

## Humanizing Language Education to Foster Student Motivation and Values for Sustainable Development

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### Abstract

Humanizing language education not only enhances the quality of education but also contributes significantly to the sustainable development of multicultural societies worldwide by strengthening their social cohesion and cultural foundations. The humanization of language education through learner-centered, value-oriented, and culturally responsive pedagogies offers a transformative approach to fostering cross-cultural competence and internalizing sustainability-related values. This study investigates how integrating humanistic pedagogical principles into language teaching can enhance learners' intrinsic motivation, support the development of cross-cultural competencies, and encourage the internalization of values consistent with sustainable development. Using a mixed-methods explanatory design, the study analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data from students across diverse educational settings. The study involved 120 pre-service teachers enrolled in English language education programs at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, Kazakhstan. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in linguistic backgrounds and academic levels. A 12-week intervention was designed to integrate humanized language education principles into the existing English language curriculum. The results indicate that humanized language education, characterized by empathy, dialogic interaction, cultural inclusivity, and critical reflection, significantly enhances students' intrinsic motivation, promotes intercultural sensitivity, and cultivates value systems aligned with sustainability, social justice, and global citizenship.

**Keywords:** *Humanization of language education, Sustainable Development Goals, motivation, cross-cultural competence, value orientations.*

### Introduction

The role of education in Kazakhstan is transitioning to align with global standards of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Central to this is the "Trinity of Languages" compolicy,

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which positions English as a bridge to the global economy. However, implementation often faces barriers in regions where mechanistic, teacher-centered approaches predominate.

To address these, this study proposes a paradigm shift toward "humanization." Humanism in English Language Teaching (ELT) moves away from behaviorist stimulus-response models toward a holistic view that treats the learner as a "complete person." This shift transforms language learning from the mere acquisition of grammar and vocabulary into a profound human experience focused on self-actualization and interpersonal connection. For example, rather than simply memorizing vocabulary about the environment, a humanized approach involves students discussing their personal emotional responses to local pollution, thereby linking linguistic content to personal values. In the Kazakhstani context, this serves as a mechanism for preserving morality and spirituality while introducing universal values.

In the era of global transformation, the role of education in fostering sustainable development has become increasingly prominent. Central to this mission is the humanization of language education, which emphasizes the development of learners not only as competent communicators but also as ethically responsible and socially aware individuals. This pedagogical approach aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

The humanization of modern education is driven by the processes of globalization, informatization, intellectualization as well as the integration of educational processes in accordance with the Bologna Process (BPEHEA, 2022).

In this regard, the actualization of the process of humanization of language teaching at the university is of particular importance. It involves the creation of a harmonious learning environment that promotes the development of personal qualities, supports creativity, and fosters tolerance.

Freire (1970) emphasizes the development of empathy, dialogue, and learner autonomy, moving beyond traditional, mechanistic approaches to embrace the full personhood of the learner. In language education, this means taking into account the language needs and cultural background of students to organize a flexible, inclusive educational process (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). As stated by Noddings (2012), education must be grounded in care and dialogue, forming the foundation for ethical and motivational growth in learners. Modern universities need approaches aimed at creating a comfortable learning environment that motivates students to learn, create, and promote self-expression.

Humanization, as applied to education, emphasizes respect for the learner's personality, cultural identity, and individual agency. It entails a shift from traditional, utilitarian models of language instruction to more student-centered, value-oriented approaches that integrate emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of learning (Noddings, 2005). This transition is especially relevant in higher education, where students are not only acquiring professional knowledge—but also shaping their worldviews, motivations, and value systems (Barnett, 2007).

Language education in the context of humanization contributes to the formation of qualities such as empathy, respect for opposing opinions, and the ability to communicate and cooperate in a multicultural environment (Hadzugova, 2015; Rejekiningsih et al., 2025). This is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to quality education, reducing inequality, and promoting sustainable and inclusive communities. In the context of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the "Trinity of Languages" policy serves as a practical vehicle for this multicultural engagement. By promoting trilingualism (Kazakh, Russian, English), the policy necessitates a multicultural approach where language learning becomes the primary method for students to navigate and respect diverse cultural identities, thereby bridging national policy with the humanistic goal of cross-cultural competence (Baishymyrova & Sadykova, 2024; Karimsakova et al., 2022).

