

Adaptation of International First-year Students in Multicultural Education: Role of National Music

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Abstract: *The article analyses the role of international students' national music in psychological support and activation of individual adaptation resources in new conditions. The authors, using psychodiagnostics and statistics methods, reveal psychological peculiarities of international students' adaptation to new conditions, and describe their emotional, communicative and behavioral characteristics.*

Key words – *adaptation, international first-year students, national music* *.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern science understands adaptation as a process of adjustment of a person's mind to objective surroundings factors, which is characterized by overcoming difficulties and developing certain personality traits. Adaptation is closely connected with disposition to specific activities, adequate and efficient adjustment of a person to the environment, accommodation to new social roles. This accommodation manifests itself in protective adaptation to social imperatives, as finding a way out of a stressful situation and overcoming physical strain, since psychological states (feelings of stress) arising from different adaptations to changes in the normal lifestyle are physiologically-based.

A person develops various individual strategies to cope with stress and adapt to a new situation in their life. For example, Selye compared a mechanism to cope with stress to the way our bodies react to poisons: either by removing them or ignoring them [9]. Drawing an analogy, behavior in new social conditions can be characterized as proactive when a person strives to win other people's trust in order to act as he or she wants in the future. Another strategy is a passive stance, which is characterized by the coordination of actions with other people and simple adjustment, etc.

Adaptation syndrome contributes to an unstable personality (crisis), which manifests itself as disorientation in time and space. Emotional stress looks like a lack of balance between being unable to maintain the previous status and having no experience to deal with a current situation, which takes much emotional strength to cope with challenging conditions of life. Hence, crisis is connected with frustration and such notions as coping and a failure to

cope, when chaos in life helps get rid of limitations and life patterns that have outlived their usefulness.

From personality psychology point of view, becoming a first-year student is an experience that leads to the reevaluation of one's identity and a change of life. Adaptation of international first-year students calls for a number of challenging psychological tasks, with optimal relationship between a person and the environment being the key one. Of utmost importance is understanding the multicultural society with its imperatives, norms and values, where one cannot be just a fence sitter. In a social and emotional context, adaptation of such students comprises new ways to evaluate the world and their own attitude to it using limited experience, due to their age.

Below is empirical research of psychological peculiarities of social and personal adaptation of pedagogical university international students, taking into consideration emotional and behavioral characteristics typical of new living conditions. We raise the point of creating conditions for personal growth and development, and students' identity formation, taking into account the specific role of their national culture, in particular, music.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Adaptation peculiarities depend on individual psychological characteristics and personal development level. Adaptability criteria are a person's survival and finding a place in the community, as well as psychological health in general, ability to implement one's potential, subjective feeling of self-respect and mindful living.

When entering a university, students often demonstrate typical disadaptability characteristics, which show in their behavior and emotional reactions. For example, babyish (immature) personal attitudes are a passive role in making decisions, which is represented by the wait-and-see stance, a limited spectrum of activity to change a current situation, while waiting for help from outside. Students can have extremely high expectations connected with their university, which, in its turn, can lead to disappointment, disillusionment, etc. Unrealistic evaluation of a current situation leads to irresponsible behavior, which manifests itself in looking for someone to blame, and that someone is often tutors, fellow students, etc. Blaming stance (learned helplessness) can serve as a defense in doing-nothing-

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situations, which, like a bad habit, can help get pleasure from being "a victim" of circumstances [10].

Personality problems connected with dissatisfaction with oneself and social environment have an impact on general emotional and physical discomfort of first-year students. They may feel depressed and anxious, and complain about insomnia, health and being increasingly vulnerable. Such behavior is, most often, a substitution and associated with an attempt to control one's own anger and get help from others.

During adaptation, first-year students tend to have inadequate self-esteem, which manifests itself in instability, sense of worthlessness, inferiority, lack of confidence in one's abilities, etc. Sometimes, self-esteem can seem extremely inflated against the background of particular arrogance, which has a compensational nature. Young people may avoid stroking (avoid support), which is based on taboos they learned in their childhood connected with a range of irrational neurotic inferences [8]. For example, a person should not stroke others (give support) because an active display of emotions is a sign of weakness. A person should not ask for support, even when absolutely necessary, since it is equal to "winning". A person should not allow being stroked (being supported), even when absolutely necessary, and, instead, try to belittle it by giving implausible excuses because "nothing comes from nothing", etc.

