

## Formation of Intercultural Identity in Children of Northern People in a Multilingual Context

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### ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the formation of linguocultural identity among indigenous children in a multilingual context that is of particular relevance in connection with the linguistic and cultural problems of minority peoples of the North. The aim of this work is to reveal the contents of textbooks on the subjects “Culture of indigenous peoples of the North” and “Technology” for children of primary school age as a component of the basic educational program, forming ethnic, regional, civic linguocultural identity. These tutorials are aimed at preserving native language and culture of the Northern peoples. The article considers different approaches of foreign researchers to the concepts of forms of identity that are appropriate to the age peculiarities. Research findings are important and confirmed by the results of scientific research in the field of ethno-cultural, language and multicultural education of indigenous minorities of the North, held at the Institute of National Schools of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia).

### KEYWORDS

Linguocultural identity, culture, technology, peoples of the North

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### Introduction

In the present context, general education facilities, located in the areas where indigenous peoples of the North reside, are facing an urgent task of finding innovative forms and effective mechanisms of socializing children through educational tools provided by the Federal state educational standard of general education. “Currently the world is experiencing a process of self-comprehension and revival of national culture of the peoples. Until recently, scientists, researchers and representatives of Northern minorities themselves have been seriously concerned about the loss of language, culture and traditions” (Lebedeva, 2009; Frolova, 2016). The study of the native language and national culture is one of the major tasks defined in the Concept of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation. Safeguarding and enhancing ethnic and cultural diversity of the

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peoples inhabiting Russia is stated among priority areas of the Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation until 2025 (Decree of the RF President, №1666 'On the strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation until 2025', 2012).

Meanwhile, in the changing context of transition period, managers and teachers of educational institutions are experiencing serious difficulties in developing comprehensive educational programs that shape forms of language identity in children. Therefore, it is necessary to create such components of comprehensive educational program that would provide formation of civil, regional, and ethno-cultural, linguocultural identity of indigenous children of the North.

The Federal state educational standard of general education states that it is aimed at ensuring Russia's civil identity, preservation and promotion of cultural diversity and linguistic heritage of the multinational people of the Russian Federation, the right to study native language, and to digest spiritual values and culture of multinational Russia.

The Sakha Republic (Yakutia), one of the largest northern regions of the Russian Federation, is home to representatives of more than 130 ethnicities. "...indigenous peoples of Yakutia – the Yukaghirs, the Evens, the Evenkis, the Chukchi, the Yakuts, the Dolgans, and Russian old-timers were able to become not only a part of the Russian nation (We, the Russians), but also to preserve traditional culture and create regional cultural values based on intercultural dialogue, which brings together representatives of different peoples to form a consolidated community (We, the Yakutians)" (Semyonova, 2014).

In the context of historically formed multicultural environment, educational system of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), as part of the common educational space in Russia, is responsible for holistic formation of civil, regional, and ethno-cultural, linguocultural identity in children, based on core values enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), as well as in other world, federal and regional conceptual and legal documents.

In the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples of the world (2016) and UNESCO Declaration "The responsibility of present generations towards future generations" (2016) which highlighted the main areas where the protection of the needs and interests of future people is the most important: preservation of peace, preservation of the human genome, preservation (or creation) of fair institutions, preservation of cultural heritage of humanity. The solution of this task requires the development of a new generation of teaching kits of different levels and in different domains, taking into account regional and ethno-cultural features and based on the requirements of the Federal state educational standards of general education.

An urge to create a new generation of educational programs on multicultural education is also envisaged in the Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025, aimed at strengthening the nationwide civil consciousness and spiritual unity of the multinational people of Russia.

The abovementioned document states that "objectives of the state national policy in the educational domain need to be addressed: through the development of training programs nurturing the centuries-old experience of interaction of the peoples of Russia via familiarization with historical documents regarding landmark events that reveal the origins of the all-Russian unity and solidarity; through amending training courses of educational institutions with information about cultural values and traditions of the peoples of Russia" (2012).

