

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN TEACHER AND STUDENT IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. In modern educational institutions, which are becoming increasingly multicultural, interaction between the teacher and the student acquires new psychological characteristics. The article examines the features of communication and relationships between “teacher-student” in the context of cultural diversity. The influence of cultural differences (for example, differences in norms and values, language barriers, levels of hierarchy) on the perception and behavior of participants in the educational process is analyzed. Special attention is paid to psychological safety in the classroom, the importance of interpersonal relationships for the success of students from cultural minorities, as well as the role of the teacher’s intercultural competence. Based on the results of current international research, the article emphasizes the need to develop teachers’ skills of culturally sensitive interaction and empathy. In conclusion, recommendations are proposed for creating an inclusive educational environment that takes into account the psychological aspects of multicultural interaction.

Key words: intercultural environment, teacher-student, intercultural communication, cultural differences, psychological safety, intercultural competence, inclusive education.

Introduction. Globalization and the intensification of migration processes have led to the fact that the composition of students in many countries has become significantly more heterogeneous in ethnic and cultural terms. Ethnic and cultural diversity is steadily increasing under the influence of these factors. For educational institutions, this means new challenges: it is necessary to ensure social cohesion and the successful integration of newcomer students with different cultural backgrounds. A special role in this process is assigned to the teacher, who becomes a key link in adaptation. Research notes that teachers perform the function of a kind of “protective network” that mitigates the influence of migrants’ past experiences and acts as one of the main mechanisms of social adaptation of new students to the school environment. In other words, students’ emotional well-being, academic performance, and success of integration into the group largely depend on how effectively the teacher builds interaction with students from different cultures.

Methodology. However, interaction between the teacher and the student in a multicultural classroom is complicated by a number of factors. Participants may significantly differ in *cultural norms of communication, language codes, expectations regarding the role of the teacher and the student, and value orientations*. These differences can lead to misunderstanding and psychological discomfort. According to a review of studies, ethnic and cultural affiliation significantly influences students’ perceptions of teacher behavior and communication style in the classroom. It has been shown that teachers may communicate with students differently depending on the ethnic composition of the group, and that the importance of a supportive interpersonal teaching style is particularly high for the academic outcomes of students from cultural minorities. In this regard, it is necessary to study in detail the psychological characteristics of such interactions in order to develop effective pedagogical strategies for a multicultural environment.

The present work aims to analyze the key psychological aspects of “teacher-student” interaction in a multicultural environment based on current international scientific literature. The article consistently examines: (1) the influence of cultural differences on the nature of pedagogical communication; (2) psychological difficulties and barriers arising in relationships between teachers and students from different cultures (for example, language problems, stereotypes, and prejudices); (3) positive factors and strategies that contribute to effective interaction (teachers’ intercultural competence, the creation of an atmosphere of psychological safety, and the application of culturally oriented approaches). Based on research data, the concluding section formulates recommendations for developing teachers’ skills of intercultural interaction and for creating an inclusive learning environment.

One of the most important factors influencing psychological dynamics in the classroom is the cultural norms and values that participants bring into communication. Culture determines perceptions of the roles of the teacher and the student, acceptable ways of expressing respect, communication style (direct or indirect), attitudes toward authority, and much more. In a multicultural classroom, different systems of these norms may coexist, which affects the nature of interaction between teachers and students.

A multicultural environment often implies the presence of several native languages in the classroom and varying levels of proficiency in the language of instruction. Language barriers are among the most obvious factors that complicate interaction between the teacher and the student.

Results. Even when a student has sufficient knowledge of the language, the nuances of *gesture language, manner of speech, and style of expressing thoughts* differ across cultures. The teacher should be aware that many children who are bilingual or multilingual have a unique experience: on the one hand, bilingualism can provide cognitive advantages; on the other hand, students may experience difficulties when switching from their native language to the language of instruction. According to research data, a significant proportion of students worldwide are bilingual, and even within a single classroom representatives of several language groups are often present.

This poses a task for the teacher – *to support the student’s native language* without opposing it to the language of instruction. Practice shows that preserving and respecting a student’s native language contributes to more successful acquisition of a second language and increases the student’s self-esteem. Moreover, the use of elements of native culture and language (for example, greetings or the inclusion of bilingual materials) can help establish a trusting relationship. Thus, mastery of basic intercultural communication skills – the ability to speak simply and clearly, avoid idioms and culturally specific expressions, and encourage students to share elements of their culture – becomes an integral part of a teacher’s work in a multicultural classroom.

