



## Cross-Cultural Language and Communication as Means of Creating Tolerance

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### Abstract

The foundation of qualitative enquiry is language and communication. Language is a fundamental instrument by which qualitative researchers attempt to understand human behavior, social processes, and the cultural meanings that are part of human behavior. Russia is a multinational, multi-confessional and multicultural country, and in this connection, the problem of educating the younger generation in the spirit of tolerance at the present stage is especially relevant. These circumstances have led to the inclusion of the term “tolerance” in the thesaurus of social and pedagogical sciences in recent years. The purpose of this article is to consider the main approaches to the interpretation of this concept, as well as to identify favourable conditions and ways of creating cross-cultural tolerance in modern society and in educational institutions in particular. The research is based on the analysis made on the current situation of cross-cultural communication in Russia and Tatarstan in particular.

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Communication; Language; Foreign; Students; University.

### 1. Introduction

Squires describes cross-language as the process that occurs between the researcher and participants when a language barrier is present (Squires, 2009). Using a translator or interpreter, this obstacle is also mediated. When two languages are involved in the research, problems with interpretation may result in a loss of meaning and thus a loss of the validity of the qualitative study. As Oxley, Günhan, Kaniamattam, & Damico (2017) point out when researchers and participants speak the same non-English language, comprehension problems occur in a multilingual environment, but the study findings are intended for an English-speaking audience. For example, when interviews, observation, and other data collection techniques are used in cross-cultural contexts, the processes of data collection and analysis become more complicated because of the inseparability of human experience and the language spoken by (Oxley et al., 2017). Positionality refers to the ethical and relational problems encountered by researchers when choosing a language over another to express their results in this context. Li (2011), for example, considers the ethical and relational problems of language preference faced while dealing with the Chinese and English languages in his research on Chinese international students at a Canadian university. It is necessary in this case that the researcher provides a reason behind his/her choice of language. Thus, as Squires observes, in cross-cultural research, language plays an important role; it allows participants to reflect their sense of self. Similarly, interviews in qualitative research require an ongoing reflection on language choices because they can influence the method and outcome of the research. Lee shows in his work the crucial role that reflexivity plays in setting the goals of the researcher and his/her participation in the translation process (Lee, 2017). In particular, his study focuses on the problem posed by researchers speaking the same language of participants when the results are intended only for an English-speaking audience. Lee introduces the article by arguing that "Research on other language-speaking subjects conducted by English-speaking researchers is essentially cross-cultural and often multilingual, especially with QR involving participants who communicate in languages other than English." In particular, Lee discusses



the issues that occur in terms of Mandarin interview answers, preparing interview transcripts, and translating the Mandarin/Chinese data for an English-speaking/reading audience (Lee, 2017).

Language and communication problems are becoming more complicated when performing cross-cultural research and often need the aid of interpreters/translators as 'cultural brokers.' There are various methodological, epistemological and practical obstacles to cross-cultural study, which are seldom debated in qualitative research. Improving cross-cultural qualitative research includes understanding how rigor can be influenced by language and communication and resolving issues of language and communication that underlie the whole research process. In the absence of awareness and recognition of the role of language and communication problems in cross-cultural study, the rigour and reliability of the research could be affected (Alipour & Nooreddinmoosa, 2018; Chiknaverova, Gazizova, & Mingazova, 2019; N Romanova, O Amelina, P Skorikova, & M Petrova, 2019).

Tolerance is a necessary and fundamental value for the realization of human rights and the achievement of peace. It serves as the basis for today's international human rights standards (Islam, 2017; Sipayung & Dwiningrum, 2020a; Zhuk & Lisovskaya, n.d.). In our modern world, characterized by an increase in the pace of globalization and integration of all life processes and phenomena, on the one hand, and the desire to isolate national cultures, on the other, the problem of tolerant relations between representatives of various cultural communities appears to become one of the important issues (Sipayung & Dwiningrum, 2020b; Tiedemann, 2019; Todorović, 2019; Zhipeng, 2019).

