DEFINING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING CULTURAL AND DIALOGIC DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL PRESCHOOLERS

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Abstract: This paper examines an issue of cultural and dialogical development of bilingual children. The preschooler period is an essential time for learning a second language and forming ethnical and cultural components of education. The need for bicultural and bilingual education is urgent and vivid in Transbaikalia region of Russian Federation as it is a multinational territory. Russian is the official language, and numerous members of the indigenous group of Buryat speak Buryat (minority) language. The study focuses on the Transbaikalia Agin-Buryat preschooler institutions. Linguistic, cultural, and person-oriented approaches are used. The authors discuss criteria for evaluating cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers, taking into consideration that such a process is determined by a child's identification of self in social relations and his or her ability to construct interactive dialogue using native and non-native languages. The study shows that cultural and dialogic development of a preschooler can be successful in a bilingual educational environment.

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Introduction

The multinational population of countries worldwide, in the 21st century, demands ethnic, cultural, and personality oriented systems of education, that is, multicultural education. Modern scholars see multicultural education as a general idea, as a movement and process, aimed to "change the structure of educational institutions" so that "students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school" (Banks & Banks, 2009, p. 1).

Despite academic success, ethnic and cultural oriented education for culturally diverse pupils and students is aimed at their social establishment, as Zubia and Doll (2002) wrote, "Optimal cultural introductions can enrich bicultural students' learning, language, and problem-solving opportunities; allow them to understand and engage in effective social interactions in both the dominant culture and their family culture; and enhance their opportunities for life success" (p. 30). The need for bicultural and bilingual education (especially in preschool) is urgent in the Transbaikalia Siberia region of the Russian Federation as it is a multinational territory where Russian is the official language, and numerous members of the indigenous group of Buryat speak Buryat (minority) language.

One priority of the preschool education system is that of children's deep and comprehensive mastery of their own culture, which is considered an essential condition for integration of cultures. Cultural and dialogic development of a preschooler in a bilingual environment is directed at the formation of personalities that express a belonging to a nation, an understanding of the culture of those inhabiting a person's native country and the world culture as a whole, as well as an orientation in contemporary information society.

Traditionally, bilingualism has been defined as a set of human skills for using two language systems in everyday situations to provide intercultural communication. As such, language reflects the specific spiritual relationships, mentality, and system of ethnos's ethical values (Arutyunov, 1978; Kozlov, 1979; Bromley, 1983; Volkov, 2007; Gumilyov, 2014).

Several scholars have examined bilingualism and cultural diversity and connections in ethnic culture, language skills, and cognitive development. Malavé-López and Duquette (1991) emphasized the role of teaching and learning bilingualism and multiculturalism. Barron-Hauwaert (2011), Houwer (2009), and Steiner and Hayes (2008) described the development of children in bilingual families, which involved a method of "one parent – one language".

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Defining Cultural and Dialogic Development of Bilingual Preschoolers

Bilingualism from childhood (like in the region of Russians and Buryats' co-residence) is a necessary objective, since bilingualism creates favorable conditions for the full growth of a child's personality, feeling of belonging, and responsibility. The preschooler period lays the foundation for learning a second language and ethnic and cultural components of education in general.

Ethnic, cultural, and cross-cultural elements of education need to be introduced during preschool. This requires a new approach in selecting teaching and learning content for all components to "work" towards intercultural communication (knowledge, skills, speech material, situations, and themes). A second language for preschool children is not only a new way of expression, but a vehicle of information about the national culture of another nationality. It is important for this study to follow the position of Protasova and Rodina (2011) in that language acquisition has an impact on the development of a child's personality (he or she grows more competent, not afraid to enter into dialogue with people who speak other languages, representing different culture, more tolerant and ready to use the language, and plan his or her speech).

Teaching and learning provide a better understanding of linguistic phenomena and sensitivity towards native and second languages, i.e., native and "other" cultures. Cultural and dialogic development means the ability to establish and maintain contacts with other people in the dialogue of native and second languages, and familiarity with the cultural environment (values, traditions, and customs). Verbal communication is evident in associations between language and culture. Cultural memory embodied in objects and words (in the material and spiritual culture) is given indirectly, by prescribing culture. Thus, two participants of intercultural communication can understand each other, in a communicative act of people belonging to different national cultures.

