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# TEXTOCENTRIC APPROACH IN TEACHING TATAR AS A NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE

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### *Abstract*

The article studies learning the Tatar language according to the textocentric principle. The purpose of this study is to explain the linguistic and methodological features of development of speech, language and ethno-cultural competence of students on the basis of texts of the Tatar language textbooks. Textocentric approach takes an important place in the educational process, as it allows Russian-speaking students to form speech, language and ethno-cultural competence in the process of learning the Tatar language, as well as to achieve the main objectives of education. It contributes to the achievement of better practical results and increase of interest in the subject, helps the students to improve their communication skills, discover new cultural values, expand their horizons. The texts used in the educational process can be different in genre, theme, volume, however, they serve as means of obtaining information and developing the creative potential of students. The results of the study will be useful to teachers engaged in teaching national languages in schools and to researchers studying the improvement of modern linguomethodology. It is important to point out that the formation of speech skills while reading or listening to texts allows to provide students with the opportunity to make their own oral and written statements logically and constructively and understand the speech of other people.

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**Keywords:** Education, linguistic competences, principle of textocentrism, quality of education, Tatar language.



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## 1. Introduction

The modern education system is a basic social institution that determines the socio-economic progress of society, its moral and psychological state and cultural development. One of its functions is the transfer of ethno-cultural knowledge, norms, values, traditions, ensuring ethnic continuity, preservation and development of ethnic community (Musina, 2011).

In accordance with the Federal educational standard of basic general education of the Russian Federation, the study of the native (Tatar) language requires the achievement of the following objectives: the development of communicative competence of students by major types of speech activities (listening, reading, speaking and writing); understanding of the determining role of a language in development of intellectual and creative abilities of the individual; the formation of the responsibility for language culture as a value of the humanity; the mastery of the common speech culture. In school education, communicative competence is understood as the ability and willingness of students to communicate in the target language and is considered to be a set of several components, including speech, language and social-cultural competencies (Fazliakhmetov & Yusupova, 2016; Solovova, 2003; Yakupov, Fatkhullova, & Denmukhametova, 2016). Therefore, when studying the Tatar language, Russian-speaking students should acquire a certain level of linguistic knowledge and communication skills in speaking and writing. To do this, it is necessary to purposefully form all kinds of the above-mentioned competencies at the lessons, transferring the foreign language culture by means of the Tatar language as a subject of study, which contributes to general education. As historical experience shows, every language, every culture has its own mission, and they contribute to the development of world culture. Accordingly, the system of modern language education should see this mission and educate students in this spirit, develop their communication skills and willingness to cooperate.

Currently, the methodology of teaching Tatar as a non-native language that has its rich experience and traditions, is developing with the new educational approaches on the basis of their critical processing and appropriate adaptation to modern conditions. Of great methodological value is the textocentric approach, in which the learning the main types of speech activity is carried out on the basis of texts.

## 2. Problem Statement

Reading is a receptive type of speech activity and a form of written communication. Main goals of teaching the Tatar language are realized through reading texts. The methodological literature states that school students should obtain the following strategic skills in reading a foreign language text: to be able to guess the meaning of words; to guess the meaning of unknown words according to their similarity to the words of a native language; to predict the content of a text according to its title; to ignore unknown words that do not affect the main idea of the text; to read twice for clarification of the meaning; to use explanatory notes for better understanding; to use bilingual dictionaries (Golskaya & Gez, 2008). Texts represent a coherent sequence of oral and written statements generated in the process of speech activity. As the basic unit of a communicative act, texts perform several important functions. Firstly, they act as means of communication, secondly, they affect the participants of communication; thirdly, they reflect knowledge about the world and, fourthly, texts serve as means of storing knowledge and human experience. Therefore,

the texts contain the information that needs to be transferred, organized in the semantic and structural unity of a certain language level. The structural and content features of a text and the information contained in it are determined by the topic and the specific situation of communication.

Thus, when teaching Tatar as a non-native language, we proceed from the fact that the texts presented in the textbooks contain various information necessary for transmission, and students throughout the school course learn to work with them, performing various tasks. These tasks contribute to the formation of different skills such as: listening comprehension of oral texts, ability to make dialogues and monologues, writing pragmatic texts (advertisements, announcements), texts of epistolary genre (personal and official letters, congratulatory letters, etc.). Thus, we develop students' speech, language and ethno-cultural competence, as the texts reflect the peculiarities of national culture, spiritual achievements of the Tatar people. To form speech skills on the basis of the texts being read or listened to means to provide students with the opportunity to make their own oral and written statements logically and consistently and understand the speech of other people.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subjects of the study are the texts of different genres in Tatar language textbooks for students of 1-11 grades studying the Tatar language as the state language in the Republic of Tatarstan, in the online-school Ana tele (Anatele.ef.com), as well as software language competence according to the types of speech activity. The scientific novelty of this study lies in the fact that for the first time in the Tatar linguistic methodology we have studied the development of a communicative competence level according to the textocentric principle.

