



АВТОНОМИЯ СТУДЕНТОВ ИЗ АЛЖИРА И РОССИИ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

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Поступила в редакцию 03.06.2025

Окончательный вариант 28.08.2025

■ Для цитирования: Лайш С. Автономия студентов из Алжира и России в процессе обучения // Вестник Самарского государственного технического университета. Серия: Психолого-педагогические науки. 2025. Т. 22. № 3. С. 83–94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17673/vsgtu-pps.2025.3.6>

Аннотация. Автономия студентов является важным элементом современного образования, способствуя их вовлеченности, мотивации и развитию ключевых жизненных навыков. В данном исследовании рассматриваются коммуникативные стили алжирских и российских студентов с акцентом на их косвенность при обращении к преподавателям с просьбами. Используя сравнительный кейс-метод и качественный подход, 143 студента (72 россиянина и 71 алжирец) выполнили задания на завершение высказываний на родном языке, имитируя реальные ситуации в классе. Результаты показывают, что обе группы склонны использовать косвенные стратегии из-за культурных ценностей, подчеркивающих иерархию, уважение и формальность. Тем не менее алжирские студенты иногда прибегают к более прямым формам, например декларативным высказываниям, что отражает стремление к автономии. Различия в риторических стратегиях демонстрируют влияние социальных и образовательных норм на общение между студентами и преподавателями. Исследование подчеркивает важность культурной осведомленности в многонациональной образовательной среде и ее роль в создании инклюзивной и эффективной учебной атмосферы.

Ключевые слова: разрешение, алжирские классы, российские классы, сравнительные исследования, дистанция власти, студенческая автономия.

Конфликт интересов. Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

STUDENT AUTONOMY IN THE CLASSROOM: BALANCING PERMISSION AND AUTHORITY IN ALGERIAN AND RUSSIAN CLASSROOMS

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Original article submitted 03.06.2025

Revision submitted 28.08.2025

■ For citation: Laiche S. Student autonomy in the classroom: balancing permission and authority in Algerian and Russian classrooms. Vestnik of Samara State Technical University. Series: Psychological and Pedagogical Sciences. 2025; 22(3):83–94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17673/vsgtu-pps.2025.3.6>

Abstract. Student autonomy is essential in modern education, promoting engagement, motivation, and critical life skills. This study examines the communication styles of Algerian and Russian students, focusing on their indirectness when requesting permission from teachers. Using a comparative case study design and qualitative methods, 143 students (72 Russian and 71 Algerian) completed discourse completion tests in their native languages, reflecting real-life classroom interactions. Findings reveal that both groups tend to use indirect strategies due to cultural values emphasizing hierarchy, respect, and formality. However, while indirectness is common, Algerian students occasionally employ more direct forms like declaratives, reflecting a shift toward autonomy and independence. Differences in rhetorical strategies highlight how societal and educational norms shape student-teacher communication. The study underscores the importance of cultural awareness in diverse educational settings, suggesting that understanding these communication patterns can enhance teacher-student relationships and create more inclusive, respectful classroom environments that support effective learning and student agency.

Keywords: permission, Algerian classrooms, Russian classrooms, comparative studies, power distance, student autonomy.

Conflict of interest. The author declares no conflict of interest.

Introduction

Student autonomy refers to the ability of learners to take control of their own learning process. This includes the capacity to make decisions, set goals, monitor progress, and engage in self-directed activities [1]. It emphasizes students' ability to be active participants in their educational journey rather than passive recipients of information. In the context of the classroom, autonomy encompasses various aspects such as decision-making, self-regulation, motivation, and independent learning. Permission asking in the classroom can be understood through the lens of *linguistic politeness*, *power dynamics*, and *sociocultural norms*. It involves students seeking approval from the teacher to engage in actions or behaviors, such as speaking, moving, or participating in an activity. This behavior reflects broader societal values, including authority, respect, and social hierarchies, which are deeply rooted in cultural and educational traditions.

