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НАУЧНЫЙ ЖУРНАЛ  
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<https://doi.org/10.48081/KVKZ7976>**\*E. F. Gerfanova<sup>1</sup>, E. M. Nemtchinova<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Astana IT University,  
Republic of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan;<sup>2</sup>Seattle Pacific University,  
USA, Seattle**EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL  
CITIZENSHIP AMONG KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS**

*In recent years, the concept of intercultural citizenship in language education has been recognized worldwide. The goal is to prepare students for effective interaction in intercultural settings across diverse communities. Despite many reviews in the literature that address the importance of incorporating intercultural citizenship into language education, very few studies have discussed it from student perspectives. This study aims at exploring perceptions of intercultural citizenship held by university students. Employing a questionnaire, quantitative data were collected from 407 students of both English and non-English majors. The aim of the questionnaire survey was to identify whether the participants are familiar with the concept of intercultural citizenship and what core qualities, responsibilities, and skills they think an intercultural citizen should have. The findings revealed that students' attitudes to the idea of intercultural citizenship are generally favorable, the participants give prominence to such components as knowledge of languages, cultural awareness, acceptance of diversity, tolerance, respect for other cultures, patriotism. At the same time, the results indicate that students have developed superficial understandings of the concept, since the responses were limited to just some core components of intercultural citizenship.*

*Keywords: intercultural citizenship, intercultural competence, perceptions, students, education, culture, language.*

## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in Intercultural Citizenship education, which is predetermined by the increase in the prominence given to the intercultural dimension of education. The theory of Intercultural Citizenship proposed by M.Byram has become widely recognized and implemented in the EFL classroom [1].

As stated by F.Fang and W.Baker, the concept of intercultural citizenship encompasses components of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) intertwined with a sense of global connectivity and responsibility [2]. Despite many reviews in the literature that address the importance of incorporating intercultural citizenship into language education, very few studies have discussed it from student perspectives. This is a significant gap, since it becomes important to reveal whether foreign language education in its current state provides students with a sense of being a part of global community. Thus, the study focuses on FL students' familiarity with the concept of intercultural citizenship and their perceptions in regards to it.

## **Materials and Methods**

The notion of intercultural citizenship has risen due to the development of intercultural communicative competence which is seen as a learning goal in the FL education. Some researches in Kazakhstan have previously investigated teachers' and students' perceptions as well as teachers' practices in regards to intercultural dimension of FL education. K. Smakova conducted a research which aimed to investigate 108 EFL teachers' understanding of ICC, the challenges they encounter in developing learners' ICC and examine the extent to which teachers integrate ICC into their EFL classrooms [3]. The findings showed that teachers are aware of the concept and understand the significance of developing learners' ICC, however, practising ICC in the EFL classroom is still challenging for them. The following problematic aspects were identified as a result of the survey: lack of a real environment for students, inappropriate content of the coursebooks and the necessity to elaborate additional ICC-oriented materials as well as lack of knowledge on how to promote ICC, how to assess its components and how to balance language and intercultural teaching. M.Kassymbekova and A. Tchaklikova explored 44 EFL teachers and 167 students' views on ICC through conducting a questionnaire survey [4]. The results showed that the EFL teachers see intercultural language learning as reasonable and emphasize the role of a teacher in promoting ICC through the task design and assessment strategies. In the same study, 167 students' perceptions of ICC were explored. The data obtained demonstrated that, on the whole, students engage learning about the interculturality and use language appropriately in the intercultural setting. However, the survey diagnosed some

gaps: students do not learn the «dos and don'ts» of the culture being studied, know little about the body language rules and experience difficulties in using politeness strategies in their speech. In a study investigating students' perceptions of ICC, Z. Duisembekova found that students lack intercultural knowledge, since a larger amount of time in the FL classroom was dedicated to language teaching rather than culture teaching [5]. Thus, exploring perceptions and attitudes, either those of teachers' or students', to a certain issue relevant for the FL classroom aims to identify and understand gaps which might be helpful in enhancing effectiveness of the intercultural teaching/learning process.

Intercultural communicative competence refers to the ability to communicate effectively with individuals belonging to different linguocultural communities [6]. G. Chen and W. Starosta perceive it as «the ability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and integrate cultural differences that qualifies one for enlightened global citizenship» [7, p. 367]. In this sense, intercultural communicative competence runs in parallel with the notion of intercultural citizenship.

