
FEATURES OF PROCESS OF SOCIOCULTURAL ADAPTATION AND FORMATION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF LATIN-AMERICAN (HISPANIC) STUDENTS IN RUSSIA

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This article is devoted to the analysis of the results of our research of the sociocultural adaptation features and the communicative competence of students from Latin America during their education at the university in Russia.

Key words: sociocultural adaptation, cross-cultural adaptation, communicative competence, sociability, logical thinking, conformity, emotional stability, self-control, interactivity, nostalgia, Hispanic students in Russia.

The study of the social and psychological adaptation is a topical problem of the modern psychological science and represents one of the main tasks of the psychological science. The scientific and special practical interest in the problems of cross-cultural adaptation arose in the world of science in the early XX century. Since the 50-ies in psychology there has been developed the problem of the adaptation of individual immigrants and migrants, which was stimulated by the postwar boom in the exchange of students, professionals and mass migration. The basic attention was focused on the analysis of the sense of satisfaction, psychological well-being and mental health of the "outsiders". The possible acculturation changes were almost not mentioned.

The cross-cultural adaptation is a process of immersion into a new culture, a gradual development of its norms, values and behavior patterns. Thus, the real adaptation means achieving the real social and psychological integration into a new culture without losing the riches of their own culture.

The most important factors for sociocultural adaptation are the duration of residence in the new environment, the language, the number of contacts and the cultural distance. The greatest difficulties in these types of adaptation occur at the early stages of emersion into a new cultural environment. However, the sociocultural problems will gradually decrease over time, while the psychological difficulties, as a rule, tend to grow [5].

Connected with the adaptation to training activities in a foreign environment are such pressing social issues as: the negative trends in the formation of socio-occupational orientations, the lack of professional qualification potential of people and the low efficiency of its use, the unduly prolonged financial dependence of young people on parents, the dissatisfaction of the young with their housing conditions, the low family stability, the low satisfaction of the interests and needs of students in their own country and others [6].

Studying in a foreign country may be associated with a culture shock in many students. Many researchers have attempted to clarify the understanding of a culture

shock, emphasizing the different aspects of staying in a different culture. For this purpose they used the terms “cultural fatigue”, “language shock”, “role shock” and etc. P. Bock described a culture shock as an emotional response that arises from the inability to understand, to monitor and predict the behavior of others [4]. Other writers associated the culture shock with the uncertainty of the norms and expectations and, consequently, with the difficulties of controlling the situation and predicting it. In this connection there is anxiety, confusion and apathy, continuing until the new cognitive constructs for understanding other cultures and developing the appropriate models of behavior are formed [2].

The formation of communicative competence is an indicator of human social and psychological adaptation. Therefore, the study of communicative competence is an urgent problem of social psychology, whose solution is of great importance, both for every individual and for the society as a whole.

The communicative competence is seen as a system of internal resources required to build an effective communication in a certain range of situations of personal interaction. The competence in communication, undoubtedly, has universal invariant features and, at the same time, the characteristics historically and culturally preconditioned. The concept of communicative competence is characterized by the ability to be conversant in the interpersonal communication and to participate in it with relative ease, achieved by using a linguistic knowledge and the knowledge of traditions, customs and ways of the society.

The theoretical analysis of the existing works devoted to the study of communicative competence has shown that the problem has not been studied properly. They primarily studied the pedagogical aspects [3].

In general, the amount of research dedicated to the connection between the communicative competence and adaptation is insignificant, the empirical data are heterogeneous, there exist many unresolved issues awaiting the attention of researchers. In this regard, there is an obvious need for a study of the relationship of the communicative competence and adaptation.

In our research, we consider the relation between the communicative competence and adaptation of Latin American students. The aim of our work was to compare the characteristics of the adaptation and communicative competence of the Hispanic students living in Russia for one — two years and four — five years [1].

The study involved 72 students from Latin America studying at the Peoples' Friendship University. The sample was divided by us into 2 subgroups according to the years of their stay in Russia (1—2 years and 4 to 5 years). In each subgroup there were 36 students. The age characteristics of our sample range from 18 to 25 years. The average age is 22 years. The sex composition of the sample is: 50% of men and 50% of women.

In order to diagnose the communicative competence the method “Diagnosis of communicative social competence (CSC)” developed by N.P. Fetiskin, V.V. Kozlov and G.M. Manuilov was used. To determine the degree of cross-cultural adaptation of Latin American students, we used the “Personality questionnaire of adaptation to new

social and cultural environment (ALKSS)” by L.V. Yankovskiy in the modified version of T.G. Stefanenko and M.S. Panov. These methods have been translated into Spanish using forward and reverse translation.

