Norms and Values Characteristics of Students in a Foreign Cultural Environment

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Abstract: The article presents empirical research data of cultural norms and values. Students of Kazan federal university took part in the research. The aim of the research was to reveal comparative data about cultural indexes (norms and values) of foreign students for whom Russia is a foreign cultural context. To achieve the purposes there were used methods known in social sciences: S. Schwarz and G.Triandis methods. Comparative data were received for students from China and Turkic speaking countries in comparison with Russian students presenting the culture of the host stay country. The results of study allow to state that learning in a foreign culture environment save differences of norms and values. It speaks for acculturization in a students’ environment along the lines of integration when each group keeps and saves its own culture and at the same time tends to maintain contacts with the representatives of different culture. The factor analysis revealed tendencies concerning norms adopted in cultures of considered groups. Norms in contrast to values distinguish one group from another. Comparison of cultural values exposed that along with existing differences there are common value estimations. Thus, all three different ethno-cultural student groups ranking showed that safety is a dominant value. On the whole, the research found out that acculturization during the period of study in a foreign culture environment keeps differences of norms and values to a greater extent.

Key words: Norms %Comparative data %Foreign culture %Dominant value

INTRODUCTION

Last years are marked by increase in university teachers’ and students’ mobility. Processes of students’ foreign education are developing rapidly. Due to theses tendencies, there arise psychological issues to study learners’ adaptation in a foreign cultural environment. Research of norms and values appear to become important as they are the most significant psychological attributes of social adaptation. Therefore, issues of successful cross-cultural communication, tolerance, adequate cultural sensitivity, inter-cultural competency formation and development are coming to be more crucial.

Urgency of norms and values investigation in a foreign cultural environment is reinforced by a phenomena described by a famous researcher in the field of cultural psychology H.Triandis [1]. He emphasizes that cultures are similar and different at the same time that, on the one hand, provides an individual with the opportunity to adapt to another culture, on the other hand difficulties of this process come into being when an individual faces other norms and values in a foreign environment. Berry D. described four ways of culture interaction: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. People strive to save or not to save their cultural identification and to interact or not interact with another culture. Integration is defined as such a type of acculturization when each group supports and saves its own culture and at the same time tends to keep up contacts with representatives of another culture. Assimilation takes place when a group does not maintain its cultural traditions but it keeps up contacts with another culture. Separation of cultures happens when a group maintains its own culture but does not tend to keep up contacts with another culture. And, finally, marginalization occurs in cases when representatives of a cultural group do not strive to save either the culture of their own group or to keep in touch with another cultural group. Berry submitted data arguing for the fact that integration is the most positive variant for cultural groups which is accompanied by the process of mutual assimilation as far as mental health is concerned [2]. We assume that in a situation when a student studies in a foreign country, i.e. in a foreign cultural environment, integration is more characteristic for them as a type of
cross-cultural interaction when values and norms of their culture are kept and reflected in differences when compared with the culture of a host stay country.

The argument that a person interacting with culture is an active subject is meaningful for us. First of all, he interacts with norms as structural elements of culture. Therefore, an individual does not only interact with culture but appears to be in a standard situation. Pursuant to this argument, psychological study of culture should proceed from the research of its standard constituent. L.S. Vygotsky’s [3] cultural-historical theory about cultural determination of psyche makes the methodological basis of the research. The theoretical basis of the research is N.E. Veraksa’s [4] statement about culture as a system of standard situations and the concept of cultural subject’s psychology where cultural subject is an individual interacting with culture as a system of standard situations, consciously reflecting them and acting in compliance with cultural norms of behavior, communication and activity [5-7]. A standard situation is regarded as a situation with a predetermined task.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The following supposition is put forward as the hypothesis of the research: in the context of foreign cultural environment foreign students keep up peculiarities of their own cultural norms and values that is revealed in intergroup differences at different ethno-cultural group comparison.

