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CINEMATIC TEXT AS A DIDACTIC MEANS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE CONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

The paper investigates methods of forming sociolinguistic and intercultural competence for students of Russian as a foreign language by means of comprehending cultural codes that appear in a cinematic text. It analyzes the features of the codes and their role in constructing semantic fields of the recipient. It shows that comprehension occurs based on combining systems of different symbolic nature in a text space, designed for polymodal perception (visual and auditory). The non-verbal and verbal components of film text are structured according to meaning-generating cinematic principles that affect the cognitive mechanisms of information processing. Watching a cinematic text that transfers national culture may be useful in increasing the efficiency of education, activating mental processes (attention, thinking, memory, emotions), and increase motivation. The paper notes that the process of understanding foreign cultural film text can cause a number of difficulties since the perception and understanding of any text are largely determined by previous knowledge and are based on the conceptual system of the recipient, which perceives and structures the flow of information. We emphasize the need to adapt the images of another national consciousness based on existing knowledge and ideas formed in the native culture. The authors suggest methods to facilitate comprehension of the polycodal cinematic text that contain cultural specifics of verbal and non-verbal communication of native speakers in order to integrate codes of Russian culture into the cognitive system of students studying Russian.

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1. Introduction

Modern education cannot exist without the use of mass communication and information technologies. Currently, everyone is connected with the production, reception and subsequent transfer of media texts, which can range from small messages in social networks to full-length feature films. Mass media are the most important medium in which the majority of communication types are carried out for society and, accordingly, for the individual. In addition, in recent years, the media has transformed into a new structure that provides a steady increase in the amount of verbal and non-verbal information that has an intensive effect on the individual's thinking. We agree that video understanding is a challenging problem and it attracts a lot of research attention (Chen et al., 2020, p. 62). Cinema is one of the most popular and, therefore, an influential means of mass communication in the modern era, which determines the importance of studying the characteristics of the perception of texts produced by the film industry, studying the factors affecting receptive processes, and also explaining the mental processes that occur in the mind of the recipient.

It seems that the use of multimedia text as a means of introducing students to foreign culture through special codes (visual and auditory), contributes to the accumulation and transfer of social and cultural experience of native speakers of the studied language. It is not only motivation to learning a language that researches stress on for using film in the classroom (Haghverdi, 2015). The result of perception and understanding of the cinematic text can be applied in the process of construction of sociolinguistic and intercultural competence (Samkova, 2016). Sociolinguistic competence refers to "the ability to choose a linguistic form and method of language expression which is adequate to the conditions of the communication act, that is, the communication situation, aims and intentions, social and functional roles of communication partners" (Galskova & Gez, 2004, p. 99). Its construction is an important goal in teaching a foreign language, as it is necessary "for adequate perception of interlocutors, the ability to navigate freely in a foreign language environment and respond adequately in various communication situations (Pocheptsov, 2000, p. 753). In terms of communication between representatives of different cultures, students should form an intercultural competence which is a part of the communicative competence of the language personality. According to some researchers (Galskova & Nikitenko, 2004), it is the ability and willingness to participate in a dialogue of different cultures, in an environment of intercultural communication based on the principles of cooperation, mutual respect, tolerance for cultural differences and overcoming cultural barriers. Acquiring intercultural competence is an important issue, especially in large cities and in megalopolises where students with different cultural, ethnic, religious, and moral principles are educated and interact with one another (Polyakova, 2016, p. 289). Some researchers think that is a key competence in individuals' life (Puente-Maxera et al., 2000).

The relevance of the topic is due to the following processes actively occurring in modern linguistics and methods of teaching foreign languages:

- a noticeable increase of attention to the cinema text as a means of effective influence on the perceiving individual (Agtzidis et al., 2020; Betzel et al., 2020; Gruskin et al., 2020);
- the need to develop a methodological model of the cinema text to identify its potential in the development of sociolinguistic and intercultural competence.

2. Problem Statement

The perception of cinematic text is determined by the features inherent in the perception of a literary text. We know that it is characterized by the presence of a veiled author's position, subtext links, which can complicate the understanding of the text but also cause a variety of interpretations. As a result of understanding the text, the individual forms a projection of this text, which is mental construction (the concept of the text, the meaning of the text as integrity), the product of the process of semantic perception of the text by the recipient, to some extent approaching the author's version of the text projection. We believe that the meaning of a literary text as a product of aesthetic activity is revealed precisely in the process of its perception.

