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Preparing Future Teachers for a Multicultural World: Sociocultural Competence as the Foundation of Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Professional and Personal Development

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ABSTRACT
The present study examines the development of sociocultural competence (SCC) among Kazakhstani pre-service English language teachers within the framework of a targeted pedagogical intervention. Against the backdrop of ongoing educational modernisation and increased global engagement in Kazakhstan, developing SCC among pre-service English teachers has become a critical professional requirement. The study implements an SCC-focused curriculum in English language teaching and evaluates its effectiveness in developing the components of SCC, as well as the statistical relationships among those components over time. The study involved 102 students enrolled in the foreign language teacher training program, who were divided into treatment and control groups. Within the quasi-experimental design, a training program was implemented that focused on the development of sociocultural knowledge, awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability. To assess the effects of the intervention, comparative analysis methods, multivariate analysis of variance, as well as linear mixed-effects models were applied controlling for repeated measurements and interindividual differences between participants. The findings confirm the multicomponent and interrelated nature of SCC and emphasize the importance of integrated pedagogical approaches to its development in the professional training system of pre-service English language teachers.

KEYWORDS
Pre-service English language teachers; sociocultural competence; sociocultural knowledge; sociocultural awareness; motivational-affective readiness; cultural adaptability.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of fostering SCC among professionals across all fields is underscored by the centrality of cultural and social values in professional and personal development. This competence is especially important for educators whose work involves intercultural communication and social interaction (Kaharuddin, 2020). SCC enables effective and respectful engagement with individuals from diverse backgrounds across multiple contexts (Feinauer et al., 2023). For educators who regularly engage with individuals from diverse sociocultural traditions, therefore, cultivating appropriate knowledge and attitudes is essential for effective intercultural communication.

The SCC development process begins in higher education institutions and continues throughout professional practice. Educational institutions bear a responsibility to equip pre-service teachers with the skills necessary to enter the workforce, particularly in an era where international collaboration is an integral aspect of nearly every profession (Dumbadze & Dilaverova, 2023). Rudik et al. (2025) argue that foreign language education is increasingly recognised as one of the most effective means of developing the capacity to communicate across cultural boundaries and contribute to both local and global communities. According to Gerfanova et al. (2025), effective teacher education focuses on providing future teachers with pedagogical tools that motivate students to learn a foreign language and its culture. In line with these ideas, the conceptual framework of professional learning communities aligns with the objective of SCC formation by fostering students' ability to understand themselves and others as cultural participants within societal structures (Silva-Enos et al., 2022). Consequently, a culturally oriented approach to professional training enriches the foundations of an individual's professional and personal growth (Agyare, 2024; Serhina & Verhun, 2023).

Defined as the capacity to engage with the world through a commitment to peace, equity, and social accountability (Feinauer et al., 2024), SCC is centrally concerned with communicative appropriateness. While being appropriate may seem straightforward when interacting with individuals from the same sociocultural background, it becomes significantly more complex when interlocutors belong to different sociocultural groups. Misunderstandings are common in intercultural communication, even when both interlocutors demonstrate linguistic accuracy and consistency in using each other's language (Byram et al., 1997). Such communication breakdowns and the accompanying feelings of embarrassment or discomfort underscore the necessity of integrating sociocultural content into foreign language curricula (Thomas, 1983). This approach aligns with the Council of Europe (2020) and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2025) frameworks that recognise SCC as a key component of lifelong learning.

Understanding what topics are considered acceptable or taboo in a particular cultural group, the physical distance maintained during conversations, and the appropriateness of certain words or phrases in different contexts equips learners with essential tools to achieve accuracy and effective communication (Altakhaineh et al., 2024). In this regard, SCC is

recognised as an integral personal attribute, encompassing cultural knowledge, socially significant abilities, personal qualities, and practical experience (Ivygina et al., 2019). Without the targeted development of SCC, foreign language learners may demonstrate linguistic accuracy while remaining unable to engage effectively in intercultural communication. As a result, the development of SCC becomes not just relevant but indispensable (Dumbadze & Dilaverova, 2023; Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025).

The formation of SCC in foreign language education does not occur spontaneously; it requires a well-structured methodological framework. Simply exposing learners to a foreign culture is insufficient to develop effective intercultural navigation skills (Liu, 2014). Various educational techniques and instructional methods have been proposed to facilitate the development of SCC. Studies show that the integration of audiovisual materials (Zamzamy, 2021), digital learning (Khojaniyazov & Sharipova, 2025; Nugroho, 2020), role-playing games (Sari & Sari, 2020), discussions (Kulakhmetova & Tasbolatov, 2020), linguistic tasks, intercultural dialogues, and case studies (Skrypnyk, 2019), artistic films (Trykashna, 2018), and literary text analysis (Avetisyan & Karapetyan, 2023) contribute to the development of SCC. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of SCC (Dumbadze & Dilaverova, 2023; Feinauer et al., 2023; Kaharuddin, 2020), there remains limited empirical evidence based on longitudinal intervention studies and insufficient research on integrated approaches to its development in the context of pre-service foreign language teacher education. To address these research gaps, the present study proposes a unified SCC-focused curriculum that integrates a set of educational techniques and formulates the following research questions:

RQ1. Does implementing the SCC-focused curriculum lead to a statistically significant improvement in the SCC of pre-service foreign language teachers in English language instruction?

RQ2. To what extent are the components of SCC interrelated, and does the development of one component influence the development of the others?

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of these pedagogical techniques and exploring the interrelations among the components of SCC, this study also aims to operationalise SCC by developing two structured instruments – a questionnaire and a test. The questionnaire is grounded in established theoretical frameworks and was empirically validated through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, demonstrating strong internal consistency and satisfactory model fit. The sociocultural knowledge test, in turn, was designed to assess factual and applied understanding of sociocultural concepts, with its validity and reliability examined in subsequent sections.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Sociocultural Competence: Theoretical Foundations and Structural Dimensions

One of the foundational stages in conceptualising SCC was the development of the Threshold Level by van Ek et al. (1990) as part of the Council of Europe's language education initiatives.

This model laid the groundwork for communicative language teaching by incorporating SCC as an essential dimension of successful communication. It addressed learners' awareness of culturally embedded behaviours, norms, and values necessary for effective interaction in diverse social contexts.

Byram et al. (1997) further conceptualised SCC as a relatively autonomous construct, emphasising critical cultural awareness, relativisation of value systems, and intercultural flexibility in its structure. Building on this approach, Savignon and Sysoyev (2004) highlighted SCC as a core element for learners to engage in communication within sociocultural contexts, rather than focusing solely on the learning of linguistic forms.

These foundational perspectives established the basis for subsequent theoretical refinement of SCC. While early models provided structural and conceptual groundwork, more recent studies have aimed to operationalise the construct in context-dependent ways. As a result, modern research defines SCC as the learner's ability to communicate according to the verbal and nonverbal norms of the target language society (Zahidova, 2019), encompassing deep knowledge of the ways of life, behavioural patterns, values, standards, and beliefs of different cultural groups, providing learners with essential tools for intercultural communication (Chukueggu, 2011).

SCC is also conceptualised as the awareness of the interplay between language and non-linguistic social contexts that allows learners to navigate culturally embedded discourse effectively (Gholami et al., 2021). Within this definitional perspective, SCC entails openness to cultural diversity, tolerance of cultural peculiarities, and an appreciation of different worldviews (Musayeva, 2023).

