

# ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ АДАПТАЦИИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ

## INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION TO RUSSIA OF STUDENTS FROM ASIA, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST\*

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The article presents the results of empirical research revealing the cultural specificity in the levels and combinations of various aspects of intercultural adaptation of foreign students from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Central Asia to Russia. Students from Central Asia and Latin America have the most harmonious style of intercultural adaptation. In their structure of adaptation their outlook plays the leading role. Socialization occurs at a deeper (intrapersonal) level. Chinese students have a controversial and least effective style of adaptation. Emotional intelligence plays the leading role in it. It's very important for the Chinese to have clear goals in life and confidence in their accessibility, but uncertainty in foreign cultural environment frustrates them.

**Key words:** intercultural adaptation, socialization, ethno-psychological features, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Central Asia, types of ethnic identity, strategies of stress overcoming, life meaning orientations, basic convictions, social distance, social roles, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, style of self-control, tolerance.

The urgency of the problems of polycultural education, intercultural adaptation of foreign students has become a topical issue owing to the growth of students' mobility, activation of the integration processes in the world education. Russia has been included into the international educational space. Russian education is becoming more and more attractive to foreign students, and every year the quantity of students, coming to study in the Russian universities increases.

The process of introduction to the new culture is often too hard for foreign students. The young people who have arrived to study, quite often do not cope with difficulties of the adaptation period and they go back, without finishing their education.

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But foreign future experts' experience of staying in our country is closely related to the image of Russia in the world, the attitude to it, prospects of the international cooperation. Therefore early diagnosis of the level and characteristics of adaptation, working out the ways of adaptation process optimization are most important. Therefore the research of the problem of adaptation to a new cultural environment represents a major theoretical and practical interest for Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (PFUR) where students from more than 130 countries of the world are trained.

The scientists of PFUR have carried out a series of fundamental and applied studies on problems of intercultural adaptation, ethnopsychological features of students from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, former Soviet countries [1—10].

The aim of the empirical research is to reveal the cultural specificity in levels and combinations of various aspects of intercultural adaptation of foreign students from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Central Asia to Russia.

351 foreign students from 5 regions of the world took part in the research. All of them were first-year students from 9 different faculties of PFUR. There were 189 men and 162 women. Age of examinees: from 17 to 25 years, average age — 21.3 years.

According to professor A. Krupnov's theory, we arranged all the considered aspects of intercultural adaptation into 6 groups, and for each group we used special psychodiagnostic techniques: *Operational and dynamic aspect* — Types of Ethnic Identity (G.U. Soldatova, S.V. Ryzhova), Indicator of Strategies of Stress Overcoming (D. Amirhan); *Motivational aspect* — Test of the Life Meaning Orientations (D.A. Leontev); *Cognitive aspect* — Scale of Basic Convictions (R. Janov-Bulman), Scale of Social Distance (E. Bogardus), "Who am I?" — Technique of 20 Questions (M. Kun, T. Macpartlend), Measurement of Social Intelligence (J. Guilford); *Emotional aspect* — Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence (D.V. Ljusin), Gnosis Facials Photo (J. Merten, J. Spang); *Regulatory aspect* — Style of Self-control (V.I. Morosanova), *Productivity aspect* — Adaptation Questionnaire (A.I. Krupnov), Adaptations of the Person to the New Social and Cultural Environment (APSCE) (L.V. Yankovsky, T.G. Stefanenko, M.S. Panova). We also investigated the tolerance of students as an important factor of adaptation using the techniques — Tolerance Index (G.U. Soldatova, O.A. Kravtsova, O.E. Khukhlaev) and Diagnostics of the General Communicative Tolerance (V.V. Boyko). We performed the statistical analysis using the techniques: Kruskal Wallis test, Multiple Range Tests, Multifactorial Dispersive Analysis, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, Factorial analysis.

The study resulted in the following main conclusions. In general, foreign students in PFUR have average (normal) **level of intercultural adaptation**. As a whole, they are satisfied with their stay in Russia, they have a positive attitude towards others, a sense of social security and belonging to a new society, aimed at enhancing social cohesion, assured of their ability, focused on cooperation with others, they respect the social norms of the current society. It is defined not by internal changes, but by external adjustments. Apparently, for short term migrants such strategy is optimal.

