

## CULTURAL COMPONENT IN INTERACTION AT LEVEL A1 IN TERMS OF COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

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**Abstract.** The authors identified a cultural component for teaching English primary schoolchildren at level A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The purpose of the study was to identify and describe what knowledge, skills and abilities primary schoolchildren must have to interact effectively within the framework of CEFR speech interaction for level A1. During the analysis, interaction types were identified and described. Then the intercultural component was identified within each type of interaction at level A1, and on this basis, author's educational materials were developed. The authors identified three types of communication, namely, oral, written and online interaction. Within each type of interaction the authors identified and described the intercultural component. The cultural component was identified and described as a set of knowledge, skills and abilities that primary schoolchildren must use in each method of interaction. For further research more cultures can become the focus of the analysis. This would help to identify cultural similarities, differences, and characteristics of communication types between the representatives of different cultures. The results of the study can be used to teach the cultural component to younger schoolchildren in the process of interaction at level A1.

**Keywords:** Common European Framework of Reference, interaction, intercultural component, types of interaction

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## КУЛЬТУРНЫЙ КОМПОНЕНТ ВО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИИ ДЛЯ УРОВНЯ А1 СОГЛАСНО ОБЩЕЕВРОПЕЙСКИМ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯМ ВЛАДЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКОМ

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**Аннотация.** Авторы определяют культурный компонент в обучении младших школьников при взаимодействии на уровне А1 согласно общеевропейским компетенциям владения иностранным языком (CEFR). Цель исследования – выявить и описать, какими знаниями, умениями и навыками должны обладать учащиеся начальной школы, чтобы эффективно взаимодействовать в рамках CEFR. В ходе анализа речевого взаимодействия для уровня А1 были определены и описаны типы взаимодействия, а также компоненты внутри каждого типа. Затем был выявлен межкультурный компонент внутри каждого типа взаимодействия на уровне А1, и на этой основе были разработаны авторские учебные материалы. В результате авторы выделили три типа коммуникации – устное, письменное и онлайн-взаимодействие, и в рамках каждого типа взаимодействия выделили и описали культурный компонент. Культурный компонент идентифицирован и описан в виде набора знаний, умений и навыков, которыми должны обладать учащиеся младшей школы для осуществления каждого способа взаимодействия. В дальнейшем в анализ взаимодействия можно включить больше

культур. Это помогло бы выявить культурные сходства, различия и особенности коммуникации между представителями разных культур. Результаты исследования можно использовать для обучения культурному компоненту младших школьников в процессе взаимодействия на уровне А1.

**Ключевые слова:** общеевропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком, взаимодействие, межкультурный компонент, типы взаимодействия

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## **Introduction**

Nowadays when we live in times of political, social and economic instability, language educators and scholars pay more and more attention to teaching culture with the means of language [1, 4]. Intercultural competence is becoming the key element in a language class as it promotes peace [6, 7, 12].

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) stands as a pivotal normative educational framework in Europe. This system depicts the communicational skills that students should gain to participate in various cultural interactions and put the emphasis on the importance of acquiring multicultural communicative experience. Furthermore, CEFR provides a comprehensive framework for assessing and measuring learners' proficiency levels.

There are different objectives of CEFR:

- Promoting multilingualism and celebrating cultural diversity.
- Supporting the development of each learner's individual multilingual profile.
- Facilitating the evolution of language curricula in different contexts.
- Offering valuable guidelines for the creation of teaching materials.
- Enhancing transparency in assessment and testing procedures

## **Materials and Methods**

During this research, the following stages were undertaken:

1) Analysis of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) at level A1 was conducted with the primary objective of identifying the intercultural component within interactions. CEFR was selected for analysis due to its role in shaping educational goals, desired outcomes, educational content, and the educational process organization. We specifically focused on CEFR at level A1 as it closely aligns with the language proficiency level typically attained by elementary school children.

2) Subsequently, we identified and compre-

hensively described various types of interactions, along with a detailed exploration of each component within these interaction types.

3) In the final stage, we discerned and introduced the intercultural component within each type of interaction at level A1.

The research methods employed for this study included analysis and synthesis.

## **Results**

Let's delve into the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and analyze the process of communication at level A1, as this mode of communication presupposes engagement, cooperation, and active participation of both parties in the communicative process. We selected level A1 because it best caters to the fundamental language needs of elementary school children and aligns with their language abilities.

