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**STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL
DIALOGUE AS A BASIS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE INTERACTION**

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Abstract

The paper sets out the case for forming students' willingness and readiness for cross-cultural dialogue in the higher education process at the present stage of societal development. The theoretical analysis resulted in relevant ideas and conceptual methodological approaches as a scientific basis for the research methodology of students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue. In the article readiness for dialogue is considered as such a kind of personal education that makes mutual constructive interaction possible without any difficulty. The paper presents the results of the empirical research applying critical incident situations, group discussions, observation, methods of "Participation in ethnic contacts", "Diagnostics of reflexivity development", "Method of unfinished sentences", tests of foreign language knowledge assessment. The data obtained during the study showed positive effect of the formative experiment carried out in the educational process. The correlation between the level of students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue and subjects' constructive interaction is revealed. The psychological and pedagogical work aimed at the effective development of students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue is presented in the article. In pursuing the study objective the common principles are identified and emphasized, their taking into account made it possible to achieve results indicating the effectiveness of the formation mechanism of students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue. The results obtained will be of use to teachers, students, professionals involved in the development of personality in the circumstances of ethnic diversification of the society.

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Keywords: Cross-cultural dialogue, intercultural interaction, students.



1. Introduction

The modern world of human relations in circumstances of ethnic societal diversification is constantly being influenced by various factors. The information space of the present-day world provides the prerequisites both positive and negative for the development of relations between people. Aggravation in intergovernmental relations and tension in them, multipolarity of human life, multi-ethnic nature of modern society, low level of ethno-cultural competence have a direct influence on the individual's readiness for cross-cultural dialogue and, as a consequence, on the constructive ethnic interaction. Especially students appear to be the most susceptible to various changes due to sensitivity of their development. At present, taking into account telecommunications, students can be actively involved in the process of cross-cultural interaction. In this regard, the most important process is the development of personal qualities implying abilities to engage in cross-cultural dialogue, to comprehend the messages, to encode and decode information taking into account the cultural differences of the population of the country and the world. Primarily, it is necessary to develop the qualities of a multicultural personality (empathy, ethno-tolerance, humanism, etc.). First and foremost, such qualities make it possible to engage in dialogue, supposing mutuality in information exchange. The development of students' ethno-cultural knowledge is of particular importance. It allows objective assessing of a communicative act and its content and predicting future interaction. Active scientific researches indicate the relevance of the scientific problem. The issue of cross-cultural dialogue as a basis for constructive interaction is considered in the following conceptual aspects of the researchers: dialogic pedagogy (Astashova, 2018), the implementation of multicultural education in the interactive educational space (Astashova, Bondyreva, & Zhuk, 2019), interethnic conflict and dialogue of cultures (Batarчук, 2012), life through the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1972, 1986), tolerance of an individual (Derkach, 2003), reflexive-dialogical interaction of an individual (Koval, 2012), socio-cultural determination (Merzlyakova, 2016), communicative competence (Millrood, 2017), language personality (Rezunova, 2016), cross-cultural communication (Shachnev, 2016), socio-cultural partnership (Yusupova, 2019), cross-cultural citizenship (Sánchez, Rodríguez, & Sanz, 2017), cross-cultural dialogue as an innovative factor (Shalaeva, 2011) and others.

The problem under study has a sufficiently large methodological basis. The matter is that the readiness for intercultural dialogue implies well-formed criteria allowing students to easily take an active part in communication with people with cultural differences. In the research the problem of intercultural dialogue in the context of interethnic interaction is considered.

