
Integrating Migrant Children into Host Country Community: Target Audiences Survey in Russia

E. Zvereva¹, K. Chilingaryan², R. Gorbatenko³

Abstract:

Modern society develops in complex geopolitical conditions, characterized by the processes of globalization, ethnic and religious conflicts, outbreaks of xenophobia and extremism, manifestations of various forms of violence and terror.

Migration processes in the modern world are intensifying, the number of refugees, forced due to ethnic, religious conflicts to move to other countries, is growing. The number of religious believers is increasing, religions are splitting into smaller units, new religious and confessional groups and trends are being created. The result of the processes of globalization is multiculturalism.

This is what determines the relevance of this study, the topic of which is of practical importance for the economic, social and cultural aspects of the life of the state and its population.

The research goal is to compare opinions and expectations within international academic data and provide possible recommendations for further actions in the field that can be relevant both for Russian and international educational community. The research methodology rested on empirical approach and used interviews as the main tool for analysis.

Keywords: *Language socialization, migration policy, multicultural education, integration of migrants, adapting migrant children.*

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¹Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – RUDN University, Moscow, Russia, frakatr@yandex.ru

²Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – RUDN University, Moscow, Russia, chili1@yandex.ru

³Peoples' Friendship University of Russia – RUDN University, Moscow, Russia, gorbatenko_rg@pfur.ru

1. Introduction

Migration processes in the modern world are intensifying, the number of refugees, forced due to ethnic, ethnic-religious conflicts to move to other countries, is growing. Modern society faces the increase of multiculturalism. Regardless of the strategic choice, every country should be prepared for the influx of foreign migrants to increase significantly. European refugee crisis of 2015-2018 is a clear example of the above. Within the above framework one of the most important aims of the activities of state authorities is a consistent language policy, language regulation and effective measures to influence the language processes that are taking place in the society (Zuniga *et al.*, 2017; Wodak and Boukala, 2015).

At the same time there is a growing need to use linguistic knowledge for modelling and forecasting the phenomena of the humanitarian sphere and solving issues aimed at developing the personality of a human and harmonizing social relations with the help of language (Atabekova and Gorbatenko 2017; Berry and Sam, 2013; Norton, 2013).

Most researchers agree that it is the language and culture that are the main mechanisms for the adaptation and integration of migrants in the host society. Only clearly formulated legislation, the accessibility of the cultural and educational sphere will contribute to the successful adaptation and integration of migrants (Dimitrova *et al.*, 2017; Sam, 2018).

The present paper strives to explore current practices regarding minor migrants' integration into Russian community. The analysis of various studies in the field of adaptation of migrants and their children in Russia makes it clear that the issue of effectiveness of integration of migrant children into the national community is considered crucial for national security, health, and education, economic and social well-being. The issues related to the integration of children from migrant families into the Russian educational environment are considered within the Federal Targeted Program for the Development of Education (Decree, 2016-2020; Guskova *et al.*, 2016).

Russian schools' curricula assume classes for migrant children, however there are only two hours per week in the curriculum that stands far from the necessary minimum for adequate learning outcomes. This can be explained by the dominance of the needs of school population majority that comprises those who do not need classes of Russian as a foreign language. Therefore, crucial role in training belongs to additional education on grounds of public schools, educational and cultural centers in cities across Russia.

The present paper goal is to conduct pilot survey of migrant children, their parents and migrant minors' teachers regarding their views and expectation in the area of learning Russian as a foreign language.

The research hypothesis assumes that opinions and goals of minors, their parents and teachers differ regarding the study of the Russian as a foreign language.

2. Research methodology

The empirical case studies were based on Moscow Nekrasov library, where classes of Russian as a foreign language are conducted for migrant children. The classes were organized as additional education for migrant children under the current Russian legislation in force. Such classes are sponsored from the Russian entities' budgets.

The research methodology rested on qualitative approach and used the interviews as the main tool. The interviews were conducted during 3-year period (2015-2015). The respondents' target audiences included migrant children, their parents and teachers who held language classes. There were three parallel lines of interviews with minor migrants, their parents and teachers.

As for minors, there were interviews conducted annually in groups of 10 children aged 13-16, with 60 children interviewed during total research period. The children were asked about the use of language outside the classroom (within their families at their home) and their purposes to learn Russian. Considering that children are a group of minors, interviews were conducted among their parents.

On average, over 40 parents were interviewed, several families represented a mononuclear cell (one parent). Parents were asked about their expectations (desired results) regarding their children studies of Russian and the level of their satisfaction with classes their children attended. Twenty teachers have been interviewed within 3 years. The age group of teachers was between 21 and 27 years. Teachers were asked about their challenges and desired results of their professional activities.