The Sakha Republic (Yakutia) has developed a new generation of educational programs for the training course (of subject) "Culture of the peoples of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia)" in accordance with the requirements of the federal state educational standards and based on regional, ethnic and cultural features. In elementary school the training course program (subject) provides for the development of ethno-cultural competence, which is an integral part of cultural expertise and which contributes to formation of ethno-cultural identity and intercultural competency. In middle school the program of the subject promotes the development of intercultural competency, formed on the basis of ethno-cultural competency and aimed at fostering a citizen of multinational Russia through the prism of regional cultural identity.

"In our view, in Yakutia, development of new educational programs of the training course (subject) "Culture of the peoples of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia)" in accordance with the requirements of the Federal state educational standards and based on regional, ethnic and cultural features, is a major factor in the performance of tasks entrusted to the new educational system of the republic, consisting in education of culture of international relations based on respect for spiritual and moral values of the multinational Russia" (Ivanova, 2013).

As part of the research in language and multicultural education we have developed components of the basic educational program in form of manuals on the following subjects: "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North", "Technology". The results of these studies suggest that the development of native languages contributes not only to the educational programs on the subjects of philological cycle, but also the programs in other subjects of ethno-cultural focus, in particular, the "Culture of the indigenous peoples of the North", "Technology".

### Literature Review

The problem of identity is one of the most serious and widely discussed problems in the world today; and it is an interdisciplinary phenomenon. The concept of identity is used in several senses. Psychology and sociology recognize several kinds of identity (correspondence, conformity): ethnic, civil, age, gender, etc.

Within the scope of our study the following forms of identity are of particular interest: ethnic, regional, and civil, linguocultural. Contemporary research can give a vast number of definitions for these forms. In this article, we want to touch upon only some points of view regarding this concept.

Jean Piaget (1994) considered the development of ethnic identity primarily as a creation of cognitive models, which produce ethnic feelings as a response. The Swiss scientist identifies three stages of development of ethnic characteristics: 1) at 6-7 years a child acquires first (fragmentary and unsystematic) knowledge of his/her ethnicity; 2) at 8-9 years a child is already clearly identifying himself/herself with his/her ethnic group, and provides a basis for such identification - ethnicity of parents, place of residence, mother tongue; 3) in early adolescence (10-11 years) ethnic identity is formed in its entirety; a child recognizes the uniqueness of history and specifics of a traditional culture as features of different ethnicities. Today, a large number of studies have been undertaken, which clarify and specify age limits of stages in the development of ethnic identity.

For junior students regional identity is originally linked to the place of residence (village, city, district), and can be gradually enhanced to realization of belonging to a particular region: 'I, a Yakutian', as well as more general concepts, such as 'I, a northerner', 'I, a Siberian'. Region-wise irregular waves of industrialization in the modern era reinforced marginalization of many peripheral (provincial) territories, and ultimately contributed to the regional stratification and territorial hierarchy of the



society. This factor, according to M. Hechter, “contributes to preservation of ethnic and regional identity in certain territories (sometimes in a latent form), despite all the attempts of the Center to unify cultural values” (Hechter & Levi, 1994, p. 187). In addition, as noted by some researchers, the prevalence of local political loyalty over the national one is typical for the societies with a fragmented political culture and for political transit periods.

The concept of civil identity was more precisely formulated by D. Weinstock (2002), who also defined the basic elements of citizenship: “to be a citizen means, at least, to some extent, to identify oneself with the political community to which a person belongs, and to be positioned to act in relation to one’s fellow citizens so as to contribute to stability and unity of the society” (Weinstock, 2002, p. 202).

J. Lee (2005) in the literature review summarized the discussion on the definition of the term “native speaker” and cut key linguistic criteria to the six core functions, for our study the sixth is the most important, where people identify themselves or are identified with a particular linguistic community (Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Nayar 1994). This criterion examines the role of language, which plays a significant role in shaping the social, linguistic and cultural identities, and affirms the importance of public perception in the formation of the personality (Chevalier, 2015).

