Linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation of foreign students at university

Elena Murugova\textsuperscript{1*}, Marina Semenova\textsuperscript{1}, Elena Shirina\textsuperscript{2}, and Olga Gaybaryan\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Don State Technical University, Gagarin Sq., 1, Rostov-on-Don, 344000, Russia
\textsuperscript{2} South Federal University, 105/42 Bolshaya Sadovaya St., Rostov-on-Don, 344000, Russia

\textbf{Abstract.} The article deals with the issues of linguistic and cultural adaptation of students, the problems they face in a new environment. According to the results of the research, the patterns of connections between the student's personality, socio-cultural skills, academic performance and adaptation to new linguistic and cultural realities are revealed. The process of adaptation is manifested in the verbal behavior of foreign-speaking students. Experimental studies show the length of social and cultural contact, the connection with the former mates, who remained at home. This makes it possible to model the process of replacing old contacts with new ones, how this process affects learning, to what extent the formation of a team is determined by the socio-demographic characteristics of students.

1 Introduction

The problem of linguistic and cultural adaptation of foreign students to the university conditions involves taking into account the cognitive unity of linguistic and socio-cultural factors.

Leaving the sphere of communication and forming a new foreign-language team have a number of certain difficulties that need to be overcome \cite{1}. The need to study the problem of adaptation of foreign students does not need a special justification. It is enough to point out that the results of the study of this problem will contribute to the scientific determination of the feasible academic load on foreign students. Students of all levels of education and the maximum, purposeful use of them to obtain competencies.

The objectives of the study are defined as follows:

1) to study the novelty of the ethno-cultural situation at the university;
2) to study the novelty of the socio-psychological situation at the university, in comparison with national educational systems and changes in the academic performance monitoring system in Russia;
3) the duration of the internal conflict in these manifestations.

The effects of non-adaptation include unavoidable cases that are associated with overcoming the novelty of the living conditions of foreign students at the university.

If we consider academic work to be the main load of students, then these points can be called an additional (accompanying) load, which additionally burdens students during...
adaptation. They relate not only to overcoming the language barrier, but also to the ethnocultural and socio-psychological side of adaptation [2].

While the team of students is in the process of formation, which is characterized by the lack of stable mutual assessments and effective group control by tutors, students cannot study with the necessary concentration [3]. The formation of a team requires efforts both on the part of mentors of international groups and on the part of students. Efforts are understood as some kind of spending time, switching attention from studying to communication, sometimes in painful self-evaluations, etc. All these can in some way negatively affect performance and academic success.

2 Materials and methods

The process of adaptation is manifested in the verbal behaviour of foreign-speaking students. Experimental studies show the length of social and cultural contact, the connection with the former team, who remained at home. This makes it possible to model the process of replacing old contacts with new ones, how this process affects learning, to what extent the formation of a team is determined by the socio-demographic characteristics of students.

3 Results

The negative consequences of the socio-psychological aspect of adaptation are closely related to overcoming the language barrier. They come out in the difficulties of acquiring and maintaining a satisfactory personal status and preserving the “I-concept”.

Facing difficulties in learning puts at risks self-esteem, and behaviour takes on the character of reactions to frustration [4].

Overcoming the language barrier, in other words, breaking the dynamic verbal stereotype of mastering educational material presupposes an individual trajectory of socialization, which is based on modern methods of organizing learning and involves independent mental work of students in the languages being studied, used as languages of intercultural communication and learning. Mastering a language requires some effort. These efforts are reflected in the subjective state of students who find themselves in an unfamiliar linguistic situation. A. N. Leontyev believes that this transition from “rational to reasonable activity” should be carried out consistently in the form of a gradual increase in the degree of complexity of the material. In the Russian university, the way of presenting the material and the way of checking the assimilation is changing – mainly in Russian.

As the surveys and interviews conducted by the authors show, students themselves are aware of the threshold stages of overcoming different states of mental performance and the integral nature of their adaptation [5]. The analysis showed that students who have maintained academic performance at the level of national educational institutions, less note the importance of control in Russian and an increase in the volume of independent work (58.2 and 62.3%, respectively).