Students of Kazan federal university aged between 19 to 23 participated in the research. They made up the following groups: a group of Russian students, a group of Chinese students and a Turkic language speaking group of students from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The initial condition for respondents’ recruitment was the availability of positive ethnical identity. This parameter of group formation for the research was carried out on the basis of G.U. Soldatova’s procedure [8]; to determine cultural values S.Schwarz procedure adapted by V.N. Karandashev [9] was applied; to determine norm preferences H.Triandis’s [10] procedure was used.

According to H.Triandis, cultures vary in types of relationship in compliance with the rules that these cultures approve. We considered 33 rules of interaction that H.Triandis identified empirically working out the procedure of revealing norms in culture [10]. The results of the answers were processed on the basis of factor analysis. Statements according to H.Triandis’s procedure are given with factor loading values for each investigated student groups.

On the basis of this analysis there were developed three factors in the group of Russian students. They are defined as “public autonomy”, “intimacy”, “recognition”.

“Public autonomy” implies undisguised support of formal relationship in accordance with stereotyped rules of social interaction with keeping the control and internality of intentions and goals, self-reliance:

- C Benevolence and hospitality should be displayed, postcards should be sent, presents should be given (0.63);
- C One should invite another person for celebrations (0.79);
- C One should not discuss their financial matters with another person (0.08);
- C One should not ask other people for financial help (0.67);
- C One should not discuss other people’s secrets (0.7);
- C One should not criticize another person in public (0.64).

“Intimacy” means close relationships with a limited circle of people. According to this group of rules it is allowed to:

- C Reveal one’s feelings towards a beloved individual in the presence of other people (0.73);
- C Touch a close person deliberately (0.67);
- C Ask for advice of private character (0.68);
- C Discuss matters of sex and death (0.7);
- C Pay visits without an invitation and preliminary agreement (-0.64);
- C Look into interlocutor’s eyes while speaking (0.64).

“Recognition” is a respectful attitude to another person, recognition of individual’s merits. It suggests that another person should not be hurt either physically or morally on purpose:

- C One should address other people by name (0.82);
- C One should not laugh at or tease another person (0.79);
- C One should not make another person experience strain (0.87).
Thus, the specified norms for Russian students are as follows: recognizing individuals’ merits and respecting another person one should observe formality, autonomy, independence of public relations, intimacy of communication with close people. All mentioned features mark distinct differentiations of respondents’ social interaction (“ours” and “strangers”). In respect to this differentiation there are established reasonable frames of social contacts distance.

The results of factor analysis in the group of Chinese students revealed the following issues: “recognition”, “financial independence”, “group interaction harmony maintenance”.

“Recognition” is a respectful attitude to another person, recognition of individual’s merits. It comprises the following set of standard directions:

C Not to use strong language in the presence of another person (0.82);
C Not to laugh at or tease another person (0.76);
C To respect private life and personal secrets of another person (0.73).

“Financial independence” - need for financial self-dependence:

C It is possible to discuss personal financial matters with another person (0.79);
C One should not ask other people for material aid (0.83).

“Maintaining of group relationships harmony” - aspiration for creation of the benevolent atmosphere:

C One should shake hands meeting another person (0.79);
C One should repay debts, thank for the support and compliments no matter how slight they are (0.7);
C One should inform another person about his work schedule, plans, etc. (0.73);
C One should not carry on a conversation with another person on matters of faith and policy (0.73).

Therefore, for the Chinese respect for another person, maintaining of group relationship harmony, aspiration to thank for the minimum service, support, the desire for financial independence from others are characteristic features.

In the Turkic language speaking group the following factors were revealed: "restraint", "ethics" and "confidentiality".

“Restraint” was defined in its factorial completeness by the following positions:

C One should not disclose feelings and private problems to another person (0.81);
C Should not show feelings to a beloved person in the presence of other people (0.89);
C One should not touch purposely another person (0.81);
C It is improper to get into sexual relations with another person for the sake of pleasure (0.82);
C One should not criticize another person in public (0.89);
C One should not make fun of or tease another person (0.86).

