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## University Students' Patriotic Education Through an Interdisciplinary Approach

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**Abstract.** This study examines the role of an interdisciplinary approach in strengthening patriotic education among university students in Azerbaijan. Interdisciplinary integration has recently gained increasing importance in higher education as an effective pedagogical model for developing critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility. By combining knowledge, methods, and skills from different academic disciplines, this approach enables students to address real-life challenges more effectively and supports their intellectual as well as civic development. The study is based on observations and surveys conducted in teacher-training faculties at higher education institutions in Nakhchivan. The findings indicate that interdisciplinary teaching helps future educators understand the relationship between subject areas and their shared contribution to the formation of civic awareness, national identity, and patriotic values. The study also draws on international experience, particularly the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) model, which demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating subject knowledge with language learning. The article concludes that the broader implementation of interdisciplinary integration in higher education requires stronger methodological support, targeted teacher training, and improved institutional resources.

**Keywords:** interdisciplinary integration, patriotic education, higher education, civic awareness, CLIL

### Introduction

Interdisciplinary integration has emerged in Azerbaijan as a relatively recent yet increasingly significant pedagogical approach applied across a variety of academic subjects. Despite the fact that this model may appear complex or demanding for some educators, particularly because of its research-oriented and collaborative nature, it offers substantial educational benefits. One of its primary advantages is its contribution to the development of students' critical thinking, analytical

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abilities, and creativity. In addition, interdisciplinary integration facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and skills across multiple domains, thereby preparing learners to respond more effectively to real-life challenges beyond the classroom environment (ARTI, 2023; Cavadova, 2024).

The distinguishing feature of interdisciplinary teaching lies in the fact that students do not merely study isolated subject content; rather, they learn to combine concepts, skills, and methods from different disciplines in meaningful and practical contexts. Such an approach enables learners to develop a more holistic understanding of knowledge and to recognize the interconnectedness of academic fields. Within this framework, the integration of pedagogy and English language teaching offers a particularly productive model. Through this synthesis, students not only improve their foreign language competence but also engage more deeply with pedagogical concepts and values. In this regard, the inclusion of patriotic education as a thematic component within pedagogical instruction appears especially relevant, as it allows both linguistic and civic objectives to be addressed simultaneously (Ağayeva, 2022; ARTI, 2023).

The relevance of this topic is further reinforced by the growing scholarly and practical interest in interdisciplinary integration as an effective educational strategy. In contemporary higher education, this approach is increasingly viewed not only as a methodological innovation but also as a means of shaping socially responsible, critically aware, and ethically grounded individuals. Although previous studies have largely focused on the role of interdisciplinary integration in fostering civic values among children and adolescents, comparatively less attention has been paid to its application in the context of university-level patriotic education. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the challenges and possibilities of strengthening patriotic education among university students through an interdisciplinary approach.

## Literature Review

Patriotic education occupies an important place in the moral, civic, and social development of the younger generation, particularly among university students who are expected to assume active roles in society. In educational discourse, patriotic education is often associated with the formation of civic qualities, national consciousness, social responsibility, and respect for cultural heritage. It encourages individuals to move beyond narrow personal interests and to develop a sense of duty, dignity, and commitment to their homeland. According to Ağayeva (2022), genuine patriotism is grounded in high moral values and in devoted service to both the nation and the state. She emphasizes that the family constitutes the first and most influential environment for the formation of patriotic feeling; however, such education should not be left to chance but should instead be organized in a purposeful, systematic, and pedagogically sound manner. In her view, patriotic education is closely connected with students' moral development, disciplinary awareness, and knowledge of their country's history, geography, traditions, and culture.



