ETHNIC STEREOTYPES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF ETHNOCULTURAL TOLERANCE AMONG CHUVASH STUDENTS

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Abstract

The problems of ethnic tolerance and intolerance have always been a debatable issue. Besides the key concepts "*tolerance*" and "*intolerance*" most scholars deal with concepts like "*national character*" and "*ethnic stereotype*". The article is devoted to the study of the stereotyped image of contemporary Americans in the minds of Chuvash ethnic students in Russia and it aims at revealing intolerant tendencies among the latter. This is done through the attitude analysis of Chuvash ethnic students towards common Americans, herewith some practical recommendations on the formation of ethno-cultural tolerance of students being considered. As a social phenomenon ethnic intolerance is manifested vividly in conditions of socio-economic and political instability in the form of interethnic tension, the essence of which lies in the fact that a person begins to demonstrate a certain degree of intolerance towards representatives of other ethnic groups and nationalities. The authors experimentally reveal individuals with a transformed ethnic identity among Chuvash students. For this purpose, the questionnaire method is used. For a more in-depth study of the perception by Russian students of the American national character and the attitude of students towards the American people, the method of analyzing ethnic stereotypes is used. The emotional-evaluative component of an ethnic stereotype can have both a negative and a positive load. Ethnic stereotype is internally dialogical. Its main structural components are auto-stereotypes and hetero-stereotypes. The differences between auto-stereotype and hetero-stereotype reflect the level of mutual understanding between peoples and the degree of their psychological identity. In the structure of the ethnic stereotype of persons with a predominance of intolerant attitudes, the imbalance between the positivity of the auto-stereotype and the negativity of the hetero-stereotypes increases. Based on this provision, in order to identify persons with intolerant tendencies among students, the diagnostic test of attitudes (DTA) is applied, i.e. a method of studying the orientation of the emotional-evaluative component of the ethnic stereotype. The study showed that Chuvash students have some false ideas about the American people and sometimes even intolerant tendencies. The conclusion is made about the need for purposeful work with students to form ethno-cultural tolerance. Educational institutions are faced with the task of acquainting young people with the values of other cultures, teaching foreign languages in unity with the culture of the peoples who speak these languages, getting an idea of the peculiarities of their national character, strategies and tactics of communicative behavior, and fostering ethno-cultural tolerance. The study considers some psychological and pedagogical conditions for the formation of ethno-cultural tolerance among Chuvash students. A number of specific recommendations and measures are proposed to prevent intolerant tendencies among Chuvash ethnic students in contemporary multicultural Russia.

Keywords: attitudes, auto-stereotypes, hetero-stereotypes, diagnostic tests, ethnic stereotypes, ethno-cultural, foreign languages, intolerance, tolerance, tendencies.

1 INTRODUCTION

At all times of human history the issues of inter-ethnic relations have never stopped being debated even at times when one could hardly see any reasons for their popping up, spreading and causing negative consequences for peoples. To put it metaphorically inter-ethnic relations are like a fragile porcelain that can either crack or go into pieces unless handled carefully. That is why interethnic relations need constant attention, the more so as in modern multipolar world peoples are going through a difficult period of exacerbation of conflicts on interethnic grounds, the latter being caused by challenging social problems, such as economic and political crises, hot spots, spontaneous migrants' waves, etc.

Outbreaks of xenophobia and neo-fascism, ethnic violence and extremism which are truly recognized as the challenges of the 21st century may pose a direct threat to the security of any polyethnic human community or society on the whole. The problems arising from interethnic relations set new requirements for the education system, too. In compliance with these requirements the educationists set the goals for developing the work on the civil-patriotic education of young people, strengthening the spiritual and moral foundations of the society, and forming a positive ethnic identity. Ethnic identity in Russian ethnic psychology and ethnic pedagogy is understood as the acceptance by a person of certain group ideas, his or her readiness for a similar way of thinking and shared ethnic feelings, as well as the readiness for construction of a system of relations and actions allowing him or her to behave oneself appropriately in various ethnocontact situations (Soldatova, 1998, p. 74). Thus ethnic identity is considered in the work as "the cognitive-motivational core of ethnic self-awareness" (Soldatova, 1998, p. 43). The concept of ethnic identity is often associated with the words similar in meaning such as self-awareness and self-consciousness. In scientific literature ethnic self-awareness and national self-consciousness are defined as "a set of views, assessments, opinions of and attitudes to other members of a national-ethnic community manifested by a person in actual communication wherein the latter being viewed upon as a discourse actor. An in-depth analysis of the discourse in the light of the actor's attitude to ethnic and national relations enables to expose the characteristics of other members of a national-ethnic community expressed by the discourse actor. These characteristics concern also such items as the history, current state and prospects of the national-ethnic community development, as well as the place and the position of the members of the national-ethnic community among similar communities and the like.