Literature review

To understand the balance between permission and authority in fostering student autonomy, it is crucial to examine how teacher authority and student freedom intersect. Teachers traditionally hold authoritative roles in the classroom, guiding students toward specific learning outcomes. However, as the notion of student autonomy evolves, it becomes clear that an overly authoritative approach can hinder students' self-direction and intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, too much freedom without structure can result in disengagement and lack of direction.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) [2]: This theory posits that autonomy is essential for fostering motivation. SDT identifies three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. According to SDT, when students feel autonomous, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material and develop intrinsic motivation for learning. The role of the teacher, in this view, is to create an environment that supports these needs by providing choice, encouragement, and opportunities for self-direction.

Sociocultural Theory [3]: Vygotsky's work focuses on the social and cultural contexts of learning, emphasizing the importance of interaction in the learning process. Vygotsky suggests that autonomy can be developed through collaboration and guided interaction with more knowledgeable others (teachers or peers). In this context, the teacher's role is seen as one of a "scaffolder" who helps students gradually assume more control over their learning, moving from more structured guidance to independence.

1. In Algerian context

In Algeria, the educational system is often described as teacher-centered, with a heavy emphasis on authority and traditional pedagogical approaches. The teacher holds the central role in classroom activities, and students are typically expected to follow instructions without much room for independent thinking or decision-making [4]. However, recent reforms have aimed to promote a more student-centered approach, emphasizing the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and autonomy. Algerian classrooms are influenced by both the Arabic and French education systems, and the balance of authority and student autonomy can vary based on socio-cultural factors. Teachers in Algeria often hold a high level of respect

and authority in the eyes of students, but there is an increasing recognition of the need to foster student autonomy in order to prepare students for a more dynamic and globalized workforce [5]. Furthermore, In the context of Algerian classrooms, permission-seeking is often linked to the teacher's authoritative role and the cultural emphasis on respect for elders and authority figures, as is typical in many parts of the Arab world and other collectivist societies [6]. The way students seek permission in class may reveal not only their attitudes toward authority but also their level of autonomy, which is influenced by both personal and cultural factors.

1.1. *The Role of Politeness Theory*

One relevant theory for understanding permission asking in classrooms is *Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory* [7], which explains how individuals manage social relationships and mitigate face-threatening acts through politeness strategies. Politeness in the classroom is especially important when students ask for permission to speak, ask questions, or make requests. In Algerian classrooms, the use of politeness strategies may be influenced by the teacher's role as an authority figure and the social distance between the teacher and students. Typically, the Algerian educational system places strong emphasis on maintaining respectful relationships between students and teachers, with permission often being sought formally. According to *Brown and Levinson* [7], these strategies can be categorized as:

Positive Politeness: This strategy aims to reduce social distance by emphasizing shared values or seeking mutual solidarity. In Algerian classrooms, this might involve indirect requests or phrasing that emphasizes the teacher's role in fostering student growth.

Negative Politeness: This strategy is used to avoid imposition or intrusion. In Algerian classrooms, students may use formal language or polite requests to avoid challenging the teacher's authority directly.

1.2. *The Role of Sociocultural Norms*

In Algerian society, respect for authority, particularly teachers, is deeply embedded in cultural values. The *power-distance index* [8], which measures the extent to which less powerful members of society accept unequal power distribution, can provide insight into how permission is asked in Algerian classrooms. Algeria, like many Arab countries, tends to have a high power distance, meaning that there is a significant respect for authority figures such as teachers. Consequently, students are often expected to ask for permission in a manner that demonstrates deference to the teacher's role as the primary authority in the classroom.

1.3. *Permission Asking and Teacher-Student Interaction*

Teachers in Algeria often hold a dominant position in the classroom, and their authority is rarely questioned. This leads to a situation where permission is asked not only for participation but for other actions such as leaving the classroom, speaking out of turn, or asking for help. The interactional dynamics between teachers and students often reflect these hierarchical structures. According to *Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory* [3], knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction, but this interaction is still influenced by power dynamics, with the teacher acting as the primary source of authority. In an Algerian classroom, the act of asking for

permission may be considered both a learning strategy and a social tool, helping students maintain harmonious relationships with teachers while also adhering to the strict norms of authority and respect.

