

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****ETHNOCULTURE CONCEPT IN MODERN LANGUAGE
EDUCATION WITHIN THE ETHNIC STUDIES PARADIGM**

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Abstract

Modern linguistics pays special attention to the reflection of the culture in language and the right interpretation of these processes by students. A.B. Afanasieva claims that “the main objective of education has been redefined at the beginning of the XXI century. The centrist paradigm of knowledge was replaced by cultural, creative and competency paradigms”. However, researchers still note the lack of optimal methods and technologies that facilitate the acquisition of this multifaceted cultural phenomenon. Jinliang Zhang writes: “since no language can exist in a cultural vacuum, and since no two cultures are exactly identical, second or foreign language learners will inevitably encounter cultural confrontations on their learning route”. We agree that difficulties in perception of ethnoculture during language learning relate to its complexity as a phenomenon. For example, foreign learners of Russian have a period of time when they must get necessary knowledge about the reflection of the real world in the language, including national character, folk genres, ethnographic details of Russian life, national and religious symbols, communicative taboos and so on. The article represents ethnocultural peculiarities in teaching Russian for foreign learners. Attention is given to the term “ethnoculture”. It is an important constituent in the history of national development which indicates the necessity to account for it while teaching Russian to foreign students. The knowledge of ethnoculture helps to form the linguistic identity of a foreign student and build interest in language and culture.

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Keywords: Ethnic group, ethnoculture, language identity, ethnocultural peculiarities.



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1. Introduction

The term “ethnic group” has been attracting the attention of scientists from the end of the XIX century. The foundations of ethnic group theory were laid in the 1920s by Shirokogorov (1923) (1887–1939). He defined an ethnic group as “a group of people, united by the unity of origin, habits (ethnographic unity) and language” (Shirokogorov, 1923, p. 83).

Now the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language is closely related to the modern linguistic concept that assumes the necessity to combine productive teaching and the development of cultural competencies in learners.

For example, modern methodology teaching Russian as a foreign language pays special attention to linguistic and cultural studies. This is because the purpose of these studies is to “provide communicative competences within the acts of intercultural communication, particularly through the adequate perception of communicator speech and understanding of original texts” (Prokhorov, 1996, p. 71). This allows saying that accounting for ethnocultural factors within foreign language teaching is an important problem in the modern domestic methodology of foreign language teaching.

2. Problem Statement

The research problem lies in the necessity to determine the influence of ethnocultural factors on teaching Russian as a foreign language.

3. Research Questions

The subject of research is the role and place of ethnocultural factors within the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

4. Purpose of the Study

The research aims at refining the understanding of the term “ethnoculture” and describing the role of ethnocultural factors in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

5. Research Methods

Currently, the majority of scientific articles focus on exploring separate aspects of the ethnic group concept: the problem of national identity formation through the unity of language as a bearer of ideas and practices (Tsapko et al., 2018); systematic study of problems related to the aspects of ethnic gender (Uranhaeva et al., 2018); the place of a linguist in modern society (Metslang, 2018); the analysis of the Russian theory of ethnic groups and the western concept of ethnicity (Kuznetsov, 2016); the interrelationships between the concepts of nation and ethnic group in Russian and foreign humanities and the problem of national identity (Kuznetsova et al., 2016); the study of discourse ontogeny as an important component in building the identity (Nechaev, 2011); ethnic differences between Russian and English linguistic cultures based on taste preferences (Ermakova et al., 2018).

The problem of foreign language teaching will always reside in the implementation of adequate communication. The optimization of the teaching process is possible under the more profound study of the ethnocultural specificity of a taught language.

Shaklein (2008) indicates that “teaching is a social process that appeared with the emergence of society and evolved together with its development” (p. 109). Scientists treat this process as a transfer of knowledge about the surrounding world reflected in a language. For example, when teaching a foreign language, it’s necessary to account for national culture factors reflected in a language. This will help to acquire both a foreign language and the knowledge about traditions, psychology, and lifestyle of its native speakers. All this shows the importance of understanding ethnocultural factors within the process of foreign language learning.

The term “ethnoculture” appeared as a variant of the term “ethnic culture” and was widely disseminated at the end of the XX century. This term is closely connected with such concepts as “national culture”, “traditional culture”, “ethnic culture”. According to Afanasieva (2009) the term “ethnoculture” “brings focus to ethnic component” (p. 192). This means that this term determines the understanding of the specificity of ethnic group behavior.

Let’s study several well-established descriptions of the term “ethnoculture” to give its most accurate definition based on the works of domestic researchers.

