicates that the ability to empathize and adapt significantly enhances the outcomes of cross-cultural communication, particularly in professional environments. For instance, linguists working on international projects often face the need not only to understand linguistic nuances but also to interpret non-verbal signals, such as gestures or communication distance, which requires a high level of cultural sensitivity (Earley & Ang, 2003). Thus, cross-cultural competence represents a synthesis of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills.

In summary, it is evident that all components, to varying degrees, reflect the learner's position regarding new knowledge about their own cultural attitudes and their understanding.

Opportunities for applying business games to develop cross-cultural competence

In the approved order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (2020), the Federal State Educational Standards (FSSES 3++) outline the requirements for the learning outcomes of the bachelor's program 45.03.02. The key outcome is the application of specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies in real professional communication scenarios, including interaction within a multicultural educational environment. Future linguistics professionals must be able to perceive and accurately interpret cultural diversity, adapting appropriate interaction and communication strategies in specific situations to build effective cross-cultural dialogue (Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, 2020). One such strategy can be business games.

In their work, Sørensen & Meyer (2007), analyzing the educational and intellectual activities of students engaged in business games as part of foreign language learning, highlight their focus on context. While studying the

language, its features, forms, and application through this methodological tool, students concentrate not so much on the act of speech itself as a task, but rather on the relevance of the phrases, expressions, forms, or intonations they choose in accordance with the created scenario. This scenario depends both on the overall goal and on other individuals and their behavioral characteristics, as all these factors influence the further course of the game.

Several other foreign researchers (Ishaq et al., 2022), while exploring the possibilities of developing a universal business game for use in foreign language teaching, emphasize the importance of the cultural aspect. According to the researchers, everything—from the selection of materials to the consideration of behavioral patterns and gestures used by representatives of different cultures - affects the scenario of the business game, which allows learners to deeply immerse themselves in the communicative context. Thus, business games expose learners to extensive cultural influence.

In the works of Selevko (1998), business games are described as a universal technology capable of achieving multiple goals within foreign language teaching. One such goal identified by the researcher is the development of the learner's ability not only to adapt to the conditions created within the game scenario but also, through deep immersion in the context and experiencing the situation as a new communicative—and, importantly, cultural - experience, to identify and account for the specifics of interaction with a given subject. This is considered one of the factors contributing to the achievement of the game's objectives (Selevko, 1998).

The study by Kondratieva et al. (2021) makes several relevant contributions to the field of language pedagogy and intercultural education. First, it provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of business games as an interactive method for teaching professional language to foreign students. By integrating real-life business scenarios into the classroom, the authors demonstrate that such simulations enhance students' communicative competence, motivation, and ability to apply linguistic knowledge in authentic professional contexts.

Second, the research highlights the interdisciplinary value of business games, showing how they combine linguistic, cultural, and professional training in a single pedagogical framework. This aligns with contemporary approaches that emphasize experiential learning and task-based instruction, where learners acquire not only linguistic skills but also pragmatic and socio-cultural awareness.

Third, the study contributes a structured model for the design and implementation of business games in language instruction, outlining specific stages such as scenario development, role assignment, problem-solving, and

reflection. This methodological clarity offers educators practical guidance for integrating game-based learning into foreign language curricula.

The article underscores the importance of developing cross-cultural competence through simulation-based interaction. The authors argue that business games foster adaptability, collaboration, and intercultural understanding—skills increasingly vital for students preparing to work in globalized environments. In this sense, the study bridges the gap between traditional language teaching and the growing need for culturally responsive and professionally oriented education.

Thus, both foreign and domestic scholars acknowledge the potential of business games in foreign language teaching, emphasizing not only the possibility of recreating realistic professional scenarios in which learners demonstrate and practically apply their acquired theoretical knowledge but also the ability to create a motivating educational environment through the establishment of frameworks, clear task formulation, and adherence to specific principles. In such an environment, students are driven by their engagement in the scenario and their desire to achieve goals (in the context of integrating business games into foreign language teaching - to ensure successful communicative acts). This allows them to critically analyze the communicative context that emerges during the interaction of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, the following potential applications of business theatre as a highly effective tool can be identified:

1 Awareness of One's Own Cultural Uniqueness: Assuming the role of another person within a specific problematic professional and cultural scenario fosters the development of empathy and an awareness of one's own cultural stereotypes among students, which is an essential component of cross-cultural competence.