For the processing and interpretation of the empirical data we applied the methods of statistical processing of the data (Spearman correlation analysis) using the statistical package STATGRAPHICS Centurion XV.I. The significance of differences in mean values was evaluated using the Mann Whitney comparison criterion.

The analysis comparing the mean values of the parameters of adaptation showed that the level of satisfaction, conformity and interactivity of Hispanic students in the group of students living in Russia for 4—5 years is lower than in the group of students living in Russia for 1—2 years (see in Fig. 1).

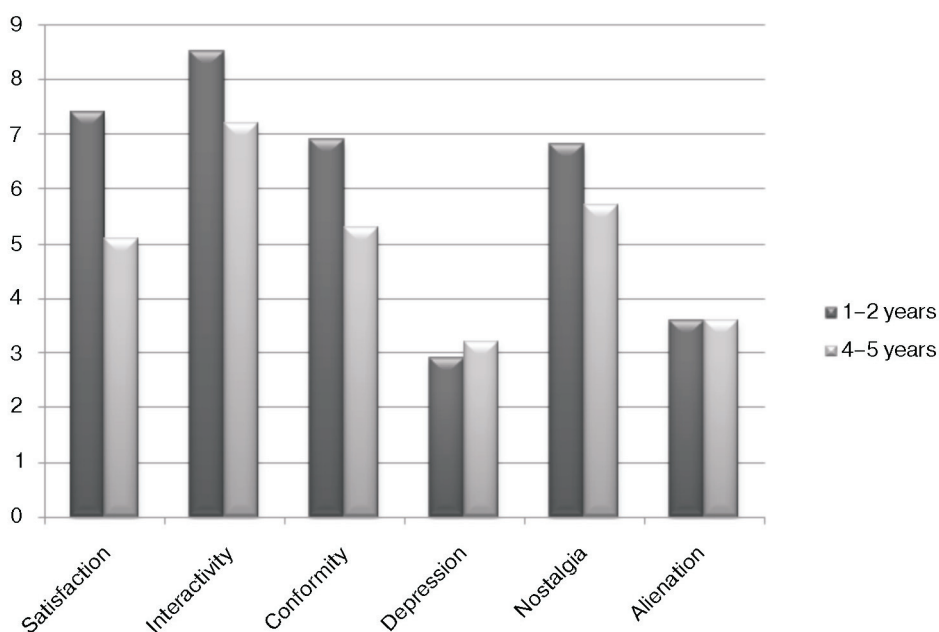


Fig. 1. Bar chart of the mean values of the parameters of adaptation

In the group of students living in Russia for 4—5 years, the level of depression is higher than that of the students living for only one or two years, and the level of alienation is the same as during the first years of their residence in Russia. Therefore, we can say that the satisfaction level decreases over time. Evidently, towards the completion of the course there happens a reassessment of the experience, and there appears a sense of insecurity, which leads to an increase in depression.

The analysis comparing the mean values of indicators of the communicative competence has shown that, in general, the communicative competence of the students is developing throughout the learning process, starting with the first year of their stay in Russia until the fifth (see Fig. 2).

