

DIVERSION IN SEMANTIC SPACE OF FUTURE TEACHERS AND ASSISTANT TEACHERS FOR ROMA COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The contribution is devoted to presenting multicultural education, which reflects influence of increasing diversity at schools. Competences of a teacher in given area are considered incredibly important, especially in attitude towards Roma ethnic. Negative attitudes, difficulties in bonding within social space under the influence of globalisation trend can unfavourably affect educational process of a pedagogue, as well as an assistant for Roma community. Therefore we focused our research study to findings of semantic space of identity forming notions, and also notions, which shows bonding of observed dimensions. Participants consisting of future teachers (N=215) and future assistant teachers for Roma community (N=164) expressed to notions, namely by choosing and assigning pictures by using the method the Test of semantic selection (Doležal). Final findings showed certain similarities as well as differences in semantic space, which was attributed to observed notions by future teachers and assistant teachers for Roma community. Particularly stereotypes represented by higher rate were shown with both observed groups. Higher rate of fear from the notion Roma was shown by future teachers on contrary to future assistants of Roma community.

Key words: multicultural education, teachers, and assistant teachers for Roma community.

Introduction

Educational space in our republic is currently characterised by a new phenomenon – increasing ethnic diversity at schools on all the levels. Slovakia has always been a multi-ethnic society, strong Hungarian, Roma, German and Polish ethnics lived in our territory, and until the Second World War also Jewish ethnic. However, majority of members of those ethnics (except for Roma ethnic) were integrated into majority society and more or less assimilated there. In last decade Slovakia has become a target country, previously transit country, and ethnic diversity increases. Strong community of the Afghans, Vietnamese, African immigrants and immigrants from Middle East live, work and study in Slovakia. It means that Slovakia is not and will not be home space for Slovaks and home space of nationalities (ethnics) living on its territory so far, but it will become new home for groups of different geographical areas. Therefore we suppose problems regarding teaching citizens to respect these cultural, ethnical and value differences will increase - how to respect students, clients, research participants and organisations

of immigrations communities. For pedagogy and psychology this means either more consistent cultural orientation or risk that the effectiveness of their work will be insufficient.

It seems that insufficient support and interest in culturally sensitive pedagogical and psychological researches remain the problem. At the same time, problem seems to be using concepts like multi-culture and diversity in education. Multicultural and culturally specific knowledge in education are only effective when a prepared competent teacher presents and administers it, his abilities to know how to apply different modules of teaching and how to bring nearer teaching from multi-cultural perspective, not to see cultural difference as a deficit, but as a mutual benefit. Roma ethnic has a specific position in such a context. We speak about a type of aggressive population (in contrast to population of majority inhabitants that we define as regressive type of population). In educational reality it means that Roma pupils in some areas of Slovakia form more than 50% in classroom societies.

With the influence of stereotype viewing the majority society on Roma people, their social identity is created in a given negativist spirit, as well as in strong deprecatory attitude towards stereotype. The Roma people thus find themselves in a position of victims (of discrimination, racism), which they use to excuse their negativist proceedings targeted either against an individual, group of people or institution of majority society.

So called collective inferiority, that Řičan (2003) talks about, is a status that is characteristic for despised minority and manifests by self-hatred and self-scorn that reflect on others with significantly destructive impacts. It is the status when a minority group, about which the majority group created a negative picture; they adopted given picture and accordingly they identified themselves with it. Therefore we need to realise that identity forming process with any minority group is quite complicatedly and hard to form.

One of possible ways of finding identity is utilisation of psycho-semantic methods. Observing connotative, it means subjective, meaning of a notion assigned to individuals is considered important particularly in research of finding the psychological denotation of observed notions. On denotation level that is objectively given and acknowledged quality of notion, connotative expression is often connected with associations, former experience of an individual. Since the attitude of an individual is dependent on connotative meaning of notion, this is one of reasons of scientific exploration.

The way in which bonds are framed to significant social categories relating to place, persons (important for personality, as well as to those that are discriminated in society) is one of areas that construct picture of personal and social identities of a personality. Self-perception linked with place where an individual lives is an important category, to which social psychology, specifically environmental psychology, pays adequate attention.