For them, the need to increase the level of linguistic and professional competencies is more significant. The closest to this category of respondents are the groups of students whose academic performance at the university has increased in comparison with previous experience. Most of all, the increase in the volume of independent work is felt by groups whose academic performance has decreased slightly and significantly in comparison with the experience of studying in national educational institutions [6]. For them, the first two factors of the language barrier are more significant — 64.9% of those who reduced it
slightly reduced their academic performance and 39.9% of those who significantly reduced their academic performance. All the students interviewed react to the novelty of teaching methods at the university in Russian. However, it should be noted that among the students with high academic performance (85 points and more) there are slightly fewer students who complain about the weakening of self-control and more about the large amount of independent work and the need to sort out controversial issues independently in Russian. A different attitude to novelty was revealed in the group with academic performance below 85 points: most of them suffer from a weakening of self-control and a large amount of independent work. The most significant factor negatively affecting the performance and academic performance of students is the inability to organize their personal work. 45.7% of respondents indicated it. The second most important factor is the large volume of educational material (66.1%). For an undifferentiated approach in terms of abilities and available knowledge — 11%.

Some differences are observed in the attitude to self-control and a large amount of independent work are observed among foreign students who admitted the inability to organize their personal work, 43% indicated a weakening of self-control, 36% — a large amount of independent work.

The vast majority of foreign students do not experience a decrease in mental performance at the university. Moreover, as a rule, in this category of respondents, few indicate a weakening of daily self-control; most of them (35-40%) noted a greater amount of independent work.

The survey showed that the language barrier is more successfully overcome by capable and well-performing students. Students who achieve high academic performance without much effort, for the most part, overcome it already at the preparatory department. This was indicated by 54.9% of students in this group. 31.3% of the same category of respondents are getting used to new methods and organization of training in the first year in Russian, without experiencing problems and difficulties. On the contrary, many students with mediocre academic performance, even those who spend a lot of effort on studying, continue to experience a language barrier in the I and II courses. And those students whose academic performance has significantly decreased, mostly overcome the language barrier, usually during their senior years (III and IV). This indicates a noticeable relationship between the nature of linguistic and cultural adaptation and the level of academic performance: prolonged adaptation negatively affects academic performance.

4 Discussion

Finding out the duration of the process of adaptation to university methods and the organization of training, depending on the progress of students, showed that such a dependence in successfully adapted students is small [7]. Namely, 79.3% with an average score of 87.5; 74.2% with an average score of 76.4 have fully mastered the courses at the preparatory faculty.

Students with high academic performance declare that they are already getting used to the new student team at the preparatory department. As with overcoming the language barrier, the vast majority of students (75-80%) socialize in a new team, overcoming ethnocultural differences quite painlessly. However, those who did not get used to the team at the preparatory department, apparently, hardly overcome these differences or do not overcome it at all until the end of their studies. For a few students (7-10%), this aspect of linguistic and cultural adaptation differs from overcoming the language barrier precisely by its resistance to maladaptation: of the respondents, 7-10% noted that they had mastered only the I and III courses, and 5-7% report that they had not mastered by the time they completed their studies.
The survey revealed the relationship between the duration of joining the team and the most significant components of the language barrier. Those students for whom a large amount of independent work is most significant, for the most part, are mastered in a team at the preparatory department (85.3%). And among the students, for whom the weakening of daily self-control over academic performance and the need to navigate controversial socio-cultural issues are most significant, there are more (over 20%) of those who master the team in the junior courses of the university.

Many students constantly maintain contacts with relatives and friends at home, and there are many (36.6%) who sometimes communicate with former friends. However, 11.4% of students noted that contacts had stopped. As for graduates of foreign universities, here one can notice stronger attachments than graduates of foreign schools, namely 51.3% constantly maintain contacts, and only 14.7% have completely stopped them.

Joint studies, regular communication in the dormitory, cultural leisure and various events and competitions at DSTU unite students with an international team. This is indicated by over 50% of respondents. This is also confirmed by the fact that a significant factor in establishing friendly ties in the team is the joint spending of free time and communication in the language of intercultural communication — Russian [8-9]. Common professional interests have a noticeable effect on students who already have practical skills in business or in production (the oldest age group is 24-27 years old).

Of particular importance in the formation of a team is the community of life plans and interests. On average, 16% of respondents noted this. Among students with practical experience, the importance of this factor for the formation of a team is noticeably higher: 22.2%, respectively.

Apparently, the problem of linguistic and cultural adaptation is also related to the fact that among the reasons for the dropout of students, the second place after academic failure is the unwillingness to continue studying at this university. Of all the expelled students, this group is 27.1%. Finally, it can be assumed that the problem of non-adaptation and expulsion for violation of academic discipline plays an important role here, and non-compliance with the rules of stay in the state is also possible (respectively, 4.7% and 2.3% of those expelled). Violation of established norms is often associated with insufficient involvement in the team, the inability to completely overcome language and ethno-cultural barriers, and the discomfort of being in an educational environment [10].

