

EDUCATION OF INTERETHNIC RELATIONS CULTURE AS A CONDITION OF SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

One of the aspects of international students' adaptation is an interaction with representatives of different cultures. In this regard, the problem of education of interethnic relations culture of international students is becoming relevant. The article discusses the education of interethnic relations culture as one of the conditions of successful adaptation of international students. It also discusses the problems of international students in the process of adaptation to the Russian University educational environment. The structure of interethnic relations culture and the success of its education in the course of Russian as a foreign language are described.

Key words: adaptation, interethnic relations culture, education, Russian as a foreign language, international students.

The recent government policy, aimed at the promotion of the Russian language and the Russian higher education in the world, has resulted in the Russian Ministry of Education priority project "The development of the export potential of the Russian educational system" that was accepted in May 30, 2017 (hereinafter – the Project). The state programs, associated with it, such as "The development of education"

(2013-2020), “The Russian language” (2016-2020), “The strategy of innovative development”, “The development of the International economic activity”, “The International policy activity” and others, are in some way related to international students enlisting in Russian universities.

The results of the Project can lead not only to the promotion of the Russian education “brand” at the international market, the improvement of the regulatory framework and educational programs attraction increase, but also to creating favorable conditions for international students training period.

Saratov State Agrarian University named after N.I. Vavilov is one of the 39 university participants in the Project Consortium, which will provide organizational and methodological support for introduction of the target model of Russian universities activity in education exporting.

It is obvious that alongside with educational services and execution of documents, educational institutions should provide assistance and support for international students in adapting to a new educational and socio-cultural environment.

The adaptation of international students to studying and living in Russia is complicated by overcoming geographical boundaries and is an important but undecided question today [1].

The concept of psychological adaptation is not often used in ethnic psychology. As a rule, in such studies we use American approaches that focus on the problems of one ethnic group entering another ethnic group’s territory [2]. At the individual level migrants’ involvement in another culture can lead either to successful adaptation or to psychosomatic disorders, deprivation, misunderstanding or denial of the values and behaviour of the local population. Such discomfort, associated with getting into a different cultural environment, was called “culture shock” by the American researcher K. Oberg [3].

In different studies it is noted that the similar phenomenon has three stages: the excitement during first days of staying is then replaced by depression, and if an

individual has a proactive attitude to life, results in a sense of confidence, satisfaction.

The researchers [4, 5] describe the adaptation of international students to the Russian University educational environment as a multifactorial process of adjustment, development and formation of a student's personality in the University education space in the complex combination and interaction of information-functional and socio-cultural conditions.

Psychophysiological, educational, socio-cultural and household factors determine the characteristic feature of adaptation of international students. However, it is difficult to determine which ones are the key factors, because they are closely interrelated.

The problems of adaptation of international students depend on the individual involvement in the new socio-cultural, educational and cognitive environment in which the structure of steady personal relations to all components of the educational process is formed. The process of adaptation of different students develops at a different rate and needs to be organized, purposeful and complex.

The main indicator of the person adaptation is an emotional state. Positive emotions that a student experiences in relationships with friends, in living conditions, when he is in good health and feels inner comfort – all these are factors of the person adaptation and indicators of effectiveness of the existing system of work with international students [6].

Common challenges for international students from developing countries in the process of adaptation are the low cultural and educational level, low academic level in core and vocational subjects, differences in forms and methods of teaching between Russian universities and universities in their countries. International students often go to Russia after graduating from a College or getting high-school education, which also complicates the process of adaptation to new conditions.

The situation of maladjustment is manifested in the rejection of norms and values of the social environment, limitation of the social circle, refusal to solve problems, depression, etc.

A combination of nationalities, customs and traditions, mentality and its peculiarities intensifies conditions of cooperative learning of international students, staying in hostels and leisure activities.

As the new environment has its own cultural characteristics, we can conclude that the adaptation of international students in Russian universities is an adaptation to the Russian culture and coexistence in multiethnic community.

In this respect, the university administrative and academic staff should provide a clear organization of the educational process in which students interact with different cultures and nationalities. The questions of education of interethnic relations culture are thus actualized in multicultural environment of Russian universities.

In his study V.K. Abelayn notes that peculiarities of interethnic relations are determined by the formation of general personal culture [7, p. 7], and the development of interethnic relations culture derives from more generalized phenomenon of “general personal culture” and communication culture in particular [7, p. 10].

Speaking about education of interethnic relations culture, M.M. Gasanov, U.A. Omarova also emphasize that interethnic communication culture depends on general communication culture of students and their ability to put human values before the national ones [8, p. 43].