1.4. Teacher-Student Power Dynamics

The power dynamics in Algerian classrooms often shape how permission is asked. While Algerian educational reforms have encouraged more interactive and student-centered approaches, the shift away from traditional teacher-centered methods has been slow. According to *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Reproduction* [9], educational practices in Algeria reflect broader societal structures, and teachers' authority is often maintained through cultural and educational expectations. Permission asking in the classroom serves as a way for students to navigate these structures and negotiate their roles within the classroom hierarchy.

1.5. Educational Reforms and Changing Dynamics

Recent reforms in Algerian education have attempted to give students more autonomy and foster a more communicative approach to teaching. The introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning approaches in foreign language classrooms, for example, may lead to more student participation and less rigid authority structures [5]. However, even in these progressive environments, students may still seek permission in ways that reflect traditional values of respect for authority. In these reformed settings, students may feel empowered to ask for permission to speak more freely, yet the framework of formalities and respect for teachers still plays a significant role in how such interactions occur. Therefore, the act of asking for permission is not solely a linguistic or functional activity, but also a socio-cultural process that reflects the balance of power, respect, and autonomy in the classroom.

2. In The Russian Context

In Russia, the educational system has a long history of teacher authority, particularly due to the legacy of Soviet pedagogical traditions, where instruction was often formal and hierarchical [10]. However, the post-Soviet period has seen a shift toward more modern pedagogies that emphasize the importance of developing autonomous learners. Russian educators are increasingly adopting learner-centered approaches, with a growing focus on active learning, collaboration, and critical thinking. Permission asking in classrooms, particularly in Russian classrooms, is a reflection of both cultural attitudes toward authority and the pedagogical values embedded in the educational system. In Russia, like in many other traditionally structured educational systems, the teacher holds a highly authoritative role in the classroom, and students' interactions with teachers often follow strict social rules. Asking permission is a way for students to show deference and respect for authority while negotiating their space within the learning environment. Permission asking in Russian classrooms typically involves students seeking permission from the teacher to engage in various activities such as answering questions, asking for clarification, or moving within the classroom. The way this interaction is framed often reflects broader cultural norms of respect, power distance, and the teacher's central role in the educational process.

2.1. *Power Distance and Authority in Russian Classrooms*

One of the key cultural dimensions influencing permission asking in Russian classrooms is the concept of *power distance*, a term coined by [8]. Power distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members of society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Russia, with its historical background in authoritarian regimes and its transition from Soviet pedagogical practices, is considered to have a relatively high power distance. In Russian classrooms, this high-power distance often means that students are expected to seek permission for most actions, reflecting a deep respect for the authority of the teacher. While contemporary educational reforms encourage more open interaction, this hierarchical teacher-student dynamic still influences how permission is requested and granted.

High Power Distance: In a high-power distance society like Russia, teachers are seen as the ultimate authority figures, and students are expected to show deference by formally asking for permission. Permission asking can also be a social act that reaffirms the teacher's authority and establishes the student's role within the learning environment [8].

2.2. *Politeness Theory and Permission Asking*

The *Politeness Theory* [7] is particularly useful in understanding permission asking in Russian classrooms. This theory explores how individuals manage their social relationships through various politeness strategies that protect their "face" (the positive social value a person claims for themselves). In Russian classrooms, the use of polite requests for permission is often necessary to maintain respect for the teacher's authority and avoid any potential face-threatening acts.

Positive Politeness: This involves strategies aimed at expressing friendliness and solidarity. In Russian classrooms, positive politeness might be reflected in students addressing the teacher with respectful titles (such as "teacher" or "professor") and using formal language when requesting permission to speak or engage in other activities.

Negative Politeness: This strategy involves avoiding imposition or intrusion on the teacher's authority. A student in a Russian classroom may use indirect language or hedging when asking for permission to speak or make a request. For instance, they may phrase their request in a way that minimizes the imposition, such as "May I please ask a question?" or "If it's possible, may I leave the classroom?"

In this framework, permission asking is a way for students to navigate the complex power dynamics in the classroom while maintaining the teacher's face and their own social standing.