The formation of ethnic identity occurs in the process of communication with representatives of other peoples. Ethnic (national) self-awareness is characterized by ethnic (national) self-esteem. The person's high self-esteem bordering on arrogance, his considering himself superior over other peoples – these are the features characterizing him as a person with a transformed self-consciousness that being referred to the type of hyper-identity. In interethnic interaction, hyper-identity can take the forms of ethno-egoism, ethno-isolationism, national fanaticism, which are different types of national intolerance in terms of their graduation levels. Any manifestation of national intolerance during intercultural interaction can be a source of conflicts and even, as history shows, human tragedies. Transformations of national self-consciousness by the type of hyper-identity are serious barriers in interethnic communication. In the presence of such transformations in ethnic (national) self-awareness among young people, purposeful corrective educational work is required to eliminate these tendencies and form a positive ethnic (national) identity.

2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Ethnic identity as a social phenomenon manifests itself especially expressively in a multiethnic society and more often than not far from being in its best form, especially in conditions of economic and political instability, stratification of the society into the rich and the poor. "Ethnic entrepreneurs" try to use these conditions to their advantage in order to achieve their selfish goals. They begin to publicly play the card of ethnic identity the essence of which is to increase the intensity of interethnic tensions in interethnic communities. In such conditions it is especially difficult for young people who have not yet grown to moral, intellectual and mental maturity. In the light of the above the following questions arise. How do the complex political relations between Russia and the United States affect the attitude of the citizens of multiethnic Russia towards the Americans? Does the constant media coverage of political events and classified news about the United States including all areas of life lead to the emergence of false stereotypes and intolerant views of and negative attitudes of the Russians towards the Americans? In order to analyze the attitude of Russians towards the Americans a special study was carried out that involved ethnic Chuvash students permanently living in the Chuvash Republic, the subject of the Russian Federation in the middle of the Volga river region. It should be noted that in spite of the fact that the all ethnic Chuvash students consider themselves to belong to Russians the way the multiethnic Americans consider themselves to belong to the great American nation we argue that the students involved in the research actually belong to the Chuvash

because they could not help being influenced by the traditions and culture of truly ethnic Chuvash along those of ethnic Russians on the whole. So the in-depth analysis of ethnic stereotypes and diagnostics of ethnic self-awareness among Chuvash youth was carried out to identify persons with the ethnic identity transformation according to the type of "hyper-identity".

3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The problem of fostering interethnic and intercultural tolerance is arising from the necessity of preventing possible intolerant tendencies among people of different nations and cultures that may be contacting on daily basis either directly in person or otherwise indirectly, for example via mass-media. These tendencies are likely to turn into interethnic conflicts unless certain measures are taken to remove them in due time. The concept "tolerance" has been in the focus of interest of the scholars belonging to various areas of sciences such as psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, sociology and some others both in Russia and abroad. The scholars have different approaches to considering the contents of the concept "tolerance" and applying it in practice.