According to Byram, the definition of intercultural citizenship includes:

1 Causing/facilitating intercultural citizenship experience, and analysis and reflection on it and on the possibility of further social and/or political activity, i.e., activity that involves working with others to achieve an agreed end;

2 Creating learning/change in the individual: cognitive, attitudinal, behavioural change; change in self-perception; change in relationships with Others (i.e., people of a different social group); change that is based in the particular but is related to the universal [1, p. 187].

This approach to intercultural citizenship highlights changes in the individual, his/her personal growth, development of an intercultural mindset and producing activity which goes beyond the local to the international. D. Killick holds the same point of view stating that intercultural citizenship encompasses extension of citizenship, recognition of social relations on the global scale and awareness of responsibilities to the local and global communities [8]. Using the example of Kazakhstan, R. Abazov made a number of important observations on the issue of intercultural citizenship integration into HEI's educational programs [9]. One of them is that global (or intercultural) citizenship education is an important tool in promoting cultural diversity in the learning/ teaching context. Another observation is the need to understand the sensitivity of the unique national culture. Furthermore, when integrating intercultural citizenship component into educational programs it is important to consider specificities of the national educational system, perceptions of the teaching staff and institutional regulations of the educational process. Finally, the research indicated that Kazakhstani researchers and educators hold three approaches to intercultural citizenship education: a full acceptance of

globalization and internationalization, a full exclusion of the mentioned processes and perseverance of national values and traditions, and incorporation of both the national concept of citizenship and the global one into the curriculum. Furthermore, social competence and intercultural competence are conceived by Kazakhstani researchers and educators as important ones in preparing students to function effectively in the globalized world.

Intercultural citizenship is set out as a new conceptualization of language education which goes beyond purely the linguistic/ communicative/ instrumental toward intercultural citizenship education which «connects the FL classroom with the community, whether local, national, regional, and/or global [10, p. 490]. Byram identifies three dimensions of intercultural citizenship education, namely, the relational, the critical, and the civic [11] (Figure 1). According to the researcher, the relational dimension presupposes getting involved with others, understanding and comparing linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of communication. The critical one means analyzing one's own behavior and comparing it to the behavior of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and taking into account the national basis of one's own values and beliefs. Finally, the civic dimension means undertaking actions not only in the classroom, school, etc. but beyond these.

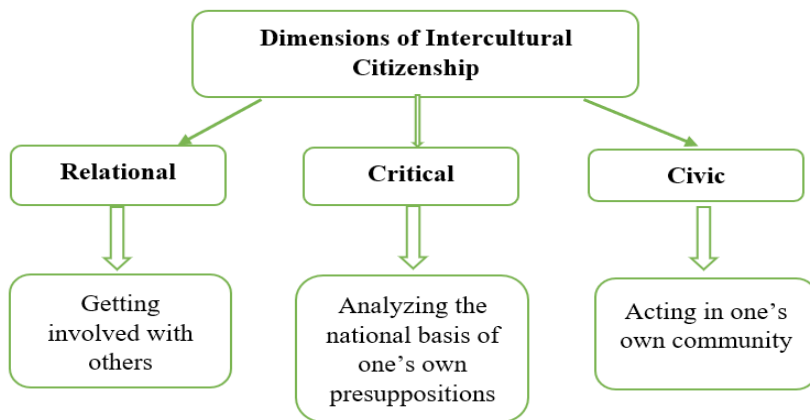


Figure 1 – IC Dimensions

Educators and researchers worldwide have considered the issue of integrating intercultural citizenship in the dimension of FL education. For example, in the book «Global Citizenship in the English language teaching» published by British Council, intercultural citizenship is explored with regard to the development of

curricula and materials, teachers' and students' attitudes, teaching methods and activities [12]. The chapter by M. Porto in the book «Intercultural Citizenship in the Language classroom» describes the combination of language teaching and citizenship education as a significant potential to develop the global community [10]. A. Barili and M. Byram evaluated language students' perceptions of their own language learning during their work as active citizens [13]. The study analyzed students' blogs and diaries on a thematical basis, and the data demonstrated that the integration of the component of intercultural citizenship in the foreign language curriculum increased students' intercultural competence development as well as their critical evaluation of perspectives and practices in their native culture and those of others.

The analysis of research literature suggests that there is not enough detailed work on the understanding of students' perceptions of intercultural citizenship in Kazakhstani educational context, and the present study aims at addressing this specific gap.

The study intended to investigate FL students' perceptions of the concept of intercultural citizenship. For this intent, the quantitative research method was used. The following research questions are central to the empirical part:

RQ 1. What does «citizen» mean to Kazakhstani university students?

RQ 2. Are Kazakhstani university students familiar with the concept of intercultural citizenship?

RQ 3. What qualities, responsibilities, duties, obligations, skills Kazakhstani university students think an intercultural citizen should have?

