

AXIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION OF RUSSIAN AND CHINESE STUDENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE OF THE RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Belyaeva
Ural State Mining University, Russia

ABSTRACT

The development of cultural ties and cooperation between Russia and China in the field of education correlates with the current strategy of internationalization of Russian universities. Many Russian universities today tend to develop partnerships with Chinese universities. In particular, the number of Chinese students studying in Russian universities constantly increases; academic exchange programs are successfully implemented, the number of scientific contacts between representatives of universities of the two countries grows. The implementation of such cooperation is accompanied by problems of social and cultural interaction in the field of education of Russian and Chinese students.

The general purpose of the study was to identify the axiological component in the interaction of Russian and Chinese students in the space of the Russian university.

Chinese students who study in Yekaterinburg universities (390 people), Russian students who study/live with Chinese (500 people), 10 Chinese experts, 10 Russian experts in the field of education in Russia and China were interviewed.

The results suggest that the Russian students find the values of hedonistic nature – love and pleasure – to be more important than the Chinese ones, while the Chinese students consider study and personal security to be most important (and this is determined by the goals of coming to Russia and the conditions of staying in the territory of a foreign country). Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the values of students from the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China differ radically and may interfere with the productive socio-cultural interaction between them. Besides, the great importance of such values as world peace and love of country for Chinese students can be the basis for attracting them to participate in the activities of patriotic and cultural student associations that already exist in the Ural universities.

The practical significance of the results obtained is that the identified problems of socio-cultural interaction between Chinese and Russian students make it possible to develop technologies for optimizing the socio-cultural

interaction of foreign students in Russian universities, which is especially important in the initial stages of their education in Russia. Among the recommendations for optimizing the process of entering Chinese students into Russian universities (in addition to Russian language classes) are joint Russian-Chinese leisure and holiday events, joint social student associations (volunteering, tourism, music, etc.), excursion programs aimed at acquaintance with the culture of the host country, the joint interaction of Russian and Chinese students in social networks and messenger apps.

***Keywords:** values, orientations, sociocultural interaction, adaptation, communication*

INTRODUCTION

The development of cultural ties and cooperation between Russia and China in the field of education correlates with the current strategy of internationalization of Russian universities. Many Russian universities today tend to develop partnerships with Chinese universities. In particular, the number of Chinese students studying in Russian universities constantly increases; academic exchange programs are successfully implemented, the number of scientific contacts between representatives of universities of the two countries grows. The implementation of such cooperation is accompanied by problems of social and cultural interaction in the field of education of Russian and Chinese students. In the works of Russian and foreign researchers, a large number of problematic areas of interaction between Russian and Chinese students (adaptation, communication barriers, inconsistency of the educational systems of the two countries, etc.) are considered. The study examines the axiological features of Russian and Chinese students, which are the basis for building a socio-cultural dialogue.

Many Russian and foreign studies of a social and humanitarian character are devoted to the study of the problem of Russia–China interaction. Feng Yujun considers the socio-cultural interaction of the two countries through the specifics of different political regimes in different time periods [1]. Qin Ming formulates peculiarities of social and cultural exchange between China and Russia: the constant expansion of the sphere of humanitarian cooperation, as well as the dominance of the state model in determining the specifics of social and cultural exchanges [2]. In their researches, Jiang Weixing [3] and Hofstede [4] focus on the civilizational similarity of the Russians and the Chinese based on the dominance of collective values of both nations.

Russian sinologists Malyavin [5] and Maslov examine various aspects of the interaction between Russia and China, highlighting ideological, religious and value components. The works by Varlamov, Kalita, Vinichuk, Popkova, Raspertova are devoted to the problems of inculturation and worldview contradictions [6], [7], [8], [9]. Adaptation and socialization is considered as the main problem in the interaction between the Russians and the Chinese in the

works by Grebennikova, Danilenko, I. Ts. Li, Suy, Dementieva, Kravtsov, Larin, Modnova, Ukhova, Nikitenko, Savchenko, Sukhova [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15].

SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERACTION

One of the key reasons for the problems in the socio-cultural interaction of Chinese and Russian students is the discrepancy between the values of native and host cultures.

Chinese students as carriers of their culture have a strict system of norms and moral values, the leading ones being family, submission to parents, respect for elders, the dominance of the needs of other people over one's own needs, modesty in presenting their achievements, and conformity. According to Varlamova, Rykova, Kirisheva, the traditional characteristics of China include: collectivism, patriotism, patience, respect for elders, excessive pragmatism, the desire to preserve the "face" (the tendency to show socially approved emotions in a conflict situation), perseverance manifested in the actualization of the strategy of "soft power", perseverance, endurance, calm, discipline, a sense of national dignity, positive ethnic identity, high self-esteem [6]. However, in our opinion, all these characteristics are continuously changing under the process of globalization and the influence of Western culture, which sets new standards of behaviour and dictates new values that cannot but affect the value orientations and behavioural characteristics of representatives of the Chinese youth.

Unlike the culture of China, the Russian society combines various traditions, cultural norms, and values due to the multiethnic composition of the population of Russia. Modern Russian society is characterized by the domination of individualistic values, in particular, the rigid hierarchical structure of the family and the family identity of the individual are not common. In the Russian culture, being more individualistic than the Chinese one, it is not common to perceive the interests of others above one's own; in the Chinese mentality, avoiding conflict and preserving harmony in interpersonal relations are obligatory, in Russian culture, it is common to express one's thoughts directly, which may seem a manifestation of insufficient politeness when interacting with foreigners [7].

In the study, the values of Russian and Chinese students of universities in Yekaterinburg were studied, which made it possible to analyze the similarities and differences between them. The terminal values of students from the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have both common and different features. The leading position among the values of both groups of students belongs to both social and individualistic values of friendship, personal security, freedom, and family. The final position in the hierarchy of values in both groups belongs to social status, pleasure and religion/faith. Thus, the values of young people from Russia and China are in many ways similar because of their age and common interests.

However, it is possible to distinguish at least two significant differences:

1. The Russian students rank the personal security the fourth, while the Chinese students rank it the first.

2. Love was ranked third by the Russian students, while only tenth by the Chinese ones. (It should be noted here that in the Chinese tradition does not consider “love” as an obligatory condition of the family and close relationships between people).

3. The Chinese students rank studies the fifth, while the Russian ones rank it the seventh.

The results suggest that the Russian students find the values of hedonistic nature – love and pleasure - to be more important than the Chinese ones, while the Chinese students consider study and personal security to be most important (and this is determined by the goals of coming to Russia and the conditions of staying in the territory of a foreign country). Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the values of students from the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China differ radically and may interfere with the productive socio-cultural interaction between them. On the contrary, the significance of such values as personal security, friendship, and family for both groups of students can be the basis for developing various associations related to these common points. Besides, the great importance of such values as world peace and love of country for Chinese students can be the basis for attracting them to participate in the activities of patriotic and cultural student associations that already exist in the Ural universities.

Analysis of the research results shows that at the initial stage of education, the Chinese students are characterized by an average level of information and an analytical component of social and cultural interaction ($M = 27.6$), reflecting knowledge about the culture of their nation and other cultures; motivational and evaluative component ($M = 27.9$), reflecting the degree of tolerance towards people of a different culture, and social and communicative component ($M = 25.3$), reflecting the skills of intercultural communication. A low level was revealed in relation to the creative activity component, reflecting the desire for joint socially significant and leisure activities and communication with representatives of other cultures ($M = 24.1$), which shows the insufficient experience of joint activities and leisure of Chinese and Russian students at the initial stages of education in Russian universities.