Additionally, Shyba (2018) highlights the construct's pragmatic dimension manifested in the ability to convey messages appropriately within specific sociocultural contexts, controlling for social factors, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural norms. From Risopoulos-Pichler's perspective (2020), SCC refers to the ability to function appropriately across various social and cultural settings, facilitating effective interaction within and beyond organisational boundaries.

In foreign language education, scholars define SCC as the integration of sociocultural knowledge with behavioural adaptability (Yusupov & Nasrullaev, 2020), as well as the capacity to interpret and adapt to culturally embedded nonverbal signals, values, and communicative norms in intercultural interaction (Hardin et al., 2024). Thus, SCC can be defined as an individual's integrative capacity that includes the knowledge of sociocultural aspects of one's own and target cultures, the readiness to communicate effectively and adapt to various sociocultural contexts, and the demonstration of respectful attitudes toward social and cultural diversity within the shaping of a language personality through intercultural dialogue.

The structural dimensions of SCC are equally multifaceted, encompassing various interconnected sub-competences. Celce-Murcia (2008) identifies three primary dimensions of SCC: social contextual factors, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural factors. Another approach conceptualises SCC as combining knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Prystai, 2021). According to

Prystai (2021), knowledge entails understanding cultural norms, traditions, and customs, as well as recognising the similarities and differences between native and target cultures. Skills involve applying this knowledge in practice through the expression of ideas in a foreign language and intercultural dialogue. Attitudes, in turn, refer to an individual's openness to cultural diversity, respect for different traditions, and willingness to cooperate in intercultural interactions.

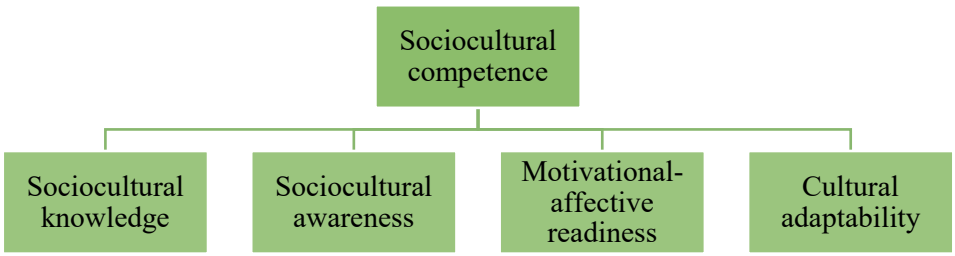
The model of SCC proposed by Anužienė (2015) conceptualises this competence as a holistic system of knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for successful socialisation and professional integration in contemporary society. This model considers SCC through two interrelated domains: social competence and cultural competence. Social competence integrates such components as social skills, social perception, self-awareness, attribution, and peer communication, while cultural competence encompasses knowledge of the target culture, awareness of cultural differences, and the capacity to communicate diplomatically and adopt multiple perspectives (Anužienė, 2015).

According to Romanova (2020), the structure of SCC consists of three key components: social readiness, personal readiness, and psychological readiness. Social readiness includes both cultural knowledge and interaction skills; personal readiness involves empathy, tolerance, adaptability, and self-regulation; and psychological readiness refers to perceptual and communicative abilities. Piddubna et al. (2022) elaborate on the structural components of SCC, categorising them into sociocultural knowledge, communicative experience, personal attitude toward foreign cultural facts, and linguistic and pragmatic competence.

These perspectives demonstrate that SCC is a complex construct integral to foreign language education. Building on this body of research, the present study conceptualises SCC as a four-component construct integrating sociocultural knowledge, sociocultural awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability. This four-component model synthesises previous frameworks while addressing cognitive, awareness-based, motivational-affective, and adaptive dimensions of SCC in the Kazakhstani education context (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

The structure of SCC



Sociocultural knowledge represents the cognitive foundation of SCC, encompassing the factual understanding of sociocultural aspects. This component consistently emphasises

sociocultural information related to the national mentality in target and native cultures (Anužienė, 2015; Chukueggu, 2011; Piddubna et al., 2022).

Sociocultural awareness refers to an individual's ability to critically reflect on how culturally shaped phenomena such as historical events, geographical contexts, religion, traditions, values, norms, social roles, speech strategies, and stereotypes may vary across native and target cultures. Integrating this dimension into the model aligns with the interpretive understanding components suggested in different SCC models (Byram et al*.,* 1997; Celce-Murcia, 2008; van Ek et al*.,* 1990).

Motivational-affective readiness refers to an individual's positive orientation toward intercultural interaction, characterised by openness, respect for sociocultural diversity, willingness to cooperate, and the desire to avoid conflict and stereotyping. It corresponds to affective and attitudinal elements in existing models, including openness to cultural and social diversity, tolerance, and readiness for intercultural interaction (Musayeva, 2023; Risopoulos-Pichler, 2020; Romanova, 2020; Zahidova, 2019).

Cultural adaptability refers to an individual's capacity and willingness to adjust their attitudes, expectations, communication, and behaviour in response to intercultural situations (Eltaiba et al., 2025). This involves adapting to culturally specific norms and communicative practices in both native and foreign sociocultural contexts (Hardin et al., 2024; Kutluca & Shpendi Şirin, 2024; Piddubna et al., 2022; Romanova, 2020; Yusupov & Nasrullaev, 2020; Yussupova et al., 2023).

The model is contextually connected with the multilingual and multicultural realities of Kazakhstan, where teachers operate across different sociocultural spaces. The approach builds upon existing models by integrating cognitive, affective, and adaptive dimensions within a unified structure, thereby making a conceptual contribution to the field of SCC research.

Educational Techniques for Sociocultural Competence Formation

In curriculum design, learning techniques are considered among the key instruments for achieving educational goals (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2016). In teacher education, intercultural learning is also regarded as an important condition for preparing future teachers to work in multicultural educational environments, particularly when authentic linguocultural materials are used to support the formation of SCC (Achaeva et al., 2018; Dev et al., 2025). This orientation is reflected in methodological studies that present a range of pedagogical techniques aimed at fostering the development of SCC across diverse instructional paradigms.

One prominent approach employs audiovisual materials to foster SCC development. The use of images and videos in language instruction provides a sociocultural foundation for learning, as audiovisual materials facilitate learners' engagement with cultural contexts (Ivanova, 2020; Zamzamy, 2021). Artistic films provide students with opportunities to analyse sociocultural behaviours and engage in intercultural dialogue through subsequent structured exercises and discussions (Trykashna, 2018).

Another method involves role-plays and simulations. By engaging in communication-oriented exercises, students develop both linguistic proficiency and the capacity to navigate intercultural situations (Sari & Sari, 2020). Similar to the experiential techniques, task-based learning is also identified as a productive method for enhancing SCC (Skrypnyk, 2019).

Additionally, informal digital learning emerges as a promising strategy for developing SCC. A multimedia educational environment is an educational space in which various media formats and technologies are purposefully integrated to support learning and facilitate the comprehension of information (Rakhman et al*.,* 2024). For instance, digital platforms foster sociocultural study (Chaikovska et al., 2022), and the use of online platforms, social media, and digital communication tools allows learners to interact with native speakers and access authentic cultural materials (Khojaniyazov & Sharipova, 2025; Nugroho, 2020).

