

Modular Curriculum Design for Developing Future Managers' Intercultural Communication Skills

UDC 37.091.3:81'243:316.77:005.336

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Abstract.

Relevance. The article substantiates a modular curriculum design for developing future managers' intercultural communication skills through foreign-language training. The problem is that foreign-language, professional, intercultural, digital, and multilingual components are often represented separately in bachelor's programs in management; consequently, their potential does not form a coherent trajectory of observable professional communication actions. The study aims to design a modular architecture that can be embedded in existing language courses without requiring a separate compulsory discipline. The methods included theoretical analysis, pedagogical design, learning-outcome mapping, and structural-functional alignment of content lines, modules, tasks, learning products, and expected performance.

Results. Six cross-cutting content lines and eight interconnected modules were developed: intercultural business communication; business correspondence and digital etiquette; negotiation and mediation; teamwork in a multilingual environment; corporate culture, leadership, and communication; multilingual work with professional texts; automated translation and generative AI; and presentation of managerial decisions to international audiences. The proposed design follows the principles of sequencing, variable repetition, professional authenticity, multilingual mediation, digital criticality, and reflective assessment. Its central result is a constructive alignment matrix that connects each module to professional situations, language operations, learning products, and assessment criteria. The modular architecture supports three implementation options: cross-curricular integration into existing foreign-language courses, a stand-alone elective course, or an interdisciplinary block shared by language and management disciplines.

Conclusions. The design provides a practical mechanism for moving from broad declarations about intercultural competence to teachable and assessable actions such as clarifying meanings, adapting messages, mediating misunderstandings, and critically revising digitally generated professional texts.

Keywords: future managers, intercultural communication skills, modular curriculum design, foreign-language training, multilingual approach, professionally oriented tasks

Модульне проєктування змісту для розвитку навичок міжкультурної комунікації майбутніх менеджерів

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Анотація.

Актуальність. У статті обґрунтовано модульне проєктування змісту іншомовної підготовки майбутніх менеджерів, спрямоване на розвиток навичок міжкультурної комунікації майбутніх менеджерів. Проблема полягає в тому, що в освітніх програмах підготовки бакалаврів з менеджменту іншомовна, професійна, міжкультурна, цифрова та мультилінгвальна складові підготовки часто представлені окремо, тому їх потенціал не перетворюється на цілісну траєкторію розвитку професійно-комунікативних дій. Метою дослідження є розроблення модульної архітектури, яку можна інтегрувати в чинні курси іноземної мови без обов'язкового створення нової дисципліни. Використано теоретичний аналіз, педагогічне проєктування, картування результатів навчання, структурно-функціональне зіставлення змістових ліній, модулів, завдань і очікуваних проявів діяльності майбутніх менеджерів.

Результати. Запропоновано шість наскрізних змістових ліній і вісім взаємопов'язаних модулів: міжкультурна ділова комунікація; ділове листування й цифровий етикет; переговори й медіація; командна робота в багатомовному середовищі; корпоративна культура, лідерство й комунікація; мультилінгвальна робота з професійними текстами; автоматизований переклад і ШІ; презентація управлінського рішення міжнародній аудиторії. Визначено принципи послідовності, варіативного повторення, професійної автентичності, мультилінгвальної медіації, цифрової критичності й рефлексивного оцінювання.

Висновки. Результатом є матриця конструктивного узгодження, що пов'язує модулі з професійними ситуаціями, мовними операціями, навчальними продуктами та критеріями оцінювання результатів навчання. Модель може застосовуватися наскрізно, як вибіркового курсу або як міждисциплінарний блок у підготовці майбутніх менеджерів для розвитку в них навичок міжкультурної комунікації.

Ключові слова: майбутні менеджери, міжкультурна комунікація, модульне проєктування, іншомовна підготовка, мультилінгвальний підхід, професійно орієнтовані завдання, професійна освіта

Introduction.

