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Psychological Characteristics of Personal Tolerance in Learning a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This article examines the role of tolerance in learning process. It also presents the results of a survey conducted by the authors of this article to determine the degree of tolerance influence on students’ mental states and on the success of learning foreign languages. The survey results revealed high direct correlation dependence between the degree of personal tolerance and the degree of cognitive activity, learning motivation, acquisition of a foreign language and reverse correlation dependence with anxiety and anger level. Based on the survey findings authors conclude about the importance of personal tolerance in learning foreign languages. In their view, the existence of important correlation dependence between the tolerance and students’ mental state which affects learning success, indicates that it is important to pay attention to this causality while designing educational process and methodology. In educational process the emphasis must be placed on unfolding and strengthening tolerance of an individual.

Key words: tolerance, learning a foreign language, learning motivation, cognitive activity, achievement motivation, anxiety, anger, school performance, educational process.

Introduction

The second language skills – one of the most important determinants of individual cognitive processes, conditions for successful adaptation in the society and building competitive skilled-workers in the sphere of social production and services. There are many researches on factors affecting foreign language learning process. However, further studies in this area are still relevant. In our view, the foreign language learning success depends on personal tolerance level. After all, tolerant environment as well as teachers and students’ tolerance levels, undoubtedly, play a significant role in training of mentally mature and achievement-oriented specialists. Tolerance, being a condition of social harmony, benefits to respect other ethnicities, their language; facilitates development of independent thinking skill, productive learning, critical thinking and judgment making based on moral principles among students [1]. The tolerance role in learning process suggests a potentiality of its influence on foreign language learning process. In this regard, we conducted a survey to identify the efficiency of tolerance level on students’ mental states and educational success, thus, tried to identify the importance of personal tolerance in learning foreign languages.

Methods

180 students (9-11 grades) of secondary school participated in the survey. The diagnostic assessment of tolerance level among students was conducted using Z.A. Abidova's methodology “Self-assessment of tolerance level”. This methodology enables to identify tolerance level, assess emotional, cognitive and behavioral components of the tolerance. These components, in their turn, have static and dynamic parameters on scales “I – for myself”, “I – for others” and “Perfect I”. The methodology is used both to self-assess personal tolerance level and to monitor effectiveness of ongoing programs on tolerance development [2]. The assessment of mental states was conducted using the methodology of Spilberg-Andreeva “Educational motivation and emotional attitude to learning”. This methodology is based on C.D.Spilberg questionnaire to examine levels of cognitive activity, anxiety and anger as current status as well as individual characteristics” (State-Trait Personality Inventory). A.D.Andreeva modified the questionnaire to examine emotional attitude (1987). The methodology enables to identify levels of such psychological attributes as cognitive activity, achievement motivation, anxiety, anger and level of educational motivation on various stages of educational process. Assessed universal learning activity includes personal

learning activity, meaning-making, school motivation [3]. The test is to determine acquisition quality of foreign language learn was also conducted.

The students were split into two groups depending on their level of tolerance and we made a comparison of cognitive activity, learning motivation and emotional attitude to learning also performance levels of foreign language learning process among participants with high tolerance level and low tolerance level. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check distribution structure of collected series, which value in many parameters was $p<0,05$. Considering that variables diverge from standard distribution non-parametric tests were used to conduct an analysis: comparison of results from two groups was conducted using Manna-Whitney U-test and correlation analysis was conducted using Spirman rank correlation coefficient r_s.

Results and Discussion

Following the results of tolerance level self-assessment, the survey participants were divided into two groups: participants with high tolerance level - 72 persons (40%) and participants with low tolerance level - 108 persons (60%). The results of data wrangling from two groups using the methodology "Educational motivation and emotional attitude to learning" demonstrated in below chart (table 1).