Within the bilingual environment, a child is required to communicate in native and second languages. It is rational to appeal to the concept of "verbal behavior", which is understood as preschooler's bilingual experience of bilingual communications, based on the willingness and ability to choose the language of communication, to use the stereotypical expressions, speech clichés, and to observe the speech etiquette. Comeau and Genesee (2001) emphasized differences between bilinguals and monolinguals in their verbal behavior: "children who grow up learning two languages learn more than two linguistic codes; they acquire the same communication skills as monolingual children and, in addition, those skills that are specific to bilingual communication" (p. 231). The quality of a child's knowledge and understanding of national features and ethnic and cultural characteristics of persons is important for bilingual communication skills.

Thus, the problem of cultural and dialogic development of preschool children in bilingual conditions involves language in both ethnic and cultural spaces. Language within the ethnic space is not only an important ethnogenic sign for fixing the national character and mentality, specifically reflecting the worldview of the people, but also of an integration and the ethnic differentiation.

The language environment determines second language proficiency. As such, dialogic interaction of bilingual participants provides both productive acquisition of native and second languages by preschoolers (ability not only to understand and reproduce, but to construct complete and meaningful utterances as well) and consistent cultural and dialogic development. This system of language education could be characterized by the formula "language + culture"; and, as Khamraeva (2015) stressed, a bilingual child must acquire both languages in such a system

In summary, modern scholars' views suggest that cultural and dialogic development of preschool children in the bilingual conditions involves three main lines:

- changes in the personality,
- change in cognition, and
- change in speech and communication.

Therefore, a certain level of cultural and mental development of a bilingual child signifies a level of speech development that assumes adequate use of linguistic resources, due to the communicative,

ethnic, and cultural situation, dialogic interaction in the context of social, ethnic, and cultural values and traditions, and experience of the bilingual space participants.

Methodology

The methodology of defining criteria for evaluating cultural and dialogic development of bilingual children includes linguistic, cultural, and person-oriented approaches.

Linguistic and cultural approaches (Elizarova, 2005; Zinov'yeva & Yurkov, 2009; Shokina, 2010) assume that culture is reflected in the language, and language is a means of understanding the material culture. The study of the cultural component of language is urgently needed because of the potential impact of cultural beliefs on communication and its consequences.

The person-oriented approach to cultural and dialogic development supposes that the education process implies a certain personality as its goal, subject, and main criterion of its effectiveness (Kogan, 1981; Shamova & Nefedova 1985; Bondarevskaya & Kul'nevich, 1999; Kulikova, 2001). The importance of person-oriented approach is determined by two positions, which are basic for this study:

- Context of cultural and dialogic development involves communication as a special kind of personal activity of a preschooler with different participants of multicultural interaction in a multiethnic region; and
- Organization of a child's cultural and dialogic development in the bilingual space is possible by teaching and learning according to the specific character of the multicultural interaction.

Cultural and dialogic development of a preschooler is understood as the result of a child's dynamic change, influenced by the social, ethnic, and cultural situation of bilingualism. This process involves continual accumulation of bilingual interactions. In summary, it is the collection of person-oriented characteristics that defines:

- psychological readiness of preschool children to emotionally positive personal interactions with adults and peers who are native and second language speakers and representatives of different ethnic and cultural communities; and
- a willingness and ability to acquire information in native and second languages and construct one's own speech from the bilingual interactions.

Results and Discussion

The study identified the authors' approach to defining criteria for evaluating organizational and pedagogical support for cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers. A set of criteria was developed that included two groups:

- criteria for determining the quality of the organizational and pedagogical support as a means of achieving a cultural and dialogic development of bilingual children; and
- criteria for determining the quality of cultural and dialogic development of preschool as a person-oriented characteristic.

This set of criteria was the basis for diagnosing the effectiveness of experimental work on the cultural and dialogic development of children in preschool educational institutions of Agin-Buryat district (Transbaikal Siberia, Russia). We highlighted three quality criteria to ensure the organizational and pedagogical support of cultural and dialogic development of bilingual children:

1. Presence of ethnic and cultural component in preschool teaching and learning process;
2. Willingness of teachers to include cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers; and
3. Inclusion of parents and the immediate environment into the process of cultural and dialogic development of the preschooler.