In the most general form, inclusion in the process of university life activity means adaptation, survival of a person in the circle of university norms. This is an adaptation to the requirements of the educational process, social and socio-cultural activities, standards of communication [11]. The result of adaptation is a certain degree of involvement in the relations of university life, reflected in the requirements for the individual and her ability to assimilate these requirements and implement them in everyday activities.

Studying the mechanisms and analyzing the patterns that determine the degree of inclusion allows us to more deeply explain the differences in the lifestyle of foreign students — in the ability of a young person to meet the complex requirements of a university lifestyle [12]. In this case, the degree of involvement in the relations of university life activity acts as an objective basis, a kind of foundation of a particular type of lifestyle. Not being the only fundamental basis, the degree of inclusion is at the same time the most important of them [13].

The study of the lifestyle of a modern student, as well as any other phenomenon, and a more complete understanding is possible if the mechanism of its functioning is investigated comprehensively.

The priorities of students can be seen in Figure 1 below.
Therefore, the study of a student's lifestyle should cover not only a positively developing process, but also the process of disintegration. This approach makes it possible to more clearly outline the framework of the lifestyle both in general and in each of the forms of life, to answer the question when, under what conditions, the implementation of the student's lifestyle becomes impossible [14]. In addition, having found out what hinders the normal formation of the student lifestyle and its development, which makes this process impossible, it is possible, on the one hand, to reach the level of practical recommendations in the field of improving the system of educational work with various categories of foreign students, and on the other – to develop a program of measures to further improve the lifestyle international students in general.

5 Conclusion

If the involvement of a young person into university life presupposes in each case a balance of requirements for the individual and her abilities to meet these requirements, which determine the successful life of a student at university, then its involvement is a certain imbalance of these requirements and abilities, making the implementation of university life impossible. Of course, not every discrepancy between requirements and abilities creates a critical situation, because of which it is possible to go beyond the limits of the student's lifestyle, although in many cases the resulting imbalance implies the possibility of conflict and the subsequent departure of a foreign student from the university.

An unfavourable ratio of external requirements and the ability of a person to satisfy them in life generates a conflict situation, i.e. such a combination of circumstances for a person when she inevitably falls out of the sphere of university life. This is how the movement of foreign students outside the university is formed, which means a break in studies, expulsion and a radical change in lifestyle, leading to stress and conflict. Presenting an alternative to the development and improvement of a foreign student's lifestyle, the conflict with the environment (linguistic or ethno-cultural) concentrates personality characteristics in a negative form, making it possible to better and more clearly formulate...
the framework of norms applicable to a group or category of students according to linguistic or cultural stratifications.

The conflict factors can be divided into two groups. The first group includes those that are related to the personality characteristics of the foreign student himself. These are general and special preparedness, character, temperament, cognitive and other mental processes, linguistic abilities, depth of the stereotype of thinking, etc. Thus, two types of characteristics are distinguished here: a) social, acquired in the process of education, and b) psychological and psychophysiological. In their totality, they largely determine the readiness of a person (both long-term and situational) to carry out university life in all its forms and types. Hence, the main components of the readiness of a foreign student arriving in the country are differentiated:

a) motivational (the need to successfully complete the task, interest in the activity, the desire to succeed and show yourself from the best side);

b) cognitive (understanding of responsibilities, tasks, assessment of its significance, knowledge of the means to achieve the goal, representation of likely changes in the situation);

c) emotional (sense of responsibility, self-confidence, in success, inspiration);

d) strong-willed (self-management and mobilization of forces, concentration on the task, distraction from interfering influences, overcoming doubts, fear).

The second group consists of factors that exist objectively in relation to the individual: socio-cultural characteristics, the level of organization and quality of educational work at the university, teachers, means of familiarization with the nature of the situation and the tasks being solved, etc. When analyzing the causes of conflict and non-adaptation of students, the role and features of the manifestation of subjective motives should be taken into account. They can act both as reasons for the discrepancy between the requirements imposed on the individual and its orientation, and as consequences of this discrepancy. So, in one case, a student’s awareness of his unpreparedness to study in a foreign country, lack of knowledge can generate a desire to leave the university, and in another case, on the contrary, unwillingness to study can negate, neutralize even a fairly high level of general education and personal linguistic abilities.

Thus, when analyzing the conflict and its correlation with the student's adaptation, it is of great importance to take into account factors both related to the personality and unrelated to them, both objective and subjective features. At the same time, the university is an open system, therefore, non-university factors also play a significant role in reducing conflict. They can complicate the implementation of university life or make it impossible at all, which must be taken into account when forming the university educational trajectory.

References