Alongside the activity-oriented techniques, a crucial aspect of SCC formation is creating an ethnolinguistic and ethnopsychological educational environment. This involves fostering openness and respect towards other cultures by integrating discussions of cultural identity, norms, and values within the curriculum – an approach that promotes cultural sensitivity through cross-cultural exchange (Karimova et al., 2024; Kulakhmetova & Tasbolatov, 2020; Yüncü & Akgül,2023).

As SCC goes beyond knowledge acquisition, it highlights the importance of holistic language instruction, which integrates sociocultural learning with linguistic proficiency (Khouni & Boudjelal, 2019). Thus, this study tests an integrative combination of pedagogical techniques within a specially designed educational curriculum for developing SCC. The tasks include linguistic tasks, the use of audiovisual materials (videos and films) to observe authentic sociocultural contexts through digital platforms, reading and analysing authentic texts about the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan, comprehension and retelling exercises, comparative tables, role-playing games and simulations, group discussions and debates, poster presentations, and case-based tasks. The implementation of this approach enables investigation of how SCC develops among pre-service foreign language teachers over time, and how its components mutually influence one another within the educational process.

Designing an SCC-focused Curriculum: Educational Techniques

The curriculum aimed at the formation of SCC among pre-service foreign language teachers involves a 15-week curriculum framework incorporating learning goals and outcomes and including eight modules: *History and Geography, Symbols*, *Religion, Traditions, Values, Social Roles, Behaviour and Social Norms, Speech Strategies,* and *Stereotypes* (see Appendix). Within the curriculum, the methodological approach in SCC formation is based on a three-stage model: preparatory (Preparation Stage), active stage of sociocultural learning (Active Stage), and reflexive (Reflection Stage). This structure corresponds to the principles in the development of language programs within an intercultural perspective, as proposed in the work of Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), as well as the pedagogical principle of experiential staged learning (Kolb, 1984).

At the first stage, the primary goal is to equip students with the necessary linguistic resources, encompassing vocabulary, phonetics, grammatical structures, and an initial awareness of sociocultural differences. Methodologically, this stage is grounded in Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which posits that learning requires the conscious perception of linguistic input. The preparatory stage is implemented through working with a dictionary, phonetic transcription, the analysis of authentic examples, phonetic training and the introduction of basic concepts (e.g., nomads, Magna Carta, Zhuzes, religion, tradition, values, etc.), ensuring linguistic readiness for further understanding of sociocultural content.

The second stage is central to the formation of SCC, since it involves the integration of language practice and sociocultural development. It draws on the principles of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and the communicative approach (Brandl, 2008), whereby sociocultural cognition is enacted through active engagement and interaction.

The tasks include reading and analysing learning material on the United Kingdom, the USA, and Kazakhstan; comprehension questions; comparative tables; retelling; role-playing games and simulations in pairs; group discussions and debates; creative assignments; and case analyses. For example, the modules on History and Geography, Religion, Traditions, and Values provide a comparison of sociocultural phenomena across the three countries, aimed at developing factual understanding and interpretive awareness of sociocultural differences (sociocultural knowledge and awareness). At this stage, motivational-affective readiness and cultural adaptability are formed through students' interaction, collaboration, and aspiration for sociocultural relativism. The active stage also emphasises the need to move from the knowledge of facts to the ability to interpret and act in a multicultural environment, as Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) wrote.

The final, reflective stage is aimed at engaging students in conscious analysis and re-evaluation of what they have learned. At this stage, learners revisit, reinterpret, and consolidate the studied sociocultural material, transforming it into a personally meaningful experience. The approach draws on the ideas of Beauchamp (2014), who viewed reflection as an important condition for professional growth and a conscious learning process. During this phase, students write reflective essays, watch authentic sociocultural material, and assess their own attitudes toward various sociocultural phenomena. Ultimately, reflection completes the learning cycle, shaping the final stage of SCC formation.

Each module ensures a gradual progression from the cognitive level (knowledge and awareness) to the motivational-affective and behavioural levels (attitude and adaptation). The "preparation → action → reflection" structure implements the principle of spiral development, where each new topic brings the student back to previously studied aspects in a more complex context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative quasi-experimental design (Shadish et al*.,* 2002) with pre-test and post-test measures to assess the effectiveness of the SCC-focused curriculum in developing SCC among pre-service foreign language teachers. Both treatment and control groups were included to strengthen internal validity. In addition to evaluating the overall effectiveness of the SCC-focused curriculum, the study also examines the interrelations among the components of SCC to identify their influence within the pedagogical intervention. Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau University (Protocol No. 8, 10 September 2025). All procedures adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Experimental Procedures

During the 15-week intervention period, both the treatment and control groups studied within the same institutional setting and completed an equivalent number of academic hours. The treatment group was taught through the SCC-oriented curriculum specifically developed for this study. The curriculum was organised around nine thematic modules (see Appendix) and aimed to develop four components of SCC: sociocultural knowledge, sociocultural awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability. Methodologically, the instruction in the treatment group was structured according to a three-stage model consisting of a preparatory stage, an active stage of sociocultural learning, and a reflection stage. At the preparatory stage, students were provided with the linguistic basis necessary for further sociocultural learning through vocabulary work, phonetic practice, analysis of authentic examples, and the introduction of key sociocultural concepts. The active stage constituted the core of the intervention and integrated language practice with sociocultural development through reading and analysing sociocultural materials, answering comprehension questions, completing comparative tables, retelling, role-playing, pair and group discussions, debates, creative assignments, and case analysis. The reflection stage focused on the consolidation and personalisation of the acquired experience. The intervention in the treatment group moved systematically from linguistic preparation to sociocultural interpretation, interaction, and reflection.

By contrast, the control group followed the regular curriculum used in the professional development program for pre-service foreign language teachers at Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau University. Although the control group studied for the same duration and completed the same number of academic hours, their instruction focused primarily on general language development, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the practice of core communication skills. The control group did not receive instruction organised around SCC modules, did not follow the three-stage model, and was not engaged in systematically designed comparative, reflective, or sociocultural interpretation tasks aimed at developing the four SCC components. Any cultural references that appeared in classroom interaction or learning

materials were incidental rather than systematically integrated, sequenced, or assessed as part of sociocultural competence development.

Research Group

A total of 102 undergraduate students participated in the study. All participants were enrolled in the "Foreign Language: Two Foreign Languages" programme at Shokan Ualikhanov Kokshetau University (Kazakhstan). The sample was divided into a control group (n = 50) and a treatment group (n = 52) based on pre-existing classes that were administratively formed prior to the start of the study. Since the groups had already been formed as part of the foreign language teacher education program, it was impossible to randomly assign students. For this reason, the study was conducted according to a quasi-experimental scheme. To ensure comparability between groups and account for possible differences in the initial data, preliminary test measurements were performed before the intervention.

Gender distribution was examined using a binomial test, while regional representation was described descriptively. The majority of participants identified as female (n = 96), whereas male respondents accounted for a small portion (n = 6). Participants represented several regions of Kazakhstan, including Abai Region, Akmola Region, Almaty, Almaty Region, Astana, Atyrau Region, Kyzylorda Region, North Kazakhstan Region, Shymkent, Turkistan Region, and Zhambyl Region. The largest proportion of respondents came from Akmola, Turkistan, and Kyzylorda Regions.