At the stage of graduation in Yekaterinburg universities, a different picture was revealed that demonstrates the process of enculturation of Chinese students in the process of learning in the sociocultural conditions of Russian universities. Chinese students of the 4th course, in contrast to the students of the 1-2 years of study have statistically significant high indicators of the components of

sociocultural interaction within the average level of development according to statistical analysis conducted using the Student's t-criterion: information and analytical component $M = 31.9$; $t = 4.1$, $p < 0.01$; motivation and evaluation component $M = 32.2$; $t = 4.8$, $p < 0.01$; socio-communicative component $M = 31.7$; $t = 5.9$, $p < 0.01$; creative activity component $M = 32.4$; $t = 7.7$, $p < 0.01$.

In the group of 4th-year Chinese students, every second student showed high knowledge of their culture and the culture of other nations, can highlight the similarities and differences of their own and other cultures, strives for joint educational and leisure activities with Russian students; 55% of Chinese students showed high tolerance in relations with Russian students; 40% – high communicative and linguistic abilities in intercultural dialogue, in which they pay attention to personal qualities, and not to the national identity of the interlocutor.

Students with an absolutely low level of sociocultural interaction at the stage of graduation at the university were not identified. Thus, at the statistically significant level, Chinese students at the stage of university graduation, unlike those of the 1st – 2nd years of study, are characterized by high tolerance, high awareness of the similarities and differences of different cultures, proficiency in communicative and linguistic skills and skills in social and cultural interaction in Russian universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-cultural differences in the cultural environment of the host society make it difficult for Chinese students to interact, taking into account how much they are fluent in information about the new cultural environment, how well they understand the foreign (Russian) language, behave adequately in situations of communication and interaction with representatives of the new culture. A comparative analysis of the cultural characteristics of Russia and China makes it possible to identify the difficulties that Chinese students may experience in the process of social and cultural interaction in the new cultural environment of Russian universities: lack of knowledge of the social normative-ethical attitudes of the new social and cultural environment; discrepancy in some cultural values; problems of understanding and ambiguous decoding of the Russian speech. In the field of educational interaction, they face differences in the methods of training in higher education institutions of Russia and China; lack of awareness of the requirements of the Russian universities [6].

Most of the Russian students interviewed believe that Chinese students are not familiar with the history, cultural traditions of Russia, the style of behaviour of speakers of Russian culture, as well as with the proverbs and sayings of the Russian language. In the absence of basic language training, Chinese students have difficulty in communicating with Russian students and teachers, and this causes their social isolation. The main reason for this is the lack of everyday interpersonal communication, the inability to decipher information encoded in

non-verbal communication signals, the difference in value orientations with Russian students. According to the Russian students who study together with Chinese students, at the end of their studies, two-thirds of Chinese students do not reach the level of mastering Russian culture and language necessary for the development of a bicultural personality (Grebennikova 2010).

A comparative analysis conducted in the study showed that the problems of interaction between Russian and Chinese students manifest themselves in the context of the adaptation of foreign students to new sociocultural and organizational conditions of the universities of the host society, during which students enter the new culture, gradually mastering its norms, values patterns of behaviour and other cultural elements.

The adaptation of foreign students at the university includes the universal stages inherent in any intercultural interaction: the experience of autonomy, assimilation and integration, each of which reflects the degree of awareness and assimilation of the socio-cultural values of the new community, allowing it to conform to the parameters of a different socio-cultural environment [6].

The socio-cultural interaction of students is determined, on the one hand, by cultural interaction, on the other, by a set of socio-psychological factors of interaction: the intensity of interaction, the number of representatives of the group of foreign students, official university policies and many others. In practice, according to Kravtsov, there are “various types of interrelationships between groups of students and the mutual influence of the cultures which they represent. Some groups of foreign students completely lose their cultural uniqueness, others, on the contrary, retain their cultural identity and even spread their own cultural patterns among the representatives of the dominant culture of the university in which they study” [13].