In the context of globalization, Kazakh society has faced acute issues of achieving identity, preserving spirituality and introducing the younger generation to universal values (Nissabaeva, 2015). In this regard, the problems of humanizing modern education are becoming an urgent necessity (Zhao, 2012). Education—can accelerate the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this study focuses on the intersection of humanistic language teaching and SDG Target 4.7 (Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). By integrating these specific goals, the study posits that humanized ELT does not merely use SDGs as reading topics, but operationalizes them as classroom values—where gender equality (SDG 5) informs class participation dynamics, and peace (SDG 16) frames conflict resolution in dialogue practice.

The task of improving the quality of education is relevant for Kazakhstan's effective training programs (Auelbekova & Akhmetova, 2020), principles of sustainable development, the basis of national strategies including the Concept of Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Sustainable Development (Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 216, 2006)

and the Concept of Development of Higher Education and Science (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 248, 2023).

In the case of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the adoption of a trilingual education policy—promoting Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication, and English as the gateway to the global economy—operates at the intersection of globalization, national identity and humanized educational practice. Advocates argue that this policy equips young learners to engage globally while remaining rooted locally, thereby responding to the imperatives of a rapidly internationalizing world (Karimsakova et al., 2022; Rudik et al., 2025; Yussupova & Tarman, 2025).

Although current studies examine sustainability in ELT, global citizenship, and intercultural competence, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the humanization of language education as a specific teaching principle that fosters student motivation, cross-cultural competence, and value orientations—particularly within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This deficiency encompasses areas such as conceptual clarity, empirical evidence, and systemic integration in relation to SDG Target 4.7.

This article explores how humanizing language education can serve as a foundation for cultivating intrinsic motivation and sustainable value orientations among university students. The aim of this study is to explore how humanized language education contributes to the development of students' learning motivation, cross-cultural competence, and value orientations in the context of sustainable development.

This investigation is driven by the following core research questions:

- In what ways can language education be shaped by humanistic principles to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals?
- How does the humanization of language education influence students' motivation to learn?
- How does humanized language education contribute to the development of students' value orientations aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
- How does humanized language education contribute to the development of students' cross-cultural competence?

## **Literature Review**

The humanization of education, as a pedagogical concept, has long been associated with the humanistic traditions in educational philosophy, emphasizing personal development, respect for human dignity, and the moral responsibility of the educator (Rogers, 1969; Freire, 1970). In language education, humanization entails creating learning environments that prioritize students' emotional, social, and ethical well-being alongside the development of linguistic and communicative competences (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Karimova et al., 2023; 2024).

Drawing on the seminal work of Moskowitz (1978), Stevick (1980), and Underhill (1999), humanism in the classroom is defined by the following overlapping emphases:

- **Feelings:** Rejecting whatever causes learners to feel "closed off" and utilizing the affective-humanistic domain to foster self-acceptance.
- **Social Relations:** Encouraging friendship and cooperation over competition.
- **Responsibility:** Balancing public needs with private choice, moving from "other-directed" to "self-directed" power.
- **Intellect:** The free exercise of critical reason and the rejection of anything that interferes with the use of the mind.
- **Self-Actualization:** The pursuit of individuality and realizing one's uniqueness.

According to Salazar (2013), humanization is defined as the process of achieving greater humanity in social, historical, and transformational contexts. The main ideas of humanizing education remain an interdisciplinary task that constantly faces new challenges, especially with regard to inclusive and integrative learning. It also implies protection against excessive emphasis on national interests and other tendencies towards dehumanization.

According to Biesta (2008), humanization is a comprehensive goal of education, which includes a combination of the functions of qualification, subjectification and socialization. Qualifications aim to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to become professionals in a particular field, subjectivation increases awareness of the personal dimensions of education in relation to the process of being and becoming human, and socialization refers to "the many ways in which through education we become members and part of certain social, cultural and political 'orders'".