The perception of cultural diversity and cultural differences leads to an understanding of the necessity to have an equal dialogue, the main task of which is to ensure humane relations between representatives of different national cultures. Scientists and UNESCO documents express the idea of tolerance for a society. The recognition of tolerance as a condition of peace between peoples is the main task of democracy (Campos & Kim, 2017; Danso, 2018; Hoffman & Verdooren, 2019; Kimanen, 2018).

A special area of the theory and practice of tolerance in the modern world is cross-cultural communication. According to the definition given by V.P. Furmanova, cross-cultural communication is a dialogue of cultures and is a way of universal human communication, which covers the exchange of information and cultural values in the context of interethnic communication (Sannikova, Spiridonova, Velieva, & Ristich, 2016; Sleptsova, Ushnitskaya, & Herd, 2020).

The main aim of cross-cultural communication nowadays is to activate the humanitarian potential and aim it at developing the concept of priority of universal values, drawing together cultures of different countries by introducing into each person's consciousness a sense of community and values of our civilization (Puyod & Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Teunissen et al., 2017; Tomblason & Wolf, 2017). Cross-cultural communication as a dialogue between cultures is a multidimensional phenomenon that attracts philosophers, linguists, psychologists and methodologists. Cross-cultural communication reflects the interaction of the language, culture and individual.

Cross-cultural communication is considered to be a process of communication (verbal and non-verbal) between communicants speaking different languages and being representatives of different cultures, or a combination of specific processes of interaction between people belonging to different cultures and languages (Andreyeva, Tuleubayeva, Ganyukova, & Tentekbayeva, 2015).

In the process of cross-cultural interaction, people were involved in this process of developing cross-cultural relations. The communication participants, using their linguistic and cultural experience, traditions and habits, at the same time, try to treat other languages, customs, traditions, and patterns of social behaviour with understanding. If this does not happen, then cross-cultural interaction may not take place or be violated due to the so-called "communicative failures", which have more serious negative consequences for conducting fruitful communication between people than some language errors.

The sociolinguistic aspect of cross-cultural communication study is based on the concept of the universality of communication processes at the levels of interpersonal, intergroup and interethnic communication. Lack of attention to the existing sociocultural differences between contacting groups and native speakers affects the degree of mutual understanding and level of trust.

Theoretical problems of cross-cultural communication and interaction are studied in the works by (Furmanova, 1994; Gibaldi, 2012; Lado, 1961; Sannikova et al., 2016; Schaub, 1995; Singer, 1987; Vorobyov, Rochanavibhata, & Marian, 2019).

### **1.1. Research Objective**

The goal of this article is to consider the key approaches to the understanding of this definition and to recognize favourable circumstances and ways of generating cross-cultural tolerance in modern society and, in particular, in educational institutions. The study is focused on an overview of the current cross-cultural contact situation in Russia and, in particular, in Tatarstan.

## **2. Methodology**

To provide well-grounded conclusions, the following theoretical and practical methods were applied to achieve the solution of the research problem:

- a descriptive method for observation and classification of the material;
- a system-oriented analysis of literature as well as the experience of some teachers on the stated topic.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Teaching tolerance through culture**

Just as psychoanalysts improve communication theories to reveal the nature of the interaction between the patient and the doctor, so the practice of interethnic relations needs immersion in the particular culture in order to find the key to more effective cross-cultural communication (Dodd).

In this regard, the new directions in linguistic pedagogy are the cultural studies socialization of education (V.P. Safonova) and research on linguacultural studies (V.V. Vorobyov). The cultural socialization is defined by V.P.Safonova as strengthening of the functions of educational systems as a means of teaching students universal and national cultural values based on a comparative study of languages and cultures, their influence on each other in the global process of universal human culture."

Linguoculturology is a modern humanitarian discipline of the synthesizing type, studying the interconnection and interaction of language and culture in its functioning and reflecting this process as an integral structure of units in the unity of their linguistic and extra-linguistic (cultural) content using systemic methods and taking into consideration modern priorities and cultural values (Allen, 1983).