The participants' age ranged from 17 to 21 years (M = 18.44, SD = 0.82). All 102 responses were valid, and no missing data were identified. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. For participants under the age of 18, additional parental consent was secured in accordance with ethical research standards.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools comprised: (1) a questionnaire designed to measure the components of sociocultural competence, and (2) a sociocultural knowledge test assessing the factual understanding of sociocultural aspects. As Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommended, designing the measurement instruments included careful item construction to reduce ambiguity, desirability, and acquiescence bias. Although several reverse-worded items were included in the questionnaire to mitigate agreement bias, these were appropriately recoded before the analysis. Item wording in the questionnaire and test was kept clear and concise, and conceptually ambiguous statements were avoided.

Psychometric Validation of Instruments

The data were collected from undergraduate students majoring in foreign language teaching to evaluate the psychometric properties of the developed measurement instruments. For the factor analyses, the participants were recruited from two Kazakhstani universities: L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (ENU) in Astana and Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau University. Two independent samples were used: 295 participants completed the version for exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and 204 were included in the confirmatory factor analysis

(CFA). In addition, a separate group of 102 undergraduates from Sh. Ualikhanov Kokshetau University completed the sociocultural knowledge test to evaluate its reliability using the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20).

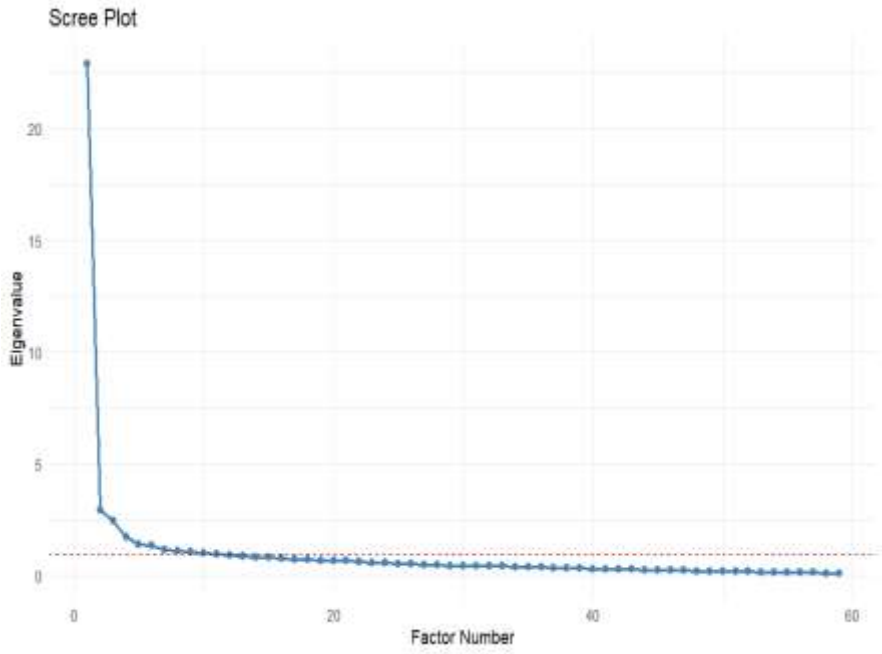
Before conducting the exploratory factor analysis, the suitability of the dataset was assessed using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy. Bartlett's Test was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1711)$ = 19052.011, p < .001). The overall KMO value was 0.949, which is considered good according to Kaiser and Rice's (1974) criteria. The individual KMO values for all items ranged from 0.808 to 0.971, with the lowest values observed for items 32 (0.808) and 33 (0.887), which are within acceptable limits (≥ 0.60).

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using the maximum likelihood extraction method with oblimin oblique rotation. Oblimin rotation was selected as it allows the identification of the natural underlying structure of the data without imposing strict constraints on factor correlations, balancing interpretability and demonstrating results comparable to those obtained through the promax rotation (Osborne, 2014).

A comprehensive approach was adopted to determine the optimal number of factors, with parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) serving as the primary criterion, given its demonstrated superiority over conventional techniques such as the Kaiser criterion (Watkins, 2018). In addition, a visual inspection of the Scree plot (Cattell, 1966) was conducted to support the decision regarding factor retention.

Figure 2.

Scree plot of eigenvalues



Based on the results of the parallel analysis, the eigenvalues for the first four factors (22.267, 2.212, 1.797, and 1.141) exceeded the corresponding mean values from randomly generated data (0.787, 0.684, 0.645, and 0.594, respectively). However, relying solely on the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues > 1) may lead to an overestimation of the number of factors.

Therefore, decisions regarding factor retention were also guided by the interpretability and theoretical meaningfulness of the factor structure, rather than by statistical thresholds alone (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Despite the statistical indication of four factors, a three-factor solution was selected based on conceptual clarity and theoretical consistency; the fourth factor added minimal explanatory value. This decision was also supported by visual inspection of the Scree plot (Figure 2), which showed an inflexion point after the third eigenvalue, indicating a natural break in the data structure.

During the analysis, items were sequentially excluded based on the following criteria: factor loadings below 0.40 across all components (Hair et al., 2019) and cross-loadings above 0.30 on multiple factors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, items 11, 22, 25, 35, 48, and 50 were excluded due to the factor loadings below the threshold of 0.40.

Table 2 (see Appendix) and Figure 3 (see Appendix) present the final structure, which displays the factor loadings of each item onto the three retained components (RC1, RC2, RC3). Factor 1 (RC1) reflects motivational-affective readiness (MAR), combining items that capture openness to social and cultural diversity and interest in intercultural engagement. Factor 2 (RC2) represents sociocultural awareness (SA), encompassing items related to understanding how historical events, traditions, values, religion, social roles, speech strategies, behavioural and social norms, symbols, and stereotypes can vary across native and target cultures. Factor 3 (RC3) suggests focusing on cultural adaptability (CA), including reverse-coded items indicating difficulty in understanding or adjusting to sociocultural differences. This factor represents a meaningful subdimension of SCC, reflecting self-perceived challenges in intercultural adaptation. Although the extracted factor consisted mainly of reverse-worded items, it was deliberately retained because accumulating evidence argues that such factors capture meaningful, construct-related variance. As Marsh (1989) argued, reverse-worded items load on distinct factors, reflecting genuine psychological dispositions such as self-criticism. Lance et al. (2010) described method factors as hybrid, combining both methodological and substantive variance. Conway and Lance (2010) wrote that common method variance does not inflate correlations but reflects valid alternative perspectives on a construct. Similarly, Biderman et al. (2011) and Siemsen et al. (2010) provided empirical and analytical evidence that method variance reveals stable evaluative traits rather than random noise. Therefore, the decision to retain this factor was taken deliberately, acknowledging its possible methodological origin while also recognising its contribution to the construct validity and interpretability of the model. Together, these components reflect the multidimensional structure of SCC as theorised in prior research and form the basis for further confirmatory validation.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the structural validity of the three-factor model developed from the theoretical foundations and exploratory factor analysis. The initial model demonstrated adequate, though suboptimal fit: CFI = .887, TLI = .883, RMSEA = .062, and SRMR = .076.