The study was conducted by analyzing data collected through an online questionnaire which was partially adopted from H. Han [14]. The questionnaire in English contained close-ended and open-ended items and was divided into two main sections: 1) a section on background overview; 2) a section on students' responses associated with their perceptions of the concepts of citizenship and intercultural citizenship.

The participants of the present study were 407 students and included both English majors and non-English majors. Twenty-six studied abroad in the framework of external academic mobility program, and the rest were interested to participate in international programs which provide an opportunity to study abroad. The majority were males with 64 %, and 36 % were females. Their age ranged from 18 to 21.

### **Discussion and results**

*RQ 1. What does «citizen» mean to Kazakhstani university students?*

The first research question aimed at finding out how students perceive the concept of a citizen. These were open-ended questions which asked students to

provide at least three items for core qualities, responsibilities and obligations of a citizen. It should be noted that not all the participants provided three items as was required, limiting their responses to 1-2 items. The answers were analyzed and distributed thematically. Table 1 presents the frequency of these themes:

Table 1 – Students' perception of the concept «citizen» (qualities, responsibilities and obligations)

Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Patriotism	328	80 %
Rights	297	73 %
Active social position	254	62 %
Knowledge of laws and abiding them	212	52 %
Tolerance	163	40 %
Personal qualities	141	34 %

As seen from Table 1, patriotism goes first which reveals that patriotic values constitute the core of the culture of the young people. The respondents associate patriotism with the sense of pride for the country, with being loyal to its people, respectful of its history, as well as they understand the importance of knowing its language and culture. Items referring to the rights of a citizen rank second which is quite understandable, since having a citizenship means having the rights and respecting the rights of others. For the respondents, citizenship also implies an active participation in the life of the community. As stated by M. Tsekoura, «Young people have been reconfigured as «citizens in the making» and, similarly to older generations, are expected now to become volunteers, take part in deliberation processes, vote (when eligible), become members of committees, be partners in the delivery of services, consume services, participate in educational programs and self-regulate» [15, p. 118]. The fourth thematic group Knowledge of laws shows that the young people realize the importance of laws and regulations and have a sense of law-abiding awareness. The next goes Tolerance, which shows that the young people living in a multicultural and multiethnic community understand the importance of being tolerant to other people and accepting views, beliefs, attitudes that may be different from their own. Personal qualities were also mentioned, among which are honesty, kindness, morality, conscientiousness, respectfulness, and responsibility.

*RQ 2. Are Kazakhstani university students familiar with the concept of intercultural citizenship?*

The aim of the second research question was to find out whether students are familiar with the term «intercultural citizenship» and whether they identify



themselves with being intercultural citizens. The results are presented in Figures 2, 3 and 4 below.

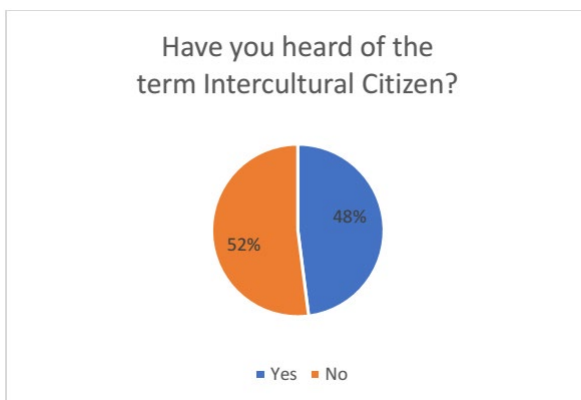
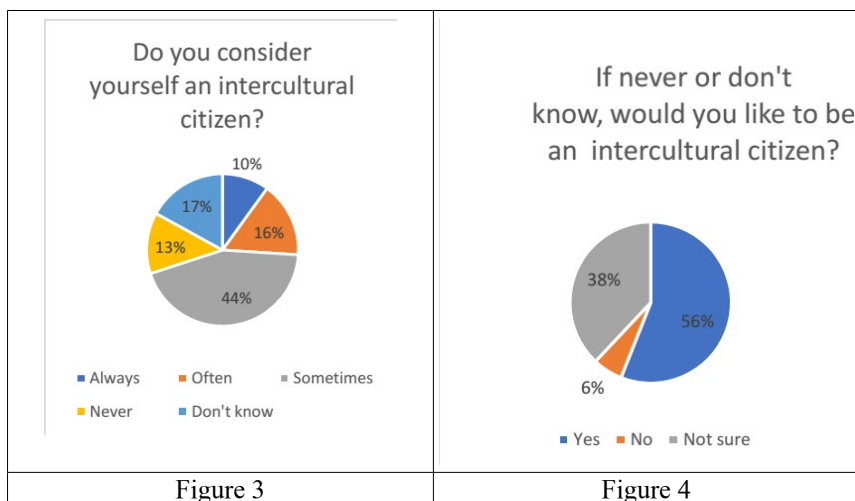