Humanization of language education involves shifting from authoritarian, top-down models of teaching to learner-centered approaches that honor the lived experiences, voices, and identities of

students (Freire, 1970). This philosophy inherently aligns with multicultural and multilingual education, which values cultural diversity and promotes linguistic pluralism as assets rather than barriers. Salazar (2013, p. 126) claims that “Humanizing pedagogy respects and honors the students’ background knowledge, culture, and lived experiences. This is central to multicultural education.” According to Cummins (2000) “Multilingual education provides a means for learners to preserve their cultural identity, which is a central concern in humanizing education.” Language education that humanizes students recognizes that language is not just a neutral tool for communication, but a core part of identity and culture. Multilingual education builds on this by supporting instruction in multiple languages and integrating students' native languages into learning environments.

Nurlanova (2022) emphasizes the importance of multilingual and multicultural education in Kazakhstan's higher education system as a factor in the sustainable development of its diverse society. These ideas echo the understanding of the humanization of education presented by Salazar and Cummins, since the emphasis on multilingualism and multiculturalism contributes not only to the professional qualifications of students, but also to their subjectivation and socialization. The humanization of language teaching is considered as a key aspect in fostering students' tolerance, understanding of the uniqueness of culture and competitiveness in a globalized world (Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025).

The introduction of trilingual education programs in the Kazakh educational system aims to create a new model of education that improves students' language skills and cultural awareness. A multicultural educational environment is considered necessary for the development of bilingual communicative competence and tolerance among students (Dwomoh et al., 2023; Koşan & Erkan, 2022; Narykova, 2020). Asipova (2018) emphasizes the importance of designing a humanitarian and technological educational environment as a key factor contributing to the development of a multicultural personality in teaching foreign languages. These approaches are considered as the main ones in the preparation of competitive graduates who are able to navigate various cultural contexts and contribute to the social and economic growth of Kazakhstan.

The humanization of language education prioritizes learner-centered approaches that honor the cultural identities, linguistic backgrounds, and emotional requirements of students. In Kazakhstan, however, there are notable gaps in the execution of the trilingual policy—particularly in regions with limited resources—resulting in varied outcomes. Karabassova (2020) contends that the

trilingual reform is obstructed by insufficient teacher training, a scarcity of materials, and a lack of contextual relevance for local classrooms. Additionally, the prevalence of Russian in educational and media contexts, a legacy of Soviet-era Russification, continues to shape language perceptions and complicate initiatives aimed at revitalizing Kazakh as the national language (Smagulova, 2008).

English, which is advocated as a medium for global integration, remains largely unattainable for numerous students due to economic and regional inequalities. As observed by Amantay et al. (2017), students hailing from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds face significant challenges in obtaining quality English education, often resulting in disengagement and diminished intrinsic motivation.

In addition to language proficiency, there is an urgent necessity to foster students' cross-cultural competence and ethical consciousness. Humanized language education can act as a transformative instrument for this aim, encouraging empathy, mutual understanding, and social cohesion within Kazakhstan's ethnically diverse community. Moreover, Altynbekova (2006) highlights that in Kazakhstan's ethnolinguistic environment, language learning should be interwoven with cultural identity and ethical values to support national unity and intercultural dialogue.

Cross-cultural competence refers to an individual's ability to effectively and appropriately interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. It encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions—such as cultural awareness, empathy, adaptability, and communication skills (Deardorff, 2006). Fluency in the language is only one aspect of this competency; another is a deeper comprehension of the cultural norms, values, and worldviews that shape behavior and perception.

In Kazakhstan, fostering value orientations is especially significant due to the country's multiethnic composition, evolving national identity, and alignment with global standards like the UN (SDGs). According to Altynbekova (2006), the Kazakhstani education system must not only transmit knowledge but also instill values that support social cohesion, tolerance, and intercultural understanding. Embedding value-based education within language learning environments enables students to internalize principles such as respect, environmental responsibility, and democratic participation—skills necessary for building a sustainable and inclusive society, as emphasized in SDG 4.7.