Based on Brown's (2015) recommendations for model refinement, several theoretically grounded modifications were made to achieve a better model fit. Specifically, Items 12, 15, 16, 18, 24, 26, and 29 were reassigned from the motivational-affective readiness factor to sociocultural awareness as they more directly addressed interpretive awareness. In addition, Item 41 was excluded from the model because its conceptual content did not align clearly with the latent construct it was intended to represent.

These changes yielded an improved model with acceptable and balanced fit indices: CFI = .910, TLI = .906, RMSEA = .056, SRMR = .072. The RMSEA confidence interval remained below the 0.08 threshold 90% CI [.052, .061]. These values collectively support the revised model's goodness of fit.

Composite reliability (CR) was used as a more accurate alternative to Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the latent constructs, as CR accounts for the actual factor loadings of items, providing a precise estimate of reliability (Cheung et al., 2024). The results indicated high internal consistency across all three constructs. Specifically, composite reliability for *motivational–affective readiness* was 0.938, *sociocultural awareness* was 0.922, and *cultural adaptability* was 0.841. All values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming reliability for each factor.

The results confirm the theoretical structure of SCC, which comprises three interrelated components: sociocultural awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability. The items in the final version of the questionnaire are mixed, as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003), to maintain participants' attention and prevent response bias, and are presented in Table 3 (see Appendix).

Sociocultural knowledge, the fourth component of SCC, was assessed using a purpose-designed test, given that this component comprises discrete factual information amenable to objective measurement. The validity of the developed sociocultural knowledge (SK) test was ensured through an expert evaluation process.

An initial version of the instrument was examined by a panel of experts with experience in foreign language education and applied linguistics. The reviewers assessed the test items concerning their accuracy, clarity of formulation, and relevance to sociocultural content, as well as their correspondence to the intended construct. At this stage, the provided feedback informed revisions to refine item wording and strengthen cultural appropriateness. The revised test was subsequently returned to the experts for further consideration. Following this second round of review, the instrument was judged to be suitable for use in the empirical phase of the study.

The test's reliability was examined using the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (Ntumi et al., 2023), which is appropriate for instruments scored dichotomously (correct/incorrect). The obtained coefficient (KR-20 = 0.83) demonstrated good internal consistency, indicating that the test items reliably represent the construct of sociocultural knowledge.

Data Analysis Techniques

The statistical analyses were conducted using JASP (version 0.19.3) and RStudio (version 2024.04.1+739) with R (version 4.4.3; 2025-02-28, ucrt). To evaluate the effectiveness of the pedagogical intervention, independent samples t-tests were used to compare mean differences between the control and treatment groups at pre-test and post-test stages. Multivariate analysis of variance was additionally employed to account for multiple dependent variables simultaneously. A linear mixed-effects modelling approach was adopted to examine the relationships and potential predictive effects among SCC components. The approach was chosen as it accommodates the nested structure of the data (repeated observations within participants) and handles missing data more robustly than traditional repeated-measures ANOVA (Baayen et al., 2008).

RESULTS

Pre-test Results

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to examine group differences between the control and treatment groups at the pre-intervention stage. Since the distributions on the scales of SA and MAR deviated from normality, the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test was used. For the CA scale, the distribution was close to normal, so the parametric Welch t-test was applied. To check the differences between the control and treatment groups based on the results of the SK test, an independent Student's t-test was applied (Table 5).

Table 5.

Pre-test results of the treatment and control groups

Aspect	U / t	df	*p*	Mean (CG)	Mean (TG)	SD (CG)	SD (TG)	Cohen's d/ Rank-Biserial Correlation
SA	1316	—	*.920*	2.82	2.71	1.10	0.68	−0.01
MAR	1253	—	*.756*	2.91	2.99	1.13	0.12	0.04
CA	−0.189	78.60	*.850*	2.80	2.84	1.31	0.70	−0.04
SK	−0.291	100	*.772*	26.40	26.87	7.80	8.33	−0.06

The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the groups. For SA, the Mann–Whitney U test yielded $U = 1316$, $p = .920$. Similar results were obtained for MAR, where no significant differences were found ($U = 1253$, $p = .756$). The parametric comparison for CA likewise indicated no significant between-group differences, $t(78.60) = -0.189$, $p = .850$. In addition, the Student's t-test for SK yielded $t(100) = -0.291$, $p = .772$.

Thus, the p-values exceeded 0.05 for all analysed scales. These results confirm the baseline equivalence of the control and treatment groups before the intervention.

Post-test Results

After the pre-tests were administered, the SCC-focused curriculum designed for pre-service English teachers was implemented over 15 weeks. At the end of this pedagogical intervention, a post-test was conducted to compare the pre- and post-intervention results (Table 6).

Post-test group differences were examined using the Mann–Whitney U test, selected on the grounds of non-normal score distributions. The results of the analysis showed the presence of statistically significant differences between the groups in all studied aspects of SCC ($p < .001$). Across all three questionnaire-based components – sociocultural awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability – scores in the treatment group substantially exceeded those in the control group. A similar pattern was recorded for the indicator of sociocultural knowledge.

Table 6.

Post-test results of the treatment and control groups

Aspect	U / t	df	*p*	Mean (CG)	Mean (TG)	SD (CG)	SD (TG)	Rank-Biserial Correlation
SA	191.0	—	*<.001*	2.81	4.54	1.11	0.23	0.85
MAR	194.0	—	*<.001*	2.91	4.52	1.13	0.25	0.85
CA	293.5	—	*<.001*	2.84	4.55	1.19	0.73	0.77
SK	5.000	—	*<.001*	27.18	50.87	2.17	8.33	0.99

MANOVA Results

To examine whether changes occurred simultaneously in the studied components following the implementation of the pedagogical intervention, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted. This approach made it possible to assess the effects of time (pre-test vs. post-test), group (treatment vs. control), and their interaction on SK, SA, MAR, and CA (Table 7).

Table 7.

MANOVA results examining the effects of time and group on SA, MAR, CA, SK

Cases	df	Approx. F	$Trace_{Pillai}$	Num df	Den df	*p*	ηp^2
(Intercept)	1	1035.36	0.940	3	198.0	*< .001*	
Group	1	17.27	0.207	3	198.0	*< .001*	0.19
Time	1	22.03	0.250	3	198.0	*< .001*	0.17
Group ✻ Time	1	21.60	0.247	3	198.0	*< .001*	0.17
Residuals	200						

As shown in Table 7, the statistically significant effects of time and group were identified for the dependent variables. Moreover, a significant time × group interaction was observed, indicating that changes in SK, SA, MAR, and CA over time differed between the treatment and control groups. This finding suggests that the observed improvements can be related to the pedagogical intervention rather than to general time-related changes.

Results of Linear Mixed-Effects Models

Due to the quantitative quasi-experimental design of the study, linear mixed-effects models were used to analyse the interrelation between the components of SCC. This approach allows for the simultaneous consideration of fixed effects impact on dependent variables controlling for interindividual differences between participants.

Although the dataset included both pre-test and post-test observations, Time was not included as a predictor in the linear mixed-effects models. The purpose of these models was to explore the structural interrelations among the components of SCC across measurement occasions, as the changes over time had already been addressed separately using t-tests and MANOVA. Pre-test and post-test observations were therefore pooled, with participant ID specified as a random intercept. All SCC-related predictors (SK, SA, MAR, and CA) were treated as time-varying variables and were mean-centred and standardised before analysis.

