

# **A New Intercultural Model for RFL Teaching at European Level**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents a new experimental intercultural theoretical and operative model for RFL (Russian as a Foreign Language) teaching at European level: the RETEACH model. As a descriptive-normative didactic model, RETEACH builds on the intercultural approach, seeking to foster the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among students. RETEACH promotes respect, understanding, and solidarity among individuals and encourages critical awareness of various issues, such as multiple identities, fuzzy cultural borders, power-related intercultural dynamics, and avoidance of stereotyped representations. The model is grounded in three specific concepts and areas within the foreign language and RFL fields: 1) the use of authentic texts, 2) the role of literature, and 3) textbook theory. The model was tested through two case studies, which investigated the place of culture in RFL classes in Lithuania and Italy (case study 1) and in RFL textbooks employed in Italy (case study 2). Three different research methods were employed: action research, classroom observation, and comparative content analysis. The findings indicate that the proposed model can boost the development of ICC in RFL learners, thus addressing some general issues with RFL teaching in the European context. There are several theoretical and practical implications of the RETEACH model: 1) combining RFL theory and practice, 2) improving the intercultural approach due to the use of authentic materials, 3) enabling the use of Russian literature to develop ICC, and 4) promoting a complex and critical image of Russia.

**Keywords:** intercultural approach, RETEACH model, teaching practices, teaching Russian as a foreign language, textbooks