2. Problem Statement

The cultural diversity of the modern world, being a factor influencing the nature of interaction, necessitates developing special conditions in the educational process, that allow forming the students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue (SRCCD), thereby creating the basis for constructive interaction (Batarчук, 2017, 2019). In the modern educational process it is necessary to create the programs and implement special psychological and pedagogical technologies, thus improving the level of SRCCD development. The important methodological conclusions are presented in the scientific works devoted to

the unity of different peoples in the educational space (Astashova & Bondyreva, 2016), the development of multicultural personality by means of folk education (Batarчук, 2011b). In the process of developing readiness for cross-cultural dialogue, it is necessary to pay attention to the content of the educative potential of the educational environment (Berezhnaya & Vyunova, 2008), and to the formation of a tolerant personality (Gurov, 2004). At the same time, the effectiveness of the formation of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue depends on the teachers' training for cross-cultural interaction of students (Lukina, 2017). The conceptual idea of pedagogical support of personality development is the most attractive (Lipsky, 2004). In the process of developing readiness for cross-cultural dialogue it is important to take notice of and take into account ethno-cultural identity (Merzlyakova & Bibarsova, 2017), the level of foreign language communicative competence (Rezunova & Ovchinnikova, 2018), ethno-cultural competence (Stefanenko & Kupavskaya, 2010), ethno-linguistic processes (Zharkynbekova, 2018). The experience and conceptual ideas available in the modern psychological and pedagogical science create the methodological basis for the solution of a scientific objective. The latter consists of finding the effective ways to develop SRCCD, providing constructive interaction.

3. Research Questions

The research objective is identified by the following research questions.

- 3.1. To develop a mechanism for forming SRCCD at higher school.
- 3.2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanism proposed with a pilot survey.

4. Purpose of the Study

To study the willingness and readiness of students for cross-cultural dialogue and to reveal the main problems. To evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanism forming the readiness for cross-cultural dialogue as the basis of constructive interaction.

In this regard, it was hypothesized that the readiness for cross-cultural dialogue contributes to the constructive interethnic contacting and interacting in the long run.

In order to achieve the research results, the following tasks were solved.

1. To determine the level of SRCCD.
2. To assess the relationship between the SRCCD level and the nature of interaction with representatives of different nationalities.

5. Research Methods

Researching SRCCD as a basis for constructive interaction, the following methods were used: interviews with critical incident situations; group discussions; observation; "Participation in ethnic contacts"; "Diagnostics of reflexivity development" by Karpov (2003); "Methods of unfinished sentences", tests of foreign language knowledge assessment, and mathematical and statistical methods to analyse and process the results obtained. The study involved 115 students (n=115). The questionnaire survey was conducted among the students of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and

Public Administration (Bryansk branch). The study was conducted in 3 stages (diagnostic, formative, resultant stages). The scientific objective of the research was carried out in the course of 4 years with full-time students from the first to the fourth year of study.

6. Findings

The analysis of the study results was based on methodological approaches to the development of a multicultural personality, being an ideal model of constructive interethnic cooperation and having the ability to cross-cultural dialogue. A multicultural personality is an individual socially and psychologically ready and capable of cross-cultural dialogue. The review of scientific literature resulted in identification of some methodological approaches, being highlighted as the main ones in the course of the theoretical analysis of the problem studied. The first one is the cultural and historical approach. According to Vygotsky (1987), learning the psyche development in relation to the personality psychology starts with understanding psychological systems as emerging and fixing in the course of ontogenesis new higher psychological functions. From that standpoint, a personality is a relatively stable psychological system of the highest integrative level. In the process of personal development the affective-demanding sphere is being formed, going through the same cultural and historical way as the cognitive processes. The system approach implicates the diversity of relations, their quality and subordination. The activity approach, making adjustments to the goals and objectives of the pedagogical process, primarily, rebuilds procedural and technological side so that a subject of an educational process becomes proficient in an integral activity, its main stages, procedure. From the point of view of the acmeological approach, a person, capable of cross-cultural dialogue, being an object of psychological and pedagogical study, is considered in this research as a product of the ethnically diversified society. The subjective approach to understanding and studying the life course of an individual as a multicultural personality and as a subject of ethnos and cross-cultural interaction is of great importance for the present study. According to the dialogical approach, the dialogue is considered as a path to self-determination and boundless communication. The system-forming concepts of the cultural approach are "culture", "humanism", "humanitarian thinking", presenting the approach as a methodology that ensures the prospectivity of modern education. The personality-oriented approach implies focusing of an educational process on individuals, taking into account their interests and tendencies, personality traits and peculiarities. The purpose of the personality-oriented paradigm of an educational process in the given study is to create pedagogical conditions for the productive SRCCD development. The axiological approach contains the ideas of the system-value orientation in education and allows emphasizing the importance of developing a student's multicultural personality in the educational system. The ideas of education and teaching on the basis of the experience gained by different peoples, ethno-pedagogy of family, clan, and tribe are taken from the ethno-pedagogic approach. In the organization of an educational process the ethno-pedagogical approach takes into consideration the specific features of the national character, perceptions and views on the essence of education. The ethno-functional approach considers the ethnic function of the elements of the human psyche (above all, relations), integrating or differentiating it with certain ethnic groups or ethnic system.

