

## STUDENTS' TOLERANCE FORMATION IN MULTIETHNIC EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS IN EFL CLASS

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### **Abstract**

Today tolerance is a fundamental universal principle the world, in general, and the individual community, in particular, should be based on. By the beginning of the XXI century, the ethnic component of tolerance has come to be of particular importance. A great role in breeding tolerance is played by education. The present day system of Russian education has to meet this challenge and to offer diverse ways of solving the problem of forming students' tolerance. The authors of this study present their own teaching technique of students' tolerance formation in multiethnic environments in EFL class. Role play has been chosen as a teaching method of forming students' tolerance in EFL class. Literature review allowed the authors to find out that a lot of scholars nominate role play to be an effective method in teaching foreign languages, although role play has not been implemented as a tool to educate tolerance in EFL class so far. 78 students from two Kazan gymnasiums ranked among 100 best schools of Russia volunteered to participate in the experiment. Study materials and instruments aimed at forming students' tolerance in multiethnic environments in EFL class were investigated. The copyright questionnaire made it possible to reveal and select tolerance features that assisted the researchers to build up the role play plots. The authors came to the conclusion that role play contributes to determining the behavior of a single representative of the ethnic group in multiethnic educational environments and to developing his arbitrary behavior. The experiment, conducted in this study, validated the authors' hypothesis that role play can significantly affect the exposure of the national character of its participants for role play creates an emotional-and-psychological background manifestation of the national character. Role play plots can be used in EFL classes, although all of them can be adapted to better suit the needs and interests of students.

*Key words:* arbitrary behavior, ethnic component of tolerance, multiethnic educational environments, role play, tolerance features, tolerance education in EFL class.

### **1. Introduction**

A significant role of educating students' tolerance is universally recognized. Researchers and educators in Russia, investigating the problem, try diverse ways of students' tolerance formation. In this paper, a role playing technique is offered as a method for forming students' tolerance in EFL class and is



considered to be the basis and prerequisite for the formation of attitudes and stereotypes in multiethnic educational environments.

A great many scholars (Zhukovskaya, 1975; Bogomolova, 1977; Anikeeva, 1987; Petrusinskyi, 1994; Elkonin, 1999; Vygotsky, 2004; Slastenin & Kolesnikova, 2006; Uzbekova, 2006; Avdulova, 2008) underline a variety of functions that role play can fulfill. The use of role play in class contributes to the formation of students' solidarity, for such type of games requires, on the one hand, personal responsibility and, on the other hand, mutual understanding and a lot of support on the part of students who have to be "one team" (Zhukovskaya, 1975). Bogomolova (1977) considers role play to be a tool that develops learner autonomy and enables learners to realize their potential. Very close to that is Anikeeva's (1987) point of view who claims that role play provides students with opportunities for individual learning. In Petrusinskyi's point of view (1994), role play creates a supportive atmosphere in class which plays an important role in developing students' communicative skills. According to Elkonin (1999), an educational game, role play including, performs 4 major functions: motivates students; increases personal knowledge; develops mental abilities; shapes arbitrary behavior.

The outstanding Russian psychologist and the founder of a theory of human cultural and bio-social development Vygotsky (2004) states that a game, being the leading form of activity for a child, satisfies his needs and aspirations and encourages him to act. Slastenin & Kolesnikova (2006) agree on the point that role play makes it possible for teachers to build a good rapport with their students so that to create an environment conducive to conversing. Uzbekova (2006) insists that games help foster higher-order thinking skills on the part of learners. Avdulova (2008) is sure that through the game a child's mindset is gradually adjusting to the upcoming changes in his life and in his relationships with peers and adults.

It is common knowledge that role play is based on interpersonal relations, which are realized in the process of communication. As a model of interpersonal communication, role-play can stimulate communication in a foreign language, as well. Literature review on Methodology showed that researchers in education for the last 30 years have advocated the idea that role play meets students' need in getting opportunities to express their opinions, personal and cultural, in authentic settings which role play plots suggest, and develops their positive mental attitude, although no investigation has been made to study the effectiveness of role play in forming students' tolerance in EFL class.