From the perspective of military-patriotic education, Ahmadova (2022) argues that adolescence and youth represent a particularly important stage in the formation of patriotism, heroism, personal beliefs, and value systems. During this period, young people begin to develop a more active civic position and a clearer understanding of social responsibility. The author maintains that effective patriotic education should not be limited to theoretical instruction; rather, it should include active participation in projects, communication with military representatives or veterans, and engagement in patriotic, intellectual, and socially oriented events. Such activities, including round tables, forums, competitions, and discussions of historical military experiences, help young people internalize patriotic values and strengthen their readiness to contribute to national defense and civic life. Although Ahmadova's focus is primarily on school education, her ideas can also be applied to higher education contexts where similar values remain relevant.

The concept of interdisciplinary integration provides a useful methodological framework for achieving such educational goals. As Cavadova (2024) explains, interdisciplinary integration involves the synthesis of concepts, knowledge, principles, and methods drawn from two or more academic disciplines. It requires the application of the theories and tools of one field to the teaching and learning processes of another. This structure contributes to the development of a holistic worldview in students and supports the emergence of broader scientific understanding through shared concepts, categories, and approaches. In this sense, interdisciplinary teaching does not simply combine subject matter; it transforms the educational process into a more dynamic, connected, and meaningful experience.

This understanding is also supported by broader international scholarship. Beane (1997) emphasizes that curriculum integration strengthens democratic education by encouraging learners to relate knowledge to real-life issues and social values. Similarly, Drake and Burns (2004) note that integrated curricula help students make connections across subject boundaries and foster deeper understanding. Within language education, the CLIL model has demonstrated that combining subject instruction with language learning can increase both motivation and content retention (Coyle et al., 2010; Marsh, 1994). These insights are particularly relevant to the present study, as they suggest that patriotic education can be made more effective when embedded within interdisciplinary and language-based teaching practices.

At the same time, local research in Azerbaijan on the pedagogical use of interdisciplinary integration remains limited. Cavadova (2024) points out that the application of this approach in specific fields, including literature and teacher education, has not yet been sufficiently explored and that there is a clear need for more dissertations, empirical studies, and methodological publications in this area. This gap in the literature creates a strong rationale for the present study, which seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on how interdisciplinary methods can be used more effectively in higher education to promote patriotic education among university students.



## Methodology

The present study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of interdisciplinary integration in the formation of civic and patriotic qualities among university students. In contemporary pedagogical research, the development of civic consciousness, national identity, and social responsibility is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional process that requires the integration of knowledge, values, and practical skills across different academic disciplines. In this context, interdisciplinary integration provides an appropriate methodological framework for investigating how patriotic education can be strengthened within higher education settings (Cavadova, 2024; Drake & Burns, 2004).

The research was conducted systematically at two higher education institutions in Nakhchivan: Nakhchivan State University and Nakhchivan Teachers Institute. The focus was placed specifically on teacher-training faculties, as these units play an essential role in preparing future educators who will later transmit civic, moral, and national values to younger generations. Observational methods were used in order to explore how interdisciplinary approaches were conceptualized and applied within the educational process. In addition, elements of survey-based inquiry were incorporated to gather the perspectives of university leadership regarding the role of higher education institutions in fostering civic qualities among students.

At the initial stage of the research, a structured work plan was prepared at the Faculty of Primary Education of Nakhchivan Teachers Institute. This plan was designed to examine how interdisciplinary integration could be used to cultivate civic awareness and patriotic values among students preparing to become primary school teachers. Within this framework, students were introduced to methods of promoting civic and moral values in future schoolchildren. Particular attention was given to demonstrating how subjects can complement one another and how interdisciplinary teaching can reinforce national consciousness, ethical responsibility, and commitment to cultural values. In this process, pedagogy and language instruction were treated not as separate fields but as mutually reinforcing domains capable of contributing jointly to students' academic and personal development.