Considering the above, young men and women may demonstrate unproductive forms of motivation, which manifest in their tendency to avoid real or imaginary failures that are connected with their fear of changes. Such behavior is down to their fear of making mistakes, and that is why the image of a "martyr" protects them from realizing the necessity to deal with problems [6].

One indicator of disadaptability is low communication skills and poor control of verbal and non-verbal means of social behavior. This problem arises from the fact that first-year students' study groups are not good teams from the start, and group dynamics is unstable due to distribution of social roles between members of the group. Therefore, manipulation can be one form of trying to influence other group members for them to change their positions in the process of communication, in spite of themselves. Adapting to a situation that is equal to crisis and stress, a person loses flexible thinking (reflexivity) and switches to stereotypical perception, which activates automatically. Thus, the more stereotypes a person has, the easier it is for them to become a victim of a manipulator, who limits their freedom with provocations, deception, machinations and hints. If young men and women, who enter a university, are stress-tolerant to external influences due to their previous relationships at school, in their families, etc., such experience will be useful in making them leaders of the team.

For adaptation of international students to the new life in university, an important personality trait is being able to flexibly cooperate with other people and confront any destructive forms of interaction in new conditions. We are referring to a person's potential, an indicator of which is a well-formed self-identity, that expresses itself, in the first

place, through appreciating the centuries-old national culture of a person's own country and other countries as well. A person's potential necessary for adaptation to new conditions shows in accepting the new environment, against the background of unconditional love and attachment to their roots. As a result, tolerance to other national cultures is formed, since archetypal content perception scheme has a wide reflection.

A psychological resource to keep a person on a solid ground and self-confident, when away from home, is a feeling of connection to the roots of one's "family", which has a psychological meaning and serves as a basis for the self-image. Hence, appreciation of national art is always associated with strong emotions, which are vital for a person's harmony and integrity, with music having the greatest influence.

Music is subject to beat, which corresponds to human pulse. Certain perceptual schemes in a person's consciousness, represented by cultural and social traditions and experiences, form the basis for its perception. For example, when listening to the world ethnic music, sounds are especially powerful, since, from the very beginning, music has been used for coping with stress [2]. For example, the purpose of aboriginal ritual dancing was to protect primitive tribes from supernatural powers. A person involved in this dramatic activity, while in ecstasy, experienced their "Self" as a "scary" image (wearing a mask of a predator, spirit, etc.), which gave a feeling of comfort and confidence due to the sense of connection (unity) with something that had previously seemed alien and strange. In this case, ritual dancing and singing create an effect of experiencing one's "Self" in the current period time as a complete image. Completeness is a most important psychological factor signaling that the image loses its subjective-temporal value. As a result, a person becomes free from anxiety and fear, which are products of the conscious differentiation of "own" and "alien", hence, strange and hostile, which can do harm. Modern psychology describes an analogous correction method of anticipation [1], which is used to prevent stress. The method consists of consciously manipulating stress factors for a person to gradually adapt to them.

Considering the above, for a listener, music can perform a social and individual support function in order to cope with problems in life. In their consciousness, a person creates an intimate image of someone capable to cope with hardships, and engages with it in a virtual meaningful dialog. This forms the basis for finding an existentially justified feeling of freedom. Activation of archetypal images in one's consciousness, while listening to music, is connected with metaphorical way of thinking, where a person interacts with the world of national mythical images in general and experiences their subjective reality. We perceive the world existentially, therefore, a person is engaged in the perception process as a whole, including physical and social characteristics and values, which makes personal development possible. National music serves as a guide for this development, with its specific qualities – procedural, intonation pattern and dynamics;

procedurality sets the tempo of our mental activity, dynamics activates perceptiveness and sensitivity to music sounds, and intonation pattern connects mind and body – I sing therefore I feel – and activates self-expression through body movements [5].

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

We carried out empirical research, in which international first-year students of a pedagogical university took part. The aim of this research was to study their peculiar adaptations to new living condition. Total number of students was 51, with 32 male and 19 female students aged 18-19. The tasks were the following:

- identify groups of students with different levels of adaptation to the new social and cultural environment and study the differences;
- determine correlations between the types of the students' disadaptation to the new social and cultural environment and analyse factors that decrease disadaptation risks;
- study therapeutic potential of national music as a means to regulate a person's emotional state in the process of adaptation to new conditions.