Table 1 Educational motivation and emotional attitude to learning among students with high and low tolerance levels

Scale		**High tolerance level**	**Low tolerance level**
Cognitive activity	High	54%	42%
	Medium	46%	56%
	Low	0%	3%
Achievement motivation	High	38%	22%
	Medium	54%	75%
	Low	8%	3%
Anxiety	High	17%	25%
	Medium	63%	64%
	Low	21%	11%
Anger	High	29%	39%
	Medium	38%	47%
	Low	33%	14%

As shown on the table, high cognitive activity is observed among majority of participants with high tolerance level (54%) and low cognitive activity is not observed. While medium level of cognitive activity is observed among majority of participants with low tolerance level (56%) and among 3% we see low level of cognitive activity. Nevertheless, the analysis of secondary assessment using Manna-Whitney U-test has shown that the variance between two groups in cognitive activity scale is not significant $U=372,5$; $p>0,05$.

Achievement motivation in educational process remains relevant. It is often seen as a problem of cognitive interest. The success of learning process depends on various psychological and educational aspects, which considerably defined as socio-psychological and socio-educational. Motivational power and its structure in principle has an apparent effect on the success of learning activity. The results of our survey revealed that

achievement motivation among majority in compared groups was on medium level (54% and 75% respectively). The variance is also not significant U=386,5; p>0,05.

Emotional sufferings, anxiety, discomfort and uncertainty for their welfare which can be treated as anxiety symptoms – all these can be categorized as basic negative forms of behavior. The anxiety scale as well as in previous scale was on medium level among majority (63% and 64% respectively) in both groups compared. Although high level of anxiety is observed among 17% participants with high tolerance level and among participants with low tolerance level among 25%. Low anxiety level among 21% participants with high tolerance level and among 11% participants with low tolerance level. The anxiety scale variation between compared groups is not significant U=368,5; p>0,05.

In fact, anger indicates aggression. In return some forms of aggression are common to majority of teenagers. However, it should not be overlooked that the aggression as persistent form of behavior among certain category of teenagers not only remains but also develops, transforming into the persistent form of behavior. As a result, teenager's productive potential decreases, capacity for good communication constricts, personal development deflects. Aggressive child is array of problems not only for surrounding but also itself. High level of ager observed among 29% of participants with high tolerance level, among 38% - medium level and 33% demonstrated low anger level. While 39% of participants with law tolerance level shown high anger level, 47% - medium level and 14% - low anger level. Anger scale variation among compared groups is also not significant U=344,5; p>0,05.

Educational motivation is a combination of internal and external motivates that encourage learners to engage in learning activities. Educational motivation among participants with high and low tolerance levels is shown is below histogram (pic.1).

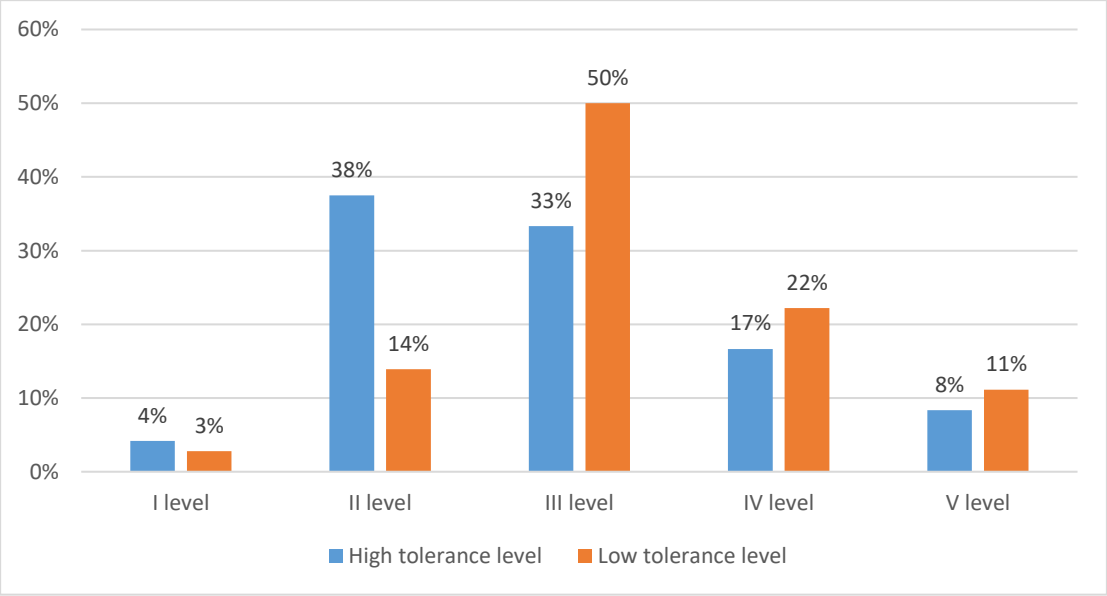

Figure 1. Educational motivation among participants with high and low tolerance levels