As part of the research design, several surveys were organized. One of the main directions of inquiry focused on university leadership. In this stage, rectors from Nakhchivan Teachers Institute and Nakhchivan State University were presented with a set of ten questions related to patriotism, civic education, and the role of educational institutions in value formation. Their responses were collected and subjected to descriptive analysis. The findings indicated that university leaders view the formation of civic qualities as a complex and continuous process that begins in the family, develops more systematically in educational institutions, and is reinforced by the broader social environment. While the family provides the initial foundation for moral and patriotic values, higher education institutions are regarded as responsible for deepening, organizing, and strengthening these values through purposeful educational practice (Ağayeva, 2022).



The survey data further showed that university leaders consider modern pedagogical approaches essential for improving the effectiveness of civic and patriotic education. In particular, they emphasized the value of integrating short but regular discussions of citizenship, moral responsibility, and national identity into classroom instruction. According to their recommendations, even a brief period at the beginning of lessons may be used to introduce issues related to civic duty, patriotism, and democratic participation, while seminars and discussions can provide more detailed exploration of these themes in different disciplinary contexts. Such a practice helps students connect theoretical knowledge with practical behavior and encourages them to see citizenship not merely as an abstract concept but as an active personal and social responsibility.

The observations conducted during the research confirmed that interdisciplinary integration can function as a significant tool in shaping civic qualities among university students. Its value lies not only in combining knowledge from different disciplines but also in promoting a broader educational environment in which students develop social responsibility, attachment to national and moral values, and readiness to participate constructively in public life. This finding is consistent with international scholarship emphasizing that integrated learning environments support deeper understanding, stronger engagement, and more meaningful connections between academic content and real-life concerns (Beane, 1997; Coyle et al., 2010).

At the same time, the research revealed that although interdisciplinary integration has become more visible in Azerbaijani higher education in recent years, its practical implementation remains limited. In many cases, the idea of interdisciplinary cooperation is reflected more strongly in institutional strategies, policy documents, and international project frameworks than in everyday classroom practice. For example, Azerbaijan Technical University adopted an interdisciplinary research policy intended to encourage cooperation across academic fields, stimulate innovation, and strengthen common ethical and methodological standards (Azerbaijan Technical University, 2023). However, the existence of policy documents alone does not guarantee effective implementation at the level of teaching and learning.

Several obstacles to practical implementation were identified in the course of the study. First, there is a shortage of material and technical resources necessary for organizing interdisciplinary instruction in a systematic way. Second, many teachers have limited methodological preparation and are uncertain about how, when, and to what extent interdisciplinary approaches should be applied. Third, interdisciplinary integration is not yet supported by a unified and centralized implementation framework across universities, which leads to fragmented and inconsistent practice. These challenges suggest that the development of interdisciplinary teaching in higher education requires not only conceptual support but also institutional planning, teacher training, and resource allocation.



From an international perspective, the findings of the study may be linked to the framework of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which represents one of the most widely recognized forms of interdisciplinary pedagogy. CLIL combines subject learning with language instruction and aims to develop both content knowledge and communicative competence simultaneously. This model has been shown to increase student motivation, improve retention of subject matter, and create more authentic educational experiences because learners use language as a tool for meaningful engagement with content rather than as an isolated object of study (Coyle et al., 2010; Marsh, 1994). In this sense, CLIL serves as a useful comparative model for understanding how patriotic and civic themes can be integrated into English language instruction in Azerbaijani universities.

## Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that interdisciplinary integration has significant potential to strengthen patriotic and civic education in higher education institutions. In particular, the integration of pedagogy and English language teaching creates a productive educational space in which students can simultaneously develop communicative competence, critical thinking, and civic awareness. Rather than teaching patriotic values in isolation, interdisciplinary instruction enables these values to be embedded in broader learning processes, making them more relevant, practical, and intellectually engaging for students.

In the context of Azerbaijani universities, this approach may be especially effective in teacher education programs. Future teachers are expected not only to master subject knowledge but also to serve as moral and civic role models for younger generations. For this reason, their university education should include opportunities to explore national identity, ethical responsibility, and democratic citizenship through integrated methods. If properly designed, interdisciplinary lessons can help students understand that patriotism is not limited to emotional attachment to the homeland but also includes respect for social responsibility, cultural heritage, and civic participation.