There is also a contradictory opinion among the majority of the Russians concerning the concept "tolerance" and well-furnished Principles of Tolerance declared and adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on November 16, 1995. It is common knowledge that the concept "tolerance" is named as such by the corresponding noun borrowed from the Latin *tolerantia* meaning "a bearing, supporting, endurance". The words similar in meaning with "tolerance" are *broad-mindedness*, *charity*, *indulgence*, *lenity*, *magnanimity*, *open-mindedness*, *patience*, *permissiveness*, *sufferance*, *sympathy*. The derivatives of *tolerance* (*n*) that are also widely used in contemporary political and mass-media discourses are *tolerate* (*v*) and *tolerant* (*adj*), the opposites being *intolerance* (*n*), *intolerant* (*adj*) and *intolerate* / *not tolerate* (*v*). The ideas of tolerance have been known to Russians long before the adoption of the principles of tolerance. The word *tolerance* and its derivatives are borrowed into the Russian language from English by means of transliteration as *tolerance* – *толерантность* / *tole'rantnost'*, *tolerant* – *толерантный* / *tole'rantnyi*/. To understand the meaning of the new concept the Russian speakers had to pick up the appropriate Russian equivalent words as *терпимость* / *ter'pimost'*/ and *снисходительность* / *sniskho'ditelnost'*/ (Pushkin, Tenyakova, 2015). It should be noted that the corresponding Russian equivalents can't express all shades of meaning conveyed by the English concept "tolerance" as stated in "Declaration on Principles of Tolerance". The Russian equivalents for *tolerance* have been used mainly to characterize attitudes in interpersonal relations, not in interethnic relations. Yet the notion of tolerance in the world is understood too broadly today, especially in the West European communities, and states as well. In this respect it is worth mentioning the West European States' appeal to be more tolerant towards LGBT community members. It is hard sometimes to draw a straight and clear borderline between tolerance and intolerance. As far as LGBT community members are concerned they may be tolerated unless they in defiance of the law encourage teens to join their community. At times the European states' authorities seem to be inconsistent in pursuing once established principles, e.g. their attitude to migrants and refugees. Before the migration wave of November 2021 Europe used to welcome migrants thus manifesting tolerance to the latter, yet in November 2021 European states refused the migrants staying on borderline between Poland and Belorussia to grant visas, thus showing their intolerance to the migrants. All these examples and the like account for the fact that the manifestation of tolerance is many-faceted. Of all possible types and forms of manifestation of tolerance/intolerance those of ethnic tolerance/intolerance have always been on the agenda since long, and as a matter of fact in the era of globalization the more so as never before.

The Russian researcher N.M. Lebedeva working on the problem understands ethnic tolerance as "the absence of a negative attitude towards another ethnic culture, or rather the presence of a positive image of another culture while sustaining a positive perception of one's own" (Lebedeva, 1993, p. 46-47). The balance of tolerance in relation to one's own and that of other people, when the positive image of one's ethnic group correlates with a positive attitude towards other ethnic groups, is characterized as positive ethnic identity.

4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the attitude of Chuvash ethnic students towards Americans based on the method of in-depth study of the analysis of ethnic stereotypes, as well as to diagnose the ethnic self-consciousness of Chuvash student youth to identify persons with a transformation of the type of "hyper-identity". The objectives of the research were determination of the meaningful characteristics of the concepts of "national character", "ethnic stereotype"; determining the degree of positivity of the stereotyped image of an American; identification of intolerant tendencies in the student environment; development of some recommendations for the formation and elimination of intolerant tendencies and the upbringing of ethno-

cultural tolerance of students. Ethnic stereotypes became the object of the research. The subject matter of the research is the national characteristics of the typical image of an American among Chuvash ethnic students.

4.1 Research Methods

The material and research methodology are determined by the topic as well as the purpose and objectives of the research. Modern theoretical and applied works on sociology, ethnic psychology and pedagogy, and the specialized methods of analyses developed by Russian scholars G.U. Soldatova and S.V. Ryzhova, highlighted as "Types of ethnic identity" and "Diagnostic Test of Attitudes" (DTA) were used (Soldatova, 1998). The survey method was also applied.