Problem Statement. International management increasingly depends on communication across linguistic, cultural, organizational, and digital boundaries. Managers coordinate geographically distributed teams, negotiate with partners who use different professional conventions, work with bilingual documents, and make decisions through email, video meetings, corporate platforms, and machine-mediated language tools. These conditions make linguistic accuracy necessary but insufficient. A professionally adequate message must also be interpretable, pragmatically appropriate, ethically acceptable, and adapted to the recipient, channel, status relationship, and possible consequences of misunderstanding. Research on cultural intelligence confirms that the ability to function across culturally diverse settings is related to work outcomes, while studies of international teams emphasize the role of communication, trust, and adaptation (Schlaegel et al., 2021). For management education, the curricular question is therefore not whether intercultural communication should be addressed, but how to convert it into a planned sequence of learning actions.

In many higher-education programs, the relevant content is dispersed across foreign-language courses, international management, organizational behavior, leadership, conflict management, digital technologies, and optional cross-cultural subjects. Such dispersion can enrich the curriculum, but it also creates discontinuity. Learners may study business vocabulary in one course, cultural models in another, and digital tools in a third without practicing how these resources operate together in a demanding professional situation. A student may know the format of a business email yet fail to recognize that a grammatically correct message is too categorical for a partner; another may understand general concepts of cultural diversity but be unable to formulate a neutral clarification when a deadline is interpreted differently. This gap between curricular presence and functional integration requires a design solution rather than the addition of isolated topics.

Modular curriculum design offers such a solution by enabling the organization of content around coherent professional functions while retaining flexibility within the institutional structure. A module is understood here not merely as a thematic unit but as a complete instructional configuration that links a professional problem, targeted communication skills, linguistic and multilingual resources, activities, learning products, reflection, and assessment. This interpretation is consistent with competence-oriented course design and with recent work arguing that professional language courses should be constructed around needs, actions, genres, and authentic communicative purposes rather than around decontextualized language material (Herasymchuk et al., 2024; Pasichnyk & Pasichnyk, 2026).

Analysis of Recent Research. Recent research

provides several foundations for modular design. First, intercultural competence is increasingly described as a dynamic combination of knowledge, attitudes, interpretation, reflection, and action rather than a stock of information about national cultures. Ukrainian studies likewise emphasize openness, adaptation, cultural sensitivity, and behavioral readiness (Vasylenko, 2022; Ihnatova, 2024). This shift has direct curricular implications. Content should not be structured as a catalog of “country facts”; it should create situations in which learners compare interpretations, identify insufficient evidence, test assumptions through neutral questions, and revise their communicative decisions.

Second, research on professionally oriented language education and CLIL supports integrating subject matter and communication. Studies conducted in Ukrainian higher education show that professional foreign-language training becomes more effective when authentic texts, professional terminology, situational modeling, and subject-related tasks are combined (Denysiuk & Danilova, 2024; Hannichenko, 2025). However, content-language integration alone does not guarantee intercultural development. An English-medium case may remain a vocabulary exercise unless it requires learners to analyze participants’ expectations, adapt a message, or mediate a misunderstanding. Modular design, therefore, requires a second layer of alignment: each professional topic must be connected to an intercultural action.

Third, multilingual and translanguaging research questions the assumption that professional language learning must isolate the target language from all other linguistic resources. Translanguaging may support conceptual understanding, comparison of meanings, metalinguistic awareness, and mediation when it is pedagogically purposeful rather than accidental (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Fedorenko et al., 2025). In management education, multilingual work is not a temporary scaffold to be removed as soon as possible. It reflects professional reality: managers compare Ukrainian and English documents, verify terminology, prepare bilingual summaries, explain specialized meanings to partners with different proficiency levels, and use machine translation while retaining responsibility for the final message. A module should therefore specify when the first language, the foreign language, translation, glossaries, or digital language resources serve the learning objective.

Fourth, collaborative and internationalized learning provides a rationale for modules centered on interaction rather than individual language reproduction. Virtual exchange can develop language, cultural, and digital competencies when learners participate in structured collaboration (Machwate et al., 2021). COIL research also shows that intercultural outcomes depend on intentionally designed tasks and facilitated reflection, not merely on online contact between students from different institutions (Hackett et al., 2023). These findings support modules that include shared problem solving, negotiated

products, rotating roles, observation, and post-task analysis. They also justify quasi-international simulations when external partnerships are unavailable.

