

WUT 2020
10th International Conference “Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects”

**MULTICULTURAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT OF
COLLECTIVE IDENTITY OF STUDENTS**

Elena Tareva (a)*, Ilya Maksimkin (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Moscow City University, 4-1, 2nd Selskokhoziastvenny Proezd, Moscow, Russia, TarevaEG@mgpu.ru
(b) Moscow City University, 4-1, 2nd Selskokhoziastvenny Proezd, Moscow, Russia, maksimkinia@mgpu.ru

Abstract

The article raises the question of considering a multicultural approach as a tool for forming the identity of foreign language learners. A multicultural approach is one of the widely discussed strategies for language education, interest in which is shown both in Russia and abroad. This approach is studied as a leading trend in preparing university graduates for participation in intercultural communication, when both participants in the dialogue understand each other based on a comparison of their worldviews, values, lifestyle, and national mentality. The question is raised of expanding the interpretation and scope of the multicultural approach as a strategy for influencing students' personality. A multicultural approach is included in the paradigm of culturally-oriented approaches to teaching foreign languages. The role of the principle of cultural reflection, which provides perception and understanding by students of related social spaces, united by one language (by the example of the Francophonie community), is proved. The authors demonstrate how the goals of shaping the cultural identity of students by extrapolating the “integrated cultural image” into the system of their own ideas about the countries of the Russian world can be achieved. The potential of the Francophonie factor is presented in the aspect of teaching foreign languages. The authors outline ways to implement a multicultural approach in relation to teaching students of linguistic universities.

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Keywords: Multicultural approach, national identity, supranational (collective) identity, Francophonie, Russian world.



1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, intercultural contacts increase significantly, people from different countries find themselves in a single information space. The Internet has leveled the chances of propagation spreading languages and cultures; the attractiveness of the latter depends not so much on military, economic or political power, but mainly on the quality and effectiveness of the implementation of intercultural communication, the main tool for the realization of which is a foreign language. At the same time, it is not enough to learn it, focusing on the linguistic and sociocultural characteristics inherent for *one* country only. It is necessary to comprehend significantly larger geopolitical spaces, the wide context of language functioning throughout the area of its existence, and making comparisons with the native reality for students, as well as understanding of the position (status) of the native language in the world community. Only in this case, the process of globalization will not lead to cultural expansion, blurring of cultural boundaries, to the effect of stereotyping, cultural syncretism, assimilation (for more about these negative features (Tareva, 2017).

The process of familiarizing students with cultural diversity is gaining particular importance in recent times, marked by a reverse trend with respect to globalization, called deglobalization or neoglobalization. The absolute dominance of one culture, which was spread by means of the English language, functioning as a lingua franca, is becoming a thing of the past. The period of intensive (sometimes painful) search for cultural self-determination (cultural identification) for large and small linguistic communities has come. We regret to note that sometimes this kind of search leads to a distortion of historical facts in order to exaggerate the national-cultural specificity of a state that painfully defends its “identity” in the world of incredible cultural diversity and cataclysms that inevitably arise in the other period of the struggle for world domination (Zheltukhina, Vikulova, Serebrennikova, Gerasimova, & Borbotko, 2016).

That’s why today they write a lot about the features of national identity of representatives of different countries: Germany and Russia (Siddi, 2017), Korea (Bukh, 2016). There are studies in which national identity is considered in conjunction with such concepts as occupation, migration, immigration, provocation (Grigoryan & Ponizovskiy, 2018; Maxwell, 2016; Pavlyshyn, 2016; Schmidt & Quandt, 2018).

In this difficult time, the importance of a person’s cultural self-identity is growing, by which (self-identity) is understood as “a person’s choice of his own position in culture, life, society based on certain values” (Gornostaeva, 2015, p. 3). This is “self-awareness as an individual with certain cultural characteristics in the environment of the surrounding cultural diversity” (Milrud, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, cultural identity is diverse and multifaceted, its types are diverse. So, we can define regional, national, supranational (collective) identity. It is necessary that a person does not lose his native culture and can freely navigate in a different picture of the world represented by means of a foreign language, act as a *mediator* between various linguistic communities, while realizing his responsibility for global human processes. As Milrud (2016) writes, cultural self-determination is an important psychological condition necessary for feeling in a native culture as an “absolute owner”, and in a foreign culture as a “welcome guest” (p. 3).

In difficult times of fundamental geopolitical transformations, it is important to choose the right approach in *foreign language education*, which would contribute to the process of finding a person's

meaning of life in the conditions of dialogue of cultures that is free and independent of any preferences and trends. At present, in linguodidactics there are many *culture-oriented approaches* that can, in the process of targeted teaching of a foreign language, direct a personality, orient him in a situation of mixed cultures and attitudes towards the dominance of sociocultural values. Russian tradition provides a wide selection of approaches that do not compete but complement each other, setting their own priorities in determining a person's place in culture and the role of a foreign language in this process. Among these approaches, a multicultural approach is given a special role.