2 Sensitivity to Cultural Diversity: The process of active cognitive and communicative engagement within the framework of business theatre requires students to employ creative approaches and analytical thinking, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of cultural differences and conflict resolution strategies in multicultural environments.

3 Flexibility and Adaptability in Intercultural Interaction: Through participation in theatrical performances, students enhance both their verbal and non-verbal communication skills, which are necessary for establishing contact and effectively advancing the plot to resolve problematic communicative situations. This, in turn, contributes to a better understanding of cultural nuances and interaction dynamics with representatives of other cultures.

There are two main subtypes of business games (Yun-Hai, 2015):

Business Theatre

This is a special teaching method based on the use of theatrical art for the active development of communicative skills.

The specific features of implementing business theatre are as follows:

- elements of expressiveness and emotional engagement achieved through the personal, spiritual, and conscious embodiment of the character;
- a high level of reflective activity through the analysis of both the overall communicative context and one's own position;
- exploration of new context-oriented situations (Yun-Hai, 2015).

Psychodrama

This type of business game is aimed at revealing both the communicative potential of the learner and their personal qualities and experiences. This method is based on the use of dramatic techniques to analyze emotions and assess relationships between participants.

The specific features of implementing psychodrama are as follows:

- autonomy in choosing strategies and vectors for communication development through the concept of spontaneity and relaxed participant behaviour;
- focus on the connection between linguistic phenomena and the socio-cultural aspect of communication;
- various interaction formats, with participants independently determining the modes of collaboration with others (Maya & Maraver, 2020).

We have chosen business theatre as one of the effective methods for developing cross-cultural competence in Generation Alpha linguistics students, as its use allows for maximum engagement in multicultural activities.

Implementation of business theatre during foreign language classes for generation Alpha linguistics students

In higher education institutions, the current thematic plan of classes in the syllabus for the discipline "Practical Course of the First Foreign Language" for second-year linguistics students includes a module such as "Nature and Nurture." Below, we provide an example of an algorithm for working with business games, using the example of a business theatre "Cultural Landscape: Conflict and Understanding."

1. Introduction to the Plot and Analysis of the Presented Roles:

First and foremost, students are required to thoroughly familiarize themselves with the presented plot of the business game:

You are a team of international linguists working on a guidebook for natural tourist attractions. During the discussion, disagreements arise due to differences in the perception of natural objects and their significance for tourism. Your task is to find a compromise solution that satisfies all participants.

At this stage, linguistics students first delve into the essence of the upcoming professional game. The linguistics students are participating in an international linguistic conference dedicated to the development of a guidebook for natural tourist attractions in various parts of the world. During the discussion, participants in the game — linguistics specialists from different countries — encounter disagreements due to variations in the perception of natural sites and their significance for global tourism. The task of the linguistics students is to find a compromise solution that would satisfy all participants.

Within the framework of this stage, the linguistics students must analyze the proposed roles, which they will independently distribute among themselves and act out, thereby experiencing a specific cultural and communicative context through each role. The following roles are presented in this game:

1. American Linguist: Pragmatist, focused on convenience and accessibility for tourists.
2. Japanese Linguist: Traditionalist, values harmony and minimal interference with nature.
3. German Linguist: Organizer proposes strict rules and standards.
4. Brazilian Linguist: Enthusiast emphasises the uniqueness of nature and ecotourism.
5. Russian Linguist: Adventurer suggests extreme types of tourism.

Each role is accompanied by a brief description that reveals certain aspects and characteristics of the cultural worldview of individuals from a particular country. During the analysis and distribution of roles, linguistics students draw upon their personal cultural experiences, drawing conclusions based on their own understanding of behavioral patterns typical of representatives of various cultures. Thus, before proceeding to the stage of preparing speeches and presentations, linguistics students must accurately interpret the given context, conduct an analysis of a different cultural reality, and reflect on their own capabilities.