In a multinational classroom, an especially important resource that helps overcome cultural barriers is the *atmosphere of psychological safety*. Psychological safety is understood as a state in which a student feels protected from humiliation or condemnation for their statements, is active and confident that their individuality is respected. Research in the field of educational psychology confirms that a positive classroom culture based on respect and acceptance is directly related to students’ academic engagement and success. In an environment where support is cultivated, where mistakes are viewed as part of learning, and where diversity of opinions is welcomed, students – especially those representing cultural minorities or immigrant students – demonstrate higher levels of participation in learning activities and motivation. For the teacher, an important task is to create such a climate: to openly declare the value of every culture, the inadmissibility of any manifestations of discrimination

or mockery, and to encourage *mutually respectful communication among students themselves*. If students feel that the classroom is a “safe space” where they are perceived without prejudice, they are more willing to engage in dialogue, seek help when facing difficulties, and are ready to learn from their mistakes. *Emotional support* from the teacher plays a crucial role, acting as a compensator for possible acculturation stress.

As researchers note, high-quality, trusting relationships with the teacher can have a particularly strong impact on the academic performance and well-being of students from ethnic minorities. Conversely, if a student feels bias or rejection of their identity, this can lead to alienation, a decline in academic performance, and even complete withdrawal from the educational process.

Effective overcoming of the described difficulties and unlocking the potential of a multicultural environment largely depend on the teacher’s professionalism. In conditions of diversity, it is not enough for a teacher to be merely a subject expert – well-developed *intercultural competence* is required, combining knowledge of other cultures, a tolerant attitude, and specific communication skills. Intercultural competence is understood as the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people of a different cultural background. For a teacher, this means the ability to adapt teaching methods to the cultural contexts of their students, understanding values and needs different from one’s own, as well as readiness for self-reflection regarding one’s cultural assumptions.

Discussion. According to modern research, *enhancing teachers’ intercultural competence brings direct benefits to students*: teachers with a high level of this competence more often create a supportive classroom atmosphere, demonstrate empathy, and achieve mutual understanding with children from diverse backgrounds.

Improving teachers’ intercultural knowledge and skills contributes to more effective communication, strengthens trust, and helps prepare students for life in a diverse society. Moreover, experience of working with a diverse student population in itself develops teachers’ confidence and flexibility: studies show that teachers who have experience teaching migrant children rate their skills and knowledge in the field of intercultural education higher compared to colleagues without such experience. This highlights the importance of both specialized professional training and support through practical internships in multicultural schools.

The growth of cultural diversity in the educational environment brings to the forefront the task of rethinking traditional models of interaction between teacher and student. The analysis conducted shows that a multicultural classroom contains both potential difficulties and new opportunities. The difficulties include differences in cultural norms that can lead to misunderstanding, language barriers, and stereotypes and prejudices that distort perceptions of students’ abilities.

At the same time, overcoming these barriers can enrich the educational process: by learning to perceive different points of view, both teachers and students develop cognitive flexibility, tolerance, and global thinking. A key factor in successful interaction in a multicultural environment is *the psychological awareness and readiness of the teacher*. A modern teacher should act not only as a transmitter of knowledge but also as a cultural mediator capable of connecting the different worlds of their students within a unified educational space. This requires developed intercultural competencies: knowledge of cultural characteristics, skills of adaptive communication, empathy, and respect for otherness. International experience shows that *specialized training of teachers for work in multicultural classrooms has tangible positive effects* – their confidence increases, the socio-

psychological climate in classrooms improves, and the academic performance and engagement of students from all groups rise.

Conclusion. The psychological aspects of interaction between teacher and student in a multicultural environment are becoming an increasingly relevant topic in educational psychology. By investing in teacher training in this area and paying attention to scientifically grounded approaches (such as culturally responsive teaching and the development of intercultural competence), educational systems can more successfully realize the potential of diversity.

When teachers and students learn to understand one another through the lens of culture, the classroom turns into a micro-model of global society, in which mutual respect, social cohesion, and readiness for effective cooperation in the conditions of the 21st century are cultivated.

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