Several scholars have examined the interrelation between humanistic approaches in language education and student motivation. Dörnyei (2009) emphasizes that intrinsic motivation, deeply tied to learners' values and personal relevance of learning content, plays a critical role in language acquisition. The integration of socially and ethically meaningful themes, such as those found in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), into language education has been shown to significantly enhance student engagement and motivation (Blöse, 2025; Cates, 2004; Chidakwa, 2024; Lamb, 2017).

Empirical studies (e.g., Underhill, 1999; Stevick, 1990) have shown that learner-centered practices such as dialogic learning, collaborative reflection, and ethical discussion contribute to students' increased self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. These approaches are contrasted with more traditional, mechanistic models of language instruction, which often neglect the personal and societal relevance of language learning.

Motivation is a key determinant of language learning success and has been extensively studied in applied linguistics (Dörnyei, 2005). Humanistic education contributes to intrinsic motivation, which emerges when learners find personal meaning in the content and context of learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When language education addresses real-world issues and fosters reflective thinking, students tend to develop deeper engagement and sustained effort (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).

Value formation in language learning is closely tied to motivation. Kramsch (1993) and Byram (2008) argue that language education should help students navigate cultural values, question assumptions, and develop intercultural competence. The inclusion of ethical and global themes in language curricula—such as identity, equity, sustainability, and peace—contributes to the internalization of values and prepares students for responsible citizenship.

While Khiminets et al. (2021) highlight the necessity of reorienting education toward humanistic values, a gap remains in empirical research exploring the mixed-methods impact of such approaches on motivation and values in Central Asian contexts.

The concept of education for sustainable development (ESD), rooted in the frameworks proposed by UNESCO (2017), promotes the development of competencies that enable individuals to reflect critically, participate actively in society, and make informed decisions for a just and sustainable future. In this context, language education is increasingly viewed as a conduit for achieving ESD

goals, particularly by promoting intercultural understanding, democratic participation, and critical thinking (Byram, 2008; Chimbunde et al., 2023; Tilbury, 2011).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary integration in language learning, where SDG-related content is used not merely as a thematic backdrop but as a framework for language tasks, critical discussions, and collaborative projects (Leal, 2020; Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). This aligns with calls for transformative pedagogy that transcends linguistic outcomes and contributes to personal and societal transformation.

However, there is still a gap in empirical research exploring the long-term impact of such approaches on students' motivation and value orientations. While qualitative studies report increased learner engagement and ethical awareness, more longitudinal and mixed-methods research is needed to assess how these experiences shape students' personal and professional identities over time (Leal, 2020; Ushioda, 2021).

This gap underscores the need for further exploration into pedagogical models that effectively integrate the principles of humanism, motivation theory, and sustainable development within language education. Thus, the humanization of language education emerges as a pivotal strategy in cultivating students' motivation and value orientations, contributing not only to linguistic development but also to the broader educational aims of sustainability and ethical citizenship. The goal of this research is to examine the role of humanized language education in shaping students' motivation, cross-cultural competence, and value orientations within the context of Kazakhstan's multilingual education system, while aligning these educational outcomes with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals. The study aims to provide insights into how learner-centered, culturally responsive, and ethically grounded language teaching practices can contribute to building a more inclusive, empathetic, and socially responsible generation of learners in Kazakhstan.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a Mixed-Methods Explanatory Design. In this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed first to provide a general understanding of the research problem, followed by a qualitative phase to explain and refine the statistical results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach allows for a rigorous assessment of the intervention's impact on motivation and

values (quantitative) while utilizing narrative data to understand the pedagogical mechanisms driving those changes (qualitative).

The study includes one independent and three dependent variables. The Humanized ELT Program is the independent variable, implemented as a 12-week pedagogical intervention and examined through process data and thematic patterns. Intrinsic Motivation is a dependent variable measured with a 10-item Likert scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.82$ ), reflecting reported engagement and enjoyment. Cross-Cultural Competence is another dependent variable, assessed using a 12-item Likert scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.78$ ) and described in terms of cultural sensitivity and awareness. Finally, Value Orientation is a dependent variable measured with a 10-item Likert scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.80$ ), capturing ethical awareness and accountability.