In this research the authors put forward and tested the hypothesis that the implementation of role play as a teaching method of students' tolerance formation enables students to consider and explore their values and others' opinions on relevant, interesting, controversial topics offered in role play plots. It was proved that role play teaches students to defend their point of view and to take the initiative in finding an optimal solution under certain conditions. Moreover, this activity is especially useful as a tool for aiding cross-cultural understanding.

## **2. Materials and study instruments**

### **2.1 Research sites**

Two Kazan High schools: Gymnasium # 19 and Gymnasium # 122. Both educational institutions are ranked among 100 best schools of Russia. 78 students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Russian - 42 %, Tatar - 39 %, Jew - 9 %, Azerbaijanian - 5 %, Ukrainian -3 %, Chuvash - 2%) from these High schools volunteered to participate in the experiment conducted by the authors.

### **2.2 Research method**

The leading research method the authors implemented in this study was role play. Role play is a unique technique that allows freely express personal and cultural values, converse in a discourse atmosphere. This activity lends itself to discussing values and opinions of any type, particularly in classes where students are having a difficult time seeing different sides of an issue. Role play encourages spontaneous speaking, group work and organization in a collaborative way. A teacher can choose to take a controlling role, giving directions or instructions at the front of the class or to take a less controlling role, monitoring learners as they work. Being less controlled practice, role play gives a learner more autonomy and independence.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**



In the context of teaching tolerance in multiethnic educational environments, the authors worked out an optional class for students of Gymnasium # 19 and Gymnasium # 122 aimed at discussing, role playing and assessing different behavioral patterns. The content of the class embraces a wide range of urgent issues for the modern world: global inequality, ethnic and religious problems, age and gender differences and discrimination, personal identification.

The outline of the study includes studying and role playing concrete examples; investigating the state of issue in Kazan (Russia) on the basis of authentic mass media material; discussing, role playing and assessing feasible scenarios for the future. Hot issues, for example, "Discussion questions":

1. If you could give the leader of your country some advice, what would it be?
2. What should I do to make more money?
3. What should someone do to be happy?
4. What three pieces of advice will you give to your children?
5. Who was the wisest person in your country's history? What kind of advice did they give? etc. lead to debates that are held with the rules of tolerant cooperation being followed.

The teaching technique implemented in EFL class fosters creating a tolerant area of collaboration. The emotional effect of the discussed issues make students leave the formal learning context and apply knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom in organizing different socially important activities for the community. The worked out algorithm of actions facilitates transforming tolerance as the value into the behavioral pattern.

#### 2.4 Experiment

In accordance with the set objectives in the study, the experiment was conducted with the aim to monitor, analyze and assess the effectiveness of role play in the formation of students' tolerance within different multiethnic groups.

The experimental training was conducted for students of the 7-th grade (2 control groups and 2 experimental groups) during two semesters: Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 in two gymnasiums.

78 students took part in the experiment: 2 control groups - 52 students and 2 experimental groups - 26 students.

The experiment consisted of three phases: ascertaining; forming; control.

At the ascertaining stage, a questionnaire was offered to the students to reveal their initial tolerance index. The questionnaire consisted of seven multiple-choice items.

All these data were taken into account during the experiment in the organization of the educational process at the formative stage where various role-playing games proposed by the authors were implemented into EFL class.

The control experiment was carried out to assess the effectiveness of the implemented role play into practice as a teaching method of students' tolerance formation in multiethnic educational environments in EFL class. The updated questionnaire was used to reveal students' answers on the problem of tolerance formation within multiethnic groups.

#### 3. Summary

As it was mentioned above, a questionnaire at the ascertaining stage revealed students' initial tolerance index. The answers to seven multiple-choice items of the questionnaire showed the average level of tolerance formation both in control and experimental groups. The results of a survey in the control and experimental groups are shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.