Linguoculturological competence/awareness means not only understanding of concepts and words, but also of the entire system of cultural values expressed in a language. The linguacultural approach is aimed at forming the students' attitude to the language as to a social phenomenon, as a means of reflecting national and universal values in different cultures.

Linguistic and cultural studies developed at the intersection of related sciences such as linguistic and regional studies, ethnolinguistics, ethno-etiquette, social linguistics, communication psychology, cultural anthropology, the history of the world and national cultures. These sciences help to carry out a value-oriented study of the cultural identity of nations and their contribution to the development of world culture and their self-awareness as a cultural unity conducting cross-cultural communication.

Tolerance develops from the ability and willingness to understand the mentality of representatives of other cultures. People who are quite fluent in a foreign language sometimes appear to have difficulties due to ignorance of cultural differences and socio-cultural norms of behaviour in a foreign country. In the mentality, three components are interconnected, forming the "triangle of mentality": knowledge, relationships, behaviour.

The notion "mentality" indicates a conditional line beyond which an adequate reaction becomes possible or impossible. When communicating, representatives of different cultures might have a certain barrier that prevents one from adequately perceiving each other's behaviour, that is the case when we may notice cultural interference. According to R.

Lado, culture is a structured system of modelled behaviour for native speakers, that does not spread its effect across cultural boundaries (Nagy, 1995).

There are cases in history when poor knowledge or complete ignorance of the culture, customs and traditions of the countries that were diplomatic partners of Russia led to significant interstate tension. Knowledge of customs and culture plays no less important role than knowledge of the language. Each nation has its own peculiarities of communication: sociability, horizons, self-expression, attitude to public opinion, social symbolism, national etiquette, types of gifts, colours, speech etiquette and distance in communication.

R. Lado in his work “Linguistics Above the Borders of Cultures” emphasized that a foreign culture should be taught through comparison with one’s own culture. According to R. Lado, the patterns of behaviour inherent in each culture have a form, a meaning, distribution and comparison of which can help to overcome difficulties in understanding a foreign culture (for example, the same form, but different meanings). He gives an example of a traditional bullfight in Spain, which has always been a source of intercultural misunderstanding (form: bullfight has a very accurate and complex form. A man armed with a sword and a red cloak defies the bull and kills him in the fray. Matador, bull, picador, music, clothing are parts of the form; meaning: bullfighting conveys a complex of meanings in Spanish culture. It is a kind of sport. It symbolizes the skills of man over the brute force of a bull. This is a demonstration of courage. A bullfight is a complex distribution model. There is a bullfight season each year, favourite days in a week, the favourite time during a day. Bullfighting takes place in a special arena and in a special place known to any person in this culture.

Thus, learning the culture of other people implies not only knowing some “cultural facts”, but also their specific national mentality, which will help to anticipate possible misunderstanding between representatives of different cultures, prevent complications in relationships and, while maintaining national identity, take steps towards each other. The Swedish researcher C. Jonsson notes that when parties cooperate their interests, usually coincide and national differences are not noticed, but when a conflict arises, they begin to play an important role.

In our research, we distinguish four main components of tolerance: recognition, acceptance, respect and understanding. Acceptance and recognition of differences between people today can be considered the most acceptable form of cross-cultural interaction. The Declaration of Principles of Tolerance, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1995, states: “Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.” Article 1 1.1. “This is a concept that means rejection of dogmatism, absolutization of truth and affirming the norms established in international legal acts in the field of human rights” (Galskova, 2000; Semenova & Vnukova, 2017).

True tolerance is a valuable moral quality of a person, a person who has its own values and interests and is ready, if necessary, to protect them, but at the same time respects the views and values of other people. Tolerance implies the awareness of the fact that the world and social environment are multidimensional, which means that the views on this world are diverse.

At the same time, tolerance requires a natural, healthy hostility to negative attitudes in terms of ideology, communication and behaviour.

