

*Foreign Experience
Чуждестранен опит*

REALIZATION OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE ASPECT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Anzhelina A. Koriakina

North-Eastern Federal University – Yakutsk (Russia)

Abstract. The aim of the article is to determine the role of intercultural communication in the realization of multicultural education. The significance of the article lies in the qualitative research based on the method of analysis of the materials on intercultural communication and multicultural education. It is revealed that intercultural communication is a broader concept than interlingual communication and can be presented as communication of citizens of one country belonging to different ethnic groups of a multinational state. It is showed that the coexistence of various ethnic groups in one social and territorial space may lead to the rapid actualization of the problem of interethnic communication with the manifestations of ethnocentrism. It is proved that cross-cultural education of individuals and groups orients at overcoming ethnocentrism and is an important part of the concept of multicultural education as the formation of students' skills of cross-cultural awareness. It is concluded that multicultural education can be considered as culture of interethnic communication fully corresponding to the principles of intercultural interaction.

Keywords: multicultural education; intercultural communication; ethnicity; interethnic communication; cross-cultural awareness

The end of the XX – beginning of the XXI centuries were marked by such tendencies and world phenomena as globalization, mutual integration, multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, tolerance, social mobility, interpenetration of cultures, informatization and computerization. And a result of it is an era of gradual disappearance of cultural and ethnic borders.

In such circumstances, the problems of intercultural communication is becoming particularly acute. Very often preparation for intercultural communication is presented as a concept identical to teaching a foreign language. On the one hand, these concepts are inextricably linked, since the mastery of a language implies not only the knowledge of a certain set of words and grammatical rules, but also the possession of such communicative competence. On the other hand, intercultural

communicative competence includes several components. The linguistic component is certainly one of the most important, but not the only one.

Sociocultural component implies that communication in a foreign language is not just a dialogue of individuals, but as well a willingness and ability to conduct a dialogue of cultures. This component is an instrument by means of which it is possible to educate an internationally oriented person who is aware of the integrity and interdependence of the world, the need for interethnic cooperation in solving global world problems.

The social component means that a person is ready and willing to interact with other people, self-confident, and knows how to put himself in the place of another person. It is very important to form a sense of tolerance, readiness to listen and understand the point of view, different from his own.

Therefore, intercultural communication is a broader concept than interlingual communication, although these phenomena are often also presented as synonyms. Intercultural communication can also be communication of citizens of one country, fluent in its state language, but belonging, nevertheless, to different ethnic groups of a multinational state.

Over the past decades, globally, many millions of people have manifested a new outburst of ethnic identity. The aspirations of various peoples have emerged to preserve their identity, to emphasize their own ethno-cultural uniqueness. It is believed that this phenomenon affected the population of many countries on all continents, societies of various types and levels of development – from traditional to post-industrial. Initially, it even became known as the “ethnic paradox” of modern times, as it demonstrated a practical combination of seemingly inconsistent trends: globalization, the progressive unification of material and spiritual culture, the development of personal individualism; integrated ethno-cultural fragmentation and activation of ethnic self-awareness of people. Today’s social scientists are already inclined to operate with the term “ethnic revival” (“ethnic renaissance”), mainly considering the latter as one of the main features of the modern stage of human development. Another distinctive feature of it is the growing migration activity of representatives of various cultures and peoples (generated by globalization), which naturally leads to a massive increase in inter-ethnic (intercultural) contacts. According to the UN, at the beginning of the 21st century, more than 175 million different categories of migrants – immigrants, refugees, foreign workers, entrepreneurs, students and many other groups – lived outside the country of their origin, were in constant contact with representatives of other ethnic cultures. It is expected that this indicator will only increase (Yuzhanin, 2010).

It is not difficult to understand that the inevitable result of the manifestation of the above-mentioned social phenomena is the rapid actualization of the problem of interethnic communication and interaction, the coexistence of various ethnic

groups in one social and territorial space - objectively distinguishable, specific cultural, communicative and socio-psychological communities of people.

The real experience of interethnic communication in the modern world mostly does not give grounds for optimism. The manifestations of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, structural discrimination based on ethnicity, inter-ethnic tensions and open conflicts, unfortunately, remain an attribute of today's reality.