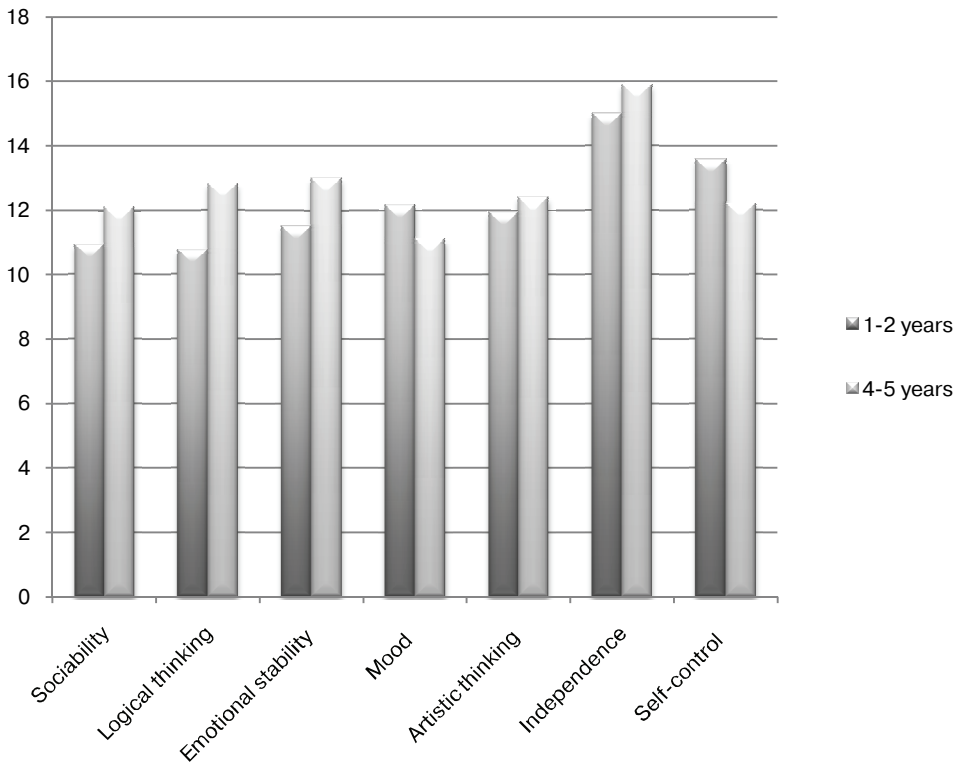


Fig. 2. Bar chart of the mean values of indicators of communicative competence

The level of sociability is increasing; it is most likely connected with a better knowledge of Russian, which promotes the growth of contacts with other people. The level of logical thinking in the students living in Russia, 4—5 years is higher, the students at this stage of training already have sufficient skills and knowledge. Also in this group, the levels of parameters of all the other variables, except for mood, are higher. The higher level of emotional stability and independence indicates that the Latin-American students are learning to control their emotions and feel more confident by the end of their studies. The lower levels of the mood of the students at the end of the course of study may be due to the stress that the students experience during the completion of training. The level of self-control in both groups is the same. The Latin-American students try to control their emotions but sometimes they cannot do it.

The comparison of the data obtained according to the level of communicative competence and adaptation in different groups showed that the level of self-control, satisfaction, conformity and nostalgia is lower in the group of students who live in Russia, for 4 or 5 years, and the level of sociability, logical thinking, emotional stability, independence and self-control is higher. Consequently, over time, a Latin-American student's level of adaptation is reduced. Perhaps, the Hispanic students face a number of issues that are a major obstacle to the successful complete adaptation.

In order to identify the relationship of adaptation and communicative competence we performed a correlation analysis. The analysis of the level of the adaptation

and communicative competence in the group of students living in Russia, for 1—2 years, showed the significant positive correlations between sociability and nostalgia, logical thinking and alienation, self-control and interactivity, as well as between the interactivity and conformity. Clearly, the growth of nostalgia leads to the desire to find support from others and establish new contacts; in the process of communication Hispanics tend to control their emotions and are willing to accept a new culture.

In the group of students living in Russia, for 4—5 years, the revealed positive relationship between sociability and satisfaction, and also, between satisfaction and interactivity means that Hispanic students have the satisfaction of establishing new contacts, from the communication process itself. The new friends can provide support in solving problems during the adaptation process.

Thus, we can conclude that in the first years of residence in Russia, in order to cope with difficulties, Latin-American students seek support from others, tend to communicate more, make new friends. The growth of interactivity leads to the increased self-control and conformity. In the process of establishing new contacts, they become more familiar with the peculiarities of the Russian society and culture, and in this regard, they control their behavior and emotions more, as the high sensibility of Latin-American students is not welcome in Russia. Later, adapting to a new culture, having got acquainted with new friends, the Latin American students come into new interpersonal contacts, gradually adapt, that leads to satisfaction as a whole. In the process of communicating over time Hispanic students try to adjust their behavior and emotions.

It is necessary to take into account, that failures and problems in adapting to the new culture should be seen not as pathological symptoms, but as the absence of specific knowledge and skills. Therefore, there should be organized not an adaptation of a person to a new culture, but the acquisition of knowledge about the customs, norms, values, behavior stereotypes of other people, without breaking up with their own culture. Also, it should be taken into account that the integration of non-dominant groups is successfully implemented only under the condition that the society is open, and is committed to cultural diversity. This implies that the integration requires mutual accommodation, which means the recognition by both groups of the right of each of them to exist as independent peoples.

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ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПРОЦЕССА СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНОЙ АДАПТАЦИИ И ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТИ У ЛАТИНОАМЕРИКАНСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ В РОССИИ

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Статья посвящена анализу результатов исследования особенностей процесса социокультурной адаптации и коммуникативной компетентности студентов из Латинской Америки во время их обучения в университете в России.

Ключевые слова: социокультурная адаптация, межкультурная адаптация, коммуникативная компетентность, общительность, логическое мышление, конформность, эмоциональная устойчивость, самоконтроль, интерактивность, ностальгия, латиноамериканские студенты в России.