The fundamental factors of social and cultural interaction of foreign students in Russian universities, according to Sukhova, are communication skills, including communication in a foreign language, the willingness to be flexible to the requirements of the host society, the desire to preserve their own cultural identity [15]. Each participant of the intercultural interaction has his/her own unique social attitudes, value orientations, aesthetic feelings, communicative manifestations associated with ethnic and national identity, as well as his/her own perception of the other side of the interaction. Besides, representatives of the Chinese side have their own stereotyped ideas about the Russian youth. Moreover, these stereotypes on both sides of the interaction may not always have a positive character, objectively reflect reality, which may complicate the establishment of contacts and effective interaction between representatives of two cultures. Thus, the study of differences in social stereotypes, perceptions and value orientations of Russian and Chinese students makes it possible to identify problems in social and cultural interaction.

CONCLUSION

The practical significance of the results obtained is that the identified problems of socio-cultural interaction between Chinese and Russian students make it possible to develop technologies for optimizing the socio-cultural interaction of foreign students in Russian universities, which is especially important in the initial stages of their education in Russia. Among the recommendations for optimizing the process of entering Chinese students into Russian universities (in addition to Russian language classes) are joint Russian-Chinese leisure and holiday events, joint social student associations (volunteering, tourism, music, etc.), excursion programs aimed at acquaintance with the culture of the host country, the joint interaction of Russian and Chinese students in social networks and messenger apps.

REFERENCES

- [1] M. Qin, “Research on Chinese-Russian cultural diplomacy in the framework of strategic partnership”. Thesis – Institute of Northeast Asia, 2014.
- [2] W. Jiang, “Foreign policy under President D. Medvedev and its influence on Sino-Russian relations”. Thesis – Hebei Pedagogical University, 2014.
- [3] G. Hofstede, *Culture’s Consequences*. Sage Publications, London and Beverly Hills, 1980.
- [4] V. V. Malyavin, “China managed. Good old management” [online] *Dispon?vel em*, 2019, Available from: <<https://econ.wikireading.ru>>.
- [5] N.V. Varlamova, “Peculiarities of mentality of Chinese students”. *Omsk Scientific Bulletin*, no. 1, pp. 31-34, 2012.
- [6] V.V. Kalita and N.V. Vinichuk, “The Image of “Typical Russian” in the Representation of Chinese and Russian Students”. *Humanitarian Studies in Eastern Siberia and the Far East*, no 1, pp. 37-41, 2014.
- [7] E. B. Popkova, “Inculturation of foreign students in the Russian high school: institutional conditions and the main stages: on an example of SRSTU (NPI)”. Thesis (PhD in Sociology). – Rostov-on-Don, 2013.
- [8] S. Y. Raspertova, “Modern cultural strategies of the People’s Republic of China in the practice of international interaction”. Thesis (PhD in Philosophy). Moscow, 2011.
- [9] I.A. Grebennikova, “Pedagogical support of adaptation of foreign students in a Russian university: on the example of Chinese students”. Thesis (PhD in Pedagogical Science) - Birobidzhan, 2010.
- [10] O.I. Danilenko, T. Li, I. Xu, “Adaptation of Chinese students at different stages of study at universities in Russia and China” in V.V. Kalita (ed.) *Psychological Aspects of Intercultural Adaptation*. Vladivostok / Dal'nauka, pp. 90-110, 2015.

[11] S.V. Dementieva, “Russian universities as a mechanism for the adaptation of migrants (in the context of sociological and philosophical analysis)”. Bulletin of Tomsk Polytechnic University, no 6 (313), pp. 158–164, 2008.

[12] A.V. Kravtsov, “Socio-psychological adaptation of foreign students to the higher school of Russia”. Thesis (PhD in Psychology). –Moscow, 2008.

[13] A. G. Larin, Chinese migrants in Russia’s history and nowadays. Moscow, Eastern Book, 2009.

[14] S.I. Modnov and L. V. Ukhova, “Problems of adaptation of foreign students studying at a technical university”. Yaroslavsky Pedagogical Bulletin, no 2 (1), pp. 111–115, 2013.

[15] E. V. Nikitenko, “Motivation of a choice of high school by foreign students (on the example of Chinese students studying in Khabarovsk)”. Thesis (PhD in Sociology). Khabarovsk, 2017.