An important aspect related to the analysis of the perception of a cinematographic work is the study of the principles of organizing information in a movie text, its complex semiotic structure (Kelly, 2019). This complexity lies in combining components belonging to different sign systems in single text space. That is, cinema text is a multicode structure represented by a combination of verbal series (speech of characters, credits, title); visual-visual series; sound and music line. This multicode information is transmitted to the viewer through two channels - visual and audio so that we can talk about film text as a multimodal text. A characteristic feature of such multicode-polymodal texts is that they represent a heterogeneous, but a single perceptual flow of information (Nekrasova, 2015).

The fact that film text acts as a multimodal text, that is, having a verbal and non-verbal effect on the recipient in different modalities, brings it close to the real environment of the language. At the same time, the special iconic essence of the film makes it possible to transform the reproduced real environment and the reality of the represented events: "turn the clock back", "compress, stretch, stop, shift and deform" space, which allows us to say that cinematic methods and procedures such as editing, camera angle and others used in film text belong to the cognitive categories and are essential in the meaning-generating organization of the text. It is worth noting that the codes of cinematic text are determined by culture and tradition. Cinema does not capture the natural spontaneity of actions but uses an already cultivated system, with its own codes and referents. Movie signs are the result of cultural conventions and are conditioned by cultural codes, without being universal. Cinematic code can only make sense if it is embedded in a specific cultural context.

It is clear that unknown signs and codes of different nature may cause difficulties for a foreign audience. Perception of foreign cultural context with a respect for cultural differences can cause a problem in the perception and comprehension process.

3. Research Questions

When choosing the material, we should consider the students' age and level of language proficiency. Thus, it seems appropriate to use animated movies in children's groups and switch to full-length feature films in adolescent and adult groups.

It is worth noting the need for a serious approach to the subject of movies. For example, the use of folklore archetypes in a movie increases the chances for success of the cinematic text in the native environment, since it will be close and understandable. However, this text may not be completely clear to

speakers of a different language and culture due to the discrepancy of cultural archetypes. However, such texts are of particular interest for use in lessons of Russian as a foreign language, as they help to form students' competence.

To create the abovementioned competence, information in a movie must be presented in the following aspects:

- thematic (information about the lives of people in the country of the studied language, the culture of the society, including traditions, rituals, etc.);
- philological (non-equivalent vocabulary, idiomatic expressions);
- sociological (information about the features of verbal and nonverbal behaviour in various situations).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this work is to create a methodological model of the cinematic text as a means of developing social, cultural, and intercultural competence of students. To achieve this goal the authors solved the following tasks:

- analysis and selection of educational material that can serve the above purpose;
- identifying the role of the cinema text in the formation of competencies.
- constructing a model that demonstrates the stages of work on developing students' competencies.

The scientific novelty of the work is in highlighting the dynamic process of forming the most important types of competence in foreign language classes in the process of watching and comprehending a movie.

5. Research Methods

Modern methods of teaching foreign languages are characterized by the concept of the importance of using authentic materials for the development of sociolinguistic and intercultural competence of students. According to Khaleeva (1989), the most important requirement for selecting texts is their authenticity, the authenticity of the picture of the world presented in them and the authenticity of their representation by native speakers (p. 37). Nosonovich and Milrud's (1999) point of view also seems fair. They believe that "teaching natural language is possible only when using materials taken from the lives of native speakers or compiled with the features of their culture and mentality in accordance with accepted speech norms" (p. 23).

The process of language learning has integrated into learning the culture of a foreign language, social and cultural traditions and peculiarities of the world image of the native speakers, and that authentic material contributes to the development of the necessary competencies and knowledge. The material, created by native speakers and for native speakers, contains background information of a typical native speaker of the language and culture (Beresova, 2015). This information reflects specific national facts of the material and spiritual culture of the society.

The perception and understanding of the text are determined by prior knowledge and occur based on the recipient's conceptual system, which perceives and structures the flow of information. Highlighting a number of factors that affect the reception of the text, we can mention:

- concepts systems used by the sender and recipient of the information;
- general and special knowledge of the recipient;
- communicative value of the text;
- explicit language information;
- individual psychological properties of the recipient;
- general laws of their mental activity.

