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DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH ONLINE SPEAKING CLUBS: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL COLLABORATION AT KHERSON STATE UNIVERSITY

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The article analyses the key aspects of developing intercultural competence among higher education students in the context of global digitalisation and the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and under martial law in Ukraine. The study focuses on the case of Kherson State University's implementation of Online Speaking Clubs as an effective tool for international virtual cooperation, Internationalisation at Home (Manning & Marku, 2024), and the development of intercultural competence. The theoretical basis of the study of intercultural communication as interaction between people from different cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds is grounded in the works of M. Byram, M. Bennett, and D. Deardorff.

The objective of the research is to analyse the tools of intercultural communication used in Online Speaking Clubs and to assess their effectiveness in developing various students' skills. The article describes the methodology for conducting classes, which partially adapts the Story Circles methodology by D. Deardorff. The structure of the sessions is highlighted, including icebreakers, vocabulary activities, mini-group discussions in breakout rooms, and a reflection phase. Special attention is paid to the use of digital platforms and tools, such as Zoom, Miro, Padlet, Mentimeter and Kahoot, which help to create an inclusive, interactive, and informal English learning environment.

The Online Speaking Clubs project implementation demonstrates the successful cooperation of Kherson State University with the University of Kent and the University of Arden (Great Britain), which gives Ukrainian students the opportunity to regularly communicate with native speakers and foreign volunteers. The results of the study indicate that participation in clubs helps to increase students' confidence, overcome language barriers, and develop intercultural awareness, empathy and critical thinking. Furthermore, the role of humour and authentic cultural exchange in reducing anxiety is analysed. Despite the technical challenges posed by the war in Ukraine, the project has proven its effectiveness in supporting students in their studies and in forming "intercultural speakers" capable of successful interaction in the international academic environment. The article offers valuable recommendations for educators on implementing virtual exchanges in higher education.

Key words: *intercultural communication, online conversation clubs, international virtual cooperation, Kherson State University, internationalisation at home, digital education, English language, higher education in Ukraine.*



РОЗВИТОК МІЖКУЛЬТУРНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ ЧЕРЕЗ ОНЛАЙНОВІ РОЗМОВНІ КЛУБИ: МІЖНАРОДНА ВІРТУАЛЬНА СПІВПРАЦЯ В ХЕРСОНЬКОМУ ДЕРЖАВНОМУ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІ

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Стаття присвячена особливостям розвитку міжкультурної компетенції здобувачів закладів вищої освіти в умовах глобальної цифровізації та викликів, зумовлених пандемією Covid-19 та військовим станом в Україні. Дослідження висвітлює досвід Херсонського державного університету у впровадженні онлайн-розмовних клубів як ефективного інструменту міжнародної віртуальної співпраці, реалізації концепції інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти вдома (Mapping & Marku 2024) та розвитку міжкультурної компетенції. Теоретичне підґрунтя дослідження міжкультурної комунікації як взаємодії між людьми з різних культурних, етнічних та лінгвістичних середовищ базується на працях М. Байрама, М. Беннетта та Д. Дірдорфа.

***Метою** роботи є аналіз інструментів міжкультурної комунікації, що використовуються в онлайн-розмовних клубах, та оцінка їхньої ефективності для розвитку навичок студентів. У статті описано методологію проведення занять, яка частково адаптує методику Story Circles Д. Дірдорфа, та висвітлено структуру сесій, що включає криголами, словникові вправи, дискусії в малих групах у сесійних залах та етап рефлексії. Увагу приділено використанню цифрових платформ та інструментів, таких як Zoom, Miro, Padlet, Mentimeter та Kahoot, що дозволяють створити інклюзивне, інтерактивне та неформальне середовище для вивчення англійської мови.*

Проєкт проведення онлайн-розмовних клубів ілюструє успішну співпрацю Херсонського державного університету з Університетом Кента та Університетом Арден (Велика Британія), завдяки якій українські студенти мають можливість регулярно спілкуватися з носіями мови та іноземними волонтерами. Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що участь у розмовних клубах сприяє підвищенню впевненості студентів, подоланню мовних бар'єрів, розвитку культурної обізнаності, емпатії та критичного мислення. Окремо проаналізовано роль гумору та автентичного культурного обміну в зниженні тривожності. Попри технічні виклики, пов'язані з війною в Україні, проєкт довів свою життєздатність як засіб підтримки студентів та формування «міжкультурного мовця», здатного до успішної взаємодії в міжнародному академічному просторі. Стаття пропонує цінні рекомендації для освітян щодо впровадження віртуальних обмінів у вищій школі.