Fifth, active methodologies provide the operational basis for modular learning. Project-based learning can strengthen interpersonal communication and teamwork when the project is structured around meaningful responsibility and a collaborative product (Crespí et al., 2022). Interactive technologies and case-based learning similarly support the transition from declarative knowledge to situated performance (Kaniuk & Kish, 2025). A module must therefore culminate in an action or product, not in content coverage alone.

Finally, recent work on digital communication and generative AI adds a new curricular requirement. Digital tools can generate, translate, simplify, or reformulate professional texts, but they may also alter tone, professional terminology, pragmatic force, and cultural appropriateness. Research on AI in professional communication advocates human evaluation and pedagogical attention to intercultural consequences (Dai et al., 2025). Ukrainian studies similarly recommend critical rather than substitutive use of generative tools in language education (Drushlyak & Semenikhina, 2025). Modular design should therefore not treat AI as a separate technological topic only; critical comparison of human, machine-translated, and AI-generated variants should recur across the correspondence, negotiation, mediation, and presentation modules.

Aim and Methods. The aim of the study was to develop and substantiate a modular curriculum architecture for intercultural communication training of future managers that can be implemented within existing foreign-language courses. The design task was formulated through four questions: (1) Which content lines should remain visible across all modules? (2) Which professional

communication situations can the modules organize? (3) How should modules be sequenced so that learners move from recognition and analysis to independent action and transfer? (4) How can learning outcomes, tasks, products, and assessment criteria be constructively aligned?

The study used theoretical analysis and synthesis of recent research on intercultural communication, professional foreign-language education, multilingual pedagogy, active learning, virtual exchange, and digital language technologies. Pedagogical design was used to transform the theoretical propositions into curriculum components. Curriculum mapping linked ten observable intercultural communication skills with six cross-cutting content lines, professional situations, modules, and assessment products. Structural-functional analysis was applied to distinguish the function of each module and to prevent thematic duplication. Constructive alignment was used to ensure that a stated outcome was practiced in a corresponding action and evaluated through evidence generated by the same type of performance. The materials analyzed included the author-developed pedagogical system, curriculum program, task bank, role cards, mediation scenarios, multilingual glossaries, and assessment rubrics.

The design was guided by six criteria. A module had to be professionally relevant to management; require observable communication action; activate more than one component of intercultural communication; make purposeful use of language resources; produce assessable evidence; and allow variation in difficulty, genre, or recipient. The resulting architecture is not presented as a fixed syllabus. It is a transferable design framework whose specific topics, terminology, and case details can be adapted to the profile of a management program.

Results and Discussion. The first result is the definition of six cross-cutting content lines (Table 1).

Table 1.
Cross-Cutting Content Lines in the Modular Curriculum

Content line	Instructional focus	Typical evidence of learning
Professional-communicative	Management genres, functions, terminology, and responsibility for outcomes	Business email, meeting record, presentation, feedback message, negotiated agreement
Intercultural-analytical	Multiple interpretations, cultural and organisational factors, stereotype control	Critical-incident analysis, evidence–interpretation chart, neutral clarification
Multilingual-mediation	Comparison, explanation, rephrasing, bilingual summarising, terminology control	Parallel-text analysis, bilingual glossary, mediated summary, clarified concept
Interactional-negotiation	Listening, soft disagreement, interest clarification, de-escalation, agreement	Role-play performance, observer record, compromise proposal, follow-up statement
Digital-communicative	Email, video interaction, shared documents, machine translation, generative AI	Edited digital message, translation audit, AI revision log, online meeting protocol
Reflective-assessment	Justification, feedback, revision, transfer, and portfolio evidence	Reflective note, self-assessment, peer review, revised product, transfer commentary

Note. Each line reappears in several modules; the curriculum is organised by professional functions rather than isolated topics.

The professional-communicative line covers the genres and functions through which managers coordinate work: correspondence, meetings, presentations, feedback, reporting, clarification, and agreement. The intercultural-analytical line concerns the interpretation of behavior, the differentiation between facts and assumptions, the analysis of cultural and organizational expectations, and the critical treatment of stereotypes. The multilingual-mediation line includes comparison of language versions, explanation of terms, bilingual summarising, rephrasing, and ensuring shared understanding. The interactional-negotiation line covers active listening, soft disagreement, interest clarification, compromise, conflict de-escalation, and confirmation of agreements. The digital-communicative line addresses email, video meetings, shared documents, machine translation, and generative AI. The reflective-assessment line makes learners explain why a communicative choice was made, evaluate its effect, receive feedback, and revise the product.