The 12-week intervention integrates humanized language education principles into the English language curriculum, emphasizing learner-centered methods, dialogue, and reflection (Noddings, 2012; Freire, 1970). It incorporates task-based learning (TBL) and project-based learning (PBL) activities centered on SDGs, such as gender equality (SDG 5), sustainable communities (SDG 11), and peace and justice (SDG 16). Activities include debates, intercultural communication simulations, and collaborative lesson plan design. The intervention uses a blended approach, combining in-person classroom sessions with online components via ZOOM and Canva for asynchronous reflections and peer feedback. The program is structured in three phases to facilitate progressive skill-building and reflection, as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*12 week intervention*

Weeks	Key activities	Pedagogical methods	Reflection
1-2	- Icebreaker tasks to build trust between students; - Discussion of videos/articles on cross-cultural tasks	- Task-based Learning (TBL): role-play tasks; - Learner-centered: encouraging self-expression	Peer feedback on discussions
3-4	- TBL: small-group debates (themes like cultural competence, cross-cultural sensitivity, equity, etc)	- PBL: collaborative project works cultural differences and cross-cultural sensitivity	Reflecting project work

5-6	- TBL: intercultural communication simulations (e.g. virtual exchanges)	- Simulation based learning	Reflection on intercultural experiences
7-8	- Research and script-writing	- Collaborative project design	Peer reviews
9-10	- Debates and preparation of arguments (e.g. cultural conflicts resolution)	- Debate preparation and execution	Self-assessment of debate performance
11-12	- Role plays on teaching scenarios (e.g. media bias in conflict reporting)	- Capstone projects	All reflections, projects and self-assessment

## Participants

The study utilized a purposive sample of 180 pre-service teachers at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. The participants were divided into an Experimental group (n = 120) and a Control group (n = 60). While equal group sizes are preferred in pure experimental designs, unequal group sizes (2:1 ratio) are often utilized in educational quasi-experiments to maximize the number of students benefiting from a potential educational innovation while maintaining a sufficient control baseline (Dumville et al., 2006). For the qualitative phase, 16 participants (8 from each group) were selected for focus group interviews. This sample size was determined based on the principle of saturation in phenomenological research, where 6 to 10 participants are often sufficient to identify core themes within a homogeneous group (Morse, 2000).

**Table 2**

### *Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Characteristic	Category	N	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	36	30.0
	Female	84	70.0
<b>Academic Year</b>	Second Year	40	33.3
	Third Year	48	40.0
	Fourth Year	32	26.7
<b>Linguistic Background</b>	Kazakh	60	50.0
	Russian	45	37.5
	Other	15	12.5

*Note:* N = 120. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

The purposive sampling ensured representation of Kazakhstan's multilingual context, with a balanced distribution of Kazakh and Russian speakers, alongside minority language groups. The predominance of female participants (70%) aligns with national trends in teacher education programs (Nurlanova, 2022). This diversity supports the study's focus on cross-cultural competence and enhances the applicability of findings to Kazakhstan's multilingual educational landscape.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

- **Survey Administration:** The 32-item pre- and post-intervention surveys were administered digitally in Week 1 and Week 12. To ensure accessibility for students at B1-B2 CEFR proficiency levels, all items included Kazakh translations alongside the original English text.

- **Reflective Journaling (ALACT Model):** Students submitted weekly journals via the university's online platform. Using Korthagen's ALACT model, students moved through five phases: Action (task engagement), Looking back (documenting feelings), Awareness (identifying essential aspects), Creating alternatives (planning future behavior), and Trial (implementing changes).