***Ключові слова:** міжкультурна комунікація, онлайн-розмовні клуби, міжнародна віртуальна співпраця, Херсонський державний університет, інтернаціоналізація вдома, цифрова освіта, англійська мова, вища освіта в Україні.*

Introduction. Intercultural communication has been of great interest to many Ukrainian and foreign scientists in cultural studies, linguistics, and pedagogy (M. J. Bennett, 2013; Byram, 2009; Kramsch, 1998; Кононенко, 2008). Developing intercultural competence among higher education students in Ukraine has become increasingly relevant as higher education internationalises and globalisation unfolds worldwide. Together with the digitalisation of education after the outbreak

of Covid-19 and during wartime disruptions, it has acquired new dimensions, new means of application, and new demands (Deardorff, 2021; Nizegorodcew et al., 2011; Podlevska et al., 2024; Spivakovskiy et al., 2023). Online communication has become predominant, making authentic intercultural interaction with real speakers of other cultures more accessible; however, it also complicates its practical implementation within the educational process from a pedagogical perspective.



A relevant example of such educational practices is provided by Kherson State University, which has demonstrated resistance to the challenges of war through the total digitisation of all university processes and the active use of social media and internet communications (Spivakovskiy et al., 2023). To develop students' intercultural competence at Kherson State University, the Online Speaking Clubs, which involve native speakers and international students, have been used. This case study illustrates key aspects and main challenges of implementing successful intercultural communication.

Consequently, this research addresses two primary **objectives**: to analyse the main tools of intercultural communication used in online speaking clubs and to evaluate the effectiveness of online speaking clubs as a means of developing intercultural competence among university students, based on the experience of Kherson State University.

Intercultural Communication as a Component of Foreign Language Education

In cultural studies, intercultural communication has been defined in its narrow and broader senses. The broad use of this term is sometimes equated with studies in translation, contrastive linguistics, reading foreign literature or comparative analysis of cultural meanings. While in its narrow sense, intercultural communication often refers to a peculiar communication situation, a person-to-person interaction among people from different cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or social backgrounds (Bennett, 2013; Byram & Hu, 2013). In this research, the term 'intercultural communication' will be used in its narrow sense as a particular interaction between people across any differences.

A comprehensive overview of intercultural communication from a constructivist perspective is provided by M. J. Bennett, who defines it as a difference-based communication involving both participants' verbal and nonverbal behaviours and the interpretations they make of those behaviours (Bennett, 2013: 2, 9). M. J. Bennett also describes in detail how people's cognitive structures evolve as they experience and adapt to cultural differences across various stages, such as denial, defence, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation, and integration, in his grounded theory, the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (Bennett, 2017). In this context, the concept of intercultural communication is inseparably linked to the notions of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, both of which aim to improve intercultural communication.

This definition is close to that of D. Deardorff (Deardorff, 2021), who defines intercultural competence as communication and behaviour that is both effective and appropriate when interacting across differences. She emphasises that the degree of competence depends on the acquisition of specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills. A further definition of the term is given by M. Byram, who develops a model of it and identifies five foundational components of intercultural competence, such as attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2021: 44). Based on these five elements and integrating them with linguistic abilities, intercultural communicative competence is built. It is a multi-dimensional concept that describes the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds while using a foreign language (Byram, 2021). The linguistic abilities include knowledge of the rules of a language (linguistic competence), sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence. Further essential elements of intercultural communicative competence include humanistic skills such as tolerance, empathy, critical thinking, and listening for understanding (Deardorff, 2021: 11), symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2021), adaptation (Bennett, 2013: 26) and outcomes which are effective and appropriate behaviour in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2021: 5). Thus, in foreign language education, intercultural communication plays a key role, and to develop intercultural communicative competence, students require not only grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use different communication strategies, negotiate meaning, and establish relationships with people of different cultural identities.