According to Uzlov (2009):

ethnic culture is traditionally connected with the process of ethnogeny and represents a cultural experience that is historically acquired by an ethnic group while developing activities on particular territory and adapting to particular natural conditions of existence. This process crystallizes as the combination of material and spiritual values, norms and stereotypes of behavior, reflecting internal and external relationships of this ethnic group, necessary for its fully-fledge activities. (p. 98)

We believe this definition is quite objective as the culture of a nation is closely related to the territory where this nation lives, while weather conditions have a significant impact on forming the perception of the world and language peculiarities of a specific ethnic group.

According to Poshtareva (2009),

ethnoculture is a combination of traditional values, relationships, and behavioral features, manifested in material, spiritual, and social activities of an ethnic group. These values formed in the past and developed in historical sociodynamics, while enriching the culture, represented in different forms of self-fulfillment of people, with ethnic specificity. (p. 83)

Such a definition of ethnoculture is of interest as the past of an ethnic group influences both its present and future, determining the line of thought and the behavior of ethnic group representatives.

Based on domestic research works, we can conclude that ethnoculture is a part of the social and cultural background of an ethnic group or nation which has a significant influence in history.

Ethnocultural factors represent the combination of traditional and modern values which serve as a basis for the life experience of a nation or a civilization.

Thus, ethnoculture is an important constituent in the history of national development. It is necessary to account for it in teaching a language, e.g. Russian, for foreign students.

One of the most important components in teaching Russian as a foreign language is the choice of the most significant aspects of Russian culture. Different course books may contain various kinds of information about Russian ethnoculture. However, among them one can always find such cultural facts that stay unchanged for the whole period of Russian history. These are the most important facts of Russian ethnoculture and you need to account for them while teaching Russian as a foreign language.

Let's describe the most important aspects of Russian ethnoculture. Its in-depth component is the household and cultural type of economy that implies the agricultural, settled way of life. This lifestyle was the foundation for many objects of Russian traditional life, religion, customs, philosophy, ethnic psychology and etiquette.

The ethnoculture of Russia is characterized by a strong connection with a collective, where group beginning prevails individual. Russians are always ready to assist. They are sympathetic and hospitable. This fact of Russian culture is reflected in the language, especially Russian proverbs and sayings: *"Time and hunger wait for no one"*, *"A hundred of friends is better than a hundred of roubles"*, *"You won't even climb a hill alone, but you can climb a mountain if you have friends with you"*. The analysis of these proverbs in the classroom will give a foreign learner of Russian an opportunity to understand the indicated facts of Russian culture better.

The Russian ethnoculture is developing in terms of space and geography as well as history and time. The size of the Russian state and cold weather have formed the mindset and world views of Russians. Russians tend to reflection. They are thoughtful as the acquisition of vast territories for centuries related to great difficulties: building roads in unknown lands and cold weather. All this formed Russian language tradition with such songs, verses, and expressions as *"Oh, the roadways, dust, and haze of mist, angst, and cold, and worries, and the tall steppe weeds"*, *"An icy roof, a creaking door, prickly darkness outside of the rough walls. Once you cross the threshold, you see frost everywhere and the bluest blue fog in the windows"*. Teaching the peculiarities of Russian ethnoculture to students can help them acquire Russian better and adapt them to Russian reality if they study the language in Russia.

Russian folklore, especially fairy tales and epic poems also reflect some aspects of Russian ethnoculture. For example, such fairy tales as *"Morozko"*, *"Repka"*, *"Kolobok"*, *"Snegurochka"*, *"At the luce will"* accurately represent the national kitchen, peasant life, separate aspects describing national culture, flora, and fauna of Russia. Fairy tales contain the descriptions of key elements of Russian culture: *cold winter, samovar, balalaika, borsch, izba, lapti, kokoshnik*.

6. Findings

A special position in understanding the essence of an ethnic group and their role in the development of society belonged to a famous historian and ethnologist L.N. Gumilyov. He introduced the concept of "passionarity" according to which an ethnic group is a community of people formed naturally

based on the original stereotype of behavior. An ethnic group exists as a system that opposes itself to other similar systems, based on complementarity.

In modern science, the term “ethnic group” is defined as the linguistic and cultural unity of people, connected by the common understanding of their origin and historical fate, common language, peculiar features of culture and psychic, the self-consciousness of group unity.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of the represented ethnocultural features shows that knowing the ethnoculture of a country helps to form a language identity of a foreign student and increase the interest in the Russian language and culture.

This research helped us make the following conclusions: the search and development of new methods for teaching Russian as a foreign language within the ethnic group–language–culture paradigm needs to account for ethnocultural factors. This can be facilitated if we organize teaching bearing cultural components in mind and considering ethnopsychological traits of students, their mentality, continuity in educational traditions, new social roles acquired while studying the language in the authentic environment.

It is important for a teacher to use means that speed up the adaptation of foreign students to the conditions of study in a new language and cultural environment. Among such means, we highlight teaching based on ethnocultural components of a studied language.

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