2. Preparation and Presentation of plays:

At the next stage, linguistics students engage in active work both in groups and individually. At this phase, they are faced with several tasks that require attention:

- preparation of specific lines;
- constructing dialogue with other conference participants, exchanging ideas, and engaging in joint reflection;
- analysis of potential disagreements arising during the discussion and methods for their resolution;
- consideration of relevant non-verbal communication attributes appropriate to the situation;
- demonstration of the performance before other linguistics students;

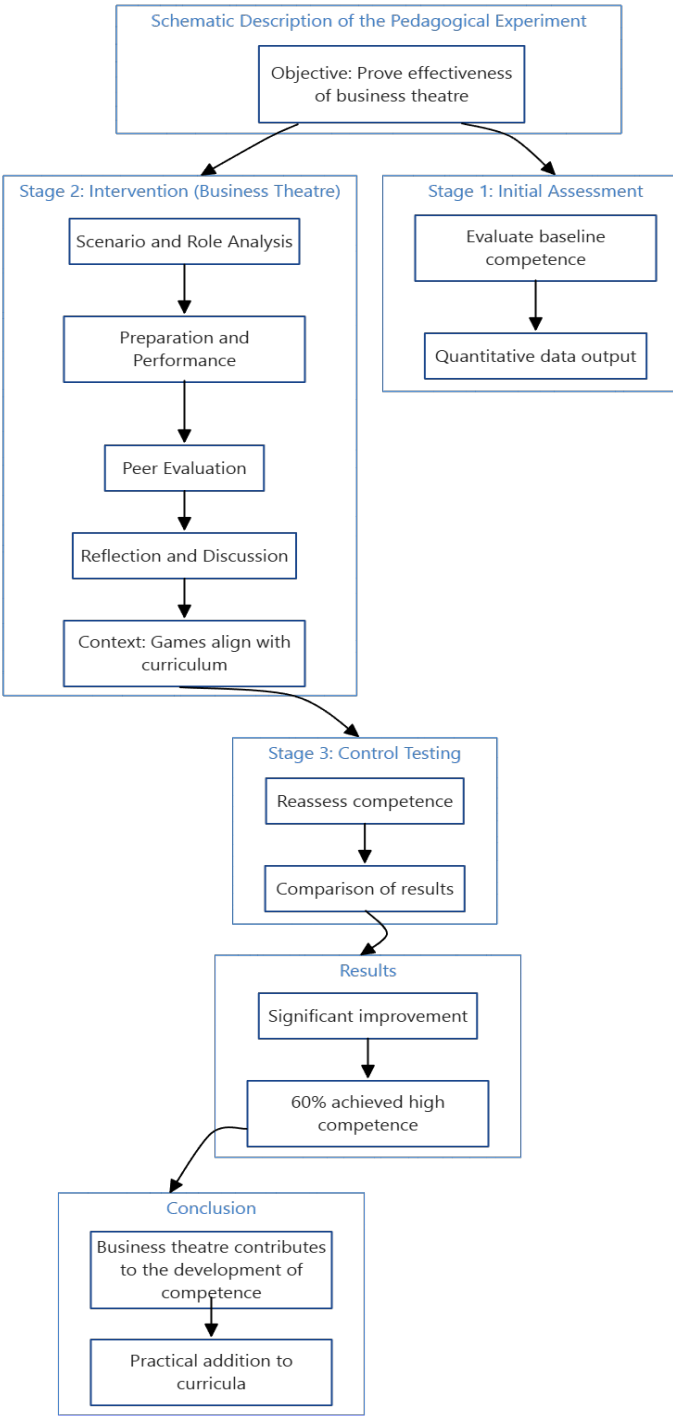
3. Peer assessment:

Since the process of developing the cognitive component of cross-cultural competence (knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural attitudes) is closely tied to active reflective activity, students are required to conduct a detailed analysis and qualitative evaluation of their peers' work. This evaluation should be guided by specific criteria developed by us based on an analysis of the component structure of cross-cultural competence, as presented in the theoretical section of the study.