The first stage of the analysis examined the relationship between SK and SA. The contribution of SK was evaluated by comparing the model including SK with the baseline only-intercept model (Table 8).

Table 8.

Comparison of linear mixed-effects models predicting SA from SK

Model	Effect	df	F	*p*	AIC	BIC	β
Model 0	Intercept	3			313.1	321.0	
Model 1	+ SK	4	373.5	*< .001*	171.7	182.2	0.069

The results demonstrated that the inclusion of SK resulted in a decrease in AIC and BIC compared to the baseline model without predictors. The addition of SK showed a statistically significant effect of the predictor ($p < .001$). This suggests that the level of sociocultural knowledge is a factor contributing to the development of sociocultural awareness in students.

The next stage of the analysis focused on MAR. A series of linear mixed-effects models was constructed, assessing the contribution of SK and SA to the prediction of MAR (Table 9).

Table 9.

Comparison of linear mixed-effects models predicting MAR from SK and SA

Model	Effect	df	F	*p*	AIC	BIC	β
Model 0	Intercept	3			309.9	302.0	
Model 1	+ SK	4	254.6	*< .001*	196.5	207.1	0.061
Model 2	+ SK	5	117.855	*< .001*	124.9	138.2	0.003
	+ SA						0.836

As shown in Table 9, the inclusion of sociocultural awareness leads to an improvement in model fit. Although sociocultural knowledge is a significant predictor of motivational-affective readiness when entered alone, its effect becomes negligible after controlling for sociocultural awareness, which emerges as the dominant predictor of motivational-affective readiness.

The final stage of the analysis focused on examining the factors influencing CA. The stepwise evaluation of linear mixed-effects models was conducted with the sequential inclusion of the predictors, which made it possible to trace their contribution to CA (Table 10).

The results presented in Table 10 demonstrate that each subsequent model with an expanded set of predictors provides a better fit than the previous one. The results indicate that sociocultural awareness plays a central role in shaping cultural adaptability, while sociocultural knowledge and motivational-affective readiness make more limited but statistically significant contributions.

Table 10.

Comparison of linear mixed-effects models predicting CA from SK, MAR and SA

Model	Effect	df	F	*p*	AIC	BIC	β
Model 0	Intercept	3			306.2	314.2	
Model 1	+ SK	4	261.3	*< .001*	195.7	206.3	0.064
Model 2	+ SK	5	29.06	*< .001*	175.1	188.3	0.035
	+ MAR						0.469
Model 3	+ SK	6	32.336	*< .001*	151.3	167.2	0.013
	+ MAR						0.014
	+ SA						0.710

DISCUSSION

The primary analysis compared the treatment and control groups on all SCC variables at both the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages. The absence of significant pre-intervention differences confirms that the two groups were comparable at baseline across all SCC components. This establishes the methodological basis for attributing post-intervention differences to the curriculum. At the post-test stage, statistically significant differences across all the SCC components were observed, showing differentiated outcomes between the groups following the intervention.

A significant multivariate time effect, identified using MANOVA, also indicates the presence of consistent differences between the variables before and after the pedagogical intervention across all the components studied. The obtained findings allow for the consideration of sociocultural competence development as a complex and multidimensional process, in which changes simultaneously affect interconnected aspects, thereby supporting their interpretation as outcomes of the targeted pedagogical intervention. This finding aligns with studies emphasising that sociocultural competence requires intentional pedagogical support and structured intercultural learning (Anužienė, 2015; Byram et al., 1997; Piddubna et al., 2022).

To examine the interrelations among SCC components in greater depth, linear mixed-effects models were employed. This approach permitted a stepwise assessment of each factor's explanatory contribution while simultaneously controlling for individual differences through a random intercept for the participant.

The first stage of the analysis demonstrated that sociocultural knowledge is a significant predictor of sociocultural awareness. This relationship reflects the theoretical view that sociocultural knowledge provides a cognitive basis for understanding cultural norms and enables deeper interpretive awareness (Guryanov et al., 2019). The inclusion of SK significantly improved model fit relative to the intercept-only baseline. However, sociocultural knowledge in this study was not considered an independent or final developmental outcome, but rather was interpreted as a cognitive foundation statistically associated with the development of a conscious understanding of sociocultural aspects. In this regard, Seawright et al. (2021) emphasise that the development of cultural competence depends on the comprehension and interpretation of sociocultural factors, rather than on the mere assimilation of information – a principle that is central to the conceptualisation of SCC adopted in this study. Baker (2015) views awareness as a construct that links sociocultural knowledge with the interpretation of specific social and cultural contexts. This interpretation is also consistent with recent findings from the Kazakhstani educational context, where factual knowledge of national symbols, institutions, and cultural heritage was found to be insufficient for fostering active engagement unless supported by emotional involvement, value orientations, motivation, and a sense of agency (Gerfanova et al., 2025).

The second stage of the analysis was devoted to motivational-affective readiness as a dependent variable. The results of the linear mixed-effects models indicated that sociocultural awareness constitutes the primary predictor of motivational-affective readiness, while the direct contribution of sociocultural knowledge becomes minimal when awareness is taken into account. The sequential inclusion of these predictors improved the quality of the model, indicating their significant role in explaining motivational-affective readiness. In the present study, motivational-affective readiness demonstrated a stronger association with the awareness-based dimension of SCC than with its knowledge-based component.

In the final stage of the analysis, cultural adaptability was considered as a dependent variable. The stepwise inclusion of sociocultural knowledge, motivational-affective readiness, and sociocultural awareness consistently improved the quality of the models. Although all predictors in the final model are statistically significant, sociocultural awareness emerges as the central explanatory component of cultural adaptability, while sociocultural knowledge and motivational-affective readiness play more limited, yet meaningful roles.

From a methodological point of view, these findings contribute to the empirical study of SCC by using linear mixed-effects models to analyse changes and statistical relationships between its components over time. The use of linear mixed-effects models is justified in educational studies with repeated measurements, since this approach allows for the simultaneous consideration of fixed effects associated with the studied variables while controlling for interindividual differences between participants by including random effects (Pinheiro & Bates, 2000). Using a step-by-step model-building strategy made it possible to evaluate the incremental contribution of each fixed effect. This approach seems to be

particularly relevant for research on SCC, where the components are conceptually interrelated, but may exhibit different explanatory significance depending on the indicator being analyzed (Jarvis et al., 2003). In this context, the present study offers a methodologically cautious view of the interrelationships between the components of SCC.

The following discussion situates these modelling findings within the context of the pedagogical intervention's design features. The SCC-focused curriculum was based on an integrative approach to the development of SCC. Engagement with sociocultural content proceeded through stages of acquisition, comprehension, and interpretation, aligning with task-based approaches to intercultural learning that prioritise meaningful engagement with authentic material (Baker, 2015; Byram & Wagner, 2018). The curriculum incorporated pedagogical techniques aimed at increasing motivational-affective involvement and readiness for adaptive behaviour in professionally relevant contexts, with the instructional design consisting of a variety of learning activities, including the use of audio-visual materials through digital platforms, reading and analysing authentic texts, comprehension and retelling exercises, comparative tables, role-playing games, simulations, group discussions, debates, poster presentations, and case-based tasks. These pedagogical techniques align with activity-oriented and experiential approaches to intercultural education (Baker, 2015).