The material for this work was the film “Gor’ko” directed by Zhora Kryzhovnikov. It can be recommended for lessons with adult groups in Russian language courses, with upper-intermediate and advanced levels of language proficiency. These requirements are due not only to the age limit of the movie itself but also due to the language specifics, as well as the subject matter that requires students to have extensive social and cultural knowledge.

This movie reflects the life of ordinary people and the generation gap conflict during an important family event, namely a wedding. The ritual is shown as typical in modern society. It incorporates different features, for example, archaic and little-understood traditions (for example, the bride's ransom, showering the newlyweds with wheat, meeting the young with bread and salt); Also it includes rituals brought from other cultures, but firmly rooted in Russia, such as throwing a bouquet by the bride, removing the groom's garter, etc.; and relatively new, but widely used phenomena, such as numerous, rude contests for guests. It seems quite time-consuming to explain to a foreigner all the specifics of a Russian wedding that combines all of the above, but the methodological work when watching the movie “Gor’ko” should cope with this task.

The film clearly depicts the intertwining of various traditions and a special wedding atmosphere, which is often not joyous when (as in the movie) there is a generation gap conflict. And the movie is valuable as it does not just tell the story of a modern wedding. It tells about a modern family and its role for the younger and older generation when the ‘clannishness’ of consciousness becomes less important and individualism and awareness of individual goals and needs come first. The young characters of the movie insist on their own version of the wedding, decide to arrange the event in secret, without parents and relatives. However, as the “family” – “personality” conflict unfolds, the “family” takes precedence, since the characters understand themselves as parts of the family and, accordingly, this conflict is resolved. For students who are carriers of traditional culture, the older generation will undoubtedly be right. For more individualistic culture, on the contrary, the older generation can cause irritation and rejection. We think it is important to form an adequate understanding of the meanings inherent in the movie about the high importance of each individual and the family as a whole among representatives of different cultures.

The film is full of colloquial words and expressions, non-equivalent vocabulary, expressions of prison jargon. Therefore, at the pre-watching stage with a group that is learning Russian as a foreign language, these phenomena must be given great attention, otherwise, when watching the movie, there may be a misunderstanding.

For the formation of sociolinguistic competence, a significant part of the vocabulary that is potentially difficult for the student can be explained without translation. It should be introduced either through stylistically neutral synonyms or through single-root words devoid of colloquial and colloquial affixes. But it is necessary to explain the stylistic originality and scope of the original vocabulary.

An example is the following words are “obschak” – (criminal jargon) common funds (money, products) of criminals; “maloy” – (coll.) the younger (brother, son), “rodaki” – (coll.) parents.

Some words that refer to Russian or Soviet realities may need additional explanation: “vykup” – redemption, wedding tradition, according to which the groom must complete tasks, who came for the bride, must complete tasks (usually comic); “GOST” – the state standard that establishes the quality of products (it was introduced in the USSR and is applied in the CIS countries); “ZAGS” – department of records of acts of civil status. The authority in Russia that registers the fact of marriage (as well as the facts of birth, the establishment of paternity, and adoption); “Ikhtiandr” – a fictional character in the science fiction novel by A. Belyaev's “Amphibian Man”, as well as films based on this novel, also a person who has the ability to freely stay and move under water.

6. Findings

The movie “Go'rko” lasts 1 hour and 40 minutes. It seems logical to divide watching a movie into 3 sessions:

Before the wedding (32 minutes of the film).

Wedding in a restaurant (up to 67 minutes of the film).

The second wedding on the beach (the last 30 minutes of the film).

This division will allow you not only to carefully watch and study the content of the film but also to pay attention to many significant details, such as the non-verbal behavior of the characters (hands in the pockets of bossy Boris Ivanovich, his fist banging on the table, etc.) and deduce ideas about the character using these observations.

The pre-watching stage is traditionally aimed at the personal experience of students, their background knowledge, to put forward hypotheses and ideas, to create interest in further watching. It is important that this stage is not prolonged, otherwise, interest may fade.

When working with this movie, it is advisable to focus on the title itself and use it to suggest a theme and problems: “what does ‘gor’ko’ mean? When is this word pronounced? If this movie is about a wedding, what do you think the conflict might be”. Students' assumptions and discussion should not take more than 3 to 4 minutes, but they are extremely important, as they emphasize the student's personal experience and cultural knowledge.

