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Проблемы адаптации иностранных студентов к обучению в Санкт-Петербурге

Объектом исследования является процесс адаптации иностранных студентов к жизни и обучению в другой стране на примере студентов курса «История и архитектура Санкт-Петербурга» в Санкт-Петербургском Политехническом Университете имени Петра Великого. В статье рассмотрены этапы процесса адаптации иностранного студента к жизни в другой стране, при помощи опроса выявлены основные проблемы и предложены возможные решения.

Problems of international students' adaptation to education in Saint Petersburg

Every year more and more international students come to study in Peter the Great Polytechnic University and that makes it very important for teachers to help foreign students adjust to education and life in Russia. This purpose requires studying the process of cultural adaptation and the main problems connected to it.

The psychological and sociocultural components of adaptation have been investigated within the framework of acculturation theory [2]. In the context of immigration, acculturation has been conceptualised as a combination of cultural changes resulting from the contact of immigrants with the host population [1]. The categorical model of acculturation is based on two dimensions: one refers to the extent to which the culture of origin is being maintained or preferred, and the other refers to the extent to which the new host culture is adopted. On the basis of the interaction between these two dimensions, four different acculturation strategies can be employed: separation, assimilation, integration and marginalisation. Nowadays, the notion of «adaptation» is very often confused with sociocultural competence formation. Sociocultural competence is that aspect of communicative ability which involves those specific features of a society and its culture which are manifest in the communicative behaviour of the members of this society. These features may be classified as

‘universal experiences’, ‘social rituals’ and ‘social conventions’. We believe, adaptation process is much more complicated and requires more practical approach, than forming a sufficient knowledge base. That is why helping international students to adjust to life and education in a foreign country is something that has to be done not only before their travel, but mostly when they already are in Russia.

Most intercultural communication specialists outline 4 basic stages of foreigners' adjustment to another country.

1. The «Honeymoon» stage is characterised as initial euphoria, excitement with new sounds, sights, smells. At this stage students can show superficial involvement in the host culture, lots of interest in learning, they are very motivated and cooperative.

2. “Culture Shock” is the stage when come irritation and even hostility. The novelty of the new culture has worn off, and students now focus primarily on the differences between the new culture and their home culture. Being constantly concerned with and stressed by cultural differences causes the feeling of helplessness and frustration.

3. Gradual Adjustment, Humor, and Perspective comes when students become more familiar with the new culture and its “logic” and values. They feel more comfortable and less isolated, and even begin to prefer some aspects of the new culture to their home culture.

4. “Feeling at Home” is what is called «adaptation» and «biculturalism». The “new” culture is no longer new; instead, the “foreign” country you live in now feels like another home [2, 3].

The survey run among international students of Peter the Great polytechnic University showed, that, having spent 6 months in Saint Petersburg, 48% of the students never got to experience stages 3 and 4. That means, that having spent quite a long period of time in Russia, they

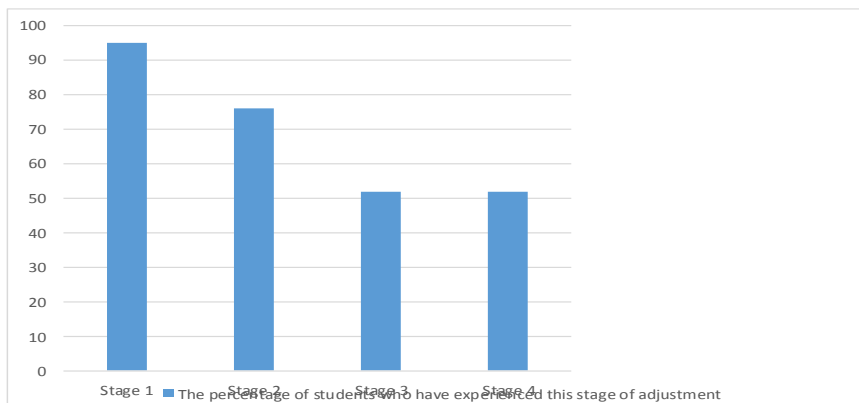


Figure 1. Results of the survey among international students.

«got stuck» either at the «Honeymoon» stage, or the « Culture Shock» and never managed to cope with it (see Figure 1).

As a matter of fact, most of international students are sure they are not going to have any problems adjusting. This belief comes from the fact that most of them are familiar with the Russian language and their level is sufficient to make a small-talk. Surprisingly, many of the international students, who join our “History and architecture of Saint Petersburg” course, show great knowledge of Russian literature and history, but not Russian realities. We have to admit, that given the current political situation, the information about Russia learned from foreign mass media can not always be objective and more often tends to create very hostile and unfriendly image of our country.

In order to find out the level of readiness of foreign students to live in Saint Petersburg 50 students from different countries were given a specially developed cultural quiz, which consisted of 50 questions and included questions about: Russian history and culture, everyday life in Saint Petersburg, Russian language and slang, Russian and Soviet Union realities. The quiz for foreign students contained questions like: "You are lost in the city and want to ask the way. Who is more likely to speak good English: a teenager, a middle age man, an elderly lady?"

Another example of questions from the quiz is: "You are in the subway in a very crowded train. You are standing close to the doors and somebody from behind touches your shoulder and asks something in Russian. What do you think it is?"

The average result of foreign students was 23 right answers out of 50, which is not enough for effective intercultural competence formation and successful adaptation to a new country.

Such results brought us to the conclusion that the level of foreign student's intercultural competence has to be improved and an international discussion club is an effective tool to do it. Intercultural competence means not only the knowledge about other countries' culture and traditions, but also the ability to perform effective intercultural communication with foreigners.

With the help of the surveys made we can outline the main adaptation problems students are facing in Saint Petersburg:

1. Language barrier
2. Lack of information about other cultures
3. Communication problems
4. Homesickness (cultural) and boredom.

We believe that the most efficient way to solve these problems is to create an international discussion club for foreign and Russian students. The main aims of the club would be: 1. providing Russian students with English practice and foreign students – with Russian practice; 2. increasing the level of students' knowledge in history and architecture of Saint Petersburg; 3. stimulating students' Intercultural competence formation and international cooperation skills.

The foundation of such club could be beneficial for both Russian students and international students and help the former to learn more about other cultures and the latter to adjust easier to life in a foreign country and find new friends.

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Контент-анализ семантического поля «образование» в русской и английской культурах (на примере текстовых источников из НКРЯ и СОСА)

Статья посвящена проблеме восприятия понятия «высшее образование» в русской и американской культуре. Для Уральского Федерального Университета, стремящегося к активному межкультурному взаимодействию и привлечению как можно большего количества иностранных студентов, это особенно актуально, поскольку качественное обучение иностранных студентов