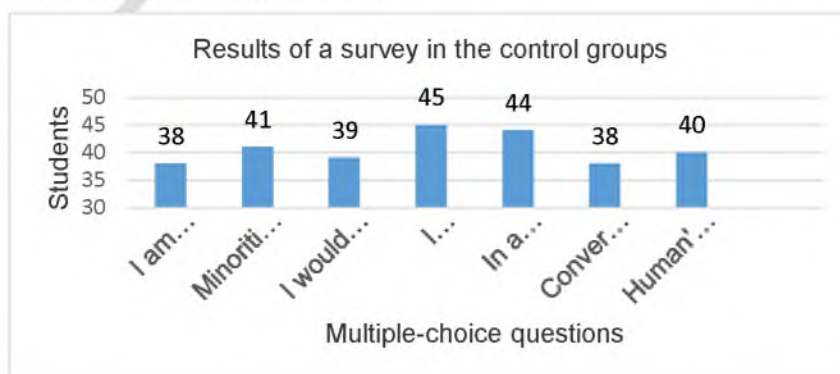


Fig. 1 Results of a survey in the control groups

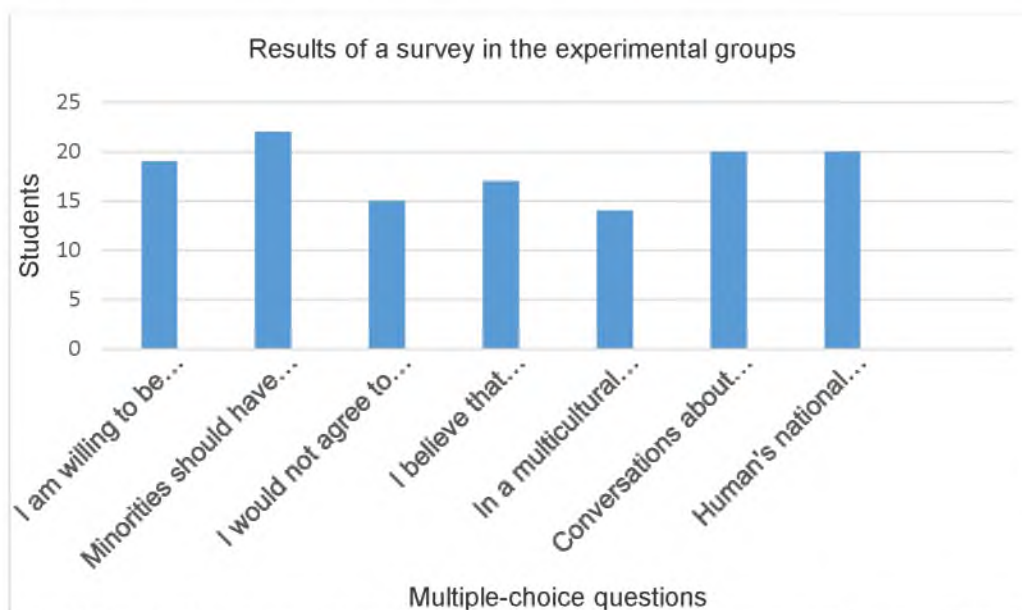


Fig. 2 Results of a survey in the experimental groups

The answers were evaluated by a special scale of assessment of five categories:

- strongly disagree;
- disagree;
- rather disagree;
- agree;
- totally agree.

As can be seen from the diagrams, the tolerance index is concentrated between “disagree - rather disagree” scales that proves less than half of the students are unaware of their level of tolerance with respect to various multiethnic groups.

At the formative stage of the experiment the following selected key criteria factors, as seen by the authors, serve as the basis of the formation of tolerant relations within multiethnic groups: cooperation and solidarity; co-respect within multiethnic groups; commitments to national traditions and culture; received positive lexis in multiethnic communication. The results of the experiment in the control and experimental groups are shown in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4.