Diversity in social environment is reality, which is necessary to be prepared for, particularly in educational field. As many research findings advise (Brozmanová & Cabanová, 2008) it is important to watch how future implementers of assisting professions are prepared for acceptance of multi-culture in environment where they will perform. One of possibilities is to find out whether and in what extent prejudice and stereotypes are reflected into subjective attitude towards areas, which are connected with negative attitudes. We understand multi-culture as theoretical approach emphasising co-existence of more cultures at a space with the stress on their bonds and mutual tolerance; it is a part of our everyday life. With entry of multi-culture in educational environment is therefore necessary to put stress on readiness of pedagogical workers on given phenomenon. Being aware of how to orientate oneself in the net of minority cultures may not only enrich educational process, but it may also help to avoid collisions, conflicts and misunderstandings. Multi-culture education is area, which according to Průcha (2004) is highly derived from intercultural psychology.

On one hand we are witnesses of globalisation trend in society, what is reflected to educational environment and on the other hand, we witness the effort to preserve the most of national tradition, uniqueness of cultural heritage of individual regions, ethnic groups and the like. Support of identity, whether social or cultural, is one of the most important attributes of education in school environment and it involves pupils of both majority as well as minority societies. By opening state borders the Slovak Republic became not only transit country, but also target country for foreigners, immigrants of many - for us exotic - countries, to which majority society was not prepared for and it is getting used to the given matter very slowly. It is also one of reasons why we are confronted with difficulties of some people or groups with accepting people of different colour, different faith, and different lifestyle

than the one of majority society. This leads to increase of illiberality, intolerance, discrimination and manifestations of racism. Xenophobia, fear of the unknown, is natural human reaction, that may lead to manifestations of racism, it means active negativist hate performance against members of minority group. We speak about fear originating from lack of information, fear that an individual tries to get rid of by accepting generalised stereotype predicaments, which are often passed from generation to generation. Xenophobic attitude can easily be projected into racism, which means open manifestation against a member (or members) of national minority, ethnic group and alike. According to sociologists, stigmatisation is a demonstration of so called people's racism; that is when people predicate negative characteristics to members of minority group, which creates self-image in given spirit (Alan, 2008). As the author advises, members of minority groups often react in the sense of created self-image, whereby they prove their mistakenly created prejudice to members of majority society. According to Alan (2008), more dangerous appearance of racism should be considered its ideological position, when false information, based on irrational ground, is produced as rational premises, whereby majority society justifies and thus excuses implementation of assimilatory or isolation programmes focused on minority groups of population. With presence of negativist attitudes towards different nationalities, or ethnic groups we have been meeting in researches presented by various EU countries, while some countries record their increase. This matter thus needs adequate attention, even of all concerned experts are aware of the fact that influencing negativist attitudes with the aim of their moderation, or elimination, is a long-term operation. In connection with the term racism we may encounter also so called "soft racism", which is a form of passive racist attitude, often labelled as discrimination. An individual committing soft-racism ignores a member of different nationality, different colour, different religion; while we consider so called hard racism an active, often thought of in advance and not rarely also organised aggressive manifestation against a member (or members) of minority group of population. On one hand antidiscrimination clauses are elaborated into more by-laws, on the other hand they are not sufficiently applied in practice. Reveals of discrimination in each domain of social life, not excluding educational environment, is one of important steps in intervention. With adherence of anti-discrimination approach in educational field we encounter the thesis advocating the same approach to education, what is advised also by Vačková (2008) and Hamranová (2003, 2007). However, we learned from the practice that social environment, which is lightly inspirational often leads a pupil to initial difficulties with learning, which is deepened year after year.

It is worthy to mention also educational system, its scheme, contents in textbooks that are prepared from the view of majority society and in some cases there occur stereotype predications not demonstrating tolerance, not providing heterogeneity, not encouraging rational discussion.