3. Research results and discussion

3.1 The interviews of migrant children

The interviews of children allow authors to conclude that lack of language proficiency and adaptation problems can be divided into several aspects: the multilingualism of language practices in the family of migrants; unjust assessment by migrants of their own level of knowledge of the Russian language; the problem of formal language education for migrant children.

Multilingualism and poly-contextuality of the language practice in the family of migrants can be, on the one hand, a stimulus for developing the skills of communicative interaction between the child and his parents, and on the other hand, a certain obstacle to mastering the spoken Russian language, since this does not create a monolingual environment, see Table 1 for further details.

Table 1. *Information from migrant children about their use of languages at home*

The ethnic affiliation of migrant children	Use of Russian at home (%)
Uzbek	12.4
Azeri	11.8
Tajik	10.6
Kirghiz	4.3
Armenian	3.7
Ukrainian	3.5
Ossetian	2.2
Moldavian	1.8
Turkmen	0,6

We assume that the lack of permanent language practices in Russian within the family objectively hinders the language adaptation of migrants, especially of their children. The objectively existing multilingualism in family communication puts each member of the family in the situation of choosing a language code. Naturally, the one is chosen, which is traditionally adopted, and, based on our survey only 11.0% will choose Russian. It seems that this percentage can be considered true for most regions of the Russian Federation. We believe that when moving to another country (region) with a different language environment, the family cannot be regarded as a universal basis for informal language adaptation not only of the child but also of the adult. Quite often, families of migrants deliberately try to maintain their native language as an element of national culture.

Russian language in everyday communication in these cases is used locally, fragmentarily, speech practices are usually primitive, artificial, and language culture is poor. This is a problem that should be discussed with the parents. Further steps in the field are necessary but the issue is very sensitive. Migrant communities try to adhere to and maintain their cultural traditions, including language issues, as well. Therefore, systemic host country language -based events with minors and their parent's participation can be a way to contribute to the improvement in the field. The next step was to explore minor migrants' aims regarding Russian language learning, the results of the survey are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Migrant children's aims to learn Russian (as a percentage over the number of respondents)*

Do you master the language to...				
Replies	learn the school program	communicate with peers	get a higher education and obtain Russian citizenship	get a higher education have a better job opportunity back at home
Yes	75.8	83.9	23	10
Rather yes than not	14, 9	13.7	42	8

Rather no than yes	1.9	0.6	3	55
No	3.1	-	1	8
Difficult to answer	4.3	1.9	31	19

The above figures confirm that minors realize their needs within a hosting community, approach the issues of language learning from a very pragmatic point of view. Minors realize that learning a host country language as a crucial tool to further personal and social development. At the same time, the replies show that the temporary residence permit is considered as a step to further longer stay in Russia.

Therefore, a more systemic approach to language and culture adaptation is required, and not just a brief introduction of rules for short term stay in the country. Practically all children of migrants speak about the availability of additional classes and the help of teachers who played a significant role in their language education. Most of the children agree on the need for high-quality school education, which is explained not so much by the need for primary language adaptation, but by the understanding of the compulsion of knowing the Russian language as a precondition for the educational success of the child, increasing the effectiveness of the learning process and the orientation of parents and the child to get such education, which will make the child a full and competitive citizen of the new society.

3.2 The survey of the teachers

The survey of the teachers showed the difficulties that teachers identified in their work with migrant minors and their parents, see Table 3.

Table 3. *Problems faced by teachers.*

Teachers' challenges	% of the teachers who mentioned the item
Establishment of contact with students	18
Lack of motivation and interest in learning	12
Making contact with parents	6
Weak knowledge (ignorance) of the Russian language-intermediary by the students	30
Inhomogeneity of the ethnic composition of the collective	13
Heterogeneity of the level of knowledge of Russian	10
The parents' unwillingness to be included in the educational process	9
Lack of uniform textbooks	2

The above results go in line with previous studies by international scholars (Banks 2017). The present research contributes to the data with the evidence from the classes of Russian as a foreign language for migrants with temporary residence

status in Moscow. It is important to consider that the figures reveal the teachers' opinions regarding parent's involvement in their children's education and adaptation while the parents' level of readiness to engage in the process does not meet the teachers' expectations.

As for the mention of ethnic composition of the classroom, to our mind specific training for teachers could help to overcome the issue. The international practice confirms the final benefits of multicultural groups in terms of mutual enrichment (Arnot *et al.*, 2018). Teachers should be trained to integrate and use multiple interactions within their classroom to tie our different social and educational backgrounds of their students. This statement goes in line with previous research (Donnelly and Watkins, 2011). However, the authors would like to underline that such training should include empirical data and cases that would allow teachers to get practical knowledge about culture of concrete ethnic groups with whose representatives they work.