Based on these approaches, the students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue is considered as a trinity of attitude to the representatives of other nationalities on cognitive, emotional and conative components of a personality. Hence, one can say about three types of this attitude: the cognitive one is connected with the knowledge of the life of people of other nationalities, interest in their culture; the emotional one deals with content and depth of feeling, emotional experience due to the real ideas of the life of the native country outside its boundaries; the conative one is a kind of contextual, planned life strategy.

Taking into account the ideas of methodological approaches, having resulted from the theoretical analysis of scientific literature, the following empirical results were obtained in the research.

The logic of the study consisted in working with a control group (CG) of 60 students and an experimental group (EG) of 55 students. All diagnostic tools were used in accordance with the stages of the study. At the first stage (the diagnostic one) the performed diagnostics allowed identifying the levels of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue. At the second stage (the forming one) the formation mechanism of SRCCD has been carried out in the experimental group for 2 years. The control group was used to compare the results and determine the effectiveness of the mechanism proposed. The results obtained will be described in details below.

In the process of interaction with students the relevant criteria were taken into consideration in order to identify the levels of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue.

The results of the method "Participation in ethnic contacts" are the following. At this stage, the degree of current students' participation in ethnic contacts, and their focus on interaction in after years were revealed. The contact areas where the students could prove themselves were collaborative work, leisure, kinship relations, contacts frequency with relatives, language of communication, and knowledge of the native language in the family. Above and beyond, the students' readiness for dialogue in such interaction areas as heteroethnic contacts, heteroethnic and proper ethnic contacts, or just proper ethnic contacts were taken into account. The results were as follows (Table 1).

Table 01. Participation in the ethnic students' contacts

Contact Area	Participation in Ethnic Contacts	The Desired Participation in Ethnic Contacts
1. Work:		
HEC	3.5%	7.8%
HEC & PEC	34.7%	53.5%
PEC	61.8%	38.7%
2. Leisure:		
HEC	2.9%	4.5%
HEC & PEC	42.5%	68.2%
PEC	54.6%	27.3%
3. Kinship Relations:		
HEC are (available)	2.5%	7.5%

HEC are not (available)	97.5%	92.5%
4. Contacts Frequency with Relatives:		
Frequently	72.5%	80.3%
Infrequently	26.5%	19.2%
No Contacts	1.0%	0.5%
5. Foreign Language Communication Level:		
Good	3.5%	42.4%
Moderate	36.2%	16.5%
I don't know	60.3%	41.1%
6. Knowledge of the Native Language in the Family:		
I know	92.7%	98 %
I don't know	7.3%	2%

Notes: HEC – heteroethnic contacts, PEC - proper ethnic contacts

It is significant to note that among the respondents there were 93% of Russian students. This largely explains the knowledge of the native language and readiness for ethnic contacts in the future interaction. In the process of individual and group interviews, it was revealed that the willingness to participate in heteroethnic contacts is due to insufficient experience of communication and interaction with people of different nationalities. The students expressed the wish to get acquainted with the national cuisine, customs, traditions, national rituals, and way of life of representatives of different nationalities.