Now, let's proceed with the analysis and description of the cross-cultural components that come into play during Interaction at level A1. CEFR provides descriptors for various aspects of Interaction at the A1 level, including oral and written communication, understanding of the message, taking part in informal collaborations, applying team work to solve different tasks, conducting interviews, completing application forms, composing messages/notes, engaging in online discussions, and using online platforms to perform specific operations.

As per CEFR guidelines, we can categorize these interactive activities into three main types: oral, written, and online [2, 11].

### Oral Communication

Students should take part in simple interactions, relying on a slow pace of speech and employing paraphrasing and clarification if misunderstandings arise. They can pose and answer basic questions, initiate conversations, and respond to straightforward statements within familiar topics. Therefore, while communicating orally young learners should be able to ask and answer simple questions, to start a dialogue, and take part in a simple conversation.

Comprehension of an Interlocutor's message

Students are able to apply basic expressions which are necessary for usage in everyday life situations: in supermarkets, at streets, different services. They are able to understand some of the simple constructions and questions addressed to them, react adequately during the certain communicative situations. So, elementary students should know the basic vocabulary in following situations: "In a supermarket", "In the street", etc., should be able to lead a simple conversation in a supermarket, in the street or at different services.

Conversation Involvement

Elementary students can be engaged in un-complicated conversations on familiar topics, such as their home country, family, and school. They can introduce themselves and utilize basic greetings and farewells. Interlocutors can inquire about others' well-being and react to people's news. So, elementary students should know basic vocabulary regarding their country, school and family. They also should be able to greet people and part with people in different ways and to start a small talk.

In this section, the cross-cultural component relates to the ways of greeting and bidding farewell. It's important to highlight to students the distinctions between formal and informal ways of saying hello and goodbye in English. They should also be made aware that the question "How are you?" is a customary part of greetings in English and doesn't necessitate a detailed response, unlike certain situations in Russian culture. In English, a simple "Fine, thank you" suffices as a response to "How are you?" – even if someone is not feeling great [8, 9] Additionally, there are cultural differences in greetings like "Good morning", "Good afternoon", and "Good evening". In English, the division of the day differs from the convention in Russian culture. Morning in English spans from 00:00 to 12:00, afternoon from 12:00 to 18:00 (or 19:00), and evening begins at 19:00 and lasts until 22:00, followed by night from 22:00 to 00:00. For instance, when the clock shows 02:00, one would say "Good morning" in English, while in Russian, it would be "Good night" [9, p. 171, p. 194–196; 10, p. 68–69]. So, elementary school children should be taught how to greet people and part with people in an appropriate way and about the different ways we divide day. For these reason the authors of the paper developed the teaching materials.

Informal Talk (with Friends)

Elementary students can express their preferences for sports, food, and other topics using a limited set of expressions when these preferences are communicated clearly, slowly, and directly. So, elementary school children should acquire basic vocabulary on sports, food, and should be able to express their likes and dislikes within these notions.

In this context, a cross-cultural component can be identified in attitudes toward food. Food, particularly dishes of national significance, holds great value in every culture. Thus, it is advisable to exercise caution when expressing negative opinions about particular dishes. Instead of using blunt phrases like "I hate it" or "I don't like it", it's better to employ more considerate language such as "It's interesting" or "I don't mind it, thank you", even if one genuinely does not enjoy the dish. Additionally, it is customary to express gratitude after a meal, even if you didn't particularly enjoy it. Therefore, when discussing food as a guest, mere expressions like "I like" or "I don't like" may not suffice. Therefore, elementary school children should be taught how to take food if they are offered and would like it or how to turn it down politely.

Goal-Oriented Cooperation

Interlocutors comprehend commands and questions when they are presented in a straightforward and clear manner. They can follow instructions related to numbers, time, and locations. Interlocutors can make requests and offer assistance when needed.

Special attention should be given to understanding how to politely request items in different cultures. For instance, in Russian, polite requests are often expressed using the imperative mood along with the word "please", as in "Give me, please!" In English, however, a request presented in this manner may come across as rather impolite. In English, polite requests are typically formulated as, "Could you ..., please?" [9, p. 171–173]. It is to notice that commands in an imperative mood are often used in elementary school as way of instructing students. After that elementary students follow their teachers and use commands instead of the forms of polite request when they want to ask something. So, elementary students should be taught the forms of polite request.