Figure 2 – Students' familiarity with the term «intercultural citizenship»



As seen from Figure 2, the responses to the question *Have you heard of the term Intercultural Citizen* have distributed approximately evenly, with 48 % of positive and 52 % negative answers. The terms «intercultural communication» and «interculturalism» are wide-spread nowadays, and the large percentage of familiarity with the term «intercultural citizenship» is quite obvious.

Figure 3 demonstrates that 44 % of the participants identify themselves as intercultural citizens. As seen from Figure 4, 56 % of those who have never had a sense of being an intercultural citizen expressed a desire to become such, and 38% expressed uncertainty which may be explained by unfamiliarity with the term.

*RQ 3. What qualities, responsibilities, duties, obligations, skills Kazakhstani university students think an intercultural citizen should have?*

The participants were asked to provide at least three items to show their perceptions of the core qualities, duties, obligations of an intercultural citizen. As in case with the first research question, not all the participant provided the required three items and limited their responses to 1–2 items, or gave the «don't know» answer. The responses in this section were distributed thematically. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2 – Students' perception of the concept «intercultural citizen» (core qualities)

Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Familiarity with other cultures	295	72 %
Knowledge of languages	251	61 %
Respect for people from other cultures, their beliefs and values	176	43 %
Skills of communication	162	42 %
Open-mindedness	107	39 %
Tolerance	103	25 %
Adaptation to a different cultural environment, flexibility	43	11 %
Personal qualities (kindness, honesty)	26	6 %
Others	9	2 %

As can be seen from Table 2, knowledge of culture ranks first among the participants which shows that students understand the importance of cultural awareness in situations of intercultural communication as well as the knowledge of languages which goes second. In addition to this, respect for people that have a different cultural background is deemed important, since respect for a communication partner builds effective and healthy relationship. Next goes communicative competence, which shows that students understand the importance of developing communication skills to be able to function effectively in an intercultural setting. Students also give prominence to such qualities as open-mindedness, tolerance, flexibility, and kindness which also make the basis for effective intercultural communication.

Table 3 – Students' perception of the concept «intercultural citizen» (responsibilities and skills)

	Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Responsibilities	Accepting cultural diversity	234	57 %
	Respecting one's own culture and other cultures	167	
	Having a desire to learn about other cultures, other traditions, beliefs, taboos	153	41 %
	Bridging cultures	121	29 %
	Promoting peace	110	27 %
	Patriotism	98	24 %
	Understanding global issues and taking active participation in solving them	72	17 %
	Observing laws	54	13 %
	Others	17	4 %
Skills/ abilities	Communication skills	305	74 %
	Foreign language skills	278	68 %
	Understanding different cultures	212	52 %
	Adaptation skills	187	45 %

Regarding the responsibilities of an intercultural citizen, accepting diversity ranks first followed by such close items as respecting other cultures, having a desire to learn about other cultures, and bridging cultures. This result can be interpreted by students' understanding of the importance of being able to communicate on the intercultural level and to bring cultures together. Promoting peace was also mentioned as one of the main responsibilities of an intercultural citizen, which goes in line with the universal goal of making the world a peaceful and harmonious place. It is also noticeable that students give prominence to the awareness of global issues and participation in solving them: global issues awareness is raised across disciplines and curricula, and it is a good sign that in students' minds paying attention to issues of global significance makes a part of intercultural citizenship. Other responsibilities include patriotism and observing laws both of one's own country and the country you are travelling to.

As for skills, the majority of students believe that communication skills, foreign language skills, understanding cultures are essential, which is quite understandable: ability to communicate in foreign languages, intercultural awareness make the core of successful communication on the intercultural level. It is also noticeable that students' link intercultural citizenship to adaptation skills, which is really important, since the ability to adjust to new cultural surroundings and change one's own communicative behavior help to avoid misunderstanding between interactants.