Further, using the method of critical incident situations, the students were offered to consider the situations presenting the conflicts in the process of cross-cultural communication. The students with a low level of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue found it difficult to determine the causes. They could not see the relation between the conflict and the nature of the interaction of the communicative subjects. The students with a high level of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue, on the contrary, would willingly to dialogue and could clearly explain the reason, connecting the conflict with a low level of ethno-cultural knowledge, awareness of people behaviour with different language practices and value systems of foreign culture.

While carrying out the diagnostics, it was noticed by the method of observation, that students with difficulties in determining the cause and effect relationships infrequently were engaged in self-reflection. They had errors in predicting further interaction of subjects of cross-cultural communication, described in the proposed situations. These results induced conducting psychological diagnostics to identify the levels of students' reflexivity development. To accomplish this, the method of "Diagnostics of reflexivity development" by A.V. Karpov was used. As a result, different levels of students' reflexivity development were revealed. The data are given in Figure 1.

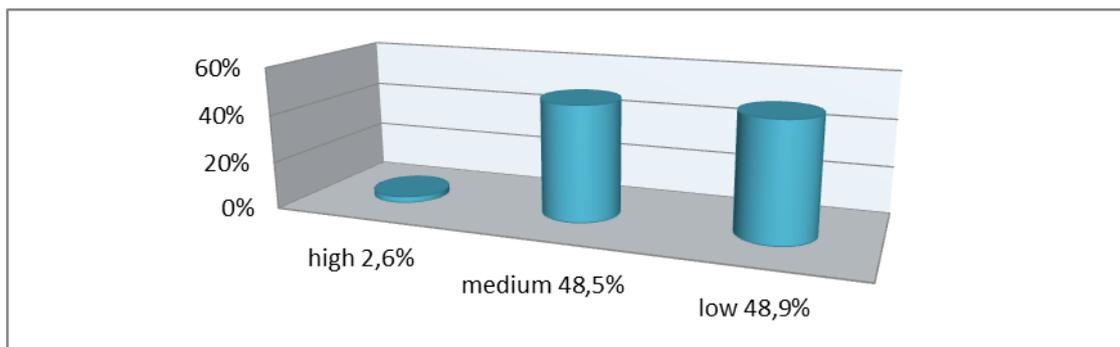


Figure 01. Levels of ethno-cultural competence of the students (n=115)

The reflection levels were as follows: low (48.9%), medium (48.5%), and high (2.6%). The levels of students' reflexivity development having been determined, the data were compared with the characteristics given by the students when analysing the conflicts in cross-cultural communication. As a result, the correlation between the level of students' reflexivity development and the difficulties encountered in objectification and analysis of the situations offered has been revealed.

Further, on the basis of ongoing observations, in the process of diagnostic interviews, group discussions, fulfilment of individual tasks, the SRCCD levels have been identified. That diagnosis was carried out with students in the first year of study (in the control and experimental groups). Attitude, knowledge, and skills were taken into account as criteria in the process of the diagnosis.

The diagnostics results of SRCCD levels are given in Figure 2.