In the intercultural paradigm and, in particular, in the European context, foreign language teaching aims to create intercultural dialogue and to develop 'intercultural speaker' who is "*able to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language and to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to themselves and the other and to act as mediator between people of different cultural origins*" (Byram, 2009; Byram & Hu, 2013: 48). This person can navigate different beliefs, values, and behaviours, which makes communication successful.

Pedagogical practice in this area encompasses a range of methodologies aimed at developing intercultural communicative competence. One

of the famous ones, piloted by UNESCO, is the Story Circles methodology, described by D. K. Deardorff in the *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story Circles*. The methodology fosters skills such as listening for understanding, empathy and cultural humility through a structured process of sharing personal experiences in small groups (Deardorff, 2021: 18). The work also outlines the approaches and tools for developing intercultural competences and the specific structure of a session, including the “Get Acquainted” round for building initial trust, the “Intercultural Competencies” round using substantive prompts to elicit stories about interacting across differences, the “Flashback” technique, where participants share memorable points from each other’s stories, and the essential “Debriefing/Discussion” phase for critical reflection on what was learned and how it can be applied (Deardorff, 2021: 18-31). This session structure can be easily adapted to the digital environment, which makes it even more valuable in modern foreign language education. Another relevant to our research methodology and systematic framework for developing intercultural communication within domestic learning environments is the experience of Internationalisation at Home in higher education across the UK (Manning & Colaiacomo, 2021). Internationalisation at Home seeks to “*link international and intercultural aspects in promoting broad mindedness, and understanding and respect for other people and their cultures*” (Manning & Colaiacomo, 2021: 6) and utilises distinct sub-methodologies to implement this aim. These include Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which allows students to collaborate and communicate with peers from different cultural backgrounds separated geographically, Virtual Exchanges as guided programs with structured road maps for conversation topics, Tandem Projects pairing native speakers with language learners, and Short Courses in Intercultural Communication designed to bring together awareness, practice and understanding (Manning & Colaiacomo, 2021; Manning & Marku, 2024). By using these domestic mechanisms, whether curricular or co-curricular, higher education institutions can develop speakers who can navigate diverse cultural beliefs and behaviours without physical travel.

The growing importance of intercultural communication in higher education and international academic cooperation is also emphasised by Ukrainian researchers

(Nizegorodcew et al., 2011; Podlevska et al., 2024; Spivakovskiy et al., 2023). Moreover, amid intensified digital transformation driven by global social changes and the challenges Ukrainian universities have faced in recent years, it is becoming even more valuable. Intercultural interaction within the modern educational environment has changed, as has the environment itself (Spivakovskiy et al., 2023). Traditional face-to-face means of developing intercultural competence are being combined with, or replaced by, virtual mobilities, online international exchanges, and online communication and speaking practice. In this context, the case study of Online Speaking Clubs at Kherson State University, held since 2021, provides a valuable example of the practical implementation of intercultural communication in a digital educational environment.

Online Speaking Clubs as a Means of Developing Intercultural Communication Competence

KSU English Speaking Clubs, as a co-curricular activity, have been organised and facilitated by the Foreign Language Education Office, founded by the Rector of Kherson State University in 2021, to provide intercultural communication and internationalisation at home through accessible foreign language courses and offline and online events. In 2022, international engagement of students and faculty became a significant challenge due to limited physical mobility under martial law. The solution was to develop an inclusive, interactive online space where students and staff could practice English regularly and communicate with native and non-native speakers. That transformed face-to-face meetings into Online Speaking Clubs with the same objectives but in a different format.