Interethnic relations culture is also related to the concept of the personal culture, confirming the conclusion that in pedagogical science personality is considered in terms of its social development and social network building, which, in turn, is the basis for the formation of interethnic relations culture [9, p. 71].

So, generally speaking, the culture of interethnic relations is characterized by researchers as “a high degree of ethnic, moral, economic and other relations of different nationalities” [10, p. 20], “the system of relations between different ethnic

groups” [11, p.7]. According to Y.V. Arutunyan, the culture of interethnic relations identifies historical, political, economic and cultural tendency [12].

A.M. Bulynin and A.D. Bragina say that the factors of interethnic relations culture are important in the solution of educational tasks [13]. Researchers distinguish background, sociocultural environment, education system, personal activity as the most essential of them.

Thus, we consider the interethnic relations culture of international students as an integrative personal education, regulating interaction and relations between different nationalities in the learning process at the University. The interethnic relations culture include knowledge of peculiarities, traditions and customs of other cultures and nationalities, respect and friendly attitude towards representatives of other nationalities, non-confrontational behavior and ability to communicate at the international level, acknowledgement of nations equality, desire to develop universal moral values, ability to take personal responsibility for your actions and behavior. Together these elements help to provide effective communication and interaction with representatives of other nationalities, while maintaining their needs and interests.

Among leading indicators of interethnic relations culture researchers distinguish interethnic communication culture (N.G. Markov), the level of individual tolerance and socio-economic interests (R.G. Stolyarova), ethnic tolerance (A.M. Bulynin, A.D. Bragina, G.M. Kodzhaspirova), personal ethnic and cultural competence (G.M. Kodzhaspirova) and cross-cultural competence (O.N. Artemenko, L.I. Makadey).

Based on the scientific analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature (V.K. Abelyan, O.N. Artemenko, A.I. Bogdanova, I.A. Dadov, I.V. Zhukovskiy, Z.T. Gasanov, A.A. Korneeva, N.G. Markova, I.A. Makhrova, I.F. Kharlamov, etc.) and characteristic aspects of work with international students, we single out cognitive-intellectual, value-motivational, reflexive-active components.

Let's represent the structure of interethnic relations culture in the form of a table 1.

Table 1.

The structure of interethnic relations culture

The structure of interethnic relations culture		
Cognitive-intellectual component	Value- motivational component	Reflexive-active component
knowledge	wish, interest, beliefs	skills, abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National identities• Ways and peculiarities of intercultural communication• Rules of effective international relations• Universal rules of coexistence• Universal humanistic ethnics• Knowledge of the theory and practice challenges of international relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universal moral values• Acceptance of other nations values• Moral actions and behaviour• Respect for other nationalities• Uncompromising attitude to nationalism and racism• Unreconciled to human rights violation of people of any nationality and religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethnic tolerance• Ability to come in contact• Ability to maintain relationship• Self-esteem• Self-analysis• Self-knowledge• Identity of one's place in the multicultural society• Ability to identification, empathy, reflection and sympathy• Emotional control• Ability to evaluate any situation objectively

International students, coming from far-abroad, usually arrive in Russia without any knowledge of the Russian language and start their training with pre-university courses. During the first year of their studies in the new country, they receive academic knowledge of the Russian language and eventually they get the certificate allowing them to qualify for a professional education in Russia.

International students become at the same time accustomed to life in the new country, learn independence, coexistence with other cultures and nationalities. They often have to meet the university requirements different from the ones at schools in their home country. According to N.Y. Filimonova and A.E. Godenko, international students for the first time think of the importance of human values regardless of national, religious and cultural traditions [14].

The success of socio-cultural and academic adaptation of international students depends not only on personal traits and qualities, but also on the educational model of pre-university courses as a whole.

Every year students from more than 30 countries take a pre-university course at Saratov State Agrarian University named after N.I. Vavilov: Northern Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya), Central and Southern Africa (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Swaziland, Botswana, RSA), Central and South Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine) and other countries.

Working in the multicultural team at present we observe deformation of interethnic relations between some representatives of other countries, which is manifested in negative attitudes, rejection of the peculiarities of appearance and behavior, mentality and style of communication of other nationalities. Destructive behaviour of students is demonstrated in categorical judgments, national egocentrism, and intolerance to opinions of others. Lack of knowledge of the history and culture of different countries, national mentality, religion and traditions reinforces this tendency.

Focusing on the complex approach to the educational process and on the system-activity approach to the study of Russian as a foreign language leads to the conclusion that the combination of classroom and extracurricular activities allows to approach effectively the issue of education of interethnic relations culture.