The second result is an eight-module architecture. The first module, Intercultural Business Communication for Managers, establishes an analytical foundation. Learners examine how directness, hierarchy, time, responsibility, criticism, silence, and decision-making may be interpreted differently. The module avoids national character descriptions. Its core tasks require at least three plausible explanations for a partner's behavior, the

identification of missing information, and the formulation of a neutral question. A personal communication profile helps learners recognize that their own expectations are culturally and organisationally situated. The module prepares the cognitive shift from categorical judgment to hypothesis-based interpretation.

The third module, Negotiation and Mediation of Misunderstandings, develops interactional, linguistic-behavioral, and emotional-regulatory skills. Learners formulate positions, clarify interests, disagree without escalation, propose alternatives, summarise interim outcomes, and mediate divergent interpretations. Typical scenarios include a deadline change, a disputed quality requirement, or a situation in which one side believes that an agreement has been concluded while the other regards the discussion as preliminary. Role cards create information asymmetry and conflicting priorities. Observers use rubrics to identify clarification, paraphrasing, tone management, and compromise-building, rather than judging only the outcome.

The seventh module, Automated Translation and Generative AI in Professional Communication, develops critical digital responsibility. Learners compare their own text with machine-translated and AI-generated versions, check terminology, identify unsupported additions, revise tone, and document accepted or rejected suggestions (Table 2).

Table 2.
Modular Architecture and Dominant Learning Products

Module	Dominant professional situation	Main learning product
1. Intercultural business communication	Ambiguous partner behaviour; different communication expectations	Multi-factor incident analysis and neutral clarification
2. Correspondence and digital etiquette	Delay, refusal, request, complaint, follow-up	Professionally adapted email with justification of revisions
3. Negotiation and mediation	Conflicting interests or meanings	Negotiated solution, mediated statement, agreement summary
4. Multilingual teamwork	Online team coordination and shared documentation	Meeting protocol, team communication rules, joint document
5. Corporate culture and leadership	Feedback, organisational values, leadership expectations	Feedback dialogue and behavioural explanation of values
6. Multilingual professional texts	Parallel documents and terminology asymmetry	Bilingual glossary, comparative analysis, dual-audience summary
7. Automated translation and AI	Digitally generated or translated professional message	Edited text, verification checklist, revision log
8. International managerial presentation	Decision presentation to diverse stakeholders	Adapted presentation, Q&A performance, reflective commentary

Note. The modules may be implemented in sequence or selected according to program needs, provided that recurring actions are preserved.

The tool is positioned as a source of alternatives rather than an author of the final decision. This design responds to the growing use of AI in professional communication while preserving human accountability for confidential information, factual accuracy, pragmatic appropriateness, and cultural sensitivity (Dai et al., 2025; Drushlyak & Semenikhina, 2025).

A module sequence should reflect increasing complexity and autonomy. At the introductory level,

learners identify communicative factors, compare short messages, practice basic clarification formulas, and reflect on their own expectations. At the intermediate level, they analyze more complex business cases, adapt written messages, compare bilingual materials, and participate in structured role plays. At the advanced level, they conduct negotiations, mediate conflict, complete a multilingual team project, critically edit AI-generated professional texts, and create portfolio evidence. The progression is

not determined by topic alone. It is defined by the number of interacting variables, degree of uncertainty, linguistic independence, responsibility for consequences, and need to justify the decision.

Variable repetition is central to the design. Intercultural communication skills do not become transferable through one successful performance. The same functional action must reappear in different genres and situations. Clarification may first be practiced in a short dialogue, then in a complaint response, a negotiation, an online meeting, a bilingual text, and a presentation question. Adaptation may begin with adjusting the formality of an email and later involve restructuring a proposal for a different stakeholder. Mediation may progress from explaining a term to neutrally representing two conflicting positions. Repetition without variation risks template dependence; variation without repetition

prevents procedural consolidation. The modular architecture balances both.

