DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL TOLERANCE IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE PROCESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

The assessment of cultural tolerance in preschool children is an important methodological problem in contemporary foreign language education. Although cultural tolerance is increasingly recognized as an important educational outcome, its assessment at the preschool level requires age-appropriate diagnostic approaches that take into account children's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. This paper aims to examine methodological approaches to diagnosing the formation of cultural tolerance in preschool children during foreign language learning. The study proposes a three-dimensional diagnostic framework consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The cognitive dimension concerns children's ability to recognize cultural diversity and identify simple similarities and differences between cultural practices. The affective dimension reflects children's emotional responses, interest, openness, and acceptance of unfamiliar cultural phenomena. The behavioral dimension concerns children's ability to demonstrate respectful communication, cooperation, and positive interaction during culturally oriented activities. The paper emphasizes the importance of using indirect, game-based, observational, and communicative diagnostic methods rather than traditional formal testing. Several diagnostic techniques are proposed, including situational tasks, picture-based choices, storytelling, role-playing, observation, and child interviews. The proposed framework may provide teachers and researchers with a practical basis for identifying different levels of cultural tolerance and monitoring its development through foreign language education.

Keywords: cultural tolerance, preschool children, diagnostic assessment, foreign language learning, educational assessment, intercultural development, preschool education, teaching methodology.

Introduction

Contemporary preschool education increasingly recognizes that the development of a child cannot be limited to the acquisition of knowledge and basic academic skills. Children also need to develop social, emotional, and communicative qualities that enable them to interact successfully with other people.

Cultural tolerance is one of these qualities. In a culturally diverse society, children should gradually learn that people may speak different languages, follow different traditions, celebrate different holidays, and have different ways of expressing themselves. At the same time, they need to understand that cultural differences do not prevent people from communicating, cooperating, and forming positive relationships.

Foreign language education can make an important contribution to this process. Through a foreign language, preschool children encounter new words, sounds, stories, characters, songs, and cultural practices. However, the presence of cultural content in a lesson does not itself demonstrate that cultural tolerance has been successfully developed.

This creates an important methodological question: How can the development of cultural tolerance in preschool children be identified and assessed?

The purpose of this paper is to propose an age-appropriate diagnostic framework for assessing cultural tolerance in preschool children in the context of foreign language learning.

The Specific Nature of Assessing Preschool Children

Assessment at the preschool level differs considerably from assessment in later stages of education. Young children may have difficulty expressing abstract ideas verbally and may not be able to provide reliable answers to direct questions about their values or attitudes.

For this reason, the assessment of cultural tolerance should be based primarily on children's observable responses and behavior in meaningful situations.

Instead of asking a child, "Are you tolerant towards people from other cultures?", a teacher may present a simple situation involving two children who have different traditions and ask the preschool learner what the characters could do together.

The child's response can provide information about attitudes towards cultural differences without requiring abstract verbal explanations

Therefore, diagnostic procedures for preschool children should be:

age-appropriate;
understandable;
emotionally neutral;
play-based;
communicative;
observational;
connected with familiar situations.

Structural Components of Cultural Tolerance

For diagnostic purposes, cultural tolerance can be represented through three interconnected dimensions.

Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive dimension refers to the child's basic understanding of cultural diversity.

At the preschool level, it may include the ability to:

recognize that different languages exist;
identify simple cultural differences;
recognize cultural objects or traditions;
identify similarities between children from different cultures;
understand that different cultural practices can coexist.

The assessment should focus on elementary understanding rather than factual memorization.

Affective Dimension

The affective dimension concerns the child's emotional response to cultural differences.

Relevant indicators may include:

curiosity towards unfamiliar cultural phenomena;
positive emotional reactions;
willingness to learn about other cultures;
absence of negative emotional reactions;
readiness to communicate with culturally different characters in stories and games.

This dimension is particularly important because knowledge about another culture does not necessarily guarantee positive attitudes towards it.

Behavioral Dimension

The behavioral dimension reflects how children act in situations involving cultural diversity.

Possible indicators include:

willingness to cooperate;
respectful communication;
sharing and helping;
acceptance of different choices;

participation in joint activities;
ability to resolve simple differences without rejection or exclusion.

Behavioral indicators can be observed during games, group activities, role-playing, and communicative tasks.

Diagnostic Methods

A combination of several diagnostic methods is recommended because no single method can adequately measure cultural tolerance in preschool children.

Picture-Based Diagnostic Tasks

The teacher can present children with a series of pictures showing culturally diverse situations.

For example, children may see characters wearing different types of clothing, eating different foods, or participating in different celebrations.

The teacher can ask simple questions such as:

"What do you see?"
"Are these children doing something differently?"
"Can they play together?"
"What could they do together?"

The answers can provide information about both cognitive understanding and emotional attitudes.