The majority of foreign students discovered high degrees of nostalgia and a relatively low degree of satisfaction with their adaptation process. Besides, Central Asian students are more adapted (they have highest *satisfaction, interactivity* and *conformity*).

Chinese students are least adapted (highest *alienation* and *depression*). And Chinese men are more *conformal*, *sociable*, *depressed* and *alienated*, than women.

The majority of foreign students have, in general, positive ***ethnic identity*** with weakly-expressed tendency to *ethnic indifference*, i.e. there is usually an optimal balance of tolerance in relation to their own and other ethnic groups which gives an opportunity to co-operate in a polyethnic environment. But all other identity types are also presented in each regional group. In particular, Latin Americans and Arabs are more inclined to *hypoidentity*, and Chinese — to *hyperidentity*. Chinese, Latin American and Central Asian girls use positive strategies more often than young men from these regions; while African and Arabian girls — more rarely than boys. Chinese girls show *ethnic bigotry* more often than boys.

In general, foreign students use *both constructive and non-constructive strategies of behavior in stressful situations*. Many students prefer *resolutions of problems*, they are somewhat less likely to choose a *search for support* but also they use the *avoiding* strategy quite often. Central Asian and African students use the active *resolution of problems*. Arabian and Latin American students prefer *ignoring problems* and hiding them from others. So they quite often try not to notice and not to solve problems, hide them from others and thus, only aggravate their problems.

Central Asian girls use *constructive strategy* of stress overcoming more actively than boys. Chinese girls look for support more often and avoid problems less often in comparison with the boys.

In the **motivational aspect** of intercultural adaptation we can distinguish conditionally three groups according to their orientation to life goals: group with high orientation — students of the Middle East and China; middle group — African and Latin American students; and group with low orientation — students from Central Asia.

Chinese and the Middle Eastern students mostly are not satisfied with their present and past life, do not often think about future, are mostly oriented to the life purposes, do not believe that it is possible to control events of their own life. Such a position may cause a rupture between goals setting and ability to realize them. Poor control of life and self-management also complicate the adaptation process of these groups of students.

For the young men of all regions it is common to be guided by the present and the past, while girls usually pay more attention to their future plans and goals setting. For girls the focus on the process of life is more typical.

In the **cognitive aspect** of intercultural adaptation we can see that Central Asian students are more convinced than others that the majority of people by their nature are kind and nice, the world is supportive and fair, they believe in good luck. Chinese students share these beliefs in the least degree. Africans take an intermediate position. Chinese and Central Asian young men trust in the benevolence of the world and in their own value less than girls.

The general level of **social intelligence** of foreign students from the regions considered is low. The students from China and the Middle East meet the greatest difficulties in interpersonal interaction. Latin American students better than others understand nonverbal reactions, are able to build strategy of their own behavior. Latin American and Central Asian students have a better ability to read nonverbal signals of another person, as well as to understand them. African students are able to find necessary tone

in various dialogue situations better than the others. Central Asian students (and Africans — especially) understand the norms and the rules regulating behavior better than the others.

In the **emotional aspect** of intercultural adaptation foreign students, in general, feel that they understand and manage *other people's* emotions better than their *own*, that they are better able to *control* emotions than *understand* them. So, students try to *manipulate* emotions without understanding them. Chinese students show the lowest ability to *understand and influence another person's emotional conditions*. Africans show a bigger ability to *understand and manage their own emotions*. In general, the emotions of pleasure, surprise, grief are better distinguished; while fear, disgust, anger are distinguished worse.

In the **regulatory aspect** of intercultural adaptation the students from Central Asia (in comparison with foreign students from other regions) have fewer problems in the regulation of their activity: *planning, assessment, correction* of it. The students from China have the *lowest level of autonomy*. In all the investigated regions (especially the Middle East), **girls** demonstrate a *better ability for the regulation* of their activities than boys.

The level of foreign students' **tolerance** is *relatively low*. They are more tolerant to various nonconventional social groups and less tolerant to other ethnic groups. Foreign students' intolerance is mainly manifested in their categorical or conservative estimates of other people, inability to hide their negative feelings.