Resource integration and a mobilizing force for the national and civil consolidation is a positive ethnic identity, which provides the establishment of tolerant relations between the representatives of different ethnic groups. Positive identity differentiates solidarity in the name of ethnic group, not against “the other”, the focus on interaction with other members of society, constructive setup to achieve humane goals for the common good. If a positive identity is a property of civic identity, it becomes a key factor in the country’s development and aspiration of the nation to success (Semenenko, 2016).

Russian identity, being a supra-ethnic, does not negate the ethnic identity and the integrity of the ethno. The introduction of the concept of “identity” does not imply the gradual replacement in the hierarchy of identities ethnic identity nationwide. Russian President Vladimir Putin in his speech in Sochi in 2014, noted that I consider myself a citizen of Russia means: “first, the Russians and then the representatives of a certain ethnic group, without belittling the importance of this identity of each people, each nationality” (Putin, 2014). Consequently, the ethnic identity of citizens with different ethnic origin (often associated with religious affiliation), is one of the basic principles of civil-national unity of the Russian society (Borgoyakov, 2016).

In education of the indigenous peoples of the North, activities of educational institutions aimed at formation of identity are crucial for preserving and developing their native language, culture, and traditional lifestyle. This fact is underlined both by researchers and managers of educational system.

“Thus, general education system needs adequate organizational and pedagogical conditions and arrangement of educational process aimed at successful socialization of children, taking into account their specific features, without evening-out different cultures, and promoting personal, cultural, and civil identity, as well as a special approach to financial, staffing, procedural, and educational support for deployment of national educational standards’ (Sitnikova, 2007, p. 126).

“Requirements to the results of education should be focused on ensuring access to quality education, formation of cultural and civil identity, as well as personal development. While socio-cultural components of modernization process are becoming more and more important, formation of vital skills of an individual, their willingness and ability to live in harmony with nature and society, maintaining their cultural

identity while remaining a citizen of united Russia, can be considered one of the most important educational outcomes" (Sitnikova, 2007, p. 126).

### Research Methods

The Institute of National Schools of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) conducted a study which purpose and objectives were: scientific and methodological support of the implementation of the basic educational program in part, aimed at the formation of a complex civil, regional, ethnocultural, linguocultural identity among children of indigenous peoples of the North.

To achieve the goals and objectives of the study was conducted in three stages. Within the 1st phase of the study (2015) theoretical basis for the development of basic educational program were identified, the components of the content of the basic educational program in the format of project textbooks on the subjects "Culture of Indigenous Peoples" (2-4 grades), "Technology" (1-4 grades) were designed, taking into account the mechanisms for an integrated approach to the implementation of the mandatory part and a part formed by the participants of educational relations. During the 2nd phase of the study (2016) content components of the basic educational program in the format of project textbooks on the subjects "Culture of Indigenous Peoples" (5-6 grades) were written. The content of the components of the basic educational program reflected as a set of basic characteristics of the formation, organizational and pedagogical conditions. During the 3rd (final) stage (2017) it is planned to design the components of the content of the basic educational program in the format of project textbooks on the subjects "Culture of Indigenous Peoples" (7-9 grades).

The study used the following methods: theoretical analysis of regional and national legal documents, and psychological, linguocultural pedagogical literature on the subject of research; designing, structuring, modeling, testing.

One of the purposes of studying the subject "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North" in the elementary school, is to promote inception of foundations of Russia's civil, linguocultural identity (I, a citizen of Russia) based on the formation of ethno-cultural (I, a representative of my people) and regional identity (I, a Yakutian). Thus, in the basic educational program, regional academic subject (course) "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North" is one of the main mechanisms that configures ethno-cultural, linguocultural and regional identities, implementing the principle of protection and development of national cultures, regional cultural traditions and peculiarities in a multinational state, exercised by the educational system.