We hope that the study will contribute to the development of methods of teaching the Tatar language and will be useful for the teachers of the Tatar language, postgraduate students and scientific researchers.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to introduce the textocentric approach to the practice of teaching the Tatar language to Russian-speaking students, aimed at developing the communicative competence of the students. In scientific researches on Tatar linguodidactics of the last years various aspects of school education to the Tatar language as non-native were considered, but the problem of development of communicative abilities on the basis of texts was not studied separately.

### **5. Research Methods**

For the successful realization of the aims of this research, we have studied scientific works, describing the use of textocentric approach in teaching a non-native language; we analyzed texts of school textbooks and online resources, studied the system of pre-text and post-text tasks, summarized the valuable experience of teachers of the Tatar language.

In the process of work the following research methods were used: comparative and descriptive methods, the method of continuous sampling. With the help of the descriptive method we carried out the procedure of primary analysis and presented the material. With the help of comparative analysis we selected

and analyzed entertaining texts from school textbooks for different levels of education. The continuous sampling method was used in the selection of materials for linguistic analysis.

## 6. Findings

We distinguish several positive aspects of using textocentric approach in teaching the Tatar language: the students try to find the required information from the proposed text independently; they learn to find the required facts and information quickly; the psychological barrier disappears; the students can address to the source repeatedly; they develop curiosity and interest trying to understand another way of thinking; the students can reflect on existing and acquired cultural experiences. The results of teaching the Tatar language on the basis of school textbooks show that the enrichment of the educational space with texts of various genre and style and their purposeful selection contribute to creation of an environment conducive to development of speaking abilities, which favorably affects the improvement of the sense of language, language intuition and creative potential of students.

Tatar language textbooks for Russian-speaking students serve as an educational model of learning, due to the objectives and content of the subject. They present a system of productive and receptive exercises, among which we can note the language-oriented (substitution, transformation, construction, etc.) and speech-oriented (question and answer, replica, situational, compositional, play, etc.) exercises. Special attention is paid to the pre-text and post-text exercises. The main content of the textbooks is aimed at mastering the most common speech models of the Tatar language, main lexical units, and learning to make an oral or written utterance taking into account the situation of everyday communication. For this purpose, there are different types of reading in the educational process: reading for detail, exploratory reading, revision reading and reading for specific information. A teacher can choose a methodically appropriate way to solve the problems, thus achieving set results in the educational process and making the teaching of the Tatar language more informative and substantial.

The study showed that the textocentric approach improves the quality of teaching the Tatar language in schools.

The issues of improving the methods of teaching national languages in modern schools and improving the results are of great importance both in the scientific community and in public. We consider it necessary to study these issues based on the experience of teaching the Tatar language in schools. The Tatar language as a subject is studied in all educational institutions of the Republic of Tatarstan. According to the curriculum, the Tatar language is studied for two hours per week in schools where the other subjects are taught in Russian. Being an instrument of cognition, the Tatar language provides the development of thinking, intellectual and creative abilities of students, and helps students to understand the culture and national traditions of the Tatar people, creating the necessary conditions for the formation of their personal qualities such as positive attitude, respect for other peoples, competence in intercultural dialogue.

The main aim of teaching to read is to provide for understanding the text, extracting information from it and the subsequent use of lexical, grammatical and informational material in verbal and cognitive processes. Without mastering the skills of reading, the speech activity in both native and non-native language can not be complete (Zamaletdinov, 1998). The program on the Tatar language for Russian-speaking students states that at the end of a primary school (grade 4) students should be able to read and

understand small descriptive texts, to retell their content, to find the necessary information. At the end of a basic secondary school (grade 9) students should develop skills that allow them to read and understand the texts related to the socio-cultural sphere of communication, popular science and pragmatic texts, analyze their content. The primary school mainly uses texts based on familiar vocabulary and grammatical structures, appropriate for the students' age and interests. The texts used in the secondary school relate to various genres and topics (reports, reviews, publications of a scientific and educational nature, excerpts from fiction, etc.). Methodists agree that excerpts from belles-lettres literature used in teaching a non-native language must meet the following requirements: informative content; the presence of a single storyline with a simple and constructive presentation; logical presentation; the title corresponding to the content of the text; the presence of an introductory part, including basic information, and the conclusion with a generalizing communicative unit; the logical coherence of the semantic parts of the text (Kulibina, 2001).