Most researchers believe that, following the principles of inclusive education, schools should abandon the creation of classes that consist exclusively of migrant children (Clark *et al.*, 1995). In most cases, teachers talk about the need to include such children in the environment of local schoolchildren in order to immerse them in a single language environment, which provides an opportunity to hear the normative patterns of the speech of the host country, the speech of peers (Allan, 2015). Further we compared the expectations that both teachers and parents kept in mind regarding teaching Russian to minor migrants (Table 4).

Table 4. *Expectations mentioned by teachers and parents.*

Classes of Russian: desired result	Teachers	Parents
Providing / receiving assistance in overcoming communicative barriers arising in the process of the child's mastery of the disciplines of the school curriculum (at lessons, while doing homework	40	75
strengthening the norms of speech and social behavior	15	12
creation of a common cultural background with children of the Russian Federation on the basis of studying precedent texts of Russian folklore, children's literature, national animated and feature films	20	7
formation of a tolerant worldview in the multicultural environment of Moscow	25	4
Difficult to answer	-	2

The above figures show that teachers consider their work in a more comprehensive way, try to integrate the students into a hosting country cultural environment. Meanwhile, migrant parents focus primarily on their children school progress and do

not care systemically about their children cultural adaptation to hosting country contexts. This situation seems alarming as most migrants who arrive in Russia stay here for years and do not aim to come back to their home countries.

Thus, teachers of Russian for migrant children bear burden of developing minor migrants' positive (normal) ethnic identity and shared identity. Within the framework of the courses on the Russian language, teachers are supposed to seek for parents' involvement in the process that aims to enhance their children' skills of understanding and interpretation, i.e. dialogue, discussion and cooperation, from the point of view of overcoming intolerant attitudes are formed. These skills training is expected to narrow social distance between different ethnic groups.

The survey of parents and teachers contributes to the thesis on the needs and relevance of creating textbooks for different migrant ethnic groups, that traditionally move to Russia. The criteria for selecting the material are of importance: what is culturally valuable and what is not. Nowadays most migrant children learn the Russian language according to standard programs, without taking into account the ethnocultural specifics of their countries. Thus, before the migrant students, there is a dilemma between the desire to preserve the culture of parents and the need to fit into the all-European socio-cultural context.

Another point to be mentioned is an inadequate evaluation by the migrants of their own level of the Russian language proficiency and their failure to understand the importance of the family in the formation of language culture for sociocultural adaptation and integration into the Russian-speaking environment. The authors discovered this situation in the course of interviews and found similar data in peers' research (Gulyayeva, 2010).

Apparently, adults with an insufficient level of knowledge of the Russian language are not fully aware of this fact. A survey of parents and their children conducted by the authors showed that children are more optimistic about the process of language adaptation, while, in the opinion of almost half of the parents, their children had problems in mastering the Russian language. Most children believe that they have a enough level of language to communicate with peers and master the school curriculum.

4. Conclusions

The issue of a systematic approach to the social adaptation of migrant children is an important outcome of our study. The school has limited reserves (financial, temporary, labour, organizational), which would allow it to solve the issues of education and adaptation of migrant children in a comprehensive way.

However, within the framework of strategies for the adaptation of migrant children to the school educational process, schools could undertake the following tasks to

engage migrant parents into their children language and culture adaptation through language education:

- to assist in overcoming communication barriers arising in the process of the child's mastering the disciplines of the school curriculum (at lessons, while doing homework);
- to fix the norms of speech and social behaviour;
- to create a single cultural background with the children of the Russian Federation based on studying the precedent texts of Russian folklore, child's literature, national animated and feature films;
- to form a tolerant worldview in a multicultural environment of the region.

It is necessary to find new ways of interaction between the school and the system of additional education and culture, the family, guardianship and trusteeship bodies, public ethnic associations, etc. In other words, it is necessary to have a managerial will to build a new system of relations of the educational institution, which itself cannot solve a set of complex problems that go beyond its competence with other structures.

It is advisable to start with the creation of information database (demographic statistics on migrants, statistics of child migration for educational institutions, statistics on the support to schools, developing a methodological framework, conceptual apparatus, the results of a representative study of the problems of schools, etc.); methodological base; the system of training and retraining of teachers; the system of interrelation between schools and additional education for migrants, schools and cultural institutions that are oriented towards solving the problem of socio-cultural adaptation of migrants; information exchange systems for the management of education and the Federal Migration Service, the Department of Education and the internal affairs agencies.

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