"According to many researchers, awareness of belonging to a particular ethnic group initially occurs approximately at 6-7 years. And by the age of 10-11 years ethnic identity is formed in its entirety. Based on this scientific evidence and on the content of the academic course (subject), curricula and textbooks for primary school were developed in the Sakha language. Structurally, the content of the course (subject) is set forth in such a way that materials are consistent and have a logical completeness:

- second to fourth grades - ethnic culture: introduction to the unique culture of native people;
- fifth to ninth grades - polyculture.

Such scheme provides conditions for introducing basic concepts of ethnic culture as part of all-Russian and the world culture; it lays the basis for further development of communicational and socio-cultural competencies required in a globalizing world" (Ivanova, 2013).



The structure of the training manual is designed so that elementary students could satisfy their cognitive interest, need for communication, independent activity, and desire to share knowledge acquired through this course. Texts on the subject were adapted to the children's perception of the folklore of the Northern peoples including well-known writers of the Even, Evenki, Yukagir, Dolgan literature and others. Working with folklore stimulates apprehension of new behavior patterns, emotional experience of previous generations, and formation of a positive attitude towards oneself as a representative of an ethnic group. Epos of the Northern peoples is a spiritual covenant that has saved a storehouse of folk wisdom, traditions and beliefs, which our ancestors passed down from generation to generation through time and space. Epic heritage belongs to the most important historical and cultural factors, due to which the people retained ethnic identity, unique culture, national language, traditional way of life, age-old moral norms and customs (Ekeev, 2014). A major role of an epic text, its broad informational field influencing formation of ethnic identity and interethnic relations, is emphasized by M.M. Balzer (2014), Professor at the Institute of Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia, Georgetown University (Washington D.C., USA).

In primary school the program focuses on studying the technology of materials processing in order to form ethno-cultural and regional identities, and to comprehend the methods of artistic processing of materials.

The following extracurricular forms of activities can contribute to meeting the goals of "Technology" subject: spiritual, moral, social, intellectual, general cultural, sports and recreation, etc. Implementation of these will result in development of individual interests and creative abilities of students; they acquire their own social and cultural experience and learn ways of cultural expression. This academic subject includes studies of folk arts and crafts, culture and lifestyle of indigenous peoples. Traditions of teaching folk arts and crafts are implemented through the following modules: work with natural materials, plaiting and weaving, paper and cardboard processing, fabric and fur processing, beadwork.

Extracurricular activity embraces a wide range of classes, for example: "Types of traditional clothing", "Fur mosaic", "Fur applique work", "Embroidery", "Types of ornamental stitches", "Applique work", "Beadwork", etc.

Textbooks on the subject guide children towards practical application of acquired knowledge and create conditions for introducing children to traditional economies, traditional lifestyles, and formation of ethno-cultural competency, help students to generate ideas about interaction between human and environment, about the role of work experience in development of society, and form initial technological knowledge and crucial labor skills.

Teaching is based on learning specific technological operations, when children create articles made of natural, artificial, and synthetic materials, and on acquiring initial skills of project activity. Social and moral aspects of labor activity, as well as personal and social value of manufactured articles are of major importance for the essence of the course.

These educational aids are auxiliary manuals and can be used both in the classroom and during extracurricular activities.

## **Results and Discussions**

Based on objectives of the basic education program, aimed at formation of civil, regional and ethno-cultural, linguocultural identity of elementary students, teaching materials were tailored for subjects (courses) "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North" and "Technology". In the current socio-cultural conditions that lead to gradual

disappearance of the core feature of ethnic identity - the language of indigenous peoples (the Yukaghirs, the Evenkis, the Chukchi, the Dolgans, and the Evens) - further efforts are needed to preserve more stable factors - material and spiritual culture and traditions.