The pattern of relationships observed among the SCC components can be interpreted in light of the instructional design described above, particularly the active stage of sociocultural learning. This stage, involving role-play, discussions, and case analysis, required students to apply their understanding in simulated intercultural situations. These activities created conditions for awareness to translate into motivational readiness and adaptive behaviour, which is reflected in the statistical models of the present study, where sociocultural awareness emerged as the central predictor of cultural adaptability. Recent evidence indicates that role-play simulations before intercultural encounters can strengthen students' cultural and ethical sensitivity in real-world settings, suggesting that such experiential activities serve as a crucial bridge between cognitive understanding and adaptive behaviour (Nia, 2025). Thus, the active stage appears to have functioned as the primary mechanism through which cognitive understanding was transformed into behavioural readiness.

In addition to the quasi-experimental design and the use of linear mixed models, the interpretation of the findings is based on a preliminary psychometric verification of the diagnostic tools used. The exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses carried out at the early stages of the study confirmed the internal consistency and construct validity of the scales used to assess the components of SCC.

At the same time, several studies emphasise that the expansion of sociocultural knowledge and awareness is not always accompanied by changes in adaptive behaviour and largely depends on the context, duration and structure of educational programs (Vande Berg et al., 2012; Jackson, 2015). In addition, motivational-affective characteristics are described as

dynamic and contextually determined variables that exhibit different predictive power in relation to learning outcomes in different analytical approaches (Teimouri et al., 2022).

In this context, the present findings do not contradict existing evidence but contribute to a refinement of it, grounded in the specific analytical approach and educational context of the study. The use of the quasi-experimental design and linear mixed-effects modelling made it possible to identify differences in the explanatory significance of SCC components. The data obtained indicate that changes in indicators of SCC depend on the cumulative interaction of cognitive, awareness-based, motivational-affective, and adaptive aspects.

CONCLUSION

Theoretically, the findings contribute to the conceptualisation of SCC as a multidimensional and interconnected construct. The findings confirm that sociocultural knowledge does not function as an isolated cognitive element but rather acts as a foundational component that underpins the development of sociocultural awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability. The identified relationships among these components support contemporary theoretical frameworks that emphasise the integrative and developmental nature of SCC.

Practically, the findings underscore the value of an integrated approach to SCC development within pre-service foreign language teacher education in Kazakhstan. Post-test results demonstrated significant gains across all SCC components in the treatment group, confirming the curriculum's effectiveness in raising overall SCC levels. The identified interrelations among sociocultural knowledge, awareness, motivational-affective readiness, and cultural adaptability suggest that educators and curriculum designers should embed SCC-focused activities within pre-service teacher training, thereby strengthening graduates' capacity to interpret, reflect on, and apply sociocultural knowledge in professional contexts.

Limitations

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample was restricted to a single educational organisation and training programme, which limited the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the marked gender imbalance in the sample (94% female) limits the generalisability of findings to mixed-gender or male-dominated programmes, where patterns of SCC development may differ. In addition, while the linear mixed-effects models employed here successfully identified statistical relationships among SCC components over time, future research employing structural equation modelling (SEM) could probe indirect and latent pathways, test alternative models of component interaction, and further validate the four-component SCC structure. Additional research comparing specific pedagogical techniques and instructional formats would help clarify their differential impact on individual SCC components and their interrelationships.

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APPENDIX

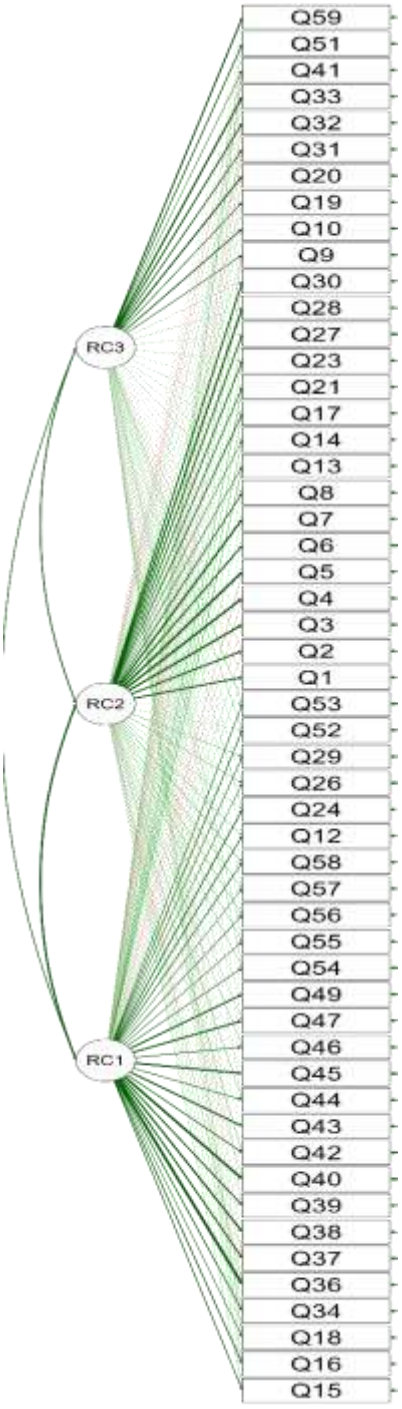


Figure 3.
Path Diagram

Table 2.

Factor loadings in EFA

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I36	0.861		
I40	0.826		
I45	0.767		
I47	0.706		
I43	0.698		
I38	0.681		
I49	0.679		
I37	0.613		
I39	0.592		
I42	0.526		
I24	0.519		
I16	0.516		
I46	0.515		
I44	0.511		
I12	0.508		
I34	0.504		
I15	0.493		
I52	0.489		
I58	0.479		
I54	0.476		
I53	0.455		
I56	0.451		
I29	0.444		
I18	0.429		
I55	0.428		
I26	0.415		
I57	0.409		
I4		0.787	
I5		0.783	
I3		0.747	
I2		0.688	
I1		0.682	
I7		0.675	

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I28	0.621	
I6	0.612	
I30	0.570	
I27	0.543	
I23	0.526	
I8	0.525	
I17	0.499	
I21	0.484	
I13	0.423	
I14	0.405	
I33		0.651
I59		0.606
I20		0.600
I32		0.597
I10		0.554
I51		0.536
I31		0.534
I9		0.487
I19		0.468
I41		0.426

Table 3.