The course of the Russian language as a combination of classroom and extracurricular activities provides the study material not only in a textbook, but in “live” and non-academic communication. Extracurricular activity is the logical conclusion of the classroom activities. Extracurricular activities are based on the Russian culture learning (visiting festive events, theatres and museums, University cinema, city libraries, etc.). At the same time the constant orientation to the culture of their native country and countries of their groupmates and to the dialogue encourages

students to exchange information with each other and maximizes the use of multicultural knowledge in the process of communication.

We present some topics of classroom and extracurricular activities in Table 2.

Table 2.

Some topics of classroom and extracurricular activities

Classroom activities, topics	Extracurricular activities
<p><i>Russia. Academic year in Russia, taking pre-university courses.</i> Vocabulary introduction and revision. <u>Grammar</u>: Verbs “to go-to come” in the past tense. Verb aspect (simultaneity or sequence of actions, past time, simple and compound sentence).</p>	<p>Songs: D. Maydanov “The flag of my State”, O. Gazmanov “Saratov”, etc.</p>
<p><i>Telling about yourself, your country, school studies.</i> Vocabulary revision. <u>Grammar</u>: Direct and indirect speech. Transferring direct speech into the indirect. Compound sentence with a subordinate clause of purpose. <u>Revision</u>. Case forms of nouns, adjectives, possessive and demonstrative pronouns, verbs of motion, verb aspects.</p>	<p>Preparing and making presentations about a native country, listening to anthems.</p>
<p><i>City, transport, places of interest, a city walk.</i> Vocabulary introduction and revision. <u>Grammar</u>: Dative case of nouns, adjectives and pronouns (direction and goal of motion). Verbs of motion.</p>	<p>Y.A. Gagarin: visiting the Place of Y.A. Gagarin’s landing on Space Exploration Day, event organizers participation in workshops. N.I. Vavilov: SSAU History Museum, watching the film about N.I. Vavilov.</p>
<p><i>Holidays in Russia, in other countries. Russian Maslenitsa.</i> Vocabulary introduction and revision. <u>Grammar</u>: Time expression: a) genitive case of ordinal numbers and nouns for indicating exact dates; b) accusative case of nouns with the preposition “in”, in word combinations: an hour ago, a week ago; c) genitive case of nouns with the preposition “before” and “after”. Verb aspects. Combinations of imperfective (process) and perfective verbs (fact).</p>	<p>Tea party at the Samovar Museum or a concert at the Saratov Harmonica Museum, outdoor festivities.</p>
<p><i>Holidays in Russia, in other countries.</i> <i>The 9th of May – Great Victory Day.</i> Vocabulary revision. <u>Revision</u>. Prepositional case for indicating time. Genitive case as a definitive. Accusative case for indicating time. Dative case in verb combinations and word combinations “monument” (to whom?).</p>	<p>Songs: “Victory Day” D.Tukhmanov/ V.Kharitonov, “Katyusha” M.Blanter / M.Isakovskiy; Victory Park and the Museum of Military and Labour Glory, films about the Great Patriotic War, city festive venues.</p>

It is advisable to start education of interethnic relations culture at the first lessons of the Russian language. This approach teaches students not only to produce information but also to receive it from others. Undoubtedly, the situation is complicated by the language barrier; however, its gradual overcoming does not guarantee the effectiveness of communication between students.

Therefore, Russian classes are supplemented by materials dedicated to various international holidays: World Day of Greetings (for example, the words “Hello”, “Hi” in different languages, welcoming gestures), Native Language Day (translations of A.S. Pushkin poems into the world's languages), “Your and my land” festival, various new year celebrations are annually included in the plan of faculty events.

Such events not only introduce students to the peculiarities of another country, but also lead to the perception and reflection of personal and national values and people relationships and convey the atmosphere of friendship of nations, explain and reveal the identity of national cultures. As a rule, the subsequent comparison in the traditions of different countries has many touch points.

Dealing with the component body of the international relations culture focuses on the sources of cultural values and facts: Russian culture, national culture (native culture, religious affiliation, etc.) and universal norms and rules. The integration of these sources into the educational process reveals a more complete picture of the international relations culture.

To sum up, based on the above we can draw the following conclusions:

a) We consider successful adaptation of international students as the process of entering, development and formation of a personality in the educational environment of the Russian University in interaction and combination of information and functional and socio-cultural conditions;

b) As the result, there occur the adaptation of international students to the Russian culture and coexistence in multinational environment of Russian universities.

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