The following schema provides a structured overview of the pedagogical experiment designed to explore the effectiveness of business theatre in developing cross-cultural competence among linguistics students. It outlines the key stages of the research process, from initial assessment to post-intervention evaluation, and highlights the core components of the business theatre methodology. The schema also summarizes the findings, practical implications, and future research directions, offering a clear and concise visual representation of the study's design and outcomes. This schema is

intended to guide educators, researchers, and curriculum developers in understanding and implementing similar approaches in linguistics education (Figure 1):

Fig. 1: Schematic description of the pedagogical experiment: business theatre for cross-cultural competence development



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Results of the conducted pedagogical experiment

The assessment of cross-cultural competence development via the questionnaire was conducted based on the maximum score achievable for task completion, which was 18 points. The results were analyzed using a three-level scale: low level – 0 to 6 points; medium level – 7 to 12 points; high level – 13 to 18 points. A full report of the control questionnaire results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.: The results of the control questionnaire.

Students	Scores
1	13
2	15
3	8
4	16
5	6
6	15
7	6
8	12
9	12
10	14

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Subsequently, the total scores were calculated, and the average level of cross-cultural competence among second-year linguistics students at NITU MISIS was determined. The results are presented in Table 2.

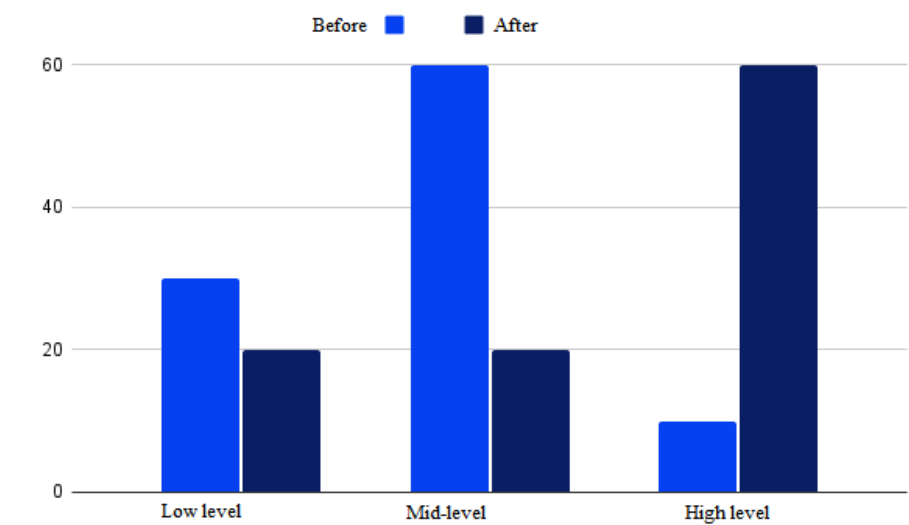
Table 2. Level of development of cross-cultural competence (knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural attitudes).

	Low	Medium	High
Number of students	2	2	6
Average percentage	20%	20%	60%

Source: Authors' own elaboration

At the initial stage of the study, the majority of participants demonstrated a medium level of cross-cultural competence development, with only one student achieving a high level, while three students showed low results. However, by the end of the control phase of the experiment, significant improvement was observed: the number of students with a high level of cross-cultural competence increased, while the proportion of students with a low level decreased. In summary, a significant number of students demonstrated a high level of competence, two students showed a medium level, and another two exhibited a low level. The dynamics of changes in the level of cross-cultural competence are illustrated in Figure 2.

Fig. 2: Changes in the level of cross-cultural competence among second-year linguistics students of group BLG-23-6 before and after the experiment aimed at developing cross-cultural competence



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The following criteria of assessment can be suggested for discussion (Table 3)

Table 3: Criteria for evaluating students' work during the business game.