One of the most important in this connection is the problem of ethnocentrism. This is one of the most natural and at the same time contradictory characteristics of culture. Ethnocentrism is a belief in the inherent superiority of one ethnic group or culture over another; the tendency to evaluate another culture according to the norms adopted in own culture.

Thus, ethnocentrism is a mechanism of interethnic perception, which consists in the tendency to evaluate the phenomena of the surrounding world through the prism of traditions and norms of own ethnic group, considered as a universal standard, the attitude of prejudice or mistrust to extraneous norms that can exist within a social group.

It is often asserted that any description of different culture is inevitably ethnocentric, as it is in fact an imposition of its cultural and theoretical prejudices. Ethnocentrism literally means "the centrality of culture," a phenomenon in which someone's culture is seen as central and its life values, beliefs, and behavioral norms are elevated to the absolute. Naturally, the best, the right, the infallible, is the culture to which the person who makes ethnocentric judgments belongs. The norms of verbal and non-verbal behavior and standards adopted in his/her culture are considered as the only possible ones. Native culture is perceived as a matter of course, obviously superior to the cultures of other peoples, that is, ethnocentrism is associated with a sense of own cultural superiority. Ethnocentrism and its manifestations can hinder effective communication.

Ethnocentrism can manifest itself unconsciously for bearers of culture themselves: they transfer the norms of their culture to another culture in the process of intercultural communication, sincerely believing that they are obligatory for observance by all people. Ethnocentrism may not be realized or the bearers of culture may ignore its manifestations in relation to a different culture, however, representatives of the latter are sensitive to the slightest of its manifestations, as a result of which communicative failures and intercultural conflicts occur.

Therefore, there is a great need to organize the so-called cross-cultural education of individuals and groups, oriented at overcoming ethnocentrism and acquiring a complex of knowledge about customs, values, modes of communication, and norms and stereotypes of the behavior of other peoples without breaking with their own culture (Yuzhanin, 2010).

Ethno-psychological foundations of intercultural learning are realized in the concept of multicultural education, which is being formed in Russia in recent

decades and recognizing the main idea of such education fostering respect for the diversity of cultural traditions (Gasanov, 1996).

The essence of multicultural education is understood as the integration and preservation of the cultural identity of an individual in the conditions of a multinational society. Its task is to help a person to find himself in the world of culture, without interfering with the self-realization of other personalities. This task is solved through dialogue of personalities, cultures, civilizations, conducted from the standpoint of the self-worth of each.

The part of multicultural education is multi-ethnic education, which includes the study of various ethnic cultures.

Multicultural education helps to change the diversity of society into a useful factor of its development, provides a faster adaptation of a person to changing conditions of existence, helps him/her to form a more multifaceted picture of the world and choose the right strategy of behavior in the process of interethnic relations (Martynova, 2004).

From this point of view, multicultural education should be the most important component of the general preparation of a person for life in the XXI century.

An important part of the concept of multicultural education is the formation of students' skills of cross-cultural awareness, i.e. understanding the culture of others. Different aspects of the formation of cross-cultural awareness, the levels of its formation and the rationale for the need for this process in the modern educational institutions are considered in the work of R. Henvi (1994) "Achievable Global Perspective". Cross-cultural awareness is based on the understanding that diversity is an objective characteristic of world culture and the driving force of its development. R.Henvi (1994) identifies 4 levels of cross-cultural awareness. At level I, people get acquainted with surface, striking oddities. These characteristics become common stereotypes and are perceived as something exotic. This level is associated with the knowledge that is obtained from the media, movies, etc. On the levels II and III, we penetrate into the essence of the deepest features of culture, contrasting with our own. But if at the second level these features are annoying with their absurdity and dissimilarity, then at the third level they already appear in their own way justified and rational, to some extent. This level is the starting point for the formation of a positive stereotype and tolerance. Only at the level IV it is possible to perceive the culture through the eyes of its bearer. This level is difficult to achieve, but the ability of a person to change his/her psychological orientation makes it possible to achieve at least several aspects of the level IV. This is helped by the special property of a human person – the ability to see oneself in the place of another person (Henvi, 1994).