5 FINDINGS

National character is a system of typical traits and properties inherent not to an individual, but to the nation as a whole. The concept of "*national character*" was entered into research from everyday life and has a collective, generalizing meaning. It is believed that it is difficult both to study and to find stable regularities in the manifestation of its content (Krys'ko, Sarakuev, 1996, p. 102). There are different points of view regarding this concept. Most scholars are of the opinion that each nation has specific psychological traits and properties, the totality of which is designated by the concept of "*national character*". The Russian ethnopsychologist V.G. Krys'ko considers national character as one of the components of the concept of "*psychology of the nation*" along with such components as *national temperament, national mentality, national feelings and moods, national traditions and habits*. In his opinion, the "*national character*" is "a historically formed set of stable psychological traits that determine the usual behavior and typical way of actions of representatives of a particular nation and are manifested in their attitude to the social environment, to the world around them, to work, to their own and other ethnic communities (Krys'ko, Sarakuev, 1996, p. 102). Elements of ideology and social psychology are intertwined in the "*national character*" that reflects the attitude of people to the world around them, to work, to their own and other people's ethnic communities. The national character is formed under the influence of the conditions of material life, the characteristics of the historical development of the nation and is manifested and refracted in the national cultural-national classical literature, art, oral folklore, etc. The people among whom the man was born, brought up and formed as a person is a necessary condition for his further successful socialization and existence in interethnic community. Having a clear cut idea of the national character of the native people of the communicative partner it will be easier for the interlocutor to build a strategy and tactics of communication, adequately respond to the partner's behavior, and avoid conflict situations. National character is often understood as a stereotyped set of qualities attributed to one nation by another. We often hear that Russians are reckless, generous and hospitable; Chuvash are hardworking, modest and unpretentious; the British are conservative, reserved and laconic; Americans are optimistic and businesslike. These characteristics are stereotypical ideas about these peoples. The concept of "*national stereotype*" traditionally entrenched in the social sciences is usually understood as a schematized image of one's own or someone else's ethnic community, which reflects simplified knowledge about the psychological characteristics and behavior of representatives of a particular nation. On the basis of this knowledge a stable and emotionally colored opinion of one nation about the other as well as about its own one is formed (Krys'ko, Sarakuev, 1996, p. 133). The word "stereotypical" has a negative connotation both in Russian and in English. It is defined through the word "stereotyped" meaning "conventional, typical, standard, devoid of originality and expressiveness". Although the problem of the objectivity of the content of stereotypes remains unresolved there is no doubt that they might reflect some kind of reality bordering on the truth, at least to some extent. It is believed that stereotypes do not arise "out of nowhere". To one degree or another they reflect in a certain way the specific national characteristics of the people, as they are formed under the influence of the socio-economic conditions of the nation's existence, its culture, way of life, and behavior.

The ethnic stereotype is internally dialogical. Its main structural components are *autostereotypes* and *heterostereotypes*. By autostereotypes we understand generally accepted stereotypes of people about a certain ethnos or nation they themselves belong to, while heterostereotypes are stereotypes of people of a certain ethnos or nation about people belonging to some other ethnos or nation. The differences between *autostereotype* and *heterostereotype* reflect the level of mutual understanding between peoples and the degree of their psychological identity. This is a very important dimension, because the greater the degree of this identity, the less opportunities for ethnic intolerance to emerge. Being formed in the border zone of cultural contacts on the basis of systems of ethnic ideas about the imaginary and effective features of one's own and other groups, the stereotype psychologically fixes the attitude towards one's own ethnic group, relations between ethnic groups and the attitude towards its individual representatives. Therefore, the area of

the ethnic stereotype includes, in addition to the cognitive sphere, communication itself. On the basis of the actualization of the ethnic stereotype as a system of representation signs, the behavior of the other side is predicted and, in accordance with the forecast, a psychological communicative distance is established, which actually regulates the process of interethnic communication. Ethnic stereotype serves as a means of rationalizing one's own actions and deeds in the system of interethnic communication.

Stereotypes can significantly affect the process of communicating with a representative of another nation, performing the function of a setting for communication. Consequently, in defiance of schematism and generalization, stereotypical ideas about other peoples and their cultural environments nevertheless might prevent possible ethnocultural collisions, weaken the moral blows, remove the culture shock. However, false stereotypes, i.e. national prejudices, the basis of which are biases and prejudices towards any nation and its specific representatives, can confuse communicators and bring communication to nought. National prejudices distort certain characteristics and traits of people and therefore can act as a serious obstacle to mutual understanding between representatives of different nations. Anyhow difficulties in establishing mutual understanding between people can lead not only to negative, but also quite positive stereotypes.

Americans are the residents of the United States. It is a nation that has united representatives of many ethnic communities. In spite of this the representatives of different ethnic communities have succeeded in forming nationally shared psychological characteristics matching the ideas of national identity. Doing our research we decided to learn how the Chuvash students of Russia imagine a contemporary American. For this purpose 90 students studying at the Chuvash Pedagogical University were selected and interviewed. It should be noted that none of them have ever been to the USA. Anyhow theirs was not a kind of "hearsay" knowledge, because contemporary students having mastered all necessary technologies might have access to unlimited digitized resources of all sorts to be found in Internet. Besides the interviewees had a course of the so called "Country Study" covering geography, history and many aspects of life in English speaking countries, the USA being included in the curriculum too.