Criterion	1 point (low)	3 points (medium)	5 points (high)
Deep awareness of the significance of cultural diversity	Demonstrates limited understanding of cultural diversity. Struggles to recognize or appreciate the value of different cultures.	Shows some understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. Recognizes the value of different cultures but may lack depth in understanding their significance.	Demonstrates a profound understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. Consistently recognizes and values the significance of different cultures and their contributions.
Readiness to integrate into a society characterized by cultural diversity	Shows reluctance or difficulty in integrating into culturally diverse settings. May resist or avoid interactions with people from different cultures.	Demonstrates some willingness to integrate into culturally diverse settings. Engages in interactions with people from different cultures but may need encouragement or support.	Actively seeks to integrate into culturally diverse settings. Comfortably and effectively engages with people from different cultures, showing genuine interest and respect.
Adoption of a Flexible Stance Towards Continuously Changing Cultural Contexts	Struggles to adapt to changing cultural contexts. Resists new cultural norms or practices and prefers familiar environments.	Shows some flexibility in adapting to changing cultural contexts. Willing to consider new cultural norms or practices but may need time to adjust.	Demonstrates high flexibility and adaptability in changing cultural contexts. Embraces new cultural norms and practices with ease and shows a proactive approach to learning and integrating them
Ability to Find One's National Identity Within the Context of Cultural Diversity	Struggles to reconcile national identity with cultural diversity. May feel conflicted or confused about one's identity in diverse settings.	Shows some ability to reconcile national identity with cultural diversity. Begins to understand and appreciate the role of national identity within a diverse context but may still experience some uncertainty.	Demonstrates a strong ability to reconcile national identity with cultural diversity. Clearly understands and appreciates the role of national identity within a diverse context, showing confidence and pride in one's identity while respecting others.

Source: Authors' own elaboration

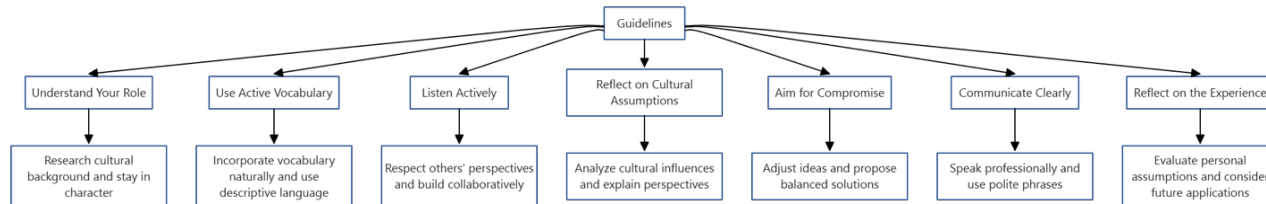
1. Balancing role-playing and cultural complexity in business games for linguistics students

The final and one of the most crucial stages of working with business games is the discussion and reflection following the linguistics students' performances. At this stage, each participant shares not only their general impressions and observations but also provides detailed feedback regarding the quality of other students' work, basing their responses on specific criteria and supporting them with examples. In addition, linguistics students are required to analyze their own performance as well, enabling them to evaluate the comments made by other participants. Finally, the instructor shares their reflections and provides comments.



Within the framework of implementing the plan for working with business games during English language classes it is crucial to create and maintain a positive and motivating educational environment where learners feel free to express their thoughts and convey various emotions during the game. Thus, to support students in their work, they are provided with guidelines highlighting the most important aspects related to successful performance and achieving communicative goals reflected in the given diagram (Figure 3):

Fig. 3. Guidelines for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication and Collaboration.



Source: Authors' own elaboration

While the structured framework of business theatre effectively develops cross-cultural competence, an important question arises: To what extent does role-playing culturally defined personas risk reinforcing simplified cultural narratives rather than fostering deeper intercultural understanding? The pedagogical benefit of assigning specific cultural roles lies in their ability to make complex cultural dynamics more accessible for learning. However, this approach may unintentionally promote generalized views of culture, where individual and subcultural differences are overlooked in favor of broad national stereotypes.

This tension between educational effectiveness and cultural simplification requires careful consideration. Structured role-playing offers learners clear examples for analyzing cultural differences, yet it is important to avoid static representations of culture in favor of more dynamic and context-aware interpretations. In the described business game, students are encouraged to fully embody their assigned roles, even when these differ from their personal perspectives. While this helps immersion, it may prioritize performance over critical reflection on cultural complexity.