Content and structure of textbooks for elementary school students on the culture of indigenous peoples were formulated in accordance with the "Concept of spiritual and moral development and education of a citizen of Russia". Knowing and understanding the basic values of culture and traditions of one's native people lays the foundation for embracing the culture of neighboring peoples, and facilitates apprehension of values of Russian and world culture. Contemporary human society has developed a new look on the place and role of Arctic and the North in the global processes. Culture of Northern peoples, obscure for the global community, is now perceived not as an obsolete archaic culture, but as an authentic grassroots culture created in the coldest part of the planet, which preserved humanistic nature of human interaction with the environment. Generalizing the result of pedagogical breakthrough, researcher of ethno-pedagogical processes in Yakutia A.M. Lobok (2007) concluded that the educational situation in Yakutia develops largely under the influence of such natural environmental cultural landmarks, among which we can highlight the following:

- dominant self-esteem, characterized by a powerful need for cultural dialogue;
- dominant individual and collective cultural past.

A.V. Krivoshapkin (2014, 2016) – a writer, scientist, an outstanding statesman and public figure, the author of over 90 books, including novels, short stories, poetry, scientific works, essays, tutorials. He is the representative of one of the indigenous peoples of the North (Nikitina, 2016).

In the Preface to his newly published poetry book, A.V. Krivoshapkin (2016) says "I am the son of the North: it is well-known that any writer largely determines the place where he was born, his small homeland, the first steps on the land, the first words heard on the mother language, the first self-discovery of the surrounding world..." It is an obligation of the young generation of the North, as A.V. Krivoshapkin (2014) underscores, "to keep up with the time", and at the same time not only to know their ancestral roots, but also to respect their people, to be proud of them, and to direct all the strength and energy to future progress of their native people - the Evens, the Evenkis, the Dolgans, the Yukaghirs, the Chukchi, and Russian old-timers of the Arctic".

As a result of taking the "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North" and "Technology" courses elementary school students will have achieved personal, metasubject and subject-wide results, provided by the federal state educational standards and programs of these courses. For example, within "The peoples of the North" topic, students deliver ICT-supported oral reports about their native people and other peoples living in the republic; they compare and distinguish characteristics of their cultures; retrieve necessary information from other sources upon instructions of teacher (encyclopedias, reference books, Internet resources, portals, websites), and discuss the found information; practically work with maps and globes, finding their native community, district, Yakutia, Russia; simulate situations of communication with speakers of other languages. Today's children travel a lot with their parents (or class, group, folk song and dance ensemble, sports team, etc.) to other districts of the republic, regions of the country, or to foreign countries. These travels often involve situations of intercultural communication, where knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom could be useful. Texts in the books are adapted for school children from folk, literary, scientific and popular works of prominent public figures, writers, scientists and ethnic educators of the North; they are amusing and enrichment-oriented. Training



aids include tasks that allow children to work individually, in pairs, and in groups, learning universal educational acts, realizing educational goals and objectives, providing motives for their actions, acquiring the skills of analysis and synthesis, collation and comparison.

Materials within teaching aids "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North" for first to fourth grades (texts, questions and tasks, reference materials, dictionary work and games) are aimed at achieving the main goal of the course: formation of ethnocultural, linguocultural competencies as a prerequisite for successful socialization, which is developing skills for living in a multicultural world. Thus, within "My family, my kin" topic elementary students tell about traditions of their families, traditional economy of their families, discover traditional family legends, try to build genealogical trees together with their parents, and learn terms for kinship in their native language; they also gradually assimilate and learn family values, simulate situations that require communication and mutual responsibility in the family; entire families prepare for national holidays, repair and amend national costumes, cook traditional national cuisine, take part in ceremonies and rituals performed at such festivals. Ethnocultural and multicultural competencies apprehended while studying this topic are projected onto relationships in society and form the basis of civil behavior.

"In order to form a personality endowed with creativity, which shapes-up ethnocultural and regional identity in children of indigenous peoples of the North, it is necessary to acquaint students with the origins of folk arts and crafts, equip them with abilities and skills in this field, taking into account their age peculiarities.

Teaching applied arts should occur in two directions: nurturing children's creative and artistic abilities and teaching skills in various types of folk art.

