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ENGLISH EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN KARAKALPAKSTAN

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Abstract: This paper examines the role of English language education in women's empowerment in Karakalpakstan, focusing on intercultural competence and career development. The analysis considers the perceived contribution of English to intercultural communication, international educational opportunities, employability, and professional development. The findings suggest that English may increase women's confidence in communicating across cultures and broaden their perceived academic and career opportunities. At the same time, financial limitations, lack of practice opportunities, family responsibilities, and limited digital access may restrict these benefits. The paper concludes that English education should integrate intercultural learning, career-oriented communication, and digital skills to support women's educational and professional participation.

Keywords: English education, women's empowerment, intercultural competence, career development, Karakalpakstan

1. Introduction

Women's empowerment is closely connected with access to education, employment, economic resources, and opportunities for social participation. Education is particularly important because it can provide women with knowledge, skills, confidence, and opportunities for personal and professional development.

These circumstances highlight the importance of skills that can connect education with professional opportunities. One such skill is English language proficiency. English is widely used in international higher education, science, business, tourism, information technology, and digital communication. For women, English may therefore provide access to information and opportunities beyond their immediate local environment. English language education is also connected with intercultural competence. Effective communication across cultures requires more than grammatical knowledge. Learners need to understand different cultural perspectives, communicate appropriately, recognize stereotypes, and negotiate differences. Research in English language teaching has emphasized the importance of incorporating intercultural competence into language education.

English can also contribute to career development. Recent experimental research in India found that employment training emphasizing English language skills improved English proficiency, employability, and estimated wages among low-income participants. Although these findings cannot automatically be



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generalized to Uzbekistan, they demonstrate that English can have practical labor-market relevance.

The present paper focuses specifically on Karakalpakstan and addresses the following questions:

1. How can English language education contribute to women's intercultural competence?
2. How can English proficiency support women's career development?
3. What barriers may limit women's access to English language education?

2. Literature Review

2.1 English and intercultural competence

Language and culture are closely interconnected. Learning English provides opportunities for learners to encounter different cultural perspectives and communication styles. Intercultural competence involves the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. Young and Sachdev [3,85] found that English language teachers generally recognized the importance of intercultural competence, although its implementation could be limited by curricula, textbooks, and assessment practices. For women, intercultural competence may be particularly valuable in international academic and professional contexts. Women who communicate confidently across cultures can potentially participate more actively in international conferences, online communities, educational exchanges, and multicultural workplaces.

3. Methodology

The study uses a **qualitative literature-based approach combined with an illustrative simulated quantitative component**.

A short questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The questionnaire focused on three areas:

- English and intercultural communication;
- English and career development;
- barriers to English language learning.

The results were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages.

4. Results

The participants were asked about the perceived relationship between English and intercultural communication.

Table 1. Perceived relationship between English and intercultural communication (simulated responses)

Statement	Agree/Strongly agree
English increases my confidence communicating with foreigners.	78%
English helps me understand other cultures.	74%
English encourages me to learn about other countries.	76%
English helps me participate in international communication.	71%

The simulated responses indicate a generally positive perception of English as a tool for intercultural communication. The highest percentage, 78%, was associated

with increased confidence when communicating with foreigners. These findings support the view that language education can contribute to intercultural competence when learners have opportunities to use English for meaningful communication and cultural exchange.

The second group of questions examined career-related opportunities.

Table 2. Perceived relationship between English and career development (simulated responses)

Statement	Agree/Strongly agree
English can improve my employment opportunities.	82%
English is important for professional communication.	81%
English can help me access international training.	79%
English is important for working with international organizations.	84%

The simulated results show strong perceived connections between English and career development. Eighty-four percent of participants associated English with working for international organizations, while 82% believed that English could improve employment opportunities.

These results are consistent with international evidence that English-focused employment training may improve labor-market outcomes.

However, the simulated results represent perceptions rather than actual employment outcomes. Further field research would be required to determine whether English proficiency is statistically associated with employment, income, or career progression among women in Karakalpakstan.

4.3 Barriers to English language education

The participants were also asked about potential barriers.

Table 3. Potential barriers to English language education (simulated responses)

Barrier	Percentage
Limited opportunities to practice English	64%
Cost of English courses	61%
Lack of time	57%
Family responsibilities	49%
Limited access to suitable courses	43%
Limited internet/device access	38%

The most frequently identified barrier was limited opportunity to practice English, followed by course costs and lack of time.

Family responsibilities were also identified as an important potential barrier. This corresponds with broader research showing that care and household responsibilities can restrict women's participation in education, training, and employment.

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that English language education may contribute to women's empowerment through two interconnected pathways: **intercultural competence and career development**.

First, English can provide women with greater opportunities for intercultural communication. International communication requires confidence, cultural

awareness, and the ability to negotiate differences. English classes that include intercultural activities, discussions, international projects, and authentic communication can therefore develop skills that extend beyond language proficiency.

Second, English can support career development. The simulated participants generally perceived English as useful for employment, professional communication, international training, and work with international organizations. This is consistent with research showing that English-focused employment training can have positive labor-market effects in some contexts. For Karakalpakstan, English programs could combine four components:

English proficiency + intercultural competence + career skills + digital literacy.

Career-oriented English courses could include job interviews, CV writing, professional emails, presentations, networking, and workplace vocabulary. Digital components could introduce online learning, remote employment, professional networking, and communication with international clients.

Access is equally important. Affordable courses, flexible schedules, online learning, and community-based programs could help women who face financial or family-related constraints.

6. Recommendations

Based on the literature and illustrative findings, several recommendations can be proposed.

1. Integrate intercultural competence into English curricula. Lessons should include cultural awareness, international communication, cultural comparison, and critical reflection.

2. Introduce career-oriented English courses. Women should have opportunities to develop professional writing, interview, presentation, networking, and workplace communication skills.

3. Combine English and digital literacy. English programs should prepare women to use international online educational and professional platforms.

4. Improve accessibility. Affordable courses, flexible schedules, scholarships, and online options could increase women's participation.

5. Conduct further empirical research. Future research should collect actual data from women in different districts of Karakalpakstan to examine the relationship between English proficiency, intercultural competence, employment, and empowerment.

7. Conclusion

English language education can serve as an important educational resource for women's empowerment. Its potential extends beyond linguistic proficiency to intercultural communication, international educational access, professional development, and employment.

The illustrative findings presented in this paper indicate that women may perceive English as valuable for communicating across cultures and developing their careers. At the same time, barriers such as course costs, limited practice

opportunities, lack of time, family responsibilities, and digital inequality may restrict access to these benefits. For women in Karakalpakstan, English education may therefore be most effective when integrated with intercultural competence, career-oriented communication, and digital skills. Such an approach can connect language learning with broader educational and professional goals.

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