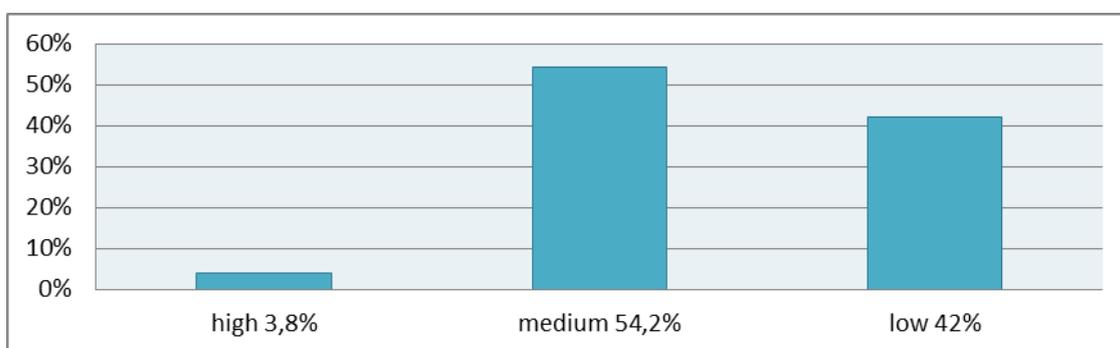


Figure 02. Levels of students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue in the diagnostic phase (n=115)

Figure 2 illustrates that there are only 3.8% of students with a high level of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue, while 54.2% are with a medium and 42% with a low level.

The characteristics of the SRCCD levels are presented below.

The low level is characterized by some negative attitude to foreign culture, by prevalence of ethnocentrism, fragmentary respect for the norms and traditions of other cultures, the low levels of empathy and tolerance, the insufficient knowledge of the universal values system. The knowledge about the differences in the structures of speech acts in native and foreign cultures are not systemic and are based on fragmentary communication with representatives of different nationalities. The ability to differentiate values when communicating with representatives of another culture, to interact with

representatives of other ethnic cultures in the practice of communication for mutual cooperation is not developed.

The medium level reflects fragmentary, ambivalent attitude to foreign language culture. Ethnocentrism is shown at the level of selectivity. The respect for norms and traditions of other cultures is connected with the frequency of communication. There is a medium level of empathy too. Besides, there is a kind of motivation for learning the cultural characteristics of different peoples. All these are fragmentary, unsystematic. The tolerant relations are selective; the ability to differentiate values when communicating with representatives of another culture is mainly associated with direct experience of interaction with representatives of ethnic cultures.

The typical characteristics of the high level are the students' willingness to be aware of the cultural characteristics of different peoples; a high level of motivation for learning a foreign language; a high level of reflection and the ability to constructive communicate with representatives of different nationalities; positive, emotional and value attitude to representatives of their own and other ethnic cultures; a high level of tolerance; the ability to build relationships and engage in dialogue on the basis of universal behavioural rules, and norms of ethnic culture; the focus on sensory perception from the perspective of the subject of communication.

The creation of an integral image of SRCCD was followed by the students' participation in the "Method of unfinished sentences", so that to clarify additional characteristics and identify factors affecting the readiness for cross-cultural dialogue. The data obtained prove the relationship between the level of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue and the nature of interaction in an ethnically diversified society. Based on the findings of the earlier studies, ethnic diversification of a society is considered to create the conditions in which readiness for cross-cultural dialogue is necessary (Batarчук, 2011a). The key unfinished sentences were the following: "While communicating with representatives of other ethnic cultures I feel...", "My knowledge about the features of different ethnic cultures allows me...", "Being among representatives of different ethnic cultures, I...", "What I prefer in cross-cultural communication is...", "Due to my knowledge of a foreign language I ..." and other questions of this type. As a result, students noted that "anxiety", "misunderstanding", "imperfect command of English", "peculiarities of thinking" and others are the basic obstacles in the process of cross-cultural communication. The students assigned to referred to the group with a high level of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue, noted that the knowledge of ethnic and cultural background, traditions, rituals, norms, customs, national character, foreign language skills allow engaging in cross-cultural dialogue with confidence and cognitive activity. For instance, one of the students gave his point of view that "before cross-cultural communication it is significant to know whom you interact with and who is "in front of you", what cultural background is characteristic of the person".

After having determined the levels and content characteristics of SRCCD, the formative stage of the experiment took place with the students of the second and third year (the limited survey sample of the experimental group is n=55). The formative experiment included special psychological and pedagogical work, creating conditions for the successful SRCCD formation.

The formation of readiness for cross-cultural dialogue in the educational process is considered through the designing and functioning of an integral pedagogical situation, consisting of particular pedagogical situations.