The textbook has two main functions: it is a source of educational information that discloses knowledge provided by the educational standard content to the student in an appropriate way, and acts as a means of teaching that helps to organize the educational process, including self-education of students. We characterize briefly the tasks that we created for the Tatar language textbooks for Russian-speaking students (Fatkhullova, Yusupova, & Denmukhametova, 2015). For example, for the development of speech competence of students we often use tasks such as: 1) *Complete the Dialogue.* 2) *Listen to the texts of advertisements and choose the appropriate answer from the options.* 3) *Retell the content of the text in 2-3 sentences.* 4) *Make the text of advertisement according to this example.* 5) *Read the text about the past event in your city and express your opinion on its content.* 6) *Read the text of the interview and retell its content in a monologue.* 7) *Read the text and retell its content in third person narration.* 8) *Read the text and ask questions about its content.* 9) *Read the text and determine which of the following statements correspond to the content of the text and which do not.* 10) *Write a story about some interesting event in your life.* 11) *Write an essay on the theme "What are the things I am grateful for?"* etc. For the development of linguistic competence of students we use the following tasks: 1) *Read the text, fill in the gaps according to the meaning.* 2) *Read the text, put the words in the right form.* 3) *Read the text and fill in the gaps choosing from the given options.* 4) *Read the text and find examples of all case forms.* 5) *Read the text and find examples of the tense forms of the verb.* 6) *Read the text and find synonyms for these words.* 7) *Read the text and write down the phraseological units.* etc. For the development of students' ethno-cultural competence it is possible to recommend such tasks: 1) *Read the text about the Assembly of peoples of Tatarstan and add some information from other sources.* 2) *Write an article for the school newspaper on the theme "My ethnic homeland."* 3) *Read the recipe of the Tatar dish and make a recipe of your favorite dish following the example.* 4) *Read the text about Tatar diasporas in the foreign countries and make an oral presentation on this topic using materials from the Internet.* 5) *Read the text about Tatar national holidays and name the holidays of the peoples living in Tatarstan.* As can be seen from the examples, the proposed tasks get more complicated both lexically and grammatically at each stage of education. It is important to emphasize that the exercises presented in the textbooks should be creative, i.e. the teacher can make individual adjustments, adapting tasks to certain learning conditions, keeping them simple or making them more complex them. In addition to school textbooks, there are also anthologies for primary school

students, which contain adapted versions of classical children's literature in the form of separate books as additional reading to make the vocabulary of students after studying the material active.

The students like texts of small folk genre that both describe the traditions of the ethnos and reflect its mentality. The researchers of folklore genres repeatedly show the positive influence of such texts for the development of ethno-cultural competence of the students (Denmukhametov & Mugtasimova, 2016; Gabdrakhmanova, Sattarova, & Nurmukhametova, 2016; Galimova, Nabiullina, & Oner, 2017; Nurmukhametova & Sattarova, 2015; Yerbulatova, Mugtasimova, Kirillova, & Sahin, 2017).

In the process of studying texts, students also experience certain difficulties with description due to the lack of necessary lexical units in their active vocabulary or of grammatical structures common for the Tatar language, as well as the lack of ability to find key information in the text and retell it. In order to overcome these difficulties, it is necessary to work systematically with texts, which helps the students to improve their skills.

To assess the level of the skills of text analysis, we recommend different types of tasks depending on the level of education, the type of reading and the type of the text. For example, in primary school, the teacher focuses on the following aspects: complete and accurate understanding of the texts (for the study reading); understanding the general content of the texts (for introductory reading); reading aloud correctly. In the basic secondary school, the ability to work with the text is evaluated with the help of several tasks: teacher can ask the students to guess the content of the text by the title; to ask and answer questions to the text; to divide the text into meaningful parts; to make extracts of the text; to compare two texts on a similar topic; to perform a selective translation of the text; to prepare an oral review of the content of the text; to synthesize information from two or three texts in accordance with its communicative task, etc. (Malkova, 2000). It is important that the system of control of communicative abilities of students at different stages of education was based on texts appropriate for their age. Only in this case the students can develop the ability to analyze and evaluate the content, language and other expressive features and structure of the message; to understand the meaning of the texts of appropriate volume and genre, to find the necessary information in the text.

The study showed that teachers of the Republic of Tatarstan rely in their work on the principle of textocentrism and pay special attention to the development of skills of independent work on the text. If the lesson of Tatar language has a good structure, the students learn to understand another culture and to see through the existing stereotypes about it and develop their own behaviour in intercultural contacts. At the lessons of the Tatar language, Russian-speaking students study different types of texts (messages) - educational, belles-lettres, scientific; they learn to distinguish the text from a set of non-coherent sentences, to recognize the relations between the elements of the message; to predict the content of the text by its name and structure, to understand the message by external features (main page, etc.), as well as to independently determine the topic and the main idea; to divide the text (message) into meaningful parts and to name them; to discuss the text in groups; to answer questions, to express their opinion on the content of the text and listen to the ideas of their classmates, to support the conversation following their presentations; to use reference and illustrative materials. This allows each participant of speech communication to be active and teaches them to communicate in different situations. All these skills are especially valuable now, when every educated person in his professional activity is dealing with a large flow of information to analyze,

and school education should contribute to the language competences of the future professionals. In the era of globalization and intercultural communication the ability to quickly process information is a necessary condition for human activity, and a multilingual person is a kind of link between different cultures.