2.3. *The Role of Sociocultural Norms*

Sociocultural norms play a significant role in shaping how students interact with teachers in Russian classrooms. Russian culture places a strong emphasis on formality, respect for elders, and deference to authority figures. This cultural context means that students are generally socialized to request permission before taking any action that could be perceived as challenging the teacher's authority. In this sense, permission asking is not just about gaining approval for participation but about maintaining a harmonious relationship with the teacher and adhering to societal expectations of behavior. Furthermore, the legacy of the Soviet educational

system, which was characterized by strict teacher control and authoritative pedagogy, continues to influence classroom interactions in modern Russia. Although recent reforms have aimed at promoting more student-centered learning approaches, there remains a deeply ingrained respect for authority that influences how students seek permission and engage with teachers.

2.4. Teacher-Student Interaction and Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory [3] is also relevant in understanding how permission asking functions in Russian classrooms. Vygotsky emphasized the social and cultural context of learning, suggesting that learners' cognitive development is mediated by their interactions with more knowledgeable others – primarily the teacher. In Russian classrooms, the teacher is the central figure who guides students' learning processes. Permission asking, in this framework, is not only about negotiating authority but also about scaffolding students' participation in the learning process.

Scaffolding: Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding is significant in the context of permission asking. As students interact with the teacher, they rely on the teacher's guidance and permission to move through the stages of learning. In this sense, permission asking can be seen as a way to facilitate this teacher-student interaction, where the teacher's authority is essential for the student's intellectual development.

2.5. Educational Reforms and Changing Dynamics

In recent years, Russia has made efforts to modernize its educational system, introducing reforms aimed at fostering more interactive and student-centered teaching methods. These reforms include encouraging students to participate more actively in the classroom and promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. As part of these efforts, permission asking has become a more nuanced and context-dependent practice. In more progressive classrooms, students may feel more empowered to ask for permission to speak or contribute, and the teacher may be more likely to grant these requests to foster a collaborative and interactive learning environment. However, even with these reforms, the historical influence of the Soviet system and the cultural norms around teacher-student relationships continue to affect how permission is sought and granted. In Russian classrooms, there is still a strong cultural respect for authority figures, but the educational reforms aim to balance this respect with greater student agency. The idea is to create an environment where students are encouraged to think independently, make decisions, and engage critically with content, all while respecting the teacher's guidance [11].

2.6. Balancing Permission and Authority: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Balancing permission (the freedom to make choices and act independently) with authority (the teacher's guidance and control over the learning process) can be challenging, especially in diverse cultural contexts. Both Algeria and Russia face the tension between maintaining traditional forms of authority while fostering autonomy and independent thinking among students. In both contexts, teachers must navigate the delicate balance of providing enough structure to guide learning while also offering students opportunities for self-regulation and decision-making. This balance is crucial for promoting motivation, engagement, and long-term learning outcomes. However, the degree to which this balance is achieved can vary depending on local

cultural attitudes toward authority, the specific demands of the curriculum, and broader educational reforms.

Methodology of the study

To examine the balance between student autonomy, permission asking, and teacher authority in Algerian and Russian classrooms, this study adopts a comparative qualitative research methodology. The purpose is to explore how permission-seeking behaviors and teacher authority dynamics contribute to or hinder the development of student autonomy in these two culturally distinct educational contexts. Below is a detailed explanation of the study's methodology, including data collection methods, sampling, and analytical approaches.

Methods and population. The study employs a comparative case study design, which is appropriate for exploring and contrasting the dynamics of student autonomy and teacher authority in classrooms from two different cultural contexts: Algeria and Russia. By comparing these two countries, the study aims to identify commonalities and differences in how permission asking is handled and how teacher authority influences student autonomy in both settings.

Qualitative Research Approach: Qualitative methods are used to explore the nuanced and complex nature of interactions in the classroom, focusing on the lived experiences of students and teachers. This approach is appropriate given the social and cultural dimensions of the study, which require an in-depth understanding of local practices and beliefs.

Data collected from discourse completion test that consists of different situations and tend to study different speech acts, yet the focus of this paper is on permission. The data collected witnessed the participation of 143 students from both Algerian and Russian contexts and it is analyzed using thematic analysis, which is suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis will allow for a deep understanding of how authority and autonomy manifest in the classroom, how permission is sought, and how these aspects differ across cultural contexts.