For this purpose a special questionnaire was developed. There were about one hundred questions in it, some of them being presented here.

- How do you imagine a true American? Name five qualities that first came to your mind.
- Can Americans be called businesslike and hardworking people?
- Can one say that Americans are arrogant and self-confident?
- What are Americans' priorities and preferences?
- Can Americans be called simple-minded, gullible and naive?
- Are Americans kind and generous?
- Do Americans give expensive gifts to friends?
- Do Americans strive for cooperation?
- Do Americans try to help each other in everything?
- Are they law abiding citizens?
- Do Americans try to be formal when dealing with strangers?
- How do Americans feel about lying?
- Do Americans always try to be polite, tactful?
- How do Americans behave in public transport?
- How do Americans treat people of other cultures?
- What topics are better not to be touched upon when communicating with Americans?
- What do Americans value in people first of all?
- How do Americans take their lives?
- What values do they consider important?

Even a brief survey of the interviewees' answers allows one to make out a stereotyped image of a present

day American in the minds of the Chuvash ethnic students. The survey showed the following results. Being asked to name no less than five qualities that characterize a true American today the ethnic Chuvash students named the following qualities that are in their opinion really inherent to Americans. The lists of respondents included such qualities as *purposefulness, friendliness, enterprise, efficiency, perseverance, self-confidence*. Among the negative qualities named there were *arrogance, excessive self-esteem, commercialism*. Anyhow there were some "false" ideas about Americans including such stereotyped characteristics as *laziness* (20%) and *low intelligence* (23%). There were also directly opposite judgments, e.g. some of the respondents called Americans too *tolerant*, while others, on the contrary, called them *intolerant*. Among the qualities bearing a negative assessment there were such as *stupid, obese, indifferent, insincere*. The presence of negative qualities in assessing the typical image of an American accounted for certain intolerant tendencies among Russian students. Nearly 40% of respondents did not consider Americans to be *simple-minded* and *gullible*, while the other 60% of respondents agreed with this judgment. Most students believe that Americans are *kind* and *generous*. Half of the surveyed respondents noted the desire of Americans to be *cooperative*, although all respondents were unanimous saying that the prominent psychological feature of the nation was still the desire to be *competitive*. Almost all respondents considered Americans to be *law-abiding* citizens. About 70% of respondents were of the opinion that Americans are adherent to a *business style* in communication. Most of the students considered Americans to be *polite* and *tactful*. The students believed Americans to be *friendly* with foreigners, but several respondents characterized them negatively as being *hostile, distrustful, flattering*. The students were unanimous at naming a topic not to be touched upon when communicating with Americans, that being criticism of the United States in any possible way. Among the qualities that Americans value in people the respondents named *efficiency, purposefulness, sociability, kindness, openness*. The respondents considered *material values, well-being of the country and family, freedom and independence* as the primary values of Americans.

Thus the survey showed that the Chuvash students have on the whole a relatively correct idea of the peculiarities of the American national character, although there might be still some misconceptions about the American people due to certain prejudices that can't be excluded altogether, the more so as the interviewees have never been to the USA. We believe that the prejudices influencing the formation of a truly national stereotypes are known to be nurtured more often than not by the politicians of both states, and to their own advantage so that the common people of both states might be misled to have true national stereotypes of each other. It is known that misconceptions about American people encourage the emergence of some negative tendencies that are likely to lead to cross-cultural conflicts resulting in opposing "us" to "them". For instance, such trait of American national character as that of *competitiveness* is alien to the Chuvash because it has been in the spirit of the Chuvash people to launch any business or enterprise together with all community members, thus delivering assistance to each other both by words and deeds. That is why the competitive behavior of Americans is perceived as a disdain, or even an insult by the Chuvash, although this is just a psychological trait inherent to all Americans. A cross-cultural clash might also occur when the Chuvash expecting a very friendly and cordial communicative behavior may get disappointed realizing that communication style in the United States is often determined by a person's businesslike character.