Systematic and consistent work with texts is given a significant place in online courses on the Tatar language, which are recommended to students as additional educational resources (Anatele.ef.com). Various dialogical and monological texts on various topics and of different size, created using the most common lexical units and their grammatical forms, situational audios and videos, provide practical assimilation of the Tatar language and create the cultural environment, help to develop skills necessary to solve certain communicative tasks. As a result, users at the end of each level acquire the ability to understand Tatar speech by listening; to make oral and written statements of different complexity; to read texts of various types, to write small messages according to examples, i.e. to participate in oral and written speech communication. Thus, from level to level, users improve their speech skills and prepare themselves for fluent speech.

The online school materials also contain texts from magazines, newspapers and other published texts, which play a very important role in understanding the culture that is connected to this language directly, and newspaper as a source of the latest information is part of the culture of the people. High school students, mastering the Tatar language as a means of intercultural and interpersonal communication, learn to work with periodicals, extract the necessary information from the sites of the Tatar press. The use of newspapers in the process of studying Tatar as a non-native language is due to several reasons. Firstly, the newspaper vocabulary is relevant and modern, it allows the students to understand the peculiarities of style and specific phenomena in the Tatar language. Secondly, reading newspapers helps students to understand the current trends of economic, scientific and cultural development of the Tatar republic, to be aware of the most important events and news, as well as to give them their assessment. Thirdly, newspapers touch upon important issues that help to initiate discussion and thus develop oral communication skills using new lexical units on a given topic.

The analysis of the current state of teaching the Tatar language as a non-native language showed that the primary tasks of improving the system of language education in educational institutions are the development of practical speech and cultural multilingualism; the formation of students' communicative culture, i.e. the ability to set and solve communicative tasks; the ability to use appropriate language tools; to be tactful and tolerant. The solution of these problems should form positive motivation and sustainable educational and cognitive interest in the study of the Tatar language in the students. This is largely due to the work of the teacher, who must make every effort to ensure that students, while learning a new language, discover new values, join the universal human values through the prism of the culture of other peoples, learn to be tolerant in communication. These qualities are extremely important now.

In general, we can conclude that the methodology of teaching Tatar as a non-native language should meet the requirements of modern education, to ensure the ability of students to communicate orally and in writing. Textbooks on the Tatar language of the New Generation, which are now being developed, should meet the needs of students and their parents; ensure logical and subsequent presentation of material; contain tasks of problematic and creative nature; provide for the integration of various forms of work (individual, pair, group); be colourful and aesthetically pleasing.

## 7. Conclusion

1. The text is one of the basic units in teaching the Tatar language, as it helps to achieve the main educational goals and develop students' speech, language and ethno-cultural competence.

2. Being the basic unit of a communicative act, texts perform several important functions. Firstly, they act as means of communication, secondly, they affect the participants of communication; thirdly, they reflect knowledge about the world and, fourthly, texts serve as means of storing knowledge and human experience.

3. In teaching Tatar as a foreign language the following strategic reading skills are formed: predicting the meaning of the word; guessing the meaning of a word that resembles to a lexical unit of the native language; predicting content from the title; ignoring unknown words that do not affect the main idea; reading repeatedly to specify the meaning; using explanatory notes and bilingual dictionaries for better understanding.

4. Methods of teaching Tatar as a non-native language should meet the changing requirements, ensure the ability of students to communicate orally and in writing. Textbooks on the Tatar language should meet the needs of students and their parents; ensure logical and coherent presentation of material; contain tasks of problematic and creative nature; provide for the integration of various forms of work (individual, pair, group); be colourful and aesthetically pleasing.

Thus, textocentric approach plays important role in the educational process, as it allows Russian-speaking students to form speech, language and ethno-cultural competence while learning the Tatar language, as well as to realize the main objectives of education. It contributes to the intensification of the educational process, improvement of practical results and increase in interest in the subject. It allows the students to improve their communication skills, discover new cultural values, expand their horizons. The texts used in the educational process can be different in genre, subject, volume, they also serve as means of obtaining information while learning the Tatar language. The textocentric approach helps students to receive information about the culture, literature, history of the Tatar people and learn the words that reflect national realities. Reading excerpts from classics, popular scientific texts, from periodicals, folklore, students have the opportunity to understand the national characteristics of the Tatar people.

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