Elementary school students should be able to request items from others and offer items to others. They should be able to ask for food and

drinks using simple language and basic expressions. They should be able to handle numbers, quantities, cost, and time when engaging in transactions.

The cross-cultural component in this context pertains to the quantity and cost of goods. In English-speaking countries, it's customary to package goods in sets of 12 items, known as a dozen. In contrast, in Russia, it's more common to package goods in sets of 10. Additionally, the cost of goods is typically denominated using the names of currencies prevalent in English-speaking countries. Therefore, it is advisable for students to become familiar with the currency names used in English-speaking regions. For this purpose the authors of the paper developed the teaching materials.

Moreover, various cultures use different methods for expressing time. In English, the straightforward way to discuss time is by using the phrases “a.m.” (ante meridiem) and “p.m.” (post meridiem). “A.m.” refers to the time period from 00:00 to 12:00, while “p.m.” applies to the time period from 12:00 to 00:00. For example, 11:45 in English would be represented as “11:45 a.m.”, and 16:10 as “4:10 p.m.”. Notably, when indicating time in English using “a.m.” and “p.m.”, a 12-hour time scale is employed instead of the 24-hour time scale. So, students should be taught how to say time appropriately minding the cultural gap.

#### Information exchange

Students should be able to manage questions and instructions when these are expressed clearly and at a measured pace. They can give answers to simple questions; react in an adequate manner when it comes to some basic topics. Students should be able to send the message, reply correctly within the scope of the simple linguistic constructions and expressions. They also should be able to use some of the exact words for time expressions as well as inquire about and share details concerning the color of clothing or other familiar items.

#### Interviewing

Elementary students should be capable of responding to straightforward questions about themselves during an interview, provided that the questions are formulated clearly and in a direct, non-idiomatic manner. Students should be able to express their health concerns in a simple manner, sometimes utilizing gestures and body language for effective communication.

#### Written interaction

Students should be able request and exchange personal information in written form. Here the international project “Russian elementary school children meet American peers” are offered by the authors of this paper [5].

#### Correspondence

Students can compose messages and online posts using short, basic constructions to convey the fundamental feelings and thoughts. They are able to write a basic postcard. Moreover, communicators are able to make simple sentences in order to convey their thoughts or to pose questions.

In this context, it's important to be aware that the conventions for writing postcards differ between English-speaking and Russian cultures [3]. The specific guidelines for composing postcards in English-speaking culture are outlined below (Fig. 1).

So, elementary school students should know about the lay – out of a postcard and should be able to write the address properly

#### Writing notes, messages and filling in the forms

Students possess the ability to write numbers and dates, including their names and nationalities. They can provide written information about their accommodation and other important personal data. Students are proficient in completing various forms, such as passport control forms and hotel registration forms. They can also leave brief messages detailing their whereabouts and expected return times.

When filling out forms in English, remember that it is customary to write the person's first name followed by their last name, unlike the practice in Russian. In English-speaking countries, there is a specific format for addresses, typically comprising the flat number, building number, street, city/town, region/state, country, and zip code [10, p. 72–80].

Regarding the writing of dates in English, there is a cultural component involved. In British English, dates are typically formed in this way:

- 27 August 2013;
- 05 December 1912.

One of the significant aspects is that the names of months in English are written like capital letters. Sometimes a comma may be placed before the year, especially when the date is part of a sentence, for example:

- 12 September, 1932;