Particular attention should be given to the role of language teachers, especially teachers of English, in implementing such approaches. English language classes often provide flexible opportunities for discussion, interpretation, comparison, and reflection. For example, if students are asked to discuss a topic such as “What should children do on Victory Day?” in English, they are not simply practicing vocabulary and grammar; they are also engaging with historical memory, civic duty, and patriotic values. In this way, language learning becomes connected with social meaning, and the educational process becomes both linguistically and morally significant. This principle closely reflects the logic of CLIL, according to which language learning is most effective when embedded in meaningful subject content (Coyle et al., 2010; Marsh, 1994).

The study also suggests that interdisciplinary integration can contribute to the formation of balanced and inclusive patriotism. In a contemporary democratic society, patriotic education



should not promote isolation or intolerance; instead, it should encourage students to value their own national traditions while also respecting the rights, freedoms, and cultural identities of others. When patriotic education is combined with democratic principles, students are more likely to develop into independent thinkers who are loyal to their homeland yet open to dialogue, diversity, and international cooperation. This is particularly important in higher education, where students are preparing for professional and social roles that require both national commitment and global awareness (Banks, 2008; Council of Europe, 2018).

Nevertheless, the successful application of interdisciplinary integration depends on several conditions. Teachers must be trained not only in their own disciplines but also in interdisciplinary planning, collaborative lesson design, and value-oriented pedagogy. Universities should provide methodological guidance, curricular support, and practical examples that demonstrate how civic and patriotic themes can be incorporated into various subjects without reducing academic depth. In the absence of such support, interdisciplinary integration may remain a theoretical aspiration rather than a sustainable pedagogical reality.

Overall, the discussion confirms that interdisciplinary teaching should be regarded not merely as an alternative instructional method but as a broader educational philosophy. It promotes the unity of knowledge, value formation, and practical skill development. In the case of patriotic education, this approach is particularly useful because it allows civic values to be taught in context, linked to real communication, and reinforced through multiple disciplinary perspectives.

## Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that interdisciplinary integration represents a promising and pedagogically meaningful approach to strengthening patriotic and civic education among university students. Its value lies in the fact that it does not treat knowledge, language, and values as separate educational components; instead, it combines them in a unified process that supports intellectual, moral, and social development. In this sense, interdisciplinary integration contributes not only to academic achievement but also to the formation of socially responsible, nationally conscious, and ethically grounded individuals.

The findings obtained from observations and survey data indicate that higher education institutions play a central role in the development of civic qualities. While the family remains the first environment in which moral and patriotic values are introduced, universities are responsible for systematizing, deepening, and expanding these values through purposeful educational practice. In particular, teacher-training faculties have a special responsibility, as their graduates will later influence the civic and moral education of future generations.

At the same time, the study confirms that the practical implementation of interdisciplinary integration in Azerbaijani higher education remains insufficient. Although the concept has gained visibility in official documents, policy frameworks, and academic discussions, it has not yet been



fully embedded in routine teaching practice. This gap between theory and practice is largely explained by limited resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and the lack of coordinated institutional mechanisms for implementation.

For this reason, interdisciplinary integration should not remain only a theoretical construct discussed in academic writing. It must be supported through practical measures at the institutional level. Universities should provide teachers with methodological training, professional development opportunities, and access to the material resources necessary for effective interdisciplinary instruction. Curriculum designers should also create space for the systematic incorporation of civic and patriotic themes into different subjects, including foreign language teaching.

In conclusion, the study argues that patriotic education in higher education can be made more effective when approached through interdisciplinary methods. Regardless of the subject they teach, university instructors should be encouraged to adopt integrative pedagogical strategies that connect disciplinary content with civic and moral objectives. Such an approach will help prepare students not only as competent professionals but also as conscious citizens who are capable of contributing responsibly to society and preserving national values in a rapidly changing world.

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