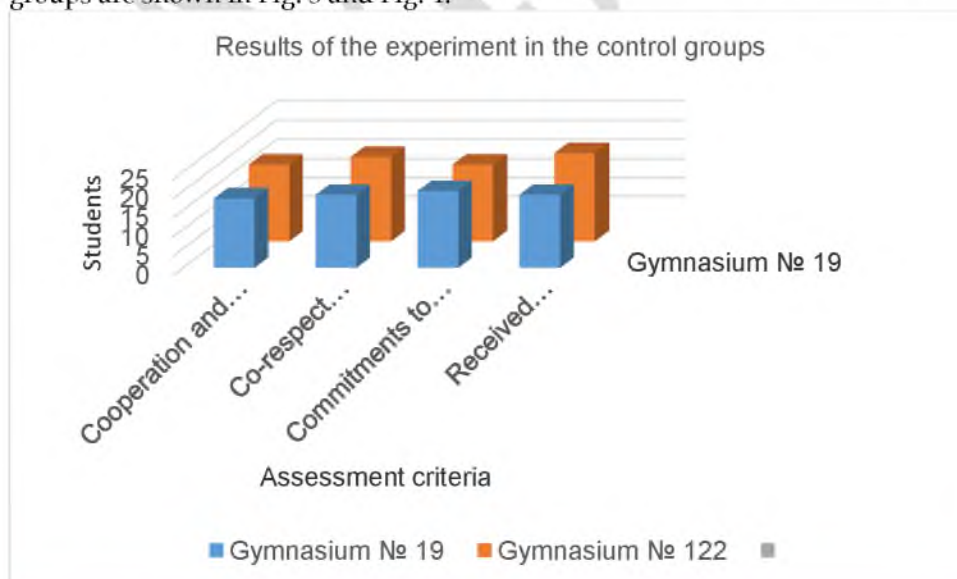




Fig. 3 Results of the experiment in the control groups

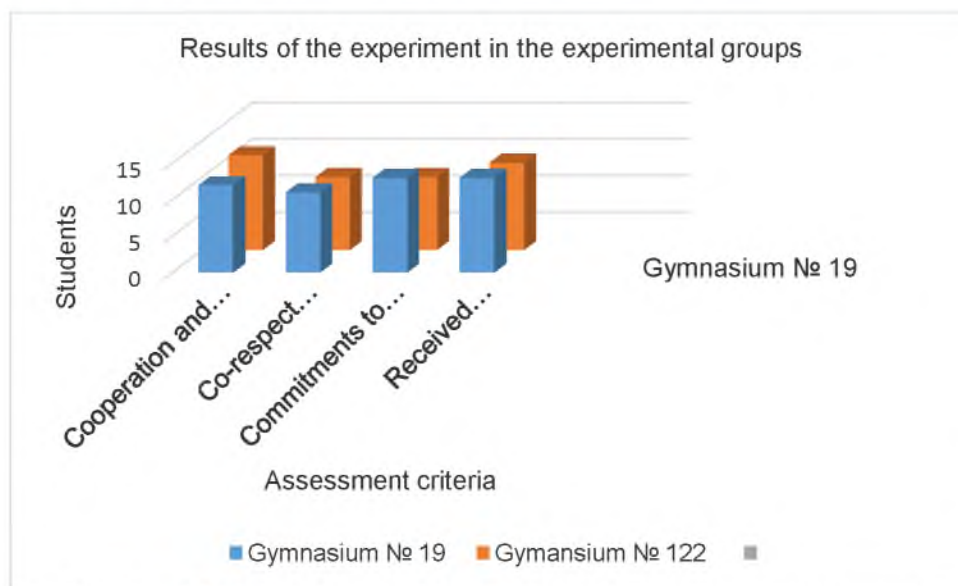


Fig. 4 Results of the experiment in the experimental groups

The control experiment was aimed at assessing the effectiveness of role play as a teaching method of students' tolerance formation in multiethnic educational environments in EFL class. The responses to the updated questionnaire showed the positive influence of role play in developing positive, tolerant attitude of students to each other in a multiethnic community.

Comparative graphs of ascertaining and control stages of the experiment in gymnasium № 19 and gymnasium № 122 are given in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6.