The following tolerance criteria can be distinguished:

- Equal rights (equal access to social benefits, to managerial, educational and economic opportunities for all people, regardless of their gender, race, nationality, religion, etc.);
- Mutual respect, friendly and tolerant attitude to various groups (disabled people, refugees, etc.);
- Preservation and development of cultural identity and languages of national minorities;
- Involvement as many people as possible into the celebration of different holidays, if this does not contradict their cultural traditions;
- Opportunity to follow their traditions for all cultures represented in society;
- Freedom of religion, provided that this does not infringe on the rights and opportunities of other members of society;



Cooperation and solidarity.

Thus, the modern concept of tolerance is based on the recognition, acceptance and respect of dissimilarity, differences between people, readiness for dialogue, for cross-cultural communication. At the same time, it is important to form an ethnocultural competence of the younger generation, which involves access to only objective information about other nations.

Ethnocultural competence is "the process of acquiring objective knowledge and experience in the field of ethnology and interethnic interaction by an individual that will contribute to the consolidation of various nations" (Galskova, 2000). To have cross-cultural competence means to recognize ethnocultural pluralism, to have true, clear knowledge about ethnic communities and their culture, to understand their specific features.

Ethnocultural competence combines knowledge, ideas about ethnic communities and their culture, and tolerant behaviour aimed at interethnic understanding and interaction. In this regard, the formation of ethnocultural competence is combined with creating ethnic tolerance.

B. S. Gershunsky indicates that it is the sphere of education that is able to actively and purposefully form a mentality of tolerance (Nagy, 1995). This point of view is also shared by Academician V. A. Tishkov, who put forward the idea of a pedagogy of tolerance, which should be transmitted through the sphere of education and culture.

### **3.2. Historical background and current situation**

The Republic of Tatarstan (one of the constituent entities of Russia, located in its central part) has always been distinguished by the stability of good relations between the peoples living in it. These traditions originated in the depths of centuries. The history of recent centuries does not know conflicts on an interethnic basis. Universal historical and social factors give Tatarstan a unique multinational character (Garaeva & Ahmetzyanov, 2018). Now there are representatives of more than 115 nationalities in the republic. Approximately 52.9% of the population are Tatars, and 39.5% are Russians (Khuziahmetov & Valeev, 2018). The number of other peoples is about 300 thousand people. The Chuvash, Udmurts, Mordovians, Mari, Bashkirs, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Germans have long lived in Tatarstan. There are ethnic groups in the region, represented by several hundred people - these are Avars, Kumyks, Assyrians, Dargins, Ossetians, Kalmyks and many others.

In recent years, mainly due to migration, there has been an increase in the representation of new diasporas. The Tajik diaspora has increased by more than four times (now there are about 4 thousand people), the Armenian has become about three times bigger (3 thousand people), the Azerbaijani more than two times (with more than 10 thousand people now).

The colour of the multinational palette is added by the Vietnamese and Turkish diasporas, which appeared in the region many years ago. Today, ethnologists and politicians call Tatarstan a region of the high culture of interethnic communication with strong, time-tested traditions of mutual understanding. They talk about unique mechanisms, "recipes" of tolerance within the framework of the Tatarstan model of ethnocultural development.

The practice of social development in the republic proves that national problems in their "pure" form have never existed and do not exist nowadays. They are closely intertwined with the social and economic spheres. At the same time, interethnic contacts, as an extremely complex, multifaceted sphere of social relations, need systematic monitoring by the state and targeting by different institutions at different levels.

### **3.3. Cross-cultural communication in KFU**

We are convinced that tolerance must be taught from preschool age when children are just beginning to build relationships with each other. Education should be complex: "kindergarten - school-university" (Khuziakhmetov, Valeev, Kralova, & Duchovicova, 2018). The principles of tolerance are developed at each stage: tolerance towards each other; understanding, interest and respect for the traditions of their own and other peoples living in the territory of their region; then, when learning foreign languages, introduction to general cultural values and culture of peoples of other countries, fostering friendly relations, teaching cross-cultural communication (Kirpichnikova, 2019).