Cross-cultural awareness is called upon to cultivate empathy and transposition, respect for other people's points of view, traditions and cultures, and readiness for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Formation of cross-cultural awareness promotes

the formation of respect and interest in the cultures of other peoples, the desire to understand the most important specific and general characteristics of these cultures, the understanding of their similarity and differences. And all this fully corresponds to the principles of intercultural interaction.

The concept of multicultural education has received public and scientific recognition, although the term itself has its variations in different countries. Having different shades in the definition, the essence of the concept of multicultural education is understood as the integration and preservation of the cultural identity of an individual in the conditions of a multicultural society. In Russia, for the time being there are more theoretical than practical developments of the goals, objectives and content of multicultural education. One of the most complete concepts of multicultural education in a multicultural Russian society is the work of V.I. Matis (1997). He represents an innovative multicultural model of education as a system whose goal is not just the formation of knowledge and skills necessary in life, but also the formation of a culture of interethnic communication. In it, a bearer of national and humanistic features of his/her ethnos appreciates the characteristics of a representative of another nationality. He/she knows history, art, language, traditions of his/her ethnos, combines a sense of national pride with respect for another person, is ready to adopt all the best that is created by each nation, irreconcilably refers to all manifestations of nationalism (Matis, 1997). The emphasis in training is transferred from the practical skills to their connection with the theory based on the conceptual approaches to the formation of multicultural education. According to the author, the multicultural model of an educational institution will allow to create tolerance among representatives of different nationalities to each other, overcome national conflicts, cultivate a culture of interethnic communication, and integrate into a multinational space (Grushevitskaya et al., 2002).

When using the principles of intercultural interaction, it is important that the content of education meets the following criteria: reflection of humanistic ideas in the materials, the characteristic of unique original features of the cultures of the peoples of Russia and the world, the disclosure in the cultures of the peoples of Russia the common elements of traditions that allow them to live in peace and harmony, the familiarization of learners with world culture, the discovery of the interdependence of countries and peoples in modern conditions.

There are several ways of preparing for intercultural interaction. The used models differ in three aspects: by the method of teaching - didactic or empirical, by the content of teaching - general cultural or cultural-specific, by the field in which the main results are achieved – cognitive, emotional or behavioral. The main types of training programs in the preparation to intercultural interaction - education, orientation, instruction and training (Stefanenko, 2006).

Recently, the problem of cultural diversity and intercultural interaction in our country is covered quite widely. This is due to the growing number of cases of

intolerance and hostility towards fellow citizens - representatives of other cultures, a lack of understanding of their mentality and traditions. Due to the fact that many people are not ready for the multiethnic nature of the social environment, the problem of multicultural education is actualized.

One can assume that in modern Russia ethnic policy will most likely be determined by a policy aimed at the equality of different cultures, although the former tendencies to preserve the model of the predominance of one culture are still quite palpable. At the same time, the implementation of theoretical models into practical reality is a difficult task. A special skill requires the transformation of scientific knowledge into educational technology. It is important that any form of education primarily educate a person who has knowledge about himself/herself, about his/her “roots”, oriented to a dialogue with other people and demonstrating the commonness of the basic values of humanity.

REFERENCES

- Gasanov, Z. T. (1996). National Relations and Fostering the Culture of Interethnic Communication. *Pedagogy*, 6, 51 – 55.
- Grushevitskaya, T.G., Popkov, V.D. & Sadokhin, A.P. (2002). *Fundamentals of Intercultural Communication*. Moscow: Unity-dana.
- Henvi, R. (1994). *Achievable Global Perspective*. Ryazan: Ryazan Teacher Institute.
- Martynova, M. Yu. (2004). Multicultural Space of Russia and the Problem of Education. *Ethnographic Review*, 1, 37 – 51.
- Matis, V.I. (1997). *Problem of the National school in a Multicultural Society*. Barnaul: Barnaul Teacher Institute.
- Stefanenko, T.G. (2006). *Ethnopsychology*. Moscow: Aspect Press.
- Yuzhanin, M.A. (2010). Cross-cultural Training in the Globalizing World. *Sociology of power*, 5, 96 – 103.

✉ **Dr. Anzhelina A. Koriakina, Assoc. Prof.**

North-Eastern Federal University
Yakutsk, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Russia
E-mail: koryakina1@gmail.com