- **Focus Group Interviews:** Six semi-structured focus groups were held in Week 13. Sessions lasted 60-75 minutes in a quiet university setting. A trained bilingual moderator facilitated discussions in both English and Kazakh, allowing participants to switch languages to express complex thoughts accurately, thereby ensuring interpretative validity. All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Paired-sample t-tests were used to compare pre- and post-intervention scores within the experimental group to test the hypothesis that humanized instruction increases the dependent variables. Independent t-tests compared post-intervention scores between groups. Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The integration of data occurs in the Results section, where qualitative findings are used to explain quantitative outcomes.

## Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. Participants provided informed consent, and data were anonymized to protect privacy. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without consequences.

## Results

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to investigate the impact of a 12-week humanized language education intervention on pre-service teachers (N=120) at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, Kazakhstan. Quantitative data from pre- and post-intervention surveys and qualitative data from focus group interviews and reflective journals were analyzed to address the research questions.

The results are presented in an integrated manner, organized by the study's key variables. Quantitative statistics are presented first to demonstrate the effect, followed immediately by qualitative evidence that explains the "why" and "how" of the observed changes.

Quantitative data were collected using a 32-item survey measuring intrinsic motivation, cross-cultural competence, and value orientations, administered pre- and post-intervention to the experimental group (N=120). Paired-sample t-tests were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics to compare pre- and post-intervention scores. Results are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Paired-Sample T-Test Results for Pre- and Post-Intervention Measures*

Variable	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Intrinsic Motivation	3.45 (0.62)	4.02 (0.58)	6.82	< .001	0.62
Cross-Cultural Competence	3.32 (0.67)	3.85 (0.61)	5.94	< .001	0.55
Value Orientations	3.50 (0.64)	3.98 (0.60)	5.12	< .001	0.48

*Note:* N = 120. SD = Standard Deviation. All tests are two-tailed. Cohen's d indicates effect size (0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, 0.8 = large).

The results indicate statistically significant improvements ( $p < .001$ ) in all three constructs. Intrinsic motivation showed the largest effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.62$ , medium to large), followed by cross-cultural competence ( $d = 0.55$ , medium) and value orientations ( $d = 0.48$ , medium). These findings suggest that the intervention, incorporating task-based learning (TBL) and project-based

learning (PBL) with SDG themes, effectively enhanced students' motivation, cultural competence, and alignment with SDG-related values (Dörnyei, 2009).

Qualitative data were collected from six semi-structured focus group interviews (8–10 participants each, total n=54) and weekly reflective journals (N=120) submitted via Canva. Thematic analysis, conducted using NVivo software following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, identified four key themes corresponding to the research questions: (1) Humanistic Principles and SDG Integration, (2) Enhanced Motivation Through Engagement, (3) Value Alignment with SDGs, and (4) Growth in Cross-Cultural Competence. Subthemes and representative quotes are presented below.

### 1. Humanistic Principles and SDG Integration:

One student remarked during a focus group: *'In my previous English classes, I felt like a "linguistic object" just repeating grammar. But when we discussed SDG 16 (Peace and Justice), I felt like my personal identity was finally part of the lesson. It made the language feel alive and necessary.'*

- **Learner-Centered Approach:** Participants valued the shift from teacher-centered to facilitative instruction, noting that activities like debates and collaborative projects fostered autonomy. One student stated, "The teacher guided us to explore SDG topics like gender equality ourselves, which made learning feel personal and meaningful."

- **SDG Relevance:** Students appreciated the integration of SDG themes (e.g., SDG 5, 11, 16) into language tasks, reporting that it connected English learning to real-world issues. A journal entry noted, "Discussing sustainable communities in English helped me see how language can address global challenges."