The pedagogical situation is regarded as a part of an educational process, which includes its integral characteristics, being the result of interrelationship and interaction of all its components (objectives, content, forms, methods, relations, requirements, etc.).

The scope of using pedagogical situations in the process of forming SRCCD is diverse. An educator (teacher), managing an educational process, specially designs, creates, selects pedagogical situations, having defined tasks to be solved. Using really existing situations, the teacher puts students in the positions of an object and subject of education in order to achieve their active participation in specific pedagogical situations, stimulates the display of states of a student's personality adequate to the qualities being formed; the teacher optimizes the process of education (formation, development), creates, selects pedagogically valuable situations.

It is necessary to design integral pedagogical situations to form the readiness for cross-cultural dialogue, which are comprised of private pedagogical situations aimed at actualization of the readiness for dialogue of subjects of an educational process, and stimulation of the formed multicultural personal qualities and properties.

It is advisable to apply pedagogical situations encouraging students to cross-cultural dialogue. The pedagogical situations ("We live in dialogue", "Interethnic communication unites us", "I am in the position of another", "I am a participant of a dialogue", "Our power is in dialogue", "You and I, We together are friends", "In the rhythm of dialogue", etc.) are designed to develop the ability and readiness for interethnic communication based on ethical and legal norms and rules, to cross-cultural dialogue, respect, empathy; to form adequate behavioural reactions based on understanding of ethnic diversity of the modern world.

These pedagogical situations contribute to the manifestation of ethno-tolerant relations; motivate students to find ways of constructive cross-cultural dialogue, to establish international contacts and to interact on the principles of peace, respect and recognition.

The tools used were the following: special trainings aimed at ensuring the readiness for constructive interethnic interaction, at developing the capacity for self-knowledge and self-reflection, at improving social sensitivity, trust, empathic abilities; as well as, role-playing games and tasks to develop the skills of interethnic communication and to avoid social and psychological tension in cross-cultural dialogue; festive celebrations with the participation of representatives of different nationalities were used as tools.

If any difficulties arise, the decision situations were used as pedagogical encouragement and students' activation in the trainings. The decision situation is considered as a certain system of coherent direct, immediate orientations of students to the social expectations of the participants of a dialogue, norms of public life and mediate internal orientations of an individual (his/her interests, positions, aspirations, and needs) in conformity with a sufficient guideline of the capabilities freely, without the help of others, to successfully get out of the situation, having got satisfied with cross-cultural dialogue.

Decision situations help students to undergo a multiple-choice, systematic analysis of cross-cultural dialogue.

Such pedagogical situations imposed the corresponding requirements to the student's personality, encouraged him to analyse a wide range of social phenomena, the system of knowledge about cross-cultural dialogue. They were effective to comprehend common cultural values, to coordinate motives, and effective ways out of the current situation of cross-cultural dialogue; to actualize the emotional-volitional, cognitive, moral and creative spheres. The decision situations stimulated students to personal reflection relating to the problem of cross-cultural dialogue and relations.

At the stage those pedagogical situations were used in the educational process that contributed to developing students' reflection and consolidated the formed constructive guidelines of interethnic relations in a dialogue. They are "Am I ready for a dialogue with representatives of other nationalities?"; "Do I have a culture of interethnic communication?" etc.).

The reflection is regarded as students' ability to analyse their activity, acts, and motives and correlate them with the activity, acts, motives of the participants in cross-cultural dialogue, with universal values.

In the context of realization of pedagogical situations there were questions that initiated free statements of the students after certain classes, events. The feedback reflected the students' opinions, their experiences, and impressions. The students answered in the written form the following questions: "Why is it necessary to promote readiness for cross-cultural dialogue?", "Do you agree with the statement that in your region there are all conditions for the organization of a constructive cross-cultural dialogue?", "What difficulties can people encounter in the process of forming readiness for dialogue in a multi-ethnic environment?". Besides they took part in trainings enabling the interaction of representatives of different nationalities.