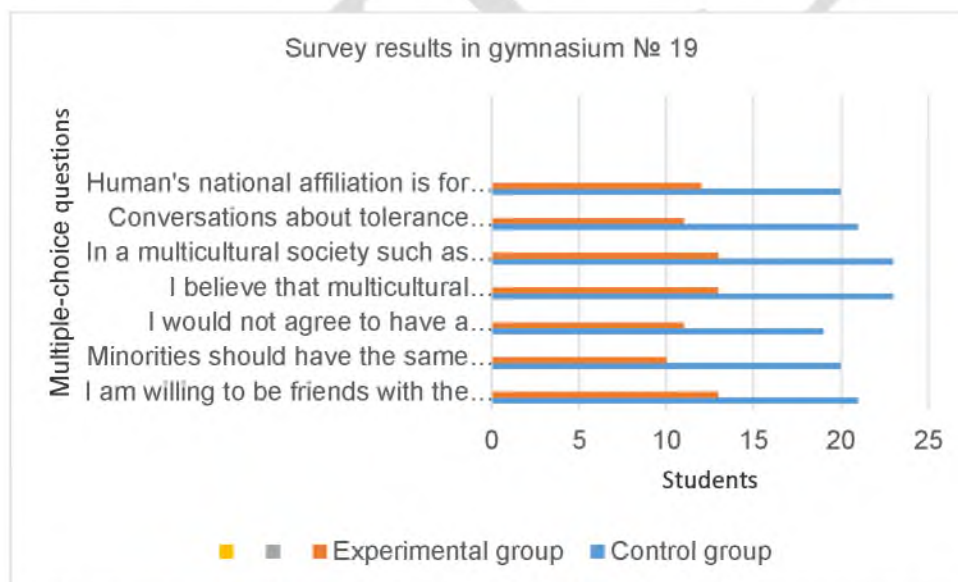


Fig. 5 Survey results of the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment in gymnasium № 19.

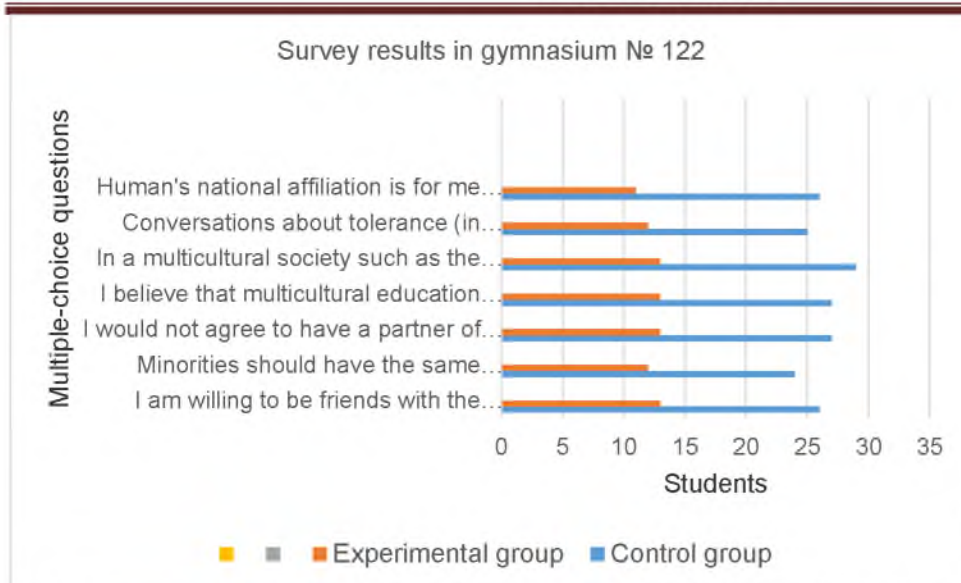


Fig. 6 Survey results of the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment in gymnasium № 122.

Comparing the results of both (ascertaining and control) stages we obtained discrepant results. Overall, they confirmed the positive trend in the change of students' tolerant attitude to each other via role play method. Significantly, the quality of knowledge of students in the English language increased that, to some respect, can prove the formation of educational abilities and skills.

### Conclusion

As shown by the results of role play's implementation in EFL classes, role play contributes to positive changes in students' speech in both qualitative (diversity of dialogical unities, partners' initiative, emotional expression) and quantitative (speech correctness, speech volume, fluency). Thus, role-play, on the one hand, is one of the most effective methods of implementation of the communicative principle in teaching a foreign language, on the other hand, is a powerful tool of tolerance upbringing within various multiethnic groups. Role play is highly motivating, because it contains an element of a game and the unpredictability of its outcome. In addition, students can see the possibility of the situation, played out in the role play, in real life. It does not give a mechanical exercise in the use of lexical units and grammatical structures.

Summing up, we can say that the hypothesis put forward by the authors was fully confirmed. The experiment clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of using role play in EFL class as a teaching method of students' tolerance formation in multiethnic educational environments.

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