"Ethics" as a factor reflects observation of certain principles at interaction with other people featured in the following statements with the indication of their factor weight:

C Not to use a strong language in the presence of another person (0.87);
C Not to show anger to another person (0.76);
C Strive to present themselves to another person in the best possible light (-0.75);
C While communicating with others it is necessary to support an emotional spirit of conversation (0.87).

The factor “confidentiality” orders to respect private life and personal secrets of another person (0.86);

C Look into interlocutor’s eyes while speaking(0.91);
C Not to discuss with other people what has been told you in confidence (0.83);
C Not to speak to another person about faith and policy (0.75).

RESULTS

Thus, the Turkic language speaking group is characterized by emotional reserve, observation of ethical principles in the process of interaction with other people, respect for other people’s secrets, reliability. Factors revealed by the research of the Turkic language speaking group preferences reflect common tendencies of
social-psychological characteristics appropriate for the representatives of oriental culture which is thought to be collectivist.

The analysis of cultural values exposed that in the group of Russian students according to the averaged scores the most significant values are such ones as thought and performance independence; safety (stability of the society, relationships and people themselves); achievements and kindness. The determining goal of these basic values is independence, individuality, personal success on the basis of stable relationship and national security.

According to averaged scores in the group of Chinese students, the most meaningful values are safety, kindness, stimulation and universalism. The values determine that tendency which is connected with a stable safe society, successful interaction with people around, endeavor for novelty and deep emotions, observation of tolerance and protection of all people and nature.

The analysis of cultural values showed that conformity, tradition, safety and achievements are the most significant values. The determining aim of these types is to control actions and incentives that can hurt others and do not correspond to social expectations, observation of customs and ideas and culture, striving to a safe society and harmonious relationship and after achieving these conditions their desire to succeed through competency.

The comparative analysis of cultural values in three groups showed that differences between the Russian group and foreign students exist. We paid attention to ranking of values and found out that in all three groups the significant value is "Safety". The motivational goal of this type is safety for other people and ourselves, harmony, stability of society and relationship. It is derived from the basic individual and group needs. According to S.Schwarz, there is one generalized type of value safety (instead of two separate ones - for a group and individual level). It is connected with the fact that values relating to collective security substantially express the purpose of safety for the personality as well (a social order, family safety, a homeland security, mutual sympathy, cooperativeness, purity, sense of belonging, health) [11-14].

The significance of this value, in our opinion, is explained by instability of international relations, manifestations of extremism and terrorism, dictatorship of cumulative economic, political, military power of few leading countries, increase in number of socially-dangerous groups and individuals responsible for the growing number of victims (including skinheads, nazis, etc.).

In all three groups an absolutely insignificant value is "Power". The central goal of these values consists in the achievement of the social status or prestige, control or domination over people and means (authority, wealth, social power, preservation of public image, public recognition). “Power” values (authority, wealth) emphasize achievement or preservation of a dominant position within the whole social system.

This position in combination with prevalence in all cultural groups of positive ethnic identity, can testify to peacefulness, pacifism, tolerance and respect as for oneself, the group and for other culture, other groups of people.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the results of our research showed tendencies characteristic for student's groups belonging to different cultures. These tendencies are connected, first of all, with the differences approving resistance to assimilation in the foreign cultural environment. For example, the Russian group is characterized by self-sufficiency, aspiration to independence; the Chinese group reveals aspiration to novelty, tolerance, protection of wellbeing of all people and the nature; according to the results of the conducted procedures, the Turkic language speaking group exposed observance of traditions, respect and responsibility for cultural and religious customs and ideas of their nation. Similar researches emphasize the issue that globalization of the modern world as the process of integration of mankind and strengthening of its cultural interdependence urgently raises a question of people’s readiness to live in new conditions.

REFERENCES