2. A structured framework for business theatre: bridging theory, practice, and cultural complexity

Having explored the potential risks and reflective considerations inherent in role-playing culturally defined personas, it becomes clear that a structured yet flexible framework is essential to maximize the educational benefits of business games while mitigating oversimplifications of culture. The proposed model of business theatre addresses this need by integrating theoretical foundations, practical learning mechanisms, and reflective practices into a cohesive implementation strategy. Designed to foster cross-cultural competence among linguistics students, this model not only immerses participants in realistic multicultural scenarios but also emphasizes critical engagement with cultural complexity. The following section outlines the operational mechanisms and practical applications of this approach, demonstrating how structured role-playing, scenario immersion, and feedback-driven reflection collectively prepare students for the demands of globalized professional environments.

The proposed model of business theatre serves as an innovative pedagogical tool for fostering cross-cultural competence among linguist students. It integrates foundational trends, core theoretical components, and practical learning mechanisms into a cohesive framework. The model addresses contemporary challenges such as geopolitical shifts, post-pandemic educational disruptions, and evolving policy landscapes, which underscore the need for adaptable, culturally sensitive professionals.

Mechanism and Application

The business theatre method operates through immersive role-playing scenarios, where students assume culturally distinct roles (e.g., an American pragmatist negotiating with a Japanese traditionalist). These simulations replicate real-world professional contexts, such as multicultural project collaborations, requiring participants to engage in dialogue construction, non-verbal communication practice, and conflict resolution. Key features include:

1. **Role-Playing:** Students embody assigned cultural perspectives, analyzing behavioral patterns and adapting communication strategies.
2. **Scenario Immersion:** Realistic tasks (e.g., designing a multinational tourism guidebook) contextualize theoretical knowledge.

3. Reflection and Peer Assessment: Structured feedback, guided by criteria like cultural flexibility and integration readiness, ensures iterative improvement.

Practical Implementation

For instance, in a business theatre session titled “Cultural Landscape: Conflict and Understanding,” students negotiate divergent viewpoints on tourism development. The process involves:

- Preparation: Researching cultural backgrounds and scripting context-appropriate dialogue.
- Performance: Demonstrating adaptive communication and compromise.
- Evaluation: Peer reviews and instructor feedback align with cross-cultural competence metrics (e.g., awareness of cultural diversity, emotional regulation).

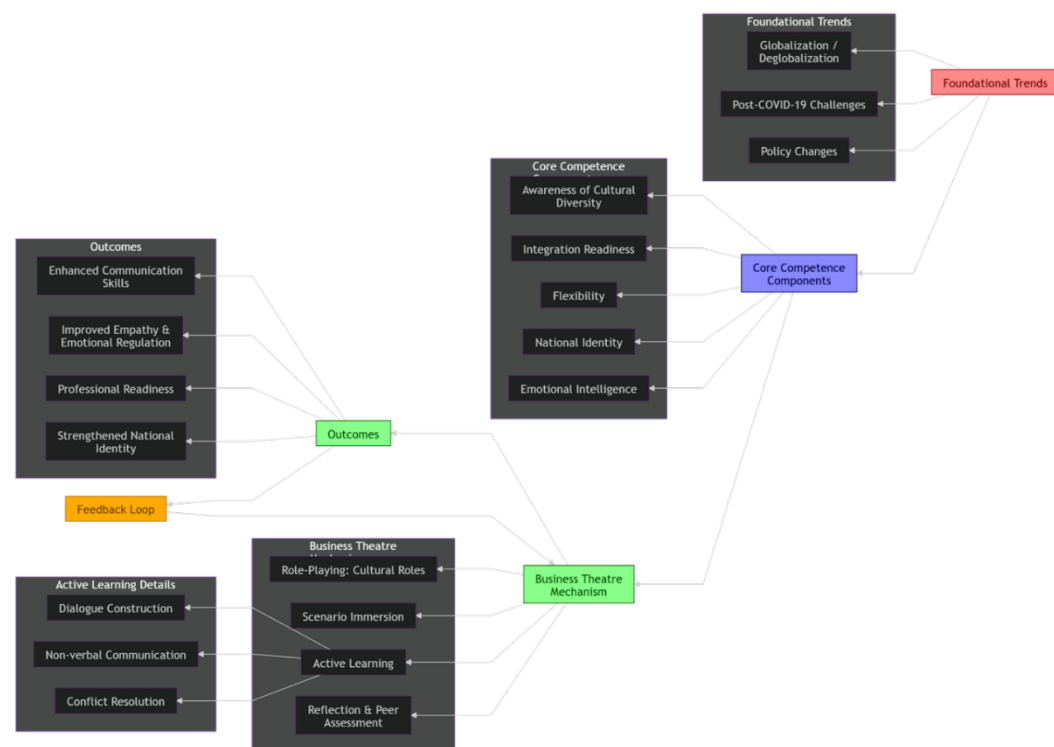
Outcomes

The model cultivates:

- Enhanced Communication Skills: Proficiency in navigating intercultural dialogue.
- Professional Readiness: Preparedness for multicultural work environments.
- Reflective Learning: Continuous self-assessment and adaptation through feedback loops.

By bridging theory and practice, business theatre equips linguist students with the tools to thrive in globalized settings while addressing modern educational challenges. Future research could explore its scalability in virtual environments or interdisciplinary curricula. Thus, the model for developing cross-cultural competence through business games in the context of modern education development should be based on the following key principles (Figure 4):

Fig. 4: Algorithm for working with the business game model and prospects for its application in developing cross-cultural competence

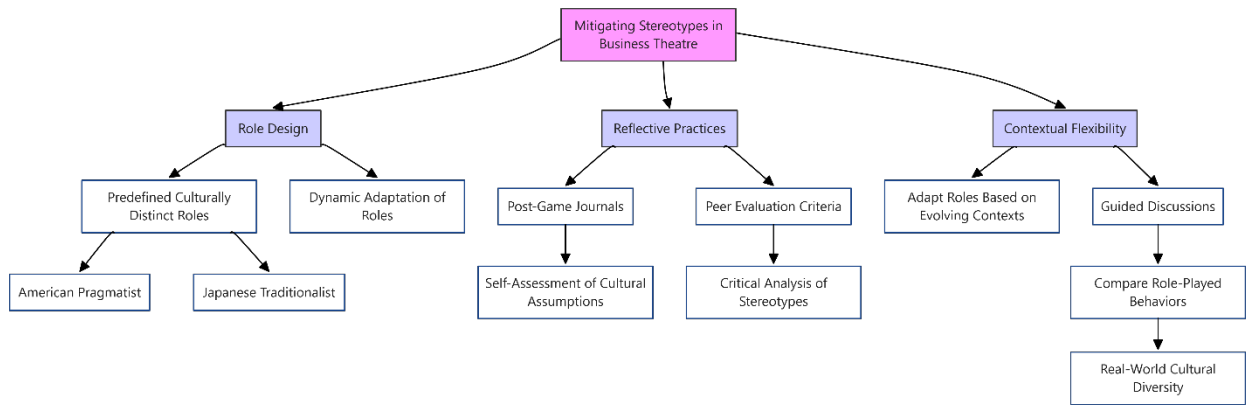


Source: Authors' own elaboration

- How can educators balance structured business theatre scenarios with the risk of oversimplifying cultural identities or reinforcing stereotypes?

It could be argued that predefined roles in business games could reduce cultural complexity to static stereotypes, failing to reflect the fluidity of real-world identities. Nonetheless, the research addresses this challenge through its emphasis on reflective practice and peer evaluation. By requiring students to analyze their own cultural assumptions (via journals and post-game discussions) and critically assess peers' performances, the methodology mitigates stereotyping. Additionally, the study's framework incorporates contextual flexibility, encouraging students to adapt roles dynamically rather than adhering to rigid cultural templates. This aligns with Generation Alpha's need for critical engagement with cultural nuances, as highlighted in the article. Figure 5 illustrates how structured business theatre scenarios avoid oversimplification of cultural identities by integrating reflective practices and contextual flexibility.