Indicators of these quality criteria are shown in Table 1.

We described each quality level of the organizational and pedagogical support for cultural and dialogic development of bilingual children, according to the criteria and indicators (Table 1). We determined three levels of differentiation: optimal, adequate, and inadequate. Another important effect of organizational and pedagogical support was the preschoolers' positive dynamics in cultural and dialogic development regarding cognitive, pragmatic-verbal, and the emotional-verbal criteria, based on the evaluation criteria:

- Cognitive criterion, determines the knowledge of folklore, traditions, calendar holidays, games of Buryat and Russian people, and works of Buryat and Russian children writers.
- Pragmatic-verbal criterion, defines dialogical skills in two languages.
- Emotional-verbal criterion, determines emotional responses of bilingual children in the bilingual communication.

The quality indicators of cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers according to these criteria are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Criteria and indicators for determining the quality of the organizational and pedagogical support for cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers	
Quality criteria	Quality indicators
Presence of ethnic and cultural component in preschool teaching and learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ content of preschool education programs includes information about national traditions, folklore, particular calendar holidays, folk games of Buryat and Russian people; ▪ efforts to develop children's abilities to establish contact in Buryat and Russian languages, observe the speech etiquette in both languages, to engage in dialogue, to use the appropriate language tools of Buryat and Russian languages to express their thoughts, to produce a verbal expression according to the communication situation; ▪ realization of innovative programs and projects for cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers.
Willingness of teachers to cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ability to establish contact with children in Buryat and Russian languages; ▪ pedagogical and methodological competence of preschool teachers working with bilingual children.
Involvement of parents and the immediate environment into the process of cultural and dialogic development of preschooler children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ awareness of parents and the immediate environment about the peculiarities of bilingual children development; ▪ involvement of parents and the immediate environment in preschooler institution activities on cultural and dialogic development.
Source: Authors	

The content of quality levels of bilingual preschoolers' cultural and dialogic development components included generalized characteristics for each of the criteria and indicators.

Table 2: Criteria and quality indicators of cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers

Quality criteria	Quality indicators
Cognitive criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buryat and Russian national traditions competence; ▪ Buryat and Russian folklore (proverbs, tales, counting rhymes, riddles, tongue twisters) acquaintance; ▪ Buryat and Russian calendar holidays acquaintance; ▪ Region environment acquaintance; ▪ Buryat and Russian national games acquaintance; ▪ Trans-Baikal Buryat and Russian artists and their works competence; ▪ Buryat and Russian children's songs acquaintance; ▪ Buryat and Russian children's writing competence.
Pragmatic-verbal criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to comply speech etiquette in both languages; ▪ Ability to formulate and ask questions in both languages; ▪ Ability to complete the dialogue; ▪ Ability to use appropriate Buryat and Russian language means; ▪ Ability to produce a linguistic utterance according to the communication situation in two languages.
Emotional-verbal criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to establish a positive emotional connection both in Buryat and in Russian languages; ▪ Skills in cultural and friendly behavior during communication; ▪ Ability to keep up a conversation in both languages, respond to the companion's speech emotionally; ▪ Ability to build a dialogue in both languages, transfer emotional attitude towards the communication situation.

Source: Authors

Conclusion

The definition of criteria for evaluating cultural and dialogic development of bilingual preschoolers is based on ethnic and cultural component in preschool teaching and learning process, willingness of teachers to provide this component, and involvement of parents and the immediate environment into the education process. This constitutes an optimal balance for cultural and dialogic development of preschooler children. Furthermore, the dynamics of preschoolers' cultural and dialogic development can be evaluated by using cognitive, pragmatic-verbal, and emotional-verbal evaluation criteria. Understanding the criteria for evaluating cultural and dialogic development allows one to take into account the communicative needs of bilingual children, the selection of lexical and grammatical material required for its acquisition, and improve the system for cultural and dialogical development in preschool institutions.

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