2. Problem Statement

Multicultural education is traditionally regarded as a research area, “the focus of which is an adequate representation of material on different cultures and cultural groups in the content of Courses on social and humanitarian disciplines” (Sysoev, 2006, p. 3). As a result, multicultural *linguistic* education is aimed at expanding the socio-cultural space of students, it helps them to see themselves as equal representatives of the world community, united by common interests, problems and solutions, while at the same time narrowing their socio-cultural space, contrasting themselves with “others”. Multicultural linguistic education should contribute to the formation of planetary thinking – “the ability of students to see their involvement, their place, responsibility and role in global human problems” (Sysoev, 2006, p. 3). It is significant that the multicultural orientation of teaching foreign languages is considered as a continuation of the socio-cultural approach, which, according to V.V. Safonova, allowed to draw attention to the possibility of teaching cultures of various ethnic, social, religious, and other groups in the countries of the languages studied (ibid., n.d.).

A new educational ideology focused on the multitude and equality (even nominal) of cultures should ensure the breadth of the multicultural space of the student, which is built on the principle of an expanding spiral. According to this principle, a person follows the path of understanding the cultural characteristics of his native city, more broadly - the region, country and, finally, the whole world. It is during the immersion at various turns of the “spiral” in culturally variable diversity that a person forms / develops his own cultural identity.

In the process of preparing for the dialogue of cultures, while mastering a foreign language, a person finds himself in a situation of intersection of two spirals, representing variants of cultural data characteristic of not only native, but also foreign reality. Understanding in such conditions the diversity of other cultures, translated in one foreign language, begins to activate the cognitive processes of the student, who voluntarily or involuntarily compares the options of cultures at the levels of cities, regions, and the whole country: native and the studied language.

These processes were taken into account by Sysoev (2006) when substantiating the significance of the *principle of cultural reflection*, which requires students to be aware of their culture, their place in the spectrum of studied cultures, comprehending universal values, understanding themselves as the subject of a dialogue of cultures with multi-group affiliation. (p. 9). It is significant that this principle applies to processes related to the awareness of the variability of cultures of the native country, region, settlement, etc., which gives the student the idea of cultural diversity as a norm of coexistence and mutual development of cultures in modern multicultural communities of the native and studied languages. Only

in this case, students will be able to understand that it is impossible to relate to the native culture in such a way that it fulfills an auxiliary function, becoming a means, not a learning goal, a tool that facilitates the process of entering another cultural dimension.

3. Research Questions

How to ensure the functioning of cultural reflection and how to develop students' cultural identity during this process are the research questions posed by the authors.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to substantiate the need to influence the personality of students in order to form their cultural identity based on the linguodidactic potential of the “*Francophonie factor*”, which demonstrates to students the pattern of the existence of a supranational community united by the French language.

5. Research Methods

The study is based on the use of the following methods: logical and system analysis, theoretical analysis, the selection of sources, the study and analysis of literature, conceptual analysis, comparative analysis, content analysis, synthesis, systematization and classification of information, the formulation of conclusions and their testing at scientific conferences.

6. Findings

A communicatively valuable *culturally variable educational context*, serves as a linguodidactics means, which triggers the cognitive activity and forms the basics for the development of learners' cultural identity. In this context we see the intersection of many cultures and “the equality of dialogically interacting cultural data, that complement each other, do not exaggerate the merits of one culture to the detriment of another” (Tareva, 2016, p. 97). It is this intersection that is the main condition for applying a multicultural approach and immersing the student in a situation of active cultural reflection when facing other values. The student through dialogue determines the levels of his cultural identity – regional, national and supranational.

Communicatively valuable culturally variable educational context involves the actualization by students of a range of knowledge and skills that contribute to:

- understanding of different groups of the country of the language being studied;
- understanding of their own cultural self-determination;
- awareness of the self-determination of participants in intercultural communication;
- willingness to change their own cultural self-determination under the influence of diverse factors of intercultural dialogue.

Creating a communicative-value culturally variable educational context involves introducing students to various social groups of a *supranational community*. A supranational community is

recognized, for example, by Eurasianism, which unites diverse sociocultural communities and serves as a counterweight to ethno-nationalism. One of the indicative examples of a supranational community is *Francophonie (la Francophonie)*. It is no coincidence that J.-P. Kuck sees it as an “alternative vision of the world” in the age of globalization (cited in (Zagryazkina, 2019, p. 151).