### 2. Enhanced Motivation Through Engagement:

A participant in the experimental group wrote in their reflective journal: *'I used to struggle with the "affective filter" and fear of making mistakes. Because this class focuses on our feelings and social relations (SDG 4.7), I felt safe to take risks. My motivation isn't just to pass; it's to express who I am.'*

- **Active Engagement:** Students reported increased motivation due to interactive TBL and PBL activities, such as role-plays and virtual exchanges. A focus group participant said, *“The simulations made me excited to learn English because I could use it to solve problems.”*

- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Reflective journals highlighted enjoyment in self-directed learning, with one student writing, *“I felt motivated to improve my English to express my ideas about peace and justice clearly.”*

### 3. Value Alignment with SDGs:

Student Participant E-44 stated: *‘I used to think teaching was just about vocabulary. Now, after our project on SDG 5 (Gender Equality), I see my future role as an “educator of the whole person.” I want to foster a classroom where every student feels valued as a global citizen.’*

**Ethical Awareness:** Participants described a growing commitment to SDG-related values, such as social justice and sustainability. A focus group comment was, *“Working on projects about gender equality made me think about fairness in my future teaching.”*

**Personal Growth:** Journals revealed shifts in personal values, with one student noting, *“I now see teaching as a way to promote ethical ideas, like protecting the environment.”*

### 4. Growth in Cross-Cultural Competence:

As noted in a weekly vlog entry: *‘The virtual simulation on cultural conflict resolution taught me that empathy is just as important as accuracy. I learned how to negotiate different worldviews in English, which has prepared me for the multicultural reality of Kazakhstan.’*

**Cultural Awareness:** Students reported improved understanding of cultural diversity through activities like intercultural simulations. A focus group participant said, *“The virtual exchanges helped me understand how to communicate respectfully with people from different cultures.”*

**Conflict Resolution Skills:** Role-plays on cultural conflict resolution enhanced students’ ability to navigate diverse perspectives, as reflected in a journal entry: *“I learned how to discuss sensitive topics like media bias without offending others.”*

## Mixed-Methods Integration

To address the four research questions, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated using a joint display (Table 4) to identify convergence and divergence across data sources. The integration confirms the intervention's impact and provides nuanced insights into how humanized language education contributes to the research objectives.

**Table 4**

*Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings by Research Question*

Research Question	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Interpretation
<b>RQ1: In what ways can language education be shaped by humanistic principles to contribute to achieving the SDGs?</b>	Significant improvements in value orientations (M=3.98, d=0.48) indicate alignment with SDG values.	Themes of learner-centered approach and SDG relevance highlight autonomy and real-world application of language skills.	Convergence: Humanistic principles (e.g., dialogue, autonomy) enabled students to engage with SDG themes, fostering skills to address global issues through language education.
<b>RQ2: How does the humanization of language education influence students' motivation to learn?</b>	Significant increase in intrinsic motivation (M=4.02, d=0.62).	Themes of active engagement and intrinsic motivation emphasize enjoyment in interactive, self-directed tasks.	Convergence: The intervention's learner-centered, interactive methods (TBL, PBL) significantly boosted motivation, as students found tasks meaningful and engaging.
<b>RQ3: How does humanized language education contribute to students' value orientations aligned with SDGs?</b>	Significant improvement in value orientations (M=3.98, d=0.48).	Themes of ethical awareness and personal growth reflect stronger commitment to SDG values like justice and sustainability.	Convergence: The intervention fostered ethical awareness through SDG-focused activities, aligning students' values with global goals.
<b>RQ4: How does humanized language education contribute to the development of students' cross-cultural competence?</b>	Significant increase in cross-cultural competence (M=3.85, d=0.55).	Themes of cultural awareness and conflict resolution skills indicate improved intercultural communication abilities.	Convergence: Activities like simulations and role-plays enhanced students' ability to navigate cultural diversity, aligning with quantitative gains in competence.

## **Discussion**

Language education shaped by humanistic principles such as respect for learner individuality, empathy, critical consciousness, and intercultural dialogue can play a crucial role in advancing Sustainable Development Goals by promoting inclusive quality education (SDG 4), fostering peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16), and encouraging global citizenship and cultural understanding (UNESCO, 2017). The qualitative data complement these findings, highlighting the role of SDG-themed tasks in making learning relevant and fostering empathy and global citizenship. These results align with UNESCO's (2017) framework for education for sustainable development, which emphasizes critical thinking and active societal participation.