Constructive alignment connects the intended skill with an action and a matching source of evidence. If the intended result is the ability to adapt a message to a recipient, a multiple-choice question about communication styles is insufficient. The learner must create at least two versions of the same message for different recipients and explain the modifications. If the intended result is mediation, the assessment should require a neutral representation of positions, clarification of the disputed meaning, reduction of tension, and a feasible next step. If the intended result is critical work with machine translation, evidence must include identified semantic, terminological, pragmatic, and genre-related problems, not only corrected grammar (Table 3).

Table 3.

Example of Constructive Alignment in the Modular Design

Intended skill	Learning action	Evidence/product	Assessment focus
Recognise multiple factors in intercultural interaction	Analyse facts, interpretations, cultural, organisational, role, and situational factors	Incident-analysis matrix	Differentiation of evidence and assumptions; quality of alternative explanations
Clarify and rephrase meaning	Ask neutral questions, restate the partner's position, summarise agreement	Negotiation extract or meeting summary	Accuracy, neutrality, completeness, and interactional appropriateness
Adapt a message to the recipient	Prepare internal and external versions of one managerial message	Parallel message versions with rationale	Tone, formality, detail, structure, and audience relevance
Mediate misunderstanding	Represent both positions, define the disputed issue, propose joint action	Mediator statement and action plan	Neutrality, tension reduction, precision, and feasibility
Use digital language tools critically	Compare human, machine-translated, and AI-generated versions; revise and document decisions	Edited text and revision log	Semantic accuracy, terminology, pragmatics, cultural sensitivity, accountability

Note. Assessment criteria should describe observable qualities of performance and be available before task completion.

The architecture supports three principal implementation models. In cross-curricular integration, selected tasks and mini-modules are embedded in existing courses such as Foreign Language, Business English, or Foreign Language for Professional Purposes. This model requires minimal structural change and can distribute practice across several semesters. Its risk is fragmentation; therefore, a skills map and shared portfolio are needed. In the elective-course model, the eight modules form a coherent three- or four-credit course. This option provides clear sequencing and assessment but may reach only students who select the course. In the interdisciplinary model, language and management teachers coordinate modules across courses such as international management, conflict management, leadership, and digital technologies. This creates strong professional authenticity but requires institutional coordination.

Regardless of the model, several invariant elements

should be preserved: a professionally meaningful problem; purposeful use of the learner's linguistic repertoire; active communication rather than passive discussion; explicit criteria; feedback and revision; and transfer to a modified situation. Removing any of these elements changes the nature of the design. For example, a module on cultural differences without professional action becomes an information unit; a negotiation without reflection becomes performance practice with limited transfer; AI use without a revision log becomes technological substitution rather than digital criticality.

Conclusions.

The study developed a modular curriculum architecture that converts intercultural communication from a broad educational intention into a sequence of teachable and assessable managerial actions. Six cross-cutting content lines organize eight modules covering business interaction, correspondence, negotiation, multilingual teamwork, leadership, professional

texts, digital language technologies, and international presentation. The architecture is based on professional authenticity, multilingual mediation, variable repetition, increasing autonomy, digital criticality, and reflective assessment.

The principal contribution of the design is constructive alignment. Each module connects a managerial situation with targeted skills, language resources, a professional product, and transparent assessment criteria. This connection prevents the curriculum from separating language, culture, management, and digital tools into unrelated topics. It also makes implementation possible without a new compulsory discipline: modules can be distributed across existing language courses, assembled as an elective, or coordinated across language and management subjects. Further work should test the architecture in programs with different management

specializations and examine how module sequencing, language proficiency, and institutional coordination affect transfer to workplace communication.

Use of Artificial Intelligence. During the preparation of the manuscript, AI (Grammarly) was used as an auxiliary tool for the technical review of selected author-written text fragments at the levels of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The AI tool was not used to generate the substantive parts of the article, including the formulation of the aim, methodology, results, discussion, conclusions, or references. All language corrections suggested by the AI tool were verified by comparing them with the original text, checking terminology, content accuracy, and consistency with the cited sources. The use of AI did not affect the research results, their interpretation, or the conclusions.

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