As the Online Speaking Clubs project aims to create an inclusive digital educational environment to enhance students’ and staff’s English proficiency, promote internationalisation at home, and foster cross-cultural communication and intercultural competence, cooperation with foreign higher education institutions has been essential. That was the first institutional-level challenge to overcome, and it has been successfully eliminated through the UK twinning initiative between Kherson State University and the University of Kent, and through the University of Kent’s representatives’ willingness to participate in the Online Speaking Clubs project. Since September 2022, staff and students from the University of Kent’s International Programmes Departments have



been attending weekly online meetings, and in 2026, the virtual international collaboration extended to the University of Arden. This has provided students with more opportunities to practice English with native and international speakers from diverse backgrounds and develop their intercultural competence more effectively. The Online Speaking Clubs have grown into a dynamic international learning environment with diverse formats that foster linguistic proficiency, global awareness, collaboration, and cultural exchange, and, what is very important for students of Kherson State University, have become a supporting tool during the war.

Participants. The main participants in this project have been students from Kherson State University, studying across different faculties and willing to improve their international communication skills, together with international students from the University of Kent from India and Africa and UK volunteers from its staff, who serve as native speakers. Consequently, the Online Speaking Club has become an interactive learning community that brings together people from diverse backgrounds, which is crucial for enhancing intercultural communication competence.

Format. The meetings are held each week during the academic year as 60-minute online thematic sessions. Each session is an interactive discussion facilitated by an English language teacher and centred on a carefully chosen central topic, designed to encourage meaningful discussion and language practice. To ensure all participants feel comfortable contributing, a facilitator creates a supportive, non-judgmental space where students of different proficiency levels can participate without fear of making mistakes. To achieve inclusivity, various digital platforms are utilised, with *Zoom* as the main platform for video conferencing, interactive polls, and chatting, especially for students who may feel shy about speaking.

Among traditional slide decks, the digital *Miro Whiteboard* is used for collaborative brainstorming and visual learning, allowing participants to map out arguments, organise key points, and create mind maps and word webs during vocabulary-building activities and problem-solving exercises. Padlet is employed as a digital collaboration tool to elicit student responses when time constraints in synchronous sessions prevent all participants from contributing verbally. From time to time, *Mentimeter* can be used as an interactive presentation tool that allows participants to respond anonymously, making it

ideal for overcoming language anxiety, checking understanding of a topic, and giving feedback. For gamification of learning and vocabulary practice, interactive activities and icebreakers, such as *Pick a Straw*, *Picker Wheel*, and *Kahoot* quizzes, make learning more fun, engaging and efficient. All these digital tools are used for different educational purposes and at various stages of a session, and allow for diversifying participation methods, ensuring that even those who are hesitant to speak can still contribute meaningfully.

Types of activities. The structure of a session aligns to some extent with the structure of the Story Circles methodology (Deardorff, 2021), though it has its own specificities. Online Speaking Club meetings include activities similar to the Get Acquainted round, aimed at building initial trust when participants are not acquainted; tasks that invite them to share culture-specific stories, like in the “Intercultural Competencies” round; and the “Discussion” phase for critical thinking and reflection. The online format and the need to improve English and intercultural communicative competence among Kherson State University students have led to the development of a specific structure for Online Speaking Club meetings that comprises a warm-up or icebreaker activity, a vocabulary-building activity, group discussion, activities in pairs or mini-groups in breakout rooms, and a reflection. Collaborative activities in breakout rooms, in groups or pairs, are of great importance because they reduce pressure and encourage more active engagement. During this part of the meetings, participants paired with native or international speakers from the partner universities might get role-play scenarios to act out according to the instructions, or topics recommended by the facilitator to discuss, or ask and answer any other topic-related questions they have.

Discussion topics. The thematic scope of the Online Speaking Clubs ranges from everyday topics, such as relationships, lifestyles, travel, education, and leisure activities, to broader cultural issues connected to different national traditions, literature, cinema, music, and the arts. In addition, considerable attention is devoted to the discussion of contemporary global problems such as sustainability, social justice, inclusivity, mental health, digitalisation and the internationalisation of modern society as well as of higher education. This diversity of topics allows students to choose which online session they want to attend based on their personal interests, language proficiency level,

and communicative needs. It also increases their motivation and active participation in intercultural communication. Discussing socially and culturally significant issues fosters greater engagement in opinion exchange, comparison of cultural perspectives, and the development of critical thinking and cultural competence.