The term "Francophonie" refers to various realities according to the sphere of interests of the authors who interpret it. In recent times, researchers from different countries write a lot about national identity (Edwards, Hogarth, & King, 2018; Jouve, 2018; Tomski, 2018). The following approaches to the interpretation of Francophonie as a phenomenon can be distinguished as follows:

- geopolitical (colonial, colonial-paternalistic) approach: Francophonie is a community of territories and economies of the metropolis and its colonies (O. Reclus);
- geographical approach: Francophonie - the territories in the world where the French language has the status of a native, state, foreign language, a language of international communication and serves to complement cultures;
- a civilizational approach based on the idea of mutual complementation of cultures (the idea of “universal civilization” according to L.-S. Sengor);
- a value approach based on spiritual unity: Francophonie - a union of people with the sense of belonging to a single community, united by the French language as an instrument of communication;
- pragmatic approach: Francophonie involves a set of actions to promote the French language and values, which the latter translates;
- institutional approach: Francophonie is the political activities of a special organization, which includes permanent members and observers.

Nowadays, Francophonie as a phenomenon has a multifunctional purpose. In an effort to maintain its ability to influence (which was originally laid down in this concept), Francophonie is an instrument of solidarity, cultural diplomacy, an element of “soft power”. It preserves the diversity of cultures articulated by the French language, but differing substantially in accordance with the conceptual sphere of a particular country (for example, the cultures of France and Vietnam, Madagascar).

The Francophonie factor in the linguistic educational context can play a crucial role. On the example of francophone countries, it becomes possible purposefully, during a specially modeled process, to teach students:

- perceive and interpret the multicultural realities of French speakers living in different countries;
- critically assess the multicultural realities inherent in representatives of various linguistic communities with the titular French language, compare realities, identify the common value core inherent in representatives of all communities, and at the same time determine the distinctive characteristics of the national mentality that represent the characteristics of a particular national identity;
- reveal the essence and specificity of supranational (collective) francophone identity and at the same time the cultural identity of francophones from different countries;
- embed the multicultural realities of the francophone world in their own system of values, determine strategies for verbal behavior in various situations of multicultural interaction with representatives of the francophone world characterized by vivid specificity of national identity.

As an example of an object that can be used for complex, versatile and multivector multicultural analysis, we can take the lexeme *Patrie* 'Motherland', which nominates the corresponding concept in the French and Canadian concept spheres. The study by Kholkina (2013) proves the mismatch of the emotional and value attitudes of the speakers of different variants of the French language. If in France the concept of *Patrie* at different times (which, however, is preserved in the semantics of the word until now) was associated with the concepts of "honor", "mother earth", "love", "nation", then in Canadian French this concept has different value dominants. The idea of this concept is connected both with the idea of separation, and with the idea of connection and/or accession to the cultural environment of France; English speaking environment; elements of autochthonous cultures. In addition, one can see an evident politicization of the concept of *Patrie* in the French language of France and its depolitization in the French language of Canada. At the same time, the concept retains the general connotation inherent in both linguistic cultures: in France and Canada, as well as dominance of a strong emotionally intense feeling in relation to one's native land.

The disclosure of the emotional-value content of this lexeme at the French language lessons will allow the student to understand the diversity of the world, the differences in the value orientations of different peoples, the values that underlie national identity, as well as identify the community that unites representatives of the Francophone world, making them owners of a single supranational (collective) identity. This kind of work on the analysis of lexical units that objectify the concepts characteristic for francophone countries can be organized and carried out in the course of Project design, during analysis of cases on multicultural issues, in the process of solving problems that represent the national and supranational specifics of the worldview of representatives of countries with one title language.

The example of Francophonie as a collective community is extended to other linguistic communities. In particular, such structures as Hispanidad, a community of Spanish-speaking countries, the Commonwealth of Portuguese-speaking countries, are well known for their active position. (It seems that a separate object for research could be the reason for the creation and maintenance of those supranational organizations that are united precisely by Roman languages).

In relation to native speakers of the Russian language, such a supranational organization is "Russian World" in the cultural and civilizational sense of the corresponding idea and the desire to maintain common and / or close value priorities among communities united by the Russian language and connected historically with Russian and, more broadly, Slavic culture. The Russian language has recently undergone changes in its status, remaining in its different status, still widely in demand around the world. There are studies in which the values common to the countries of Slavic civilization are revealed. (Podvoiskaya, 2015) These include, in particular, the concepts of "soul," "faith," "external enemy," and others.

While mastering the French language and immersing in the polychrome world of national and supranational Francophone values, the student is able to measure his personal life space, determine the values that form the Russian and / or Slavic identity, in which both common collective and distinct national values are widely represented. Thus, the student, getting acquainted with the specifics of francophone identity in a holistic palette of its national and supranational ideas, gets the opportunity to

realize his involvement in the Russian world, collective identity, measure his “Selfness” at different levels of formation and development of his cultural self-determination.

7. Conclusion

The process of teaching a foreign language from a purely utilitarian and instrumental has been transformed into a valuable one, aimed at developing the traits and characteristics of learner’s personality that are important for life in a multicultural world. It is the subject “foreign language” that becomes the communicatively valuable culturally variable educational context within which understanding of national and supranational identities of the speakers of a foreign language comes along with national and collective self-determination.

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