For a more in-depth study aimed at understanding Chuvash students' attitude towards American people we applied an analysis of ethnic stereotypes. In the structure of the ethnic stereotype of persons with a predominance of intolerant attitudes the imbalance between the positivity of the autostereotype and the negativity of heterostereotypes is increasing. We have applied the method of analysis of the direction of the emotional-and-evaluative component of the ethnic stereotype, developed by G.U. Soldatova. The main instrument for measuring ethnic stereotypes including ethnic tolerance/intolerance is a Diagnostic Test of Attitudes (option B) (Soldatova, 1998, p. 75). This test is a set of 12 pairs of qualities. The students were requested to rate the degree of expression of the proposed qualities in typical representatives of Chuvash and American people respectively on a 4-point scale. The sign and value of the general emotional orientation of the subject is characterized by the diagnostic coefficient of the stereotype (D). Its numerical value is determined by the following formula:

$$D = \frac{\sum a^+ - \sum a^-}{\sum a_i} (0 \div 1)$$

where $\sum a^+$ is the sum of the assessments of all positive qualities;

$\sum a^-$ - the sum of assessments of all negative qualities;

$\sum a_i$ - the sum total of all marks.

The coefficient changes in the range from -1 to +1. Closer value to the coefficient +1, more positive the

stereotyped image is. Closer the value of the coefficient to -1 , more negative the stereotype is.

Table 1. Statistics of Auto-and Heterostereotypes.

Autostereotype	Heterostereotype
0,10	0,08

Table 1 shows that the heterostereotype of the Chuvash students in assessing Americans is on the whole positive, although this "positivity" is not very high. The answers of 18 respondents received a negative coefficient. This indicates that some students have certain intolerant tendencies towards Americans, possibly due to certain negative attitudes and false stereotypes. The value of the autostereotype coefficient is positive, slightly higher than the heterostereotype coefficient, but not by much.

Thus, the analysis of ethnic stereotypes showed that Chuvash ethnic students have, on the whole, a positive attitude towards the American people. However, there are some intolerant tendencies and false attitudes. Any manifestation of intolerance in the process of intercultural interaction can cause conflicts. In case they are revealed a purposeful correctional educational work is needed to eliminate these tendencies and form a positive ethnic identity. We consider it is important to learn in advance the type of ethnic identity a student has in order to prevent the formation and development of intolerant tendencies due to possible transformations of ethnic self-awareness in the course of time. According to Russian scholars G.U. Soldatova and S.V. Ryzhova there are four main types of ethnic identity which are named as "positive ethnic identity, ethno-indifference, ethno-nihilism and ethno-egoism" (Soldatova, 1998). The authors of the methodology classify the respondents as tolerant persons whose ethnic identity is characterized by the type of norm, or simultaneously by the type of norm and ethno-indifference. The group of intolerant persons includes the respondents with ethnic self-awareness of the "hyper-identity" type. This also includes the respondents for whom, along with hyper-identity, either "norm" or "ethnic indifference", or both at the same time, might fall into the interethnic disposition. For those who have expressed tolerant and intolerant attitudes, the preponderance of one of the tendencies, according to the authors, makes it possible to draw a line and divide the respondents into two categories.

Table 2. Statistics of Types of Ethnic Identity

Types of Ethnic Identity	Number of students	%
Positive ethnic identity	43	47,7
Ethno-idifference	39	43,3
Ethno-nihilism	21	23,3
Ethno-egoism	26	28,8

Of all the subjects of the experiment 21 respondents manifested tendencies of ethno-nihilism (23.3%), 39 respondents manifested tendencies of ethnic indifference (43.3%), 26 respondents manifested tendencies of ethno-egoism (28.8%). The results obtained indicate that, although half of the respondents have a positive ethnic identity that testifies to their tolerance, there are still students who can be classified as intolerant persons (with the transformation of ethnic consciousness by the type of hyper-identity), as well as persons with the transformation of ethnic identity according to the type of hypo-identity. The number of ethno-indifferent students is big enough, too (43.3%). We argue that ethno-indifferent students can't contribute to the harmonization of interethnic relations in classrooms unless the educators interfere so as to transform their consciousness into the positive ethnic identity type.