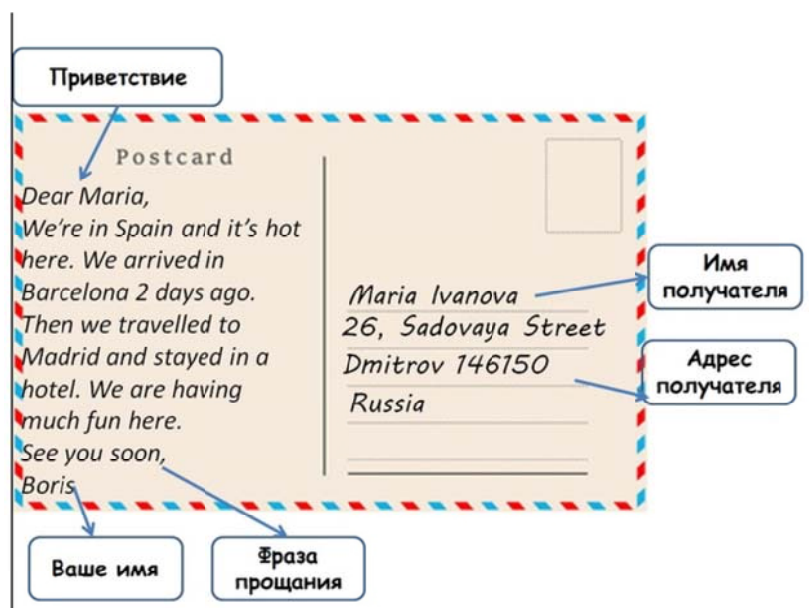


Fig. 1. The rules of writing a postcard in English-speaking culture

Table 1  
The peculiarities of writing dates in English and American English

Format	British: Day – Month – Year	American: Month – Day – Year
A	The Sixteenth of June, 1946	June the Sixteenth, 1946
B	16 <sup>th</sup> June 1946	June, 16 <sup>th</sup> , 1946
C	16 June 1946	June 16, 1946
D	16/6/1946	6/16/1946
E	16/6/46	6/16/46
F	16/06/46	06/16/46

- 11 October, 1995;
- My birthday is 08 December, 1962.

Also ordinal numbers are often added to the day, as seen in examples like:

- 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2000 (or 22 May, 2000);
- 15<sup>th</sup> February 1917 (or 15 February 1917).

In some instances, dates are written entirely in numeric form, and there are several acceptable formats, including:

- 14/5/2010;
- 14-5-2010;
- 14.5.2010.

In American English, the format for writing dates is different, with the month followed by the day and then the year, and a comma preceding the year, as shown in these examples:

- June 6, 2021;
- October 31, 2005.

The distinctions in writing dates between English and American English are summarized in the Table 1 below.

So, elementary school students should be aware of the peculiarities of writing names, addresses and dates in a foreign culture.

#### Online communication and debate

Students have the ability to write simple messages and create personal posts online, using straightforward language to discuss their hobbies, likes, and dislikes. They can express both positive and negative reactions to online posts in a simple manner. Furthermore, students can respond to comments on online posts using standard language, including expressions of gratitude and apologies.

Goal-Oriented Online Transactions and Collaboration:

Students are able to buy some of the products online and they understand how to provide personal information such as their name, email address, or telephone number when necessary (CEFR, A1).

#### Discussion

Reflecting on the results, it's noteworthy that the cultural component is present in all modes of interaction, including written, oral, and online communication as outlined in CEFR for level A1.

Furthermore, it would be intriguing to approach this not only from the perspective of Rus-

Table 2

Modes and types of interaction according to CEFR, A1

Interaction ( CEFR, A1)		
Oral : – Oral communication – Comprehension of an interlocutor – Informal talk – Buying goods and services – Information Exchange – Interviewing	Written: – Written communication – Correspondence – Filling in forms – Writing notes and messages	Online: – Taking part in online discussion – Goal-oriented online communication

sian culture but from a multicultural standpoint. In such an exploration, cultural commonalities and distinct characteristics for each mode of interaction according to CEFR could be examined. Later these findings could be used for creating teaching materials and could be included in elementary school curriculum.

#### Examples of the Practical Realization

As examples of practical realization, the topics “Parts of the day”, “Currency”, etc. were verified. The age-valid educational technologies and illustrations were used.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, it's important to highlight that the overarching goal of this paper, which is to analyze the cultural component in CEFR, particularly in the context of level A1 interactions, has been successfully achieved. The cultural component has been identified and described for each

mode of interaction as defined in CEFR for level A1 (Table 2).

The set of cross-cultural knowledge, skills and acquired practices offered and identified in CEFR for interaction level A could be a construct for developing teaching materials, textbooks, curriculums and tests for elementary school students.

Looking ahead to potential research directions, it would be useful to expand the analysis to encompass multiple cultures in the study of interactions according to CEFR. This broader perspective could shed light on cultural similarities and peculiarities in interactions among representatives of different cultures. As a practical application of this theoretical research, teaching materials could be developed to impart cultural components within the process of interaction, aligning with the description in CEFR for A1-level students.

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#### Contribution of the authors:

**Kravchenko N.V.** – research implementation; text writing.

**Mikheeva N.F.** – scientific management; research concept.

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