



Date : 28/07/2008

Dialogue reading as the most important tool in overcoming ethnical intolerance

Elmir YAKUBOV
Municipal Library
Khasavjurt city, Republic Dagestan
Russian Federation

Meeting: 125. School Libraries and Resource Centres
Simultaneous Interpretation: Not available

WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 74TH IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL
10-14 August 2008, Québec, Canada
<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/index.htm>

Various communicational practices of municipal library as the center of interaction of cultures are examined in the publication. Special attention is paid to dialogue intercourse of readers, in the process of which they are given the ability to personally interact with the bearers of "other" cultures, define and correct own point of view, develop general notions, and participate in the forming of new, shared by others reality together.

All the history of humankind is dialogue. Dialogue runs through all of our life. It is means of realization of communicational links. It is the term of understanding people. Interaction of cultures, their dialogue is the most favorable foundation for development of interethnic, international relationships. On the other hand, when there is interethnic tensions, or moreover interethnic conflicts in the society, then dialogue between cultures is difficult, and interaction of cultures can only be limited in the area of interethnic tensions of given people, bearers of given cultures.

Dialogue is interaction with culture, realization and reproduction of its achievements. Dialogue is revealing and understanding values of other cultures, means of their appropriation, ability to remove political tension between countries and ethnic groups. It is a necessary term of scientific search for truth and process of creativity in art. Dialogue is an understanding of own self and interaction with others. It is universal, and universality of dialogue is generally acknowledged.

As interaction of cultures and civilizations assumes having common cultural values, dialogue of cultures can be the factor of reconciliation, preventing beginning of wars and conflicts. It can eliminate tension, create atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

Concept of dialogue is especially topical for modern culture. The process of interaction is dialogue, and forms of interaction represent various aspects of dialogue communications.

As is well known, in libraries written communication is dominating, which is characterized by principal distance between the “collocutors”. There is no direct contact at all, and potential contact cannot be predicted. Even in case of so-called *inner dialogue* between the reader and the text, receiver of the message actively rethinks given information. As a result of this, text can be significantly “recoded”.

However, real dialogue between the reader and other users of the library creates common memory for the collocutors. With time, common memory will form elements of common culture.

Because of this, since 2006 municipal library of Khasavjurt city, Republic Dagestan, Russia, realizes the program “Dialogue reading as the most important tool of overcoming ethnic intolerance”.

Under the term “dialogue reading”, we mark common work of group of two or more people on the text of fictional or educational literature, in the process of which collocutors expand and enrich understanding of each other.

The idea of the program is in the fact that interchanging of spiritual values, and meeting with achievements of other people’s cultures enriches child’s personality. On the other hand, interpersonal communication of children assists interaction of cultures. By expanding the sources of social and cultural information, interpersonal communication can serve as an important factor in overcoming stereotyped thinking. By this, interpersonal communication assists mutual enrichment of spiritual world of the youth.

Sunday school of national language and literature for the adolescents from the families of ethnic minorities, opened by the library, became one of the projects of the program. Special interactive lessons in learning native languages are held for these adolescents, as they are not given such an opportunity at schools.

A person has to be open to native culture to understand the language of the foreign one. From home to universal - only this way can the best in other cultures be reached. Only in this way, dialogue will be beneficial.

By forming positive ethnic identity, library shapes tolerant attitude to other ethnic groups at the same time. This problem is solved by expanding access of representatives of group of the project not to cultural values of own people only, but to culture and traditions of other people of Dagestan, their beliefs and customs.

Therefore, the project, on the one hand, creates conditions for independent and stable existence of minor ethnic group. On the other hand, it creates the conditions for peaceful intercultural interaction in multiethnic community.

Dialogue reading is the main tool of reaching the aim of the project. Each of four groups of Sunday school is a reading group. By reading specially chosen books, curator of the school (it is either the librarian or the teacher of Dagestan Language) stimulates the interest of the group members to understanding of various cultural phenomena.

The most successful models of dialogue reading in conditions of our library turned out to be realized in 2006-2008 *summer reading programs* “Indian Village” – based on educational and fictional literature about North American Indian culture; “Upside Down and Backwards” – based on the book “Pippi Longstocking” by Astrid Lindgren; and “Other, Others, About Others” – based on the book series of the same name for adolescents.

We were acquainting our young readers with the traditions of absolutely far away from them (both geographically, and mentally) cultures in order to raise their respect and tolerance to unknown, foreign, and hard to understand cultural events; to lift common, usually negative clichés; to awaken friendly interest to the world; and, finally, to form directions for tolerant thinking.

In library activity, we also activate non-direct (intuitive) methods of integrating the reader, especially the young one, into “polycultural” situation. Our reality is filled with a variety of beliefs, norms, stereotypes, and myths that are conditioned by the differences in cultures. At the same time, these phenomena of outer environment are not always realized. Due to this fact, special environment of a mixture of symbolical forms, the aim of which is to fully integrate the reader into the atmosphere of polysemanticity, polylinguisticity, and co-existence of diverse cultural meanings, is created in the library. This is done with the idea of getting the reader “used to” an opportunity

of such a world order, so that by meeting it in the real life he will not suffer from cultural shock.

Calendar holidays, that are present in every culture, seem to be the most adequate from this point of view. We form multicultural calendar for the third year in a row. Side by side with important for the majority of local people important dates, such events as St. Valentine's Day, Halloween, Sabantuy, Groundhog Day, Chinese New Year, St. John Baptist's Day, Lucia's Day, Hanukah, Sinterklaas's Day, and Marcishor are included.

Extension of cultural calendar is an effective and natural way. By honoring own holidays equally with other nations' and cultures' holidays, people get used to the idea, that their own culture is not the only one, that other events worth their notice exist in the world.

According to the directions of the program "Dialogue reading as the most important tool of overcoming ethnic intolerance", *inner space of the library* has changed. Specialized reading rooms (children's, regional, and art) were created. Artificial "isolation" of particular interior regions for deeper integration in them has been realized. Books and art exhibitions are organized both in new local spaces, and in the margins of separate loci. Tables for general use were put. From four to eight people can work behind it, which enables them to freely communicate, and exchange their opinions while doing so.

Special psychological climate, atmosphere of hospitality and friendliness, interest in each user is supported in the library. This turns library into experimental model of multipolar reality, which modern person has to deal with. This place is an example, and ability for new practice at the same time. It is an open space for active social action, in which everybody can take part.

Not separate elements of the local community, but links between them become values in described models of library activity. At the same time, communication (in the form of discussions of the read material, readers' debates, role-playing, trainings of intercultural communication, etc.) helps in assimilation of the most "foreign", "distant", "unknown" meanings.

Library, by sharing its locations, information sources and channels of communication for organizing modern "negotiations places" with maximum service for dialogue, is drawing in as opponents and supporters not only particular people, but also powerful arsenal of its main wealth - books fund. Therefore, owing to contacts with people's real problems and "live" participants of the dialogue, document sources accumulated by the library are "animated".