The following psychological tests were used as research methods:

Questionnaire of personal adaptation to a new social and cultural environment (by Yankovsky, L.V.) [7] was used to identify levels and types of personal adaptation to the new social and cultural environment. This method was applied to study adaptability, conformity, nostalgia intensity (feeling of disconnection from traditional values and norms, and inability to switch to new ones), as well as alienation (as a rejection of a new community against the background of being preoccupied with one's own identity and status).

Questionnaire of cross-cultural adaptation (by Sholokhov, I.A.) [11] was used to assess the degree of adaptation to the living conditions and education in the foreign country. We identified psychological difficulties of communication in a foreign language, engagement of the students in the multicultural environment, and analysed how they evaluated their position in the community.

Social distance scale (developed by Bogardus, E., in the version of Pochebut, L.G.) was used to assess the degree of social and psychological acceptance of one another, degree of psychological closeness, which makes relationships easier. This methods involves the social acceptance scale, which reflects the desire to cooperate with other ethnic groups, integrate and even assimilate them in a society, and the social expansiveness scale, which determines intensity and direction of one ethnic group feeling towards another group.

The Tree projective technique (in the version of Gough, H.) [] was used to identify individual types of the students' personal characteristics. We studied such variables as family (structure, upbringing styles, relationships with parents and siblings. etc.); affective responses (joviality, sadness, pessimism, optimism, hostility, aggression, etc.); interests

(intellectual, artistic); role in community (self-assertion, opposition, etc.); social relationship (sociability, isolation, etc.); general development level (intelligence, attention, memory, imagination, diligence); type of activity (a person's interaction with the environment: relation to intellectual work and physical labor).

A *questionnaire* to analyse a person's attitude to national music (or favorite music, music that a person listens to at home, etc.) that can provide psychological support, act as an emotional link with home (family) and activates images in the brain that are significant for a person's development.

We put forward several hypotheses that there are differences between adaptive and disadaptive international students, with different attitudes to social interaction with people of another culture and language. We assumed that adaptations would differ, depending on the students' sex (male/female).

To prove our hypotheses, we used the mathematical statistics methods, with calculations done using the professional package for the statistical analysis – SPSS 19.0.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the level of adaptation to the new social and culture environment, we used the Sholokhov Questionnaire of cross-cultural adaptation. Table 1 shows the statistical analysis results of testing (on the basis of skewness and kurtosis, and their standard errors) [3].

Table 1 shows that general adaptation of the students to the new living conditions was close to normal (see the note in Table 1). The levels of adaptation were the following: no international students were in the high level adaptation group, average level – 29 students (19 male, 10 female), low level – 22 people (13 male and 9 female).

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS

General adaptation to new living conditions	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Std. error	Statistics	Std. error
	0.325	0.112	-0.606	0.334

Note: |As| < 1.96; |Ex| < 1,96 (at p ≤ .05)

Then, we used the Tree projective technique and studied individual types of the students' personal characteristics, from the average and low level adaptation groups. We used the Mann–Whitney *U* test to determine the statistical significance of differences. The results are given in Table 2. Table 2 shows a number of personal characteristics differences between the students from the two groups. For example, for the following indicators: family (Uemp = 0.042), role in community (Uemp = 0.038); social relationship (Uemp = 0.015). We can make a conclusion that, in the case of disadaptation, international students are afflicted by separation from their families, they need their emotional support, show a greater need of opposition to other students speaking a different language, and depend on opinions of their countrymen. We should mention that the trees of the disadaptive students often have elements of separation from their families, nature and places where they

were born. It is not rare to see in the pictures people who mean a lot to the students but who they had to leave behind at home. For example, one student draws a man and a woman under the tree, who are holding hands, and a swing, shrubs, that grow in the climate of their own country, etc.

TABLE 2. STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE INDICATORS

Indicator/scale	Mean value		Mean rank		Significance of differences (Uv)	
	Average adaptation	Low adaptation	Average adaptation	Low adaptation	Average adaptation	Low adaptation
Family	5.2	10.1	10.16	22.33	100.5	0.042
Affective responses	9.4	13.3	12.47	12.11	64	0.002
Interests	8.6	8.1	10.54	20.77	66	0.002
Role in community	7.7	7.3	12.40	21.19	92	0.038
Social relationship	11.9	2.3	15.09	14.98	85.5	0.015
Activity type	5.5	6.6	13.14	10.75	46	0.001
General development level	12.4	4.4	15.42	8.33	10	0.000

Note: Uemp is true at $p \leq .05$.