I level, which indicates productive motivation with outspoken dominance of cognitive motivation to learning and positive emotional attitude to it was observed among 4% of participants with high tolerance level and only among 3% of participants with low tolerance level;

II level that demonstrates productive motivation, positive attitude to learning, coherence with social norms was observed among 38% of participants with high tolerance level and among 14% of participants with low tolerance level;

III level – average level with mildly reduced cognitive motivation was observed among 33% of participants with high tolerance level, and among 50% of participants with low tolerance level;

IV level – reduced motivation, experiencing "scholastic tedium", negative emotional attitude to learning was observed among 17% of participants with high tolerance level and among 22% of participants with low tolerance level;

V level – animus toward learning was observed among 8% of participants with high tolerance level and among 11% of participants with low tolerance level. Despite the fact that majority of participants with high tolerance level had productive motivational level to learning than among participants with law tolerance level, the secondary data processing analysis did not show a significant difference $U=312,5$; $p>0,05$.

The analysis to identify the link between psychological state and tolerance level using Spirman's ranks correlation coefficient r_s revealed significant positive correlation dependence between tolerance level and cognitive activity. The higher tolerance level the more cognitive activity $r_s=0,302$; $p<0,05$; There is also a significant negative correlation dependence between tolerance level and anger. The higher tolerance level the less anger $r_s=-0,304$; $p<0,05$; negative correlation dependence exists also between tolerance level and anxiety but this dependence is not significant. The higher tolerance level the less anxiety $r_s=-0,215$; $p>0,05$; Generally, the level of motivation to learning has a positive correlation dependence with the tolerance level. The higher tolerance the higher level of motivation to learning among participants of the survey $r_s=0,348$; $p<0,01$;

The test to identify the acquisition quality of foreign language learned was also conducted among participants of the survey. This test was conducted using authorial questionnaire which was developed based on foreign language learning training curriculum. The results of assessing the acquisition quality of foreign language learned show that in general 38% of participants have high level of acquisition, 30% good acquisition level and 32% has low level. Further participants were split into two groups depending on tolerance level. The results are shown in below table (table 2).

Table 2 School performance in learning foreign language depending on pupils' tolerance level

Foreign language acquisition level	**High tolerance level**	**Low tolerance level**
High level of acquisition	50%	31%
Medium level of acquisition	29%	31%
Low level of acquisition	21%	39%

As shown in the table, the majority – 50% of participants with high tolerance level had high level of foreign language acquisition, 29% - medium level and 21% low level. While majority (39%) of participants with low tolerance level demonstrated low level of acquisition, 31% had high and medium level of foreign language acquisition. Despite the fact that majority of participants with high tolerance level shown high level of foreign language acquisition than participants with low tolerance level, secondary data processing analysis did not reveal a significant difference among them $U=326,5$; $p>0,05$.

The analysis to identify the link between tolerance level and acquisition of foreign language level using Spirman's ranks correlation coefficient r_s identified significant positive correlation dependence. The higher tolerance level, the higher foreign language acquisition level $rs=0,255$; $p<0,05$;

Nevertheless, the variance between pupils with high and low tolerance levels is not significant, the correlation analysis shows high level of correlation dependence. The higher tolerance level the lower anger and anxiety levels and higher cognitive activity level, foreign language learning motivation and acquisition.

Conclusion

Thus, the tolerance level has high direct correlation dependence with the cognitive activity level, foreign language learning motivation and acquisition and reversal correlation dependence with anxiety level and anger. Based on

results of the survey we can conclude the importance of individual tolerance in leaning foreign languages. The existence of significant correlation dependence between tolerance and psychological state of students that affects the achievements of learning process, indicates that it is important to focus on this causality and design educational methodology in reliance to it. In educational process it is important to focus on development and strengthening personal tolerance.

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