During such trainings, at designing or selecting such situations, the mutual stereotypes, differences in role expectations, customs, traditions, etc., were taken in mind. The situations of the kind demanded from the educator (teacher) and students a great deal of preliminary preparation and prognosis of mutual influence and tension that sometimes arose during the discussion. The interviews with the "critical incidents" were used as a kind of psychological and pedagogical means. The students were asked to recall events in which something happened that positively or negatively changed their opinion sharply about the representatives of other nationalities and influenced their relationship on ethnic grounds. Then the analysis of various actions of people in the process of cross-cultural dialogue took place. There were some specific examples with subsequent questions: "How would you do in such a situation?", "What ways for constructive cross-cultural dialogue could you offer?». The special psychological and pedagogical trainings were aimed at motivating the students to reflect before or after doing something related to the problem of dialogue in today's multi-ethnic world. In the situations there were relevant questions: "Why did I do that?", "What do I feel after committing this act?", "What does a person feels whom I treated so?", "Why couldn't I find a way out of this situation?" etc.

It should be noted that an integral pedagogical situation acted as a mechanism of developing SRCCD. At its designing it is extremely necessary to take into account the stadiality of the development of a multicultural personality (from positive ethnic self-identification to the youth's ability of personal

reflection and introspection in connection with the self-determination of the individual in the multinational space of Russia and the world).

In the process of the formative experiment the pedagogical work during the students' learning a foreign language was of particular significance. It is important to note that a foreign language is mastered through communication, rebuilding the content and cognitive processes related to it. Content and language integrated learning allowed realizing the key objective of learning a foreign language. It contributed to the development of practical skills in the situations of everyday communication, taking into account linguistic and cultural aspects, mastering the general language, educational and professional communicative competencies.

The main stage was followed by the diagnosis of the SRCCD levels in the fourth year of study. The data obtained indicate some positive dynamics (Table 2).

Table 02. Level dynamics of students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue (CG=60 students, EG=55 students)

Level	Diagnostic Stage		Resultant Stage	
	CG	EG	CG	EG
High	3.6%	4%	6.5%	23.5%
Medium	55.4%	53%	57%	68.7%
Low	43%	41%	36.5%	7.8%

CG – control group, EG – experimental group.

The findings of the study presented positive dynamics in changing the quality SRCCD characteristics in terms of ethnic diversification of the society. The mechanism of SRCCD development in the formative experiment was effective.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the data obtained resulted in the conclusion that the students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue is an integrative education, including a system of criteria, the basic ones being the readiness to participate in ethnic contacts, the level of tolerance, motivation to learn different ethnic cultures, and the reflection level. The special psychological and pedagogical work for 4 years has been effective. In the process of students' diagnostic examination and on implementing the mechanism of developing SRCCD, the following common principles were identified. The SRCCD formation in an educational process is the most effective when personal attitudes to constructive interethnic interaction are formed as a result of collaboration and interethnic communication; when it is going on in the process of socialization over the life course, being a dynamic progressive personality education. It is the most effective if an educational process is focused on creating conditions for the formation of the students' subjective position "I am a citizen of the world", a special environment in which the students become subjects of interethnic interaction and knowledge. In the educational process it is carried out more effectively, when the interaction of subjects of interethnic communication is based on dialogue with deep understanding of the national diversity of the world, the real environment, the formation of ethno-

tolerance and respect. Taking into account such principles as orientation on personality, tolerant communication, consideration of individual psychological student-age characteristics, culture conformity, nationality, intergenerational continuity, and mutual respect allowed having achieved the research objective.

The main conclusion drawn is that the students' readiness for cross-cultural dialogue in the conditions of ethnic diversification of the society is a kind of necessary personal education. It provides constructive interaction of subjects, forms value and semantic guidelines on respect and understanding attitude, motivation for developing their own multicultural competence.

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