Implementing multi-culture into educational system thus becomes one of most important principles performed at schools. According to Průcha (2001), multi-culture education is preparation pupils for social, political and economical reality that are experienced by pupils in culturally different human contacts. According to Kocourek (2008b), contents of intercultural education should include characteristic of individual cultures, their mutual comparison, observation of changes of cultures and cultural identity of individuals in consequence of their meetings, relations among members of various cultures, impacts of relations among members of various cultures, practical studies relating to basic information regarding given phenomena in selected areas. From our practice we recommend interconnection of given information with casuistry, case studies connected with alternative forms of learning (for example experience learning).

One of possible alternatives how to work with negativist attitudes (to which we rank stereotype, prejudice, discrimination) is education to tolerance, which according to Seiler and Seilerová (2008) we can divide into three basic types: disjunctive, conjunctive and synergic. We speak about disjunctive tolerance when a personality is indifferent to life conditions of another person; we speak about highly self-centred life attitude of an individual. Conjunctive tolerance is tolerance where individuals seek areas that connect them, not those that separate them. Based on those common areas they tolerate eventual differences in other people. For synergic tolerance is typical that it comes out of uniqueness of each individual and culture.

With synergy (synthesis) of diversified cultures (eventually personalities), according to given concept new elements originate; they overstep the frame of individual cultures defined by value system, life experience and the like.

Kocourek (2008a) advises that culture is a tool of a man, with the help of which he adapts to environment and understanding of the notion culture is in two diameters: in axiomatic diameter, emphasising artistic and educational aspects and in synthetic diameter, where culture is understood as complicated collection consisting of faith, art, law, moral, attitude, which an individual acquires during socialisation process as a member of respective society. In relation with the notion culture we can encounter associated notions; we speak mainly about the notion acculturation, which is according to Paulička et al (2002) characterised as a process of essential cultural and social changes, which run within one culture (society), are the result of constant and long-term contact with different culture. We speak about the process where a man adapts to culture, which is spread in his society, while it may be rapprochement (even merger) of cultures where one dominates the other; or we may speak about the origin of new culture. Another notion is assimilation, which is according to Paulička et al (2002) defined as process of incorporation of an ethnic (eventually culture) into another one, while one group in given process completely loses its determining identification characteristic. According to Verma (2003), it is important in multi-culture environment that a teacher is prepared to support equality of pupils, as well as he should be able to react adequately to diversity resulting from various composition of pupils in a classroom, what can be generalised to other areas of social life.

Aim of Research

With regard to globalisation tendency we were interested what subjective meaning is attributed by future pedagogues as well as future assistant teachers for Roma community to notions related to personal and social identities. We assigned notions that limit positive and negatives terminals to the ones that present given contents. In other words we have been watching what is semantic location of macro-social categories and the notion *I* in a larger semantic context of observed groups. We have been watching what is subjective meaning future pedagogues and future assistant teachers for Roma community will attribute to notions presenting personal and social identities, it means to notions, which were presented by the following identity forming social categories:

- notions with positive connotation describing emotional experiencing:
 - *love, joy, happiness,*
- notions with negative connotation describing emotional experiencing:
 - *aggression, unhappiness, fear, hatred, conflict,*
- notions defining in-group and out-group:
 - *we, they, enemy, citizens, Roma people*
- notions presenting significantly others:
 - *women, men, father, mother*
- notions defining macro-social categories:
 - *Europeans, Slovaks, people of my region*
- notion defining own person:
 - *I*

As classification to macro-social categories is significant aspect of self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we have been observing how macro-social categories together with the micro-social categories and with notion *I* defining reflection of own self will accommodate.

Methodology of Research

To find out targeted aim we used psycho-semantic Method of Semantic Selection of V. Doležal (Smékal, 1990), labelled also as the Test of Semantic Selection (TSV). Its pictorial version was used to find out the semantic space of notions related with identity (Urbánek, 2003). Basic principle of the method is that an observed person attributes pictures (symbols) to rendered notions. We used the original version consisting of 16 archetypal symbols (sun, mood, grate, worm, grave, boat, cobweb, mouth, dagger, eye, snake, flower, fish, house, water). A participant is provided a piece of paper with a list of

selected words followed by a net of eight boxes for each word. Eight symbols must be assigned to each word and their numbers must be written into the chart into boxes with each word. In other words, each observed person must select always 8 of those symbols according to what pictures they find proper to characterise reviewed notions. We used that notions: *love, joy, happiness, aggression, unhappiness, fear, hatred, conflict, we, they, enemy, citizens, Roma people, women, men, father, mother, Europeans, Slovaks, people of my region, I*.