Working at the watching stage involves tasks that focus on characters, events, a detailed understanding of the content. It is worth noting that watching should be done in small fragments, especially at the initial stage of working with the movie. Students will not be able to retain fragments of more than 15 minutes in their memory, which means that many significant moments of the characters' verbal and nonverbal behavior and nuances of the plot may be missed.

During watching there may be a need to explain some: the main characters' parents with their desire to be photographed at the expensive interiors and the boasting of the chandelier from Dubai by Natasha's parents indicates their social closeness rather than the difference that Natasha's parents are trying to show.

At the post-watching stage, the following tasks can be offered:

- Retell the fragments you saw on behalf of one of the participants (Roma, Natasha, parents).
- Organize a debate “for” and “against” (“young generation” – “older generation”), with the task of solving the movie conflict.
- Make a cross-cultural comparison: suggest how this situation would be perceived in your own family, whether a similar conflict is possible and how it could be resolved.

All these tasks are aimed at making sense of the watched cinematic text, as well as at developing sociolinguistic and intercultural competence by embedding the codes and meanings of foreign culture in the semantic space through the use of imagination and empathy.

Before watching the second part, students should try to predict the future course of events. We can offer to discuss the question: “Do you think the wedding of Natasha and Roma will go well? Why?”.

After watching part of the movie, the students are supposed to discuss the events that occurred at the wedding. They can be offered to retell the events on behalf of one of the participants (young, parents, or one of the guests).

Before watching the final part, the motivating task will be to guess how further events will unfold: “Describe the wedding, which Natasha and Roma arranged themselves, without their parents”. After watching it is worth returning to this question and during the discussion it is important to find out why the young heroes failed to make their dream come true.

After watching the entire movie, it is worth summarizing the content. For example: “Tell us on behalf of Boris Ivanovich about your daughter's wedding, how you prepared for it, how everything went in the restaurant and what happened on the beach. How did the wedding end?” Or ‘Tell us on behalf of Natasha, what wedding you dreamed of, what prevented you from realizing your dream, what happened in the end. What lessons have you learned from what happened?’.

An interesting creative task will be to play the roles of some key fragments of the movie which are most remembered by the students. This will facilitate the comprehension of verbal and non-verbal communication patterns. For example, distribute cards with roles (Natasha, Roma and their parents) with instructions: “Act out the first meeting in the house of Boris Ivanovich. Roma and Natasha, try to persuade your parents to your version of the wedding. Parents, try to defend your positions.”

It is necessary to return to the question suggested before watching the last part – “How was the wedding organized by Natasha and Roma? Why was it a total failure, and not the realization of the dream of a beautiful wedding on the seaside?”. It is important to give students the opportunity to express their opinions, for example, in the form of a discussion in which participants are divided into two parties: ‘fathers’ and ‘children’.

To summarize the new sociolinguistic information, we can ask to prepare a short story or presentation about the modern Russian wedding, its specifics, and the interweaving of old and new traditions and rituals.

As homework aimed at developing productive skills, students can be asked to write an essay. Topics do not have to be directly related to the story. They may think of broader issues: “Generation gap conflict. Is it possible to avoid it?”, “The role of the family in modern society”.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the process of generating new meanings for a foreign audience should be accompanied by work at three stages:

- Pre-watching, which facilitates the mechanisms for predicting the content of the film text.
- Watching, actualizing the meaning of the text, cultural and linguistic specifics, national stereotypes and attitudes.
- Post-watching, which contributes to the integration of movie meanings into the cognitive system of the perceiving subject with the result in the form of new sociolinguistic and intercultural competence of students.

The model of constructing these competencies by means of a cinematic text can be presented as follows:

- Removal of language difficulties at the pre-watching stages.
- Actualizing personal experience and background knowledge.
- Explanation of the cultural specifics of the meanings embedded in the film text.
- Group work on comprehending the movie content through discussions, debates, etc.
- Embedding the codes and meanings of another culture into the semantic space by using empathy and imagination of students (telling stories on behalf of the characters).

Each stage is important in its own way since for a foreign-cultural audience, such as those who study Russian as a foreign language, significant methodological work is necessary to understand the cinematic text in order to overcome both linguistic and cultural difficulties. In the process of this work, the student not only gets acquainted with new realities and language units but also develops their social, linguistic and intercultural competence, being included in a single communicative context (producer — cinematic text — recipient).

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