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### **Conclusion**

The research investigated students' familiarity with the concept of intercultural citizenship and their perceptions in regards to core qualities, responsibilities and skills an intercultural citizen should have. The findings demonstrate that intercultural citizenship attitudes are generally favorable and that its key components are important to the participants, including: knowledge of languages, cultural awareness, acceptance of diversity, tolerance, respect for other cultures. At the same time, the results indicate that students have developed superficial understandings of intercultural citizenship, since the responses were limited to just some core components of intercultural citizenship. Furthermore, the participants experienced confusion when providing qualities and responsibilities of an intercultural citizen which may be explained by their unfamiliarity with the concept itself. This implies that a better attention should be given to systematic intercultural education and integration of its components into the curriculum which will help students to develop a sense of being intercultural citizens.

### **Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

The main limitation of this study is seen in the use of quantitative method, future research may want to refer to the qualitative method through interviewing students. The study focused on students' perceptions, but recognizes that there is also a need to explore how teachers may perceive intercultural citizenship in their teaching, what practices they employ to develop their students as intercultural citizens.

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## МӘДЕНИЕТАРАЛЫҚ АЗАМАТТЫҚ КОНЦЕПТ ТУРАЛЫ СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ ҚАБЫЛДАУЫН ЗЕРТТЕУ

*Соңғы жылдары тілдік білім берудегі мәдениетаралық азаматтық тұжырымдамасы дүние жүзінде мойындалды. Мәдениет аралық азаматтыққа үйретудің мақсаты – оқушыларды әртүрлі қауымдастықтардағы мәдениетаралық жағдайларда тиімді өзара әрекеттесуге дайындау. Тілдік білім беруде мәдениетаралық азаматтықты қамтудың маңыздылығы туралы көптеген зерттеулерге қарамастан, студенттердің мәдениетаралық азаматтық ұғымын түсіну мәселесіне жеткілікті көңіл бөлінбейді.*

*Бұл зерттеу қазақстандық жоғары оқу орындары студенттерінің мәдениетаралық азаматтықты қабылдауын зерттеуге бағытталған. Сауалнаманың көмегімен сандық деректер жиналды, сауалнамаға ағылшын тілді және ағылшын тілінде сөйлемейтін мамандықтардың 407 студенті қатысты. Сауалнаманың мақсаты қатысушылардың мәдениетаралық азаматтық ұғымымен таныс немесе таныс еместігін біліп, «мәдениетаралық азаматта» қандай негізгі қасиеттер, жауапкершіліктер мен дағдылар болуы керек деп санайтынын анықтау болды. Нәтижелер студенттердің мәдениетаралық азаматтық идеясына қатынасы жалпы оң екенін көрсетті, қатысушылар мәдениетаралық азаматтықтың - тілдерді білу, мәдени сана, әртүрлілікті қабылдау, толеранттылық, басқа мәдениеттерге құрмет, патриотизм сияқты құрамдас бөліктерін маңызды деп есептейді. Сонымен қатар, нәтижелер студенттердің мәдениетаралық азаматтықтың не екенін және «мәдениетаралық азаматтың» қандай қасиеттерге ие болуы керектігін үстірт түсінетінін көрсетеді, өйткені жауаптар мәдениетаралық азаматтықтың кейбір негізгі құрамдас бөліктерімен ғана шектелді.*

*Кілтті сөздер: мәдениетаралық азаматтық, түсініктер, студенттер, білім, мәдениет, тіл.*

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## ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЙ СТУДЕНТОВ О КОНЦЕПТЕ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО ГРАЖДАНСТВА

*В последние годы в образовании активно развивается концепция межкультурного гражданства. Сущность данной концепции заключается в том, что образование должно быть направлено на формирование и развитие у обучающихся межкультурной компетенции, на развитие их понимания важности активного участия в жизни общества и на их гражданское воспитание в межкультурном аспекте. Данное исследование направлено на изучение представлений студентов казахстанских вузов о концепте межкультурного гражданства. Через проведение онлайн анкетирования были собраны количественные данные, в анкете приняли участие 407 студентов как языковых, так и неязыковых специальностей. Цель анкетирования заключалась в том, чтобы определить, знакомы ли респонденты с концепцией межкультурного гражданства и какими основными качествами, обязанностями и навыками, по их мнению, должен обладать «межкультурный гражданин». Результаты показали, что отношение студентов к концепции межкультурного гражданства, в целом, положительное, участники анкетирования считают важными такие компоненты межкультурного гражданства как знание языков, культурная осведомленность, принятие разнообразия, толерантность, уважение к другим культурам, патриотизм. В то же время результаты показывают, что у студентов сложилось поверхностное представление о том, что такое межкультурное гражданство, и какими качествами должен обладать «межкультурный гражданин», поскольку ответы были ограничены лишь некоторыми основными компонентами межкультурного гражданства.*

*Ключевые слова: межкультурное гражданство, межкультурная компетенция, представления, студенты, образование, культура, язык.*

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