Intercultural interaction. One of the principal strengths of the Online Speaking Clubs is the involvement of native speakers as well as international students and academic staff from UK universities, who bring diverse cultural perspectives to discussions. Such interaction exposes participants to different communication styles and English accents and provides valuable insights into behavioural norms and academic etiquette across cultures. Moreover, this enables students to observe authentic language use and interact in an international communicative environment. As a result, they become more culturally and linguistically aware and prepared for communication in international academic and professional settings.

Research methods. To assess the effectiveness of Online Speaking Clubs for the development of intercultural communicative competence, observation of students' behaviour during meetings has been used. At the beginning and end of each semester, students were asked to complete questionnaires in which they shared their expectations for participating in the project and their impressions of and feedback on the experience. At the final stage of the research, quantitative and qualitative analyses were applied to analyse students' attendance and the relevance of the project as a means of developing intercultural competence among university students.

Results and Discussion: Linguistic and Cultural Interaction in International Online Communication

Over the four years of the project implementation, approximately 30 online speaking club meetings have been held each academic year during the September-December and February-May periods. Each session has had between 5 and 20 participants, with an average of 9 students from Kherson State University. The project has demonstrated a consistently high level of student engagement, as participants who attended several meetings in a row usually continued attending throughout the semester or even the entire academic year, only occasionally missing individual sessions. Furthermore, around 10 students from different cohorts remained active participants over several years. This indicates

the sustainability of their motivation and long-term interest in intercultural communication activities. At the same time, about 15 new participants join the project each academic year. That ensures the continued expansion of the intercultural learning community and demonstrates students' interest in this international digital educational environment.

Among those who have been attending the meetings regularly, the improvement of confidence is observed, as well as a reduction of communication barriers and better motivation to continue to improve English, as some of them decide to take credit-bearing English courses at the Foreign Language Education Office, that could be admitted as an independent work at some of their curricular courses, or to attend other online events aiming to create an English-speaking environment at the university, such as the KSU Book Club.

To create a supportive and safe environment and encourage the participants to speak out, various vocabulary-building activities are proposed early in the meeting, as low language proficiency could be an obstacle. Providing students with key words and phrases that they can use in further communication activities reduces the stress and fear of making mistakes. For example, while discussing the topic of Cultural Diversities, students are first asked to match the terms '*diversity*', '*inclusion*', '*stereotype*', '*bias*' and '*belonging*' and their definitions in pairs, then to create one sentence using one of the terms in a real-life context and share with the whole group. After that, they are given a list of questions related to the topic to discuss in breakout rooms in mini groups, with a native speaker or an international student in each group. In addition to the questions, Ukrainian students are provided with a list of phrases to express their opinions, to agree and disagree politely and to give examples, such as '*In my view...*', '*I would argue that...*', '*It seems to me that...*', '*From my perspective...*', '*I completely agree.*', '*I partly agree, but...*', '*For instance...*', '*A good example of this is...*', '*This can be seen in...*' and others. They are also encouraged to listen to the phrases native speakers use and take notes on any new ones, in particular, colloquial expressions not mentioned in the list they already have. At the end of the meeting, they are asked to recall one new word and one new phrase to interact politely, which they have remembered. According to students' feedback, these activities helped them improve their confidence and communication skills. Regular use of similar phrases for simple



polite interaction also reduced communication barriers among shy students who remained silent during the first meetings but began to participate in discussions after several meetings. For example, the feedback in the questionnaire at the end of the semester from one of the participants was the following:

“At the Speaking Club, I achieved one of the most difficult things for myself – not being afraid to speak. Before that, even the easiest expressions seemed like a real stress to me, but after the first semester, I finally started not only to understand more, but also to write texts myself and speak, even if I make mistakes. I am very grateful for this experience and the fact that now I can also attend the club. Also for the knowledge I gained and most importantly, new acquaintances from another country.”

In their feedback, students also admit that they have become more interculturally aware and intelligent, due to regular authentic language exposure and intercultural communication, though in the form of virtual cultural exchange.