Fig. 5: Mitigating stereotypes in business theatre: a dynamic framework

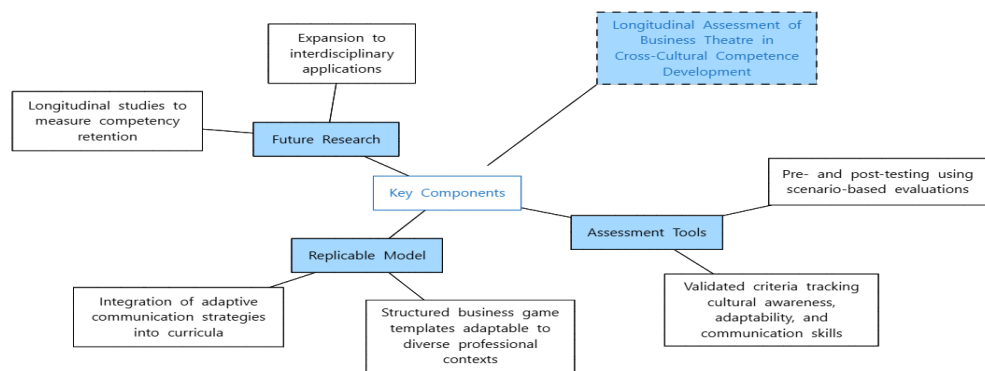


Source: Authors' own elaboration

a. How can the effectiveness of business theatre be measured in the long term, particularly in preparing linguistics students for real-world multicultural professional environments?

Some may question whether short-term improvements in cross-cultural competence (e.g., observed in controlled experiments) translate to sustained skills in unpredictable, real-world settings. However, the study proposes validated assessment criteria (e.g., pre- and post-testing with scenario-based evaluations) and a replicable model for integrating business games into curricula. These tools allow educators to track competency retention over time. Furthermore, the structured pedagogical experimentation and emphasis on adaptive communication strategies (e.g., role-playing conflicts in tourism negotiations) simulate real-world challenges, ensuring skills are transferable. Future research directions in the article, such as longitudinal studies, directly address this concern, leveraging the study's empirical foundation. Figure 6 demonstrates how validated assessment tools and pedagogical strategies ensure the long-term applicability of business theatre outcomes.

Fig. 6: Longitudinal assessment of business theatre in cross-cultural competence development.



Source: Authors' own elaboration

CONCLUSIONS

This study successfully addresses the outlined research tasks, substantiating the effectiveness of business theatre as an innovative pedagogical approach for developing cross-cultural competence among linguistics students. The study analyzed contemporary trends in education that emphasize the importance of cross-cultural competence in professional communication, designed structured business game scenarios tailored to linguistics education, and assessed their impact on students' ability to adapt to multicultural environments. Additionally, strategies for integrating business games into foreign language instruction were identified, addressing existing gaps in intercultural training.

The findings demonstrate that business theatre significantly enhances Generation Alpha students' cultural awareness, contextual flexibility, and adaptive communication skills by immersing them in realistic multicultural scenarios. These outcomes are particularly relevant for Generation Alpha learners, who thrive in interactive, technology-driven, and experiential learning environments. The proposed methodological framework provides actionable tools for modern linguistics education, including a replicable model for implementing business games, validated assessment criteria for evaluating cross-cultural competence, and strategies for fostering professional intercultural skills in constrained geopolitical contexts.

The study also highlights several avenues for future research and development: investigating the long-term retention of cross-cultural competencies acquired through business theatre in professional settings; exploring the integration of virtual and hybrid business game formats to address mobility constraints and technological gaps among diverse student populations; developing interdisciplinary applications of business theatre beyond linguistics, such as in international relations, healthcare communication, or global business management training; examining the role of emotional intelligence (EQ) in enhancing the effectiveness of business theatre, particularly in fostering empathy and reducing cultural biases.

The article is particularly valuable for educational institutions seeking innovative solutions to prepare linguistics students for multicultural professional environments, especially in contexts where physical mobility or direct exposure to foreign cultures is limited. It is also useful for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers interested in fostering cross-cultural competence among Generation Alpha learners. By providing actionable tools and validated assessment criteria, this study enhances intercultural education, benefiting both current and future professionals in linguistics and related fields.

Future research should focus on adapting the methodology for diverse contexts, exploring its applicability across educational levels, and assessing long-term competency retention. This approach is valuable for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking innovative solutions to address challenges in linguistics education, especially in contexts of limited international exchange.

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