By means of two-dimensional projection of results of factor correspondence analysis (optimal scaling procedure) of data from the test of semantic selection we gained graphic displays, which enable verbal interpretation of semantic relations of reviewed notions.

Participants of research consisted of students of assisting professions preparing themselves for teacher positions (N=215, average age AM=24, 7 years) and assistant teachers for Roma community (N=164, average age AM=28, 3 years). They were university students who were born in democratic society and witnessed the accession of the republic into European economic environment.

Results of Research

According to semantic vicinity of notions that form a certain cluster, as well as analysis of the placement of notions with affinity to identity, we have - particularly with future teachers and future assistant teachers for Roma community who are preparing themselves for work in multicultural environment, as also for work with Roma children – reached the conclusion that will be described and analysed on the next pages.

By means of correspondence analysis we identified with **future teachers** two dimensions (Figure 1), which organise verbal stimuli from the Test of semantic selection.

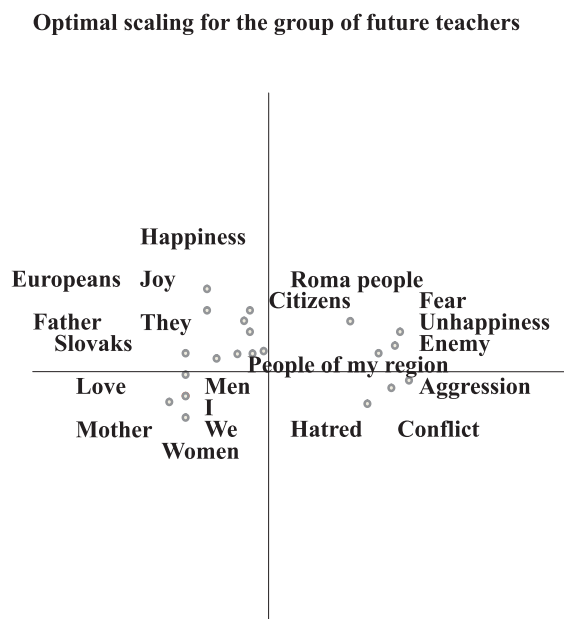


Figure 1. Semantic space formed with stimuli of the Test of semantic selection (sym-metric normalisation).

In identified dimensions we noticed marked difference in their strength (93%). The first dimension is defined with polarities positive versus negative, and the second one is characterised with polarities individual versus social. If we look closer to the result of correspondence analysis displayed in pictorial form; we can see that notions with positive connotation are centred on left side into two quadrates.

In one quadrante we find notions presenting positive emotions (*joy, love, happiness*) together with socially positively evaluated reference notions (*Slovaks, Europeans*). In the second of quadrates in-group notions together with own person (*I, we, women, mother*) are placed. On the right side negatively perceived objects formed by notions (*fear, unhappiness, aggression, Roma people, conflict, and hatred*) were grouped, while the notion *Roma people* is placed close to notions *fear* and *unhappiness*, which means notions with negative connotation that express emotional experience of observed group of individuals. The notion *Roma people* is far distant from other notions presenting social, as well as individual categories; it is integrated into social space labelled by the notion *enemy*. Another deprecatory negative manifestations are gathered in one quadrante and they are presented by notions *aggression, conflict* and *hatred*.

If we look closer to macro-social notions *Europeans, Slovaks, People of my region* we can see that future pedagogues placed notions *Europeans* and *Slovaks* in a positive quadrante, while the notion *People of my region* is located at the border of positive-negative quadrates and quadrante of reference notions, as well as in the vicinity of notions *citizens* and *they* (Figure 1). Still, the notion *I* is placed in the vicinity of reference notions presenting close persons. Even if the notion *I* is centred in a positive dimension, the factor of macro or microenvironment was not determining for its placement. The notion *Europeans*, which is distant from the notion *I* shows itself as distant, although positively reflected notion for observed group of university students.