In general, the international students, who took part in this empirical research, demonstrate such personal characteristics as openness and high motivation for interaction. However, some elements of the trees, highlighted in the pictures, like a thick canopy with few branches and a thick trunk, indicate their independence and great aspirations. We can observe a limited control over their emotions, with mood swings and extreme outspokenness, which lead to arguments, rivalry and conflicts. International students actively demonstrate abstract thinking, thanks to which they easily learn new information (if a teacher delivers it on the communication level that does not require extensive language training), and quickly react to linguistic and other information in the classroom. They are self-confident and competitive and act as independent members of the group. In team work, they look like individualists, and, thanks to being active and sociable, easily make friends in an international group (in the case of a mixed study group), creating an easy-going atmosphere. In the meantime, they tend to trust their countrymen more than other nationality students.

In order to study the international students' ability to demonstrate a positive attitude towards cooperation with people of a different culture and language, we analyzed the results of two tests and a survey: Yankovsky questionnaire of personal adaptation to a new social and cultural environment, Bogardus social distance scale and a survey of interests in one's own and other people's national music.

To study any correlations, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results are given in Table 3.

Thus, we identified (see Table 3) a number of statistically significant correlations between social acceptance and adaptability ($r = 0.563^*$; $p \leq 0.01$), conformity ($r = 0.855^*$; $p \leq 0.05$), interactivity ($r = 0.423^*$; $p \leq 0.01$) and nostalgia ($r = 0.575^*$; $p \leq 0.05$). We also

identified statistically significant correlations between social expansiveness and conformity ($r = -0.313^*$; $p \leq 0.01$), social acceptance and nostalgia ($r = 0.423^*$; $p \leq 0.05$). There is a correlation between nostalgia and listening to national music ($r = 0.380^{**}$; $p \leq 0.05$), and a strong positive correlation between listening to music and depressiveness ($r = 0.479^{**}$; $p \leq 0.05$). We would also like to notice that the strongest correlation is between social acceptance and conformity; other correlations are average, apart from social expansiveness – conformity (weak negative correlation).

TABLE 3. CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL DISTANCE, TYPE OF ADAPTATION AND PERCEPTION OF MUSIC

Type of adaption to new social and cultural environment	Social acceptance	Social expansiveness	Listening to national music
Adaptability	0.563**	-0.216	0.240*
Conformity	0.855*	-0.313**	-0.096
Interactivity	0.423**	-0.220	0.165
Depressiveness	0.335	0.167**	0.479**
Nostalgia	0.575*	0.423*	0.380**
Alienation	0.519	0.154	0.346*

Note: Statistical significance: * – $p \leq 0.05$; ** – $p \leq 0.01$ (at $n = 51$)

Considering the above, we can make a conclusion that the more the international students want to cooperate with another ethnic group (people, nation), integrate and even assimilate in it, the more efforts they make to implement their potential in a community; they want to engage in interpersonal relationships, which, as they think, result in getting experience necessary for successful adaptation to a new linguistic environment. At the same time, the students who want to integrate in the new social and cultural environment try to maintain relationships with their new friends; they behave in such a way that allows them to get approval from teachers and administration of their university, and their peers and older students as well; they demonstrate their dependence on the group; they understand and accept the system of values and norms of conduct used in the new environment. The students who tend to distance themselves from the community demonstrate a desire to be independent from the group; they feel no need of attachment and emotional relationships with people; they reject the system of values and norms of conduct used in the new social and cultural environment. If social distance increases, these personal characteristics will gain strength. However, we should mention that all the students feel nostalgic, i.e. they all suffer from being uprooted from their religion and ethnic culture, and feel frustrated and confused due to the disconnection from their traditional values and norms and being unable to switch to the new ones. The survey results show that the students constantly listen to their national music, which provides them with psychological support. When talking to them, we learned that more often they used earphones while walking around the town, being alone, etc. It came as a surprise that none of the students, who took part in this research, mentioned that get-togethers with their countrymen, with their national music playing in the background, were significant in terms of their relation to their national culture. Hence, we made a hypothesis that national music serves as a means of psychological support for international students only when they are alone, without

any outside disturbance, even if it is a get-together with countrymen.

We studied correlations between the students' sex and types of adaptation to the new social and cultural environment; the results are given below.

Correlation values are given in Table 4 and Table 5.