A higher level of communicative tolerance is observed in students from Central Asia that could be explained by their cultural norms of communicative self-restraint, tolerance. Chinese students can respond to individual manifestations of the interlocutors in a more intolerant way than the others. At the same time they are experiencing negative emotions in relation to the interlocutor, most likely, they do not show these emotions. Latin American and Arab students in a less degree inhibit their emotions when something does not suit them in a person or in the process of communication. It refers to generally accepted notions of high emotionality, expressivity, even incontinence, which are typical for the Arabs and Latin Americans. Students from the Middle East to a greater degree express the desire to fit the partners for themselves, make them more convenient.

Thus, we can draw the following **conclusions**. Specificity of adaptation of students from different regions is determined not only by the levels of its different aspects, but also by their combination.

The students from **Central Asia** and **Latin America** have the *most harmonious style* of intercultural adaptation. In the structure of these students adaptation *their outlook* plays the leading role. Socialization occurs at a deeper (intrapersonal) level. Students internalize the norms of intercultural interaction, integrate them with their personality's value system, making their tolerant behavior relatively independent of the situation. *Emotional intelligence, ability to recognize emotions* and *social intelligence* also play an important role in the adaptation of these students.

**The main specific features of students from different regions:**

**Central Asian** students have *good* physical and psychological *discomfort tolerance*, which helps to reduce the acuteness of the contradictions in cross-cultural relations.

**Chinese students** have a controversial and the least effective style of adaptation. *Emotional intelligence* plays the leading role, probably causing the growth of confidence and trust in the world. These students have *clear goals* in life and *confidence in their accessibility*.

**Middle Eastern** and **African** students have a more *pragmatic adaptation*, aimed at helping to implement life goals. The *ability to self-regulation* and a *belief in controllability of the world* play the primary role. *Emotional Intelligence* has a supporting role. *Tolerance* and *belief in the benevolence of the world* are also important.

**African students** adaptation is based on social and emotional intelligence and constructive strategy of stress coping. They have conflict tolerance.

**Gender specificity of cross-cultural adaptation.** In general, cross-cultural adaptation of **girls** from different regions is *easier and more efficient*. **Boys** focus more on *past and present*, while **girls** focus more on *future plans* and *setting goals*. **Girls**, in average, are more *independent*, more *active*, *conformal*, more likely to use *constructive strategies for adaptation and coping*.

**Chinese boys** are more *active*, *conformal*, *depressed* and *alienated*, less trust in *the benevolence of the world* and less *confident of selves*, than girls. **Girls** from this region often use *extreme manifestation of their ethnic identity*, less *flexible* in the regulation of their own behavior.

**African** and **Arabian boys** are more *active*, *conformal*, more likely to use *constructive coping strategies*, more flexible in the regulation of behavior.

**Central Asian** boys trust in *the benevolence of the world* less and are less *confident of their own value*, less flexible in their behavior.

The general patterns reflecting the *dynamics of intercultural adaptation* of foreign students as a whole are not revealed. Intercultural adaptation proceeds spontaneously, its results are not always satisfactory that proves the necessity of the regular psychological work on the optimization of this process.

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## **МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ АДАПТАЦИЯ СТУДЕНТОВ ИЗ АЗИИ, АФРИКИ, ЛАТИНСКОЙ АМЕРИКИ И БЛИЖНЕГО ВОСТОКА В РОССИИ**

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В статье представлены результаты эмпирического исследования, посвященного выявлению культурной специфики в уровне и сочетании различных аспектов межкультурной адаптации к России иностранных студентов из Азии, Африки, Латинской Америки, Ближнего Востока и Средней Азии. У студентов из Средней Азии и Латинской Америки отмечается наиболее гармоничный стиль межкультурной адаптации. В их структуре адаптации мировоззрение играет ведущую роль. Социализация происходит на более глубоком (внутриличностном) уровне. Стиль адаптации китайских студентов — противоречивый и наименее эффективный. В нем ведущую роль играет эмоциональный интеллект. Также для китайских студентов очень важно иметь четкие цели в жизни и уверенность в их достижимости, но неопределенность инокультурного окружения их фрустрирует.

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурная адаптация, социализация, этнопсихологические особенности, Азия, Африка, Латинская Америка, Ближний Восток, Средняя Азия, типы этнической идентичности, стратегии преодоления стресса, смысложизненные ориентации, базовые убеждения, социальная дистанция, социальные роли, социальный интеллект, эмоциональный интеллект, стили самоконтроля, толерантность.