Folk arts and crafts have ancient roots. According to ethnographic and archaeological data, ornamental culture demonstrates features indicating the ancient connections of the Sakha people with other Turkic-Mongol peoples. A significant impact of indigenous peoples of the North (the Evens, the Evenkis, and the Yukahgirs) is also evident, by virtue of their nearest neighborhood and a long experience of living in the North. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw a strong and complete Yakut national culture with its own characteristics (Ivanova, 1995).

The main principle of folk pedagogy is education through labor. Educating a child through labor instills such qualities as perseverance, patience, intelligence, attention, and ability to appreciate work. One of the important directions of labor education is familiarizing students with national applied arts.

Folk applied arts and handicrafts, having emerged at the earliest period of human society development, for centuries have been an important part of the younger generation labor training.

Types of national applied arts and crafts - fur sewing, beadwork, working with birch bark, animal hair, clay, wood, metal and other - reflect culture, religion, and philosophy of a people.

In particular, elementary school teachers should pay special attention to folk art at handicraft lessons. It promotes development of students' creative activity from an early age; children absorb sense of beauty and aesthetic tastes. The task is not only to make children realize the diversity of artistic creation phenomena, but also to implant a desire to create beauty with their own hands, and decorate their homes and the surrounding world.

However, in the learning process, a student learns the basics of manufacturing technology, in which their tutor is a professional. A child discovers manufacturing patterns, practically learns stages, methods, and techniques.

For effective teaching of basic folk arts and crafts to children it is necessary to develop their skills of independent work from the very outset. Skills are acquired in various ways:

- by copying models and examples;
- by means of trial exercises and investigation.

Familiarizing children with folk art, folklore, traditions and customs of their people must begin in early childhood. Involving folk arts and crafts in elementary school handicraft classroom contributes to children's development, brings positive emotions, teaches work ethics, honesty, responsibility, perseverance in overcoming difficulties, and provokes an interest in ethnic culture. Handicraft lessons develop a child's abstract and creative thinking, ability to analyze the outer world, to express their thoughts and feelings; besides, this activity develops hands, which contributes to intellectual development.

At "Technology" lessons students not only learn material, but also have an opportunity to experiment. In case of first-graders, who often have poorly developed hand motility, and regularly fail at writing and mathematics classes, when it is necessary to copy letters and numbers by model, only classes of handicraft and visual arts may be a good help. The ability to draw allows copying any element of a letter or a number; modeling trains hands, making them steadier; application work, sewing, and designing develop fine finger movement and coordination.

Elementary school age is characterized by unstable attention, which is why a conscious focus on learning material in primary school is almost impossible. Therefore, it is important to make labor and handicraft interesting and fun for children.

## Conclusion

Developed training manuals are designed for 34 hours each and for students of educational institutions with instruction in the languages of indigenous peoples. Education on these programs and the benefits will be carried out in the framework curricula for schools, where the languages of indigenous peoples are studied.

Thus, the developed training manuals on "Culture of indigenous peoples of the North" and "Technology" subjects are the components of the basic educational program for general educational institutions. Content and structure of the textbooks will contribute to the formation of linguocultural identity through culture and folk applied arts and crafts of indigenous people.

To implement educational programmes taking into account ethno-cultural, national and other characteristics of the republic, Federal state scientific institution "Institute of National Schools of Sakha Republic (Yakutia)" has developed manuals for educational institutions with instruction in the language of Sakha, the Russian language and languages of indigenous peoples of the North. These benefits are structured in the format of an approximate basic educational program and include legal aspects, planned results of development of educational programs and core content subjects of ethno-cultural orientation, exemplary curricula, guidelines for the development of plans, working programs of courses of after-hour activities (Ivanova, 2016)

In the context of implementation of the Federal state educational standards, these components are designed to help educational institutions, experiencing serious difficulties in the development of integrated educational programs forming ethnic,



regional, civil and linguocultural identity among children of indigenous peoples of the North.

In accordance with the Federal state educational standards the study could form the basis for the activities of educators, developing basic educational programs of primary and basic education, taking into account characteristics of the region of the Russian Federation, educational organization requests to the participants of the educational process taking into account ethnocultural, regional, lingocultural aspects.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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