Results

1. Permission in Russian classrooms

Three situations are used in this study to examine permissions in student-teacher interactions. Students who spoke Russian were asked how often they asked their teacher for permission to do something. When asked how often they ask their teachers to let them into the classroom if they are late for class, most students (43.8%) selected "always," followed by "often" (19.2%) and "sometimes" (17.8%). Another student (11%) claimed that they "rarely" ask for permission to enter the classroom, and the lowest percentage selected "never". The options "Sometimes" (27.4%) and "seldom" (26%), which asked students to indicate how frequently they typically ask their teacher for permission to leave the classroom for a while because they are feeling ill, had the highest percentages in the second (02) situation. The option "Always" was selected by the largest third of respondents (21%). It was noted that the option "Often" had a percentage of 16.4%, while the option "Never" had the lowest proportion of (8.2%). In the third (03) situation, students were asked to

rate how often they ask their teachers to skip class because they have a commitment that prevents them from attending. In terms of percentage, the choice "Seldom" had the highest percentage (27.4%), followed by "Always," which had the second-highest percentage (24.7%), and "often," which had (21.9%). Finally, the option "Never" had the lowest percentage noted of (6.8%) (See table 1).

Table 1

The frequency of the Russian students asking for permission

Frequency Situations	Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Seldom (%)	Never (%)
Situation 01: Would you ask your teacher for his/her permission to enter the classroom when you are late?	43,8	19.2	17.8	11	8.2
Situation 02: You want to leave the classroom for a while. Would you ask your teacher for permission?	21.9	16.4	27.4	26	8.2
Situation 03: You must do something important, and you want to ask the teacher for permission to miss the class. would you do that?	24.7	21.9	19.2	27.4	6.8

Students were asked to elaborate more about the expression that they are using while asking their teachers for their permission to fulfill a certain action, it has been remarked that the Algerian students tend to be both direct and indirect when asking for permission, for instance, their indirectness is noticed through their use of language models they tend to ask for the ability for do something (Can I?). In other situations, the students are noticed to use religious expressions that seek for the teachers' sympathy, which are commonly used in the Algerian culture (as in example 3), as for on other responses the students were noticed to be direct and use declaratives (Example 4) and some of the common responses in Algerian Arabic are as the following:

أستاذ أسمحلي على التأخر، معليش ندخل؟ (1)
'Teacher, I apologize of being late, can I come in?'

دكتور مانيش حاس روجي مليح، نقدر نخرج شوي برك ونولي؟ (2)
'Dr, I am not feeling well, can I go out for a while and come back?'

أستاذ نخرج شوي ونجي الله بحفظك. (3)
'Teacher, I will go out for a while and come back may Allah protect you.'

أستاذ أني مانيش جاي غدوة، عندي وراق مهمين لازم نخدمهم (4)
'Teacher I am not coming tomorrow; I have some important documents that I have to do.'

2. Permission in Algerian classrooms

This study looked at permissions in student-teacher interactions in three different scenarios. How frequently do students who speak Algerian Arabic ask their teachers for permission to do something. The majority (42.2%) said "always," followed by "often" (7%) and "sometimes" (43.6%) when asked how frequently they ask their teachers to let them into the classroom if they are a little late for class. A further (4.4%)

of respondents stated that they "Never" request permission to join the classroom, while the smallest percentage (2.8%) chose "never." The options "Sometimes" (33.9%) and "Always" (33.8%) had the highest percentages in the Second (02) situation, where students were asked to indicate how frequently they typically ask their teacher for permission to leave the classroom for a while because they are feeling under the weather. The third-highest percentage (16.9%) went to the "Seldom" option. "Never" had the lowest percentage (7.2%), while "Often" had the a percentage (11.2%). Students were asked to rate how often they ask their teachers to skip class because they have a commitment that prevents them from attending in the third (03) case. The choice "Always" had the highest percentage (40.8%), followed by "Sometimes" (31%); similarly, the alternatives "often" and "rarely" had a comparable percentage (9.8%). In conclusion, the option "Never" had the lowest percentage of (8.5%) (See table 2).