Semantic vicinity of notions that form a certain cluster as well as the analysis of notions with affinity to identity with the use of correspondance analysis have shown with **future assistant teachers for Roma community** how verbal stimuli from the test of semantic selection are organised (Figure 2). The results are in certain level similar to the results gained from future pedagogues, specifically in organisation of verbal stimuli into two dimensions. The first dimension is defined by polarities positive/pleasant versus negative/unpleasant and the second dimension is characterised with polarities individual/personal versus negative/social.

If we have a closer look at semantic space of observed notions showed in Figure 2, we can see that positive emotions presented by notions *joy, love, happiness* are connected with social categories *Slovaks, Europeans, People of my region* and *citizens*. In the second quadrante in dimension pleasant notions of own person *I* is centred close to notions *we, women, men* and *mother*. In dimension negative/unpleasant we find the notion *Roma people*, which – on contrary to future pedagogues – does not evoke fear with students of assistant teachers for Roma community; however, it is connected with notions *conflict* and *unhappiness*.

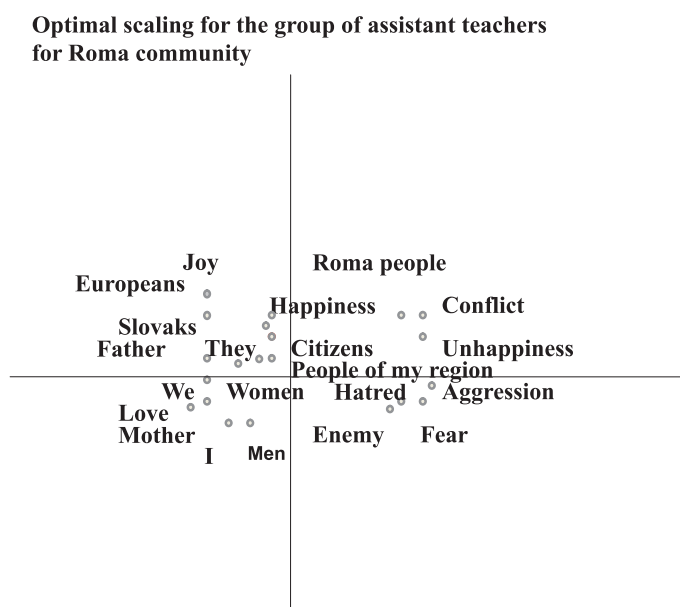


Figure 2. Semantic space formed by stimuli of the Test of semantic selection (symmetric normalisation).

Future assistant teachers for Roma community grouped rejected notions: *aggression, conflict, fear* and *hatred* into one quadrante. Macro-social categories *Europeans, Slovaks, People of my region* are centred into a mutual, positively perceived quadrante, even distant from the notion *I*. At the same time we can see both in future pedagogues and also in future assistant teachers for Roma community to perceive their own person together with close people, and also with macro-social categories.

Discussion and Conclusions

Final findings advise the presence of stereotypes with both future teachers as well as assistant teachers for Roma community. With organising verbal stimuli, two dimensions were selected that can be named individually/personally versus socially, what corresponds also with our findings in the research of adolescent youth. (Bianchi et al, 2007).

Both groups reflected macro social categories positively, however, distant from the notion *I*. Own personality is thus connected with reference notions by both future teachers as well as assistant teachers for Roma community. The result points out that geographical closeness, or the level of inclusion is not important for evaluation of macro social categories, but it is mainly the meaning that is attributed by reviewed persons (Routland & Cannarella, 2000).

The notion Roma people is experienced negatively with future teachers, with higher rate of fear on contrary to future assistant teachers for Roma community, which is in accordance with findings of Gajdošová (2007). Future teachers' assistants for Roma community attributed negative connotation to the notion Roma, though without dimension of fear. When we viewed the contents of study programme of teachers and assistants teachers for Roma community we found out that much bigger space is given to multi-culture specifically for future assistant teachers for Roma community. We assume that this is one of reasons why future assistant teachers for Roma community showed the xenophobic attitude represented with lower rate based on prejudices. And that is one of important aspects why it is necessary to pay adequate and systematic attention to implementation of multi-culture into educational process.

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