In this article, we mainly analyse the situation at Kazan Federal University (KFU), the second university in Russia in the number of foreign students. Now more than 7 thousand foreign students from 98 countries are studying at KFU. Moreover, as Ilshat Gafurov, the rector of KFU, said at a press conference, KFU is negotiating the opening of branches in China, Korea and Uzbekistan.

The Kazan Federal University has over 140 regional organizations and associations whose activities affect the various interests of students: science, education, the social sphere, creativity, sports, patriotic education, volunteering and many other areas.

The city of Kazan is the third capital of Russia. It has been hosting a lot of international events. That is why the University is the very site which gives access to all of them for its students. This is the reason for young people to be involved into the diversity of activities to raise their awareness of other cultures, the current political situation in the world, the ways to adjust differences into a smooth line of friendship, to behave in a correct way on different levels, sometimes even on diplomatic ones, to quickly make decisions on urgent international issues. Quite often they do it in combination with foreign students, whose awareness of some cultural peculiarities is of great value. Many students of KFU International Relations Institute study 3 foreign languages which raises their adaptation to the multicultural community. Students choose their preferences from about 20 languages taught at the university, which in its turn signed agreements with universities from different parts of the world. Due to this fact, students can easily participate in exchange and academic mobility programs (A. A. Shakirova & Gizyatova, 2018), going to Germany, the UK, the USA, France, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Poland, the Czech Republic, South Korea, China, Turkey, Egypt, Iran and other countries. When returning they may bring ideas of more comprehensive character, more mature and developed. There are some other sites (Fayzullina, 2019), in the city to promote the ideas of tolerance and friendship. Kazan actively celebrates days of different ethnicities, and students also are involved in it.

### **3.4. Motivation**

Foreign citizens are accepted in KFU for the Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in all areas of training. For instance, in the Institute of International Relations of the Kazan (Volga) Federal University, there are 870 foreign citizens from 44 countries of the world. Most of them, after entering the University, plunge into the atmosphere, which is totally different from the one they had in their countries.

Foreign citizens who do not speak Russian can study at the preparatory faculty for foreign citizens, and then join the basic training. However, in order to interact with representatives of other cultures effectively, to establish friendly contacts, it is not enough to speak foreign languages; a serious obstacle is the lack of knowledge of the cultural and ethnic characteristics of peoples.

Thanks to communication, it becomes possible through various cultures and peoples to overcome the problems of incompatibility of cultures, to make effective the process of understanding foreign cultures and as a result to achieve their goals in studies.

## **5. Conclusion**

It is possible to refer to the saying that there are many approaches to the interpretation of the concept of "tolerance", in each of which different accents are made depending on the field of knowledge within which this concept is considered. In general, tolerance can be understood as a special moral quality, reflecting an active social position and psychological readiness for positive interaction with people or groups of a different national, religious and social status, views, styles of thinking and behaviour.

We can conclude that the task of modern educational institutions is to create conditions for young people to develop a position focused on the values of non-violence, tolerance, justice, legality as the moral basis for behaviour in social and intercultural conflicts, as well as the principle of their constructive resolution. This article touches upon the ways these conditions are successfully organized in Tatarstan and in one of its biggest universities, KFU.

The main educational principle when teaching tolerance is the principle of dialogue, which allows people to combine in their way of thinking and activities, different cultures, values, and patterns of behaviours of different people. One of the goals of such an education is to create conditions for integration into the culture of other peoples (for instance,



different exchanges of students, programs like “Erasmus”) and the formation of skills and effective interaction with representatives of other cultures (A. Shakirova, 2019).

### 5.1. Contribution

The argument that there are many approaches to the understanding of the notion of "tolerance" can be referred to, in each of which various accents are rendered based on the area of knowledge from which this definition is taken into account. It can be concluded that the role of modern educational institutions is to establish conditions for young people to cultivate a position based on the principles of non-violence, tolerance, justice, legality as the normative basis of behaviour in social and intercultural disputes, as well as the concept of their constructive resolution. When teaching tolerance, the key educational philosophy is the philosophy of communication, which encourages individuals to combine various cultures, beliefs, and behavioural habits of different people in their way of thinking and activities.

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