Sociocultural competence questionnaire

Items	Component
1. I understand how historical events have shaped social norms in English-speaking cultures.	SA
2. I have a good understanding of how traditions and values influence social norms in English-speaking cultures.	SA
3. I comprehend how behavioral norms vary within English-speaking cultures.	SA
4. I can easily recognize sociocultural stereotypes associated with English-speaking cultures.	SA
5. I am aware of the cultural symbols that may hold different meanings in English-speaking cultures.	SA
6. I comprehend the role of religion in English-speaking cultures.	SA

7. I understand how sociocultural factors can affect interactions and behaviours in English-speaking cultures.	SA
8. I can understand the perspective of a person raised in English-speaking countries.	SA
9. I find it difficult to adjust to the behavioral norms of other cultures and feel hesitant to engage.	CA
10. I have a good understanding of how traditions and values influence social norms in my native culture.	SA
11. I comprehend how behavioural norms vary within my native culture.	SA
12. I can easily recognize sociocultural stereotypes associated with my native culture.	SA
13. I am aware of the cultural symbols in my native culture.	SA
14. I comprehend the role of religion in my native culture.	SA
15. I understand how sociocultural factors affect interactions and behaviours in my native culture.	SA
16. I can understand the perspective of a person raised in my native country.	SA
17. I understand the differences in culturally specific speech strategies between English-speaking cultures and my native culture.	SA
18. I understand the various social roles in different sociocultural contexts.	SA
19. I often do not understand what a person from another culture means.	CA
20. I believe it is essential to protect cultural diversity.	MAR
21. I understand that cultural and social diversity can be a source of enrichment rather than conflict.	MAR
22. I strive to avoid judgments based on sociocultural stereotypes.	MAR
23. I recognize that my sociocultural perspectives are not the only valid ones.	MAR
24. I struggle to understand how sociocultural background shapes people's perspectives in my country.	CA
25. I am genuinely interested in the sociocultural characteristics of English-speaking cultures.	MAR
26. I am open to interacting with people from different social groups within my native culture.	MAR
27. I am willing to communicate with people from different social groups within English-speaking cultures.	MAR
28. I feel ready to initiate contact with people whose sociocultural experiences differ from mine.	MAR
29. I am ready to collaborate in a team with people from different sociocultural backgrounds.	MAR

30. I am open to finding compromises when communicating in diverse sociocultural settings.	MAR
31. I am willing to adapt my behavior to respect my communication partner's social and cultural norms.	MAR
32. I am open to changing my opinion in response to new sociocultural experiences.	MAR
33. I am motivated to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts in intercultural communication.	MAR
34. I understand how social roles influence respectful forms of address in my native culture.	SA
35. I understand how intonation and pauses differ between English-speaking cultures and my native culture.	SA
36. I rarely think about how my cultural views may differ from those of others.	CA
37. I strive to assess my biases in intercultural communication critically.	MAR
38. I realize how my culture influences my behavior and worldview.	MAR
39. I notice how my sociocultural identity affects my perception of others.	MAR
40. I can analyze how my cultural attitudes influence my decisions.	MAR
41. I struggle to understand how sociocultural background shapes people's perspectives living in English-speaking countries.	CA
42. I understand how social roles influence respectful forms of address in English-speaking cultures.	SA
43. I find adapting to the peculiarities of speech etiquette in my native culture challenging.	CA
44. I find adapting to the peculiarities of speech etiquette in English-speaking cultures challenging.	CA
45. I respect the traditions of other nations, even if they differ from mine.	MAR
46. I do not understand why people from my native culture behave differently.	CA
47. I do not understand why people from English-speaking cultures behave differently	CA
48. I am aware of speech taboos in intercultural communication.	SA
49. I am genuinely interested in the sociocultural characteristics of my native culture.	MAR
50. I can understand and consider the feelings and emotions of people from different sociocultural backgrounds.	MAR
51. I am aware of which topics may be inappropriate in communication with representatives of my native culture.	SA
52. I know which topics may be inappropriate in communication with representatives of English-speaking cultures.	SA

Table 4.

SCC-focused curriculum

Week	Module	Learning goals	Learning outcomes
1-2	History & Geography	– *To introduce students to the key historical stages and geographical features of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan.* – *To expand students' knowledge about the development of statehood in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan.* – *To develop the ability to see the relationship between historical processes and the formation of sociocultural identity.*	*Students:* – *Analyse and compare the historical background and geographical characteristics of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan.* – *Understand the influence of historical factors on the development of the sociocultural environment.*
3	Symbols	– *To introduce the national symbols of the United Kingdom, the USA, and Kazakhstan and their meanings.* – *To demonstrate the connection between symbolism and history.*	*Students:* – *Recognize and explain the meaning of national symbols represented in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan.* – Compare how symbols reflect the identity of each society.
4-5	Religion	– *To identify and describe the religious composition and major faith traditions represented in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan.* – *To demonstrate the role of religion as part of sociocultural heritage.*	*Students:* – *Explain the differences between major religious systems.* – *Show respect and sensitivity when discussing spiritual topics.* – *Strive to understand the values underlying religious*

		– *To foster respect for spiritual traditions and a willingness to engage in dialogue based on tolerance.*	*traditions and perceive them without bias.*
6-7	Traditions	– *To introduce the national and cultural traditions of the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan.* – *To demonstrate the understanding of the relationship between traditions and social norms.*	*Students:* – *Describe key traditions and explain their significance in society.* – *Compare customs from different countries, understanding their sociocultural context.* – *Demonstrate the willingness to accept and respect the traditions of other cultures as equal forms of self-expression.*
8-9	Values	– *To develop the understanding of the fundamental sociocultural values of British, American, and Kazakhstani societies.* – *To develop the ability to compare the value orientations of different cultures.* – *To stimulate self-analysis and the awareness of differences in one's own and others' values and views.*	*Students:* – *Explain the sociocultural values represented in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan and their influence on social norms.* – *Recognize that their own values and views are not universal.* – *Are willing to adapt their perceptions and interpretations, understanding that the sociocultural background influences the formation of values.*
10	Social roles	– *To introduce differences in the perception of formal and informal social roles in different cultures.* – *To understand the influence of sociocultural factors on the distribution of roles.*	*Students:* – *Distinguish between formal and informal social roles and understand their sociocultural significance.* – *Understand why sociocultural characteristics*

		– *To develop respect for social and cultural diversity.*	*shape the behaviour of the representatives of different societies.* – *Are willing to adapt to different behaviour patterns while maintaining respect for the sociocultural norms of their own and other cultures.*
11-12	Behavioural and social norms	– *To introduce the norms of behavior and the rules of conduct* represented in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan. – *To develop a conscious attitude toward politeness and personal boundaries.* – *To develop the ability to consider context and adapt one's behavior to the norms of other cultures.*	*Students:* – *Recognize differences in behavioral and social norms* represented in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Kazakhstan. – *Are willing to demonstrate the ability to apply rules of conduct.* – *Strive to adapt to the behavioral expectations of different cultures, demonstrating flexibility and respect.*
13-14	Speech strategies	– *To introduce typical speech strategies (greetings, apologies, requests, and gratitude) in English, American, and Kazakh cultures.* – *To develop the ability to consider the communicative intentions and context of the interlocutor's statement.* – *To develop a willingness to adapt to the speech etiquette peculiarities of the native and target cultures.*	*Students:* – *Use appropriate speech formulas depending on the communicative situation.* – *Are prepared to adapt to the speech etiquette of both their native and target cultures in various communication situations.* – *Recognize that the meaning of a statement depends on the sociocultural context and strive to understand the hidden intentions and meaning of words in another culture.*

15	Stereotypes	– *To introduce the nature of sociocultural stereotypes and biased judgments.* – *To demonstrate how stereotypes influence perception and behavior.* – *To develop an internal willingness to understand differences without judgment.*	*Students:* – *Recognize the manifestations of sociocultural stereotypes in speech and behavior.* – *Recognize that stereotypes distort perception and strive to adapt to a more objective understanding of differences.* – *Show respect for the individual and sociocultural characteristics of others.* – *Strive to adapt their perceptions and understand other points of view, even if they differ from their usual ones.*