TABLE 4. CORRELATION BETWEEN SEX AND TYPES OF ADAPTATION TO NEW ENVIRONMENT

Authentic language perception	Analysis results for types of adaptation of international students to new social and cultural environment					
	Adaptability	Conformity	Interactivity	Depressiveness	Nostalgia	Alienation
Male	0.204	0.408	0.281	-0.216	0.424**	0.450
Female	0.334	0.661**	-0.251	-0.211	0.716*	0.453

Note: Statistical significance: * – $p \leq 0.05$; ** – $p \leq 0.01$. (at $n = 51$)

Table 4 shows the following statistically significant correlations: between interactivity ($r = 0.581^*$; $p \leq 0.05$) and nostalgia ($r = 0.424^{**}$; $p \leq 0.01$) for male students; between conformity ($r = 0.661^{**}$; $p \leq 0.01$) and nostalgia ($r = 0.716^*$; $p \leq 0.05$) for female students. Thus, it is the female students who, due to their separation from home and family, and stress from being away from them, want to establish relationship of trust with other people, find a friend, who would decrease anxiety and worries connected with being in the new social and cultural environment. However, the female students, as opposed to the male students, demonstrate no correlation with interactivity, which means insufficient motivation for making contacts to improve their Russian skills, in the first place. Thus, positive dynamics, due to various reasons, in communication of international students will help them develop their language skills and learn about their university everyday life and social and cultural environment.

The female students say that they find it more difficult than the male students to get accustomed to the study routine that is a little different from the way it is organized elsewhere, for example, in Central Asia. Everything mentioned above can have an adverse effect on attention and, as a result, on academic achievement.

TABLE 5. CORRELATION BETWEEN AGE AND TYPES OF ADAPTATION TO NEW ENVIRONMENT

Authentic language perception	Analysis results for types of adaptation of international students to new social and cultural environment					
	Adaptability	Conformity	Interactivity	Depressiveness	Nostalgia	Alienation
1st year	0.204	0.408	-0.251**	-0.216	0.424	0.450
2nd year	0.334*	0.661*	0.281	-0.211	0.716	0.453

Note: Statistical significance: * – $p \leq 0.05$; ** – $p \leq 0.01$. (at $n = 51$)

The results given in Table 5 show that the first and second-year students differ in interactivity, which implies the degree of acceptance of the environment and quality of integration into it, while demonstrating confidence (or lack of confidence) in one's abilities. The first-year students have a negative correlation ($r = -0.251^{**}$; $p \leq 0.05$), whereas in the

case of the second-year students we can see a positive correlation in the case of interactivity ($r = 0.551^{**}$; $p \leq 0.01$) and adaptability ($r = 0.634^{**}$; $p \leq 0.01$).

Considering the above, we can make a conclusion that the second-year students have a greater focus on personal achievements in their studies and life, while being creative and integrating into the university multicultural environment. They try to establish new contacts by studying the country's culture and language. The first-year students' results are rather different, which can signal the first stage of the so called culture shock that is characterized by romanticization of studies or work abroad, enthusiasm and hopes of a glittering future. However, over time, psychological factors connected with the failure to understand local people become more prominent. It can result in disappointment, frustration and even depression. First-year students then try to escape from reality and socialize mostly with their countrymen. Second-year students are different in that respect because they are calmer and more self-confident due to having a goal and working for it, and control over their own behavior, which conforms to the norms, social roles and imperatives of the new environment.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we would like to mention that adaptation of first-year students can be successful if psychological and academic climate is favorable for development, since it affects everyone in the academic process: first-year students – teachers – tutors. Thanks to their effective cooperation, possible problems can be solved, such as insufficient motivation for vocational choice, insufficient psychological readiness for future profession (for example, motives for entering university can be the following: to keep a friend's company, to obey parents' decision, etc.). Sometimes, first-year students lack skills to regulate their mental health and to choose an optimal study and recreation time in new conditions.

This research shows that there are psychological differences between disadaptive and adaptive international students, which manifest themselves in the need of family support and approval of close people. In general, international students have a positive attitude to social interaction in a multicultural academic environment. As for specific types of adaptation, considering age and sex of students, female students are more focused on conformity than male students, and have psychological problems with making decisions. We found out that second-year students are more focused on interaction with other people than first-year students.

This research shows that, overall, students have a strong feeling of nostalgia. One important means of psychological support is listening to national music, which performs a number of functions, such as supporting adaptation skills development of a person in new conditions, creating a positive attitude to other people by breaking language barriers, and finding personal meanings in existential understanding of the world.

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