6 RESULTS

The results of the study showed that regular purposeful work with students on the formation of ethno-cultural tolerance is necessary. It can't be just during a month or so ahead of the International Day for Tolerance that educators draw the attention of their students to the problem of fostering tolerance in them, although on this occasion special Teaching Tolerance Lessons Plans are developed by experienced teachers, to share them

with other teachers across the world, as a rule via Internet (Five Lessons..., Tolerance Lessons...). It is a very good practice, really. Anyhow we are of the opinion that at any lesson teachers might touch on the problems of tolerance indirectly. At the lessons of science as chemistry a teacher telling his students about chemical elements or their compounds might remind them of scientists who discovered and synthesized them paying attention to their origin and the country they are from. The teacher might add that science is international, and the scientists contribute to world science for the benefit of all peoples of the world. For the formation of intercultural tolerance teachers might use the potential of all disciplines, especially those of the humanitarian cycle. The teachers of arts and literature, and languages while acquainting their students with outstanding national and foreign writers and poets might tell them a lot of interesting things about their works and personal lives. The teachers should tell their students that the writers and poets created their masterpieces for all peoples irrespective their nationality and race.

An invaluable contribution to the formation of a positive ethnic identity among Chuvash students is made by such a subject as the Chuvash language. The Chuvash language is aimed at acquainting the Chuvash students with the culture of their native land, to instill in them a sense of love for the "small homeland", pride in their native people and their cultural achievements. One of the objectives of studying the Chuvash language is students' mastering their native language as a means of communication. The students learn national-specific features of oral and written forms of speech, and the norms of non-speech behavior adopted in the Chuvash culture.

A discipline such as Cultural Studies introduces students to the rich cultural heritage of the peoples of the world, forms their respect for and interest in other cultures, contributing to the formation of planetary consciousness, awareness of the unity and diversity of cultures of the peoples of the world, as well as Russia's contribution to world culture.

The subject Psychology is of great significance, too. It contributes to teaching the psychological foundations of interpersonal communication. This is very important, the more so when communicators are persons belonging to different cultures.

The study of History acquaints young people with the rich patriotic and international traditions of the peoples of Russia and those of other countries across the world.

The discipline which is designed to prepare students for intercultural (interethnic) interaction is undoubtedly a Foreign Language. The academic subject of a Foreign Language like no other subject might meet the students' need for real communication with people representing other cultures.

Powerful educational and upbringing potential of the discipline Foreign Language can be successfully used in order to teach students to communicate with representatives of English speaking countries, observing all the basic communication rules, principles and requirements of general humanistic ethics, and on this basis to form their culture of communicating with representatives of other nationalities, develop the positive national identity, empathy and compassion, instill in them national pride and ethnocultural tolerance, respect for other peoples.

The educational impact of a foreign language on students' consciousness is different and manifests itself in various forms. The effectiveness of work on the formation of ethnocultural tolerance increases when it is carried out in the unity of classroom lesson and extracurricular activities. Although extracurricular work pursues the same goals as classroom work (practical and educational) it differs from the latter in that it provides students with greater independence, initiative, and creative freedom. Out-of-class educational activities are fun, entertaining and informative. Joint preparation and organization of evenings, concerts, holidays, gatherings, etc. contribute to team building, enable students to reveal and realize their abilities and talents. For the formation of ethnocultural tolerance a wide range of extracurricular educational activities can be offered, such as literary gatherings, television bridges, festivals of folk art, competitions for the best knowledge of the traditions and customs of various cultures, Olympiads, various forms of dramatization, game relay races, watching films and video films, celebrations using costumes, music, songs, etc.

Provided the work is planned and done correctly, all subjects of the humanitarian cycle can contribute to the formation of ethno-cultural tolerance among students, the main role still being assigned to a foreign language.

7 CONCLUSIONS

For the formation of ethno-cultural tolerance among students when teaching a foreign language, the following psychological and pedagogical conditions must be observed:

- Strengthening the communicative and socio-cultural orientation of foreign language lessons;
- Introducing into the educational process of the optional course "English and the culture of interethnic communication";
- Conducting classes in the mode of dialogue of cultures between the Russian Federation, on the one hand, and the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, on the other;
- Using linguistic material that has educational value;
- Organizing purposeful speech activity, providing active discussion and sharing opinions on intercultural problems;
- Using the educational potential of speech and non-speech behavior and etiquette in a foreign language;
- Ensuring the unity of teaching and upbringing, educational and extracurricular work.

Provided the above mentioned psychological and pedagogical conditions are observed, it is possible to purposefully eliminate intolerant attitudes and educate a truly tolerant personality that combines the optimal balance of tolerance in relation to one's own and other ethnic groups, which is an important condition for peaceful intercultural interaction in a polyethnic world.

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