Incorporating SDG themes into language tasks (e.g., debates, simulations, case studies) has been shown to increase both cognitive and emotional involvement. Language classrooms offer a unique platform for addressing SDG-related topics through critical discussion, intercultural communication, and global collaboration (Cates, 2004; Leal, 2020). Research demonstrates that when language education is aligned with the SDGs such as promoting gender equality (SDG 5), responsible consumption (SDG 12), or peace and justice (SDG 16) students not only improve their linguistic competence but also develop global awareness and moral sensitivity (Alptekin, 2002; Savva, 2015).

Moreover, value-oriented education is a core aspect of both humanistic pedagogy and sustainable development which has been explored in language education through the incorporation of real-world issues and authentic materials. Researchers argue that when language instruction incorporates ethical dilemmas, global challenges, and cultural diversity, it supports the development of students' value systems and social consciousness (Kubota, 2011; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015).

Pedagogical models such as task-based learning, project-based learning, and global simulations have been adapted to include SDG-related content, encouraging students to co-construct knowledge, reflect critically on social issues, and act collaboratively (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015). The integration of sustainability themes into language learning materials was found to improve relevance and enhance students' engagement based on values supporting the conclusions drawn by Cates (2004), who pointed out addressing global issues within language classrooms can foster ethical consciousness and a sense of accountability among students.

The outcomes of this study indicate that integrating humanistic approaches like emphasizing empathy, cultural understanding, and personal relevance significantly enhances student motivation. This finding corroborates previous studies by Kramersch (2014), who pointed out that language learning is fundamentally a humanistic pursuit, wherein identity, emotion, and ethical involvement influence on communicative competence. Likewise, Byram's (1997) framework for intercultural communicative competence supports the notion that language education must extend beyond mere linguistic skills to encompass attitudes of openness and curiosity, which resonate with our conclusions regarding motivation and the development of values.

Our study also revealed that when students are encouraged to contemplate real-world challenges such as social justice, environmental conservation, and equity through language learning activities, their intrinsic motivation is reinforced. This aligns with Ushioda's (2011) assertion regarding the significance of situating motivation within the context of learners' personal aspirations, values, and real-world issues.

The strong correlations between intrinsic motivation and both cross-cultural competence and value orientations underscore the potential of humanized pedagogy to create "motivated identities" (Lamb, 2017), preparing pre-service teachers to navigate multicultural classrooms and promote inclusive education in line with Kazakhstan's Concept of Language Policy Development (RG RK, 2023).

In contrast, some studies (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005) highlighted instrumental motivation (e.g., acquiring a language for career opportunities), which frequently neglect the transformative capacity of value-centered education. Our research indicates that although external factors continue to play a significant role, it is the internalization of values through a humanistic perspective that fosters deeper and more enduring motivation. This distinction indicates a transition in educational focus from utilitarian approaches to ethical and holistic learning paradigms.

The quantitative findings, as shown in Tables 3, demonstrate that the humanized language education intervention significantly enhanced intrinsic motivation, cross-cultural competence, and value orientations among pre-service teachers at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. The strong correlations between these constructs suggest a synergistic effect, where increased motivation reinforces cultural and ethical competencies, aligning with Dörnyei's (2009) emphasis on the role of meaningful content in language acquisition. The moderate to large effect sizes (Cohen's *d*)

indicate practical significance, supporting the intervention's effectiveness in fostering competencies critical for sustainable development.

Limitations include the 12-week intervention period, which may not capture long-term effects, and the focus on a single university, which may limit generalizability. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and include other universities and languages, such as Kazakh and Russian, to assess broader applicability.

### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that humanized language education, through the integration of SDG-related content and learner-centered pedagogies, significantly enhances pre-service teachers' intrinsic motivation, cross-cultural competence, and value orientations at Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University in Kazakhstan. The strong correlations between these constructs suggest that fostering motivation can amplify cultural and ethical competencies, preparing future educators for inclusive and sustainable education. These findings underscore the potential of language education to contribute to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), aligning with Kazakhstan's national strategies for sustainable development. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies and broader institutional contexts to further validate and extend these findings.

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