Situational Tasks

Situational tasks present children with simple social problems.

For example:

A new child comes to the group and speaks a different language. Some children do not understand the child. What can they do?

A child who suggests helping, playing together, using gestures, or learning a few words from the new language may demonstrate a higher level of cultural tolerance.

Story Completion

The teacher can begin a short story involving culturally diverse characters and ask the child to complete it.

For example, the story may describe two children who have different traditions but want to participate in the same game.

The child's proposed ending can reveal attitudes towards cooperation and cultural differences.

Story completion is particularly useful because it allows children to express their ideas indirectly and creatively.

Role-Playing

Role-playing can provide direct behavioral evidence.

Children may be asked to act out situations involving:

meeting a child from another country;
learning a foreign greeting;
sharing a game;
celebrating a different cultural holiday;
helping someone who speaks another language.

The teacher observes how the child behaves and communicates during the activity.

Observation

Systematic observation should be an important component of the diagnostic process.

Teachers can observe children during ordinary educational activities and record indicators such as

willingness to interact with unfamiliar characters or cultural materials;
reactions to differences;

cooperation with peers;
verbal and non-verbal responses;
participation in multicultural activities.

Observation allows researchers to compare children's responses across different contexts.

Levels of Cultural Tolerance

Based on the proposed criteria, three levels of cultural tolerance can be identified.

Low Level

Children at a low level may demonstrate limited understanding of cultural diversity. They may react negatively or indifferently to unfamiliar cultural practices and may require considerable teacher assistance during intercultural activities.

Medium Level

Children at a medium level demonstrate basic awareness of cultural differences and generally positive attitudes. They are able to participate in intercultural activities but may still require teacher guidance in unfamiliar situations.

High Level

Children at a high level demonstrate stable interest in cultural diversity, recognize similarities and differences, and show positive emotional responses. They are willing to communicate, cooperate, and participate in activities involving culturally diverse characters with relatively little adult support.

A Diagnostic Procedure for Foreign Language Lessons

The proposed diagnostic procedure can be integrated into regular foreign language education rather than conducted exclusively as a separate examination.

For example, during a lesson on the topic "Children Around the World," the teacher can introduce a short story, show pictures, organize a role-playing activity, and observe children's responses.

The same lesson can provide evidence concerning all three dimensions:

Cognitive: Can the child identify differences and similarities?

Affective: Does the child demonstrate interest and a positive emotional response?

Behavioral: Is the child willing to cooperate and communicate?

This integrated approach makes assessment more natural and reduces anxiety among young learners.

Diagnostic Scoring

For research purposes, indicators can be recorded using a three-point scale:

0 points — the indicator is not demonstrated or the child requires substantial assistance.

1 point— the indicator is demonstrated partially or with teacher support.

2 points — the indicator is demonstrated independently and consistently.

The total score can then be used to identify the general level of cultural tolerance.

However, numerical results should not replace qualitative interpretation. Preschool children's behavior can vary depending on mood, context, familiarity with the task, and communication ability. Therefore, repeated observation and the use of several diagnostic methods are recommended.

Methodological Principles of Assessment

Several principles should guide the diagnostic process.

Principle of developmental appropriateness.

Tasks must correspond to the cognitive and emotional abilities of preschool children.

Principle of natural interaction.

Assessment should occur through play, communication, and familiar educational activities whenever possible.

Principle of multidimensionality.

Cultural tolerance should be assessed through cognitive, affective, and behavioral indicators.

Principle of systematic observation.

A single response should not be considered sufficient for determining a child's level.

Principle of positive assessment.

The purpose of diagnosis should be to identify developmental progress and educational needs rather than to label children.

Implications for Foreign Language Teaching Methodology

Diagnostic information can be used to individualize the educational process.

If a child demonstrates sufficient cultural knowledge but has difficulty interacting with culturally different characters, the teacher can provide more role-playing and cooperative activities.

If a child demonstrates positive attitudes but limited cultural awareness, additional stories, visual materials, and simple cultural information may be introduced.

If a child demonstrates both limited knowledge and negative emotional reactions, the teacher can begin with highly familiar themes emphasizing common experiences such as friendship, family, play, and helping others.

Thus, diagnosis should not be separated from methodology. It should function as a feedback mechaism that helps the teacher select appropriate educational strategies.

Conclusion

The assessment of cultural tolerance in preschool children is a complex methodological task requiring approaches that correspond to children's developmental characteristics. Traditional forms of testing are insufficient for evaluating such a multidimensional personal quality.

The proposed framework combines cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions and uses picture-based tasks, situational problems, storytelling, role-playing, observation, and communicative activities.

The three-level model — low, medium, and high — can provide a practical basis for monitoring the development of cultural tolerance. More importantly, diagnostic results can be used to adapt foreign language teaching and identify the specific educational needs of individual children.

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