Table 2

The frequency of the Algerian students asking for permission

Frequency Situations	Always (%)	Often (%)	Sometimes (%)	Seldom (%)	Never (%)
Situation 01: Would you ask your teacher for his/her permission to enter the classroom when you are late?	42.2	7	43.6	2.8	4.4
Situation 02: You want to leave the classroom for a while. Would you ask your teacher for permission?	33.8	11.2	30.9	16.9	7.2
Situation 03: You must do something important, and you want to ask the teacher for permission to miss the class. would you do that?	40.8	9.8	31	9.9	8.5

Russian speaking students were asked to provide the expressions that they use when asking their teachers for permission to do something. It has been noticed tha5t the Russian students tend to be indirect in all cases, this is seen through their use of language models, such as the language model that tend to ask for ability as well as they tend to use the interjective adverb “please. Their responses are recoded to be in Russian language, and they are as the following:

Извините за опоздание, можно войти? (5)
‘Sorry I’m late, can I come in?’

Извините, я себя плохо чувствую, можно выйти? (6)
‘Excuse me, I don’t feel well, can I go out?’

Извините, мне придётся пропустить вашу пару.
Могу ли я вам сдать задание электронно или в другой день? (7)

‘Sorry, I’ll have to miss your class.
Can I hand in the assignment to you electronically or on another day?’

Можно пожалуйста мне уйти с пары, так как у меня важные дела. (8)
‘Can I please leave the class, as I have important things to do?’

Discussion and conclusion

From the analysis of the data collected it can be said that the main point discussed is that both Russian and Algerian students tend to be indirect when asking for permission, which can be attributed to cultural values, societal norms, and the role of authority in educational contexts, for instance, in both Russian and Algerian cultures, respect for authority figures, including teachers, plays a significant role in communication. Students may avoid direct requests because they feel that it could be seen as disrespectful or overly assertive. Instead, they often choose indirect methods, which allow them to maintain a level of deference and politeness. By phrasing their requests more cautiously or in a roundabout way, students convey respect for the teacher's position while still seeking permission. Also, it can be said that Both Russia and Algeria have strong social hierarchies, and these hierarchies extend to the classroom setting. Teachers are viewed as authority figures whose positions are rarely questioned. This can lead students to adopt more indirect approaches to avoid any potential conflict or perceived disrespect. Additionally, the education systems in these countries often emphasize discipline, formalism, and respect for authority, reinforcing the tendency for students to seek permission in less direct ways. Furthermore, understanding that indirectness is not necessarily a sign of reluctance or avoidance but rather a cultural norm can help teachers interpret students' requests more accurately. Encouraging an open, supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable making requests, even indirectly, can improve classroom dynamics and foster better teacher-student relationships.

To sum up, promoting student autonomy in the classroom is a complex and context-dependent process. In both Algeria and Russia, the educational systems are gradually shifting toward approaches that recognize the importance of autonomy in enhancing student motivation and learning outcomes. However, this shift must be carefully managed to maintain the necessary authority and structure for effective teaching. A balance between permission and authority is essential, and educators in both countries face the challenge of finding the most effective ways to foster autonomy without undermining their role as authority figures. In Algerian classrooms, permission asking is a complex act influenced by sociocultural values, power dynamics, and educational reforms. Students' requests for permission to speak, ask questions, or participate reflect their understanding of the teacher's authority and their role in the classroom. These interactions are shaped by politeness strategies that mitigate the potential for face-threatening acts and maintain respect for teachers. Although recent reforms aim to foster more autonomy, the traditional norms of authority continue to play a central role in the ways permission is asked and granted. As for Russian classrooms, permission asking is influenced by a combination of cultural norms, power dynamics, and educational traditions. The high-power distance in Russian society, coupled with the historical legacy of authoritative teaching practices, means that students are often required to ask permission in a formal and respectful manner. Theories such as Politeness Theory [7] and Sociocultural Theory [3] help explain how permission asking functions as both a social and educational practice, mediating the relationship between teacher authority and student autonomy. Despite ongoing educational reforms that promote more student-centered approaches, the tradition of seeking permission remains a significant aspect of classroom interactions in Russia.

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