



INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract:

The globalized nature of modern society necessitates the acquisition of English language skills for effective communication and participation in international discourse. High school education serves as a critical foundation in this process, particularly through English language instruction. This article explores various international experiences and approaches in developing linguistic competence among high school students in English classes. Drawing on examples from countries such as Finland, Japan, Germany, Uzbekistan, India, and the United States, the article examines pedagogical strategies, cultural integration, assessment methodologies, teacher training, and the use of digital tools. These global insights aim to inform educators and policymakers about successful practices that foster both functional and academic language proficiency in adolescents.

Keywords: Linguistic competence, high school education, English as a foreign language, international experiences, language pedagogy, ESL/EFL instruction, global education.

Introduction

As English continues to solidify its role as the lingua franca of the 21st century, linguistic competence in English has emerged as a fundamental requirement for students aspiring to participate in global academic, professional, and social spheres. High schools across the world have responded to this reality by



integrating English language learning into their curricula, often with differing methodologies tailored to their sociocultural, economic, and institutional contexts. Linguistic competence encompasses phonological, grammatical, lexical, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic skills that allow learners to use English effectively in real-life situations. The teaching of English in high schools thus requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond grammar drills and vocabulary lists. This article provides a comparative analysis of international experiences aimed at fostering linguistic competence in high school students, drawing lessons from diverse education systems to highlight effective strategies and challenges.

Case Study: Finland's Immersive and Integrative Model

Finland is widely regarded as a leader in innovative and student-centered education. In Finnish high schools, the development of linguistic competence in English is approached through immersion, integrative content-based instruction (CBI), and the use of authentic materials. English is often taught not merely as a language subject, but as a medium of instruction in other disciplines such as history and science. This method enhances students' cognitive and academic language proficiency, while simultaneously developing their fluency and accuracy. Teachers in Finland are extensively trained in both subject content and language pedagogy, which equips them to design interdisciplinary lessons that are communicatively and cognitively engaging. Moreover, students are encouraged to use English beyond the classroom through exchange programs, access to international media, and partnerships with foreign schools. Finland's emphasis on learner autonomy, low-stress assessment, and real-world application exemplifies a holistic approach to language development.

Japan: A Balancing Act Between Tradition and Innovation

In Japan, English education in high schools has traditionally been grammar-focused, heavily oriented toward preparation for university entrance exams. However, recent reforms introduced by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) aim to shift this paradigm toward communicative competence. These reforms include increasing the number of English classes taught in English, emphasizing speaking and listening skills, and incorporating task-based language



teaching (TBLT). One of the unique features of Japan's experience is the integration of native English-speaking Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) through the JET Program, which provides students with exposure to authentic accents and cultures. Despite these advances, challenges remain, particularly in overcoming cultural hesitations about speaking publicly, large class sizes, and the tension between exam-oriented instruction and communicative goals. Nonetheless, Japan's transitional approach provides valuable insights into managing systemic educational change.

Germany: A Plurilingual and Intercultural Perspective

Germany adopts a plurilingual model in its education system, where English is taught as the first foreign language and often followed by French or Spanish. German high schools emphasize intercultural communicative competence, recognizing that language learning is also cultural learning. This is reflected in the curriculum, which includes literature, global issues, and cultural studies as integral components of English classes. Teachers promote critical thinking by engaging students in debates, presentations, and project-based learning that require meaningful language use. Moreover, digital technologies such as language learning apps, online exchanges (eTwinning projects), and interactive whiteboards are used to create immersive language environments. Germany's dual focus on language and culture fosters students' ability to navigate diverse communicative contexts, enhancing their readiness for global citizenship.

Uzbekistan: Reforms and Challenges in a Multilingual Context

In recent years, Uzbekistan has made significant reforms in foreign language education, especially English, in response to the country's growing international engagement. English is now a mandatory subject in high schools, and efforts are underway to improve the quality of instruction through curriculum modernization, teacher training, and international cooperation. One innovative initiative is the use of CEFR-aligned syllabi, which structure learning outcomes around communicative competencies. However, the implementation of these reforms faces obstacles such as limited access to authentic materials, underdeveloped digital infrastructure in rural areas, and insufficient opportunities



for students to practice English outside the classroom. Nevertheless, programs such as the English Speaking Clubs, partnerships with British Council, and the use of social media platforms for educational purposes are gradually enhancing linguistic competence among Uzbek students. The case of Uzbekistan underscores the importance of aligning national policy with localized support mechanisms for effective language learning.

India: Diversity as a Pedagogical Asset

India presents a unique case where English is both a foreign and a second language, depending on the region. High school English education in India benefits from a rich multilingual context, where students often speak two or more Indian languages alongside English. This linguistic diversity is harnessed as an asset in the classroom, promoting translanguaging practices that allow students to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to make sense of English. The National Curriculum Framework emphasizes communicative competence, critical thinking, and contextualized language use. Textbooks feature stories from diverse cultural backgrounds, encouraging empathy and intercultural awareness. However, there is a significant urban-rural divide in access to quality English instruction, with urban private schools offering more advanced programs compared to government schools in rural areas. Despite these disparities, the Indian education system demonstrates how cultural and linguistic diversity can be transformed into a resource for developing robust language skills.

United States: English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs and Multicultural Classrooms

In the United States, English language education for high school students often takes place in the context of ESL programs, particularly for immigrant and refugee students. These programs are designed to support students in acquiring academic English while simultaneously mastering content subjects. One distinguishing feature of American ESL instruction is its emphasis on differentiated instruction and scaffolding, which tailors support to individual learners' needs. High schools employ sheltered instruction techniques such as SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), which integrates language



objectives with content learning. Additionally, multicultural education is embedded into the curriculum, helping students navigate cultural differences and build a sense of identity and belonging. Technology plays a central role, with platforms like Google Classroom, Duolingo, and Kahoot! used to enhance interactivity and engagement. The American model offers valuable lessons in inclusivity, student support services, and curriculum flexibility.

Technology as a Global Equalizer in Language Learning

Across all these international contexts, technology has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing linguistic competence. Digital platforms, language learning apps, virtual reality experiences, and AI-driven feedback tools allow students to practice English in personalized and interactive ways. In some countries, entire curricula are being delivered through blended learning models that combine classroom instruction with online modules. Virtual exchanges, such as email pen pals and video conferencing with students from other countries, provide authentic communicative experiences that go beyond the textbook. Moreover, the availability of open educational resources (OERs) levels the playing field for students in under-resourced regions. While access and training remain issues in some areas, the global trend toward educational technology offers promising avenues for innovation and inclusion.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

A common thread in successful international experiences is the emphasis on teacher quality. Countries that invest in rigorous teacher preparation, ongoing professional development, and access to international best practices tend to produce better outcomes in language education. For instance, in Finland and Germany, language teachers often hold master's degrees and engage in regular in-service training. In contrast, in developing contexts like Uzbekistan or parts of India, the lack of qualified English teachers can hinder the effectiveness of even the best-designed curricula. Therefore, enhancing teacher competence through workshops, international certifications (such as CELTA, TESOL), and peer learning networks is critical to sustaining linguistic development among students.



Assessment and Feedback Practices

Assessment practices also vary widely across countries and have a significant impact on how linguistic competence is developed. Countries like Finland use formative assessment to provide ongoing feedback, while Japan's entrance-exam-driven system relies heavily on summative assessment. The most effective models combine both approaches, offering students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning in varied formats — oral presentations, written essays, projects, and digital portfolios. Feedback that is timely, constructive, and learner-centered supports metacognitive awareness and self-directed learning.

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