Intercultural communication allows for discoveries about cultural differences between people and diverse conversational behaviour. Very fruitful in this context were Online Speaking Clubs meetings dedicated to the traditional national holidays and national cuisines. Most of the discoveries students made during these sessions were about British culture, as almost every meeting was held with a representative of this nation. For example, the fact that five o'clock tea is just a stereotype that does not reflect the real, everyday routine of the British, as well as the famous English breakfast, or the assumption that all people in the UK speak the Queen's English. Even those who knew about untrustworthy stereotypes were surprised to hear about them in real-life interaction. The opportunity to tell foreigners about their own culture and the desire to surprise them in the same way were strong motivators for engagement.

Another great tool to help break down barriers and reduce anxiety about speaking a foreign language proved to be the occasional integration of humour. Sometimes it is done on purpose by a facilitator, for example, when a mock award ceremony was organised in 2023 featuring winners from both universities in categories such as 'Outstanding Storyteller', 'Master of Wit and Humour', 'Most Enthusiastic Newcomer', 'Most Sustainable Member', or an annual meeting dedicated to humour and differences in the sense of humour that has become a tradition to be organised around the first of April. Humour

integrations can also happen unplanned. An example could be a discussion of British culture and some stereotypes, in particular, the opinion that it is always raining in the UK. One of the native speakers from this country proved it to be absolutely true by opening an umbrella he always carries, which was very entertaining for the students. Another case was when participants shared their adventure stories, and another native speaker told a funny accident that happened to him while travelling with such mime and expression that all the participants laughed for several minutes. That also inspired some of the students to do the same and tell funny stories about themselves. So, humorous situations can help overcome speaking difficulties.

It is noteworthy that Online Speaking Clubs have demonstrated clear benefits for participants from all universities. They gain cultural exchange, build global competencies, and grow personally and professionally, as it is stated in the feedback of one of the international students at the University of Kent:

“The English Club is not only a great opportunity to learn about different cultures through people and their personal stories but also a wonderful way of making a difference by sharing our skills with one another. Personally, the English Club has allowed me to work on my Cultural intelligence and is also a lovely community to be a part of. With English being the most used language in all professional settings, I feel honoured being able to volunteer and help students at Kherson State University practice the language.”

Despite the numerous advantages, positive participant feedback, and the overall effectiveness of the Online Speaking Clubs project, several challenges have been identified during its implementation. The primary difficulties included, obviously, initial anxiety and language barriers experienced by some students of Kherson State University. Their uncertainty when communicating with native and international speakers sometimes limited their engagement in conversations. Furthermore, differences in communication styles and interaction patterns could lead to misunderstandings, as some students and foreign participants tended to communicate in either overly formal or overly informal ways, or use inappropriate vocabulary.

The online format, with occasional technical problems, also contributed to students' lack of confidence and their reluctance to speak. Common technical obstacles include unstable Internet connections, power outages,

and unexpected malfunctions or limitations of digital communication platforms, which are unfortunately common for Ukrainian universities. Organisational issues also could arise due to time-zone differences and scheduling conflicts, as some meetings overlapped with the international students' classes at the University of Kent. Nevertheless, overcoming these challenges became an important experience and component of the intercultural learning process. Eventually, Online Speaking Clubs proved to be a very effective tool for developing students' language proficiency, overcoming language barriers, and fostering resilience.

Conclusions. The present study was designed to outline the main tools of developing intercultural communication skills used in online speaking clubs and determine their effectiveness. It has been identified that in a time when physical mobility is sometimes restricted due to financial, political, safety, or logistical constraints in the Ukrainian context, Online Speaking Clubs, organised at Kherson State University, allow their participants to experience virtual cultural exchange, with authentic communication, perceptions of British and other cultures, and the opportunity to develop cultural awareness, intercultural competence and better language proficiency skills without travel abroad. In modern higher education, such an international digital educational environment becomes increasingly important and valuable. By embracing digital tools and fostering international dialogue, it becomes possible to bridge cultural divides, empower students and faculty, and create a more interconnected academic world. The findings of this research will be of interest to other educators fostering intercultural communication competence among university students, as well as to other Ukrainian and foreign universities facing similar challenges to those faced by Kherson State University.

A further study could assess how sustained participation in Online Speaking Clubs influences intercultural sensitivity over time. More broadly, research is needed to analyse the development of intercultural competence across different digital communication formats and the role of digital and AI-based tools in facilitating intercultural interaction and authentic communication in higher education.

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