

NININS 2020**International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****INTERACTIVE METHODS OF STUDYING RUSSIAN LANGUAGE
BY FOREIGNERS**

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Abstract

The article offers interactive methods of teaching international students in a Russian university in order to facilitate their socio-cultural adaptation. In our view, adaptation is considered the most important factor when educating foreigners in a new socio-cultural space. The authors dwell on the difficulties that students have to face (psychophysiological, educational, linguistic, didactic, socio-cultural) and suggest some ways of overcoming them, an interactive project is proposed and successfully tested by the Moscow Polytechnic University in order to solve these difficulties. It aims to enhance international students' interest towards studying the Russian language, to encourage them to receive education at the Russian university and to motivate them to get a deeper and thorough understanding of the Russian view of the world. The research is of a scientific and applied nature and is interdisciplinary. The authors, relying on the results of pedagogical practice, draw cultural conclusions directly related to the stages and modernization of the process of adaptation to a foreign culture and a foreign language environment.

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1. Introduction

For almost thirty years, the Russian education system has been “the subject of persistent reform, modernization and innovation”, which is accounted for by the needs of time and society. Discussions about the special path of Russia and the isolation of the domestic education system, as noted by Lukashenko, “will inevitably give rise to new players in the Russian educational services market – European universities exporting educational services” (Ivahnenko et al., 2011, p. 102). Therefore, it seems reasonable to become familiar with positive experience and learn from it the best. So, for example, European countries formulate and declare the following competencies:

It is necessary to be able to live in a democracy, to develop institutions; it is important to be able to accept cultural differences, live with people of other cultures, languages and religions; it is essential to have broad communicative competencies; it is required to be able to build your life and work in a modern informational environment, recognize and take into account its pros and cons, own informational and mass media technologies; it is necessary to have the capability and ability to learn throughout one’s life (Key competencies for Europe, para. 2).

We should add to this, that in Western countries, internationalization of educational institutions is considered to be one of the priorities in the development of higher education. “Training of foreign citizens along with national undergraduates is carried out in many countries, along with this, approximately 70 % of all international students get an education in ten of them” (Filimonova et al., 2015, p. 499).

Today internationalization of higher education has become (Warwick, 2014) a priority orientation for Russian universities as well, in which the training of international students is a promising educational route. At present Universities are pursuing an active policy of attracting foreign applicants to study in Russia. As a result, during the period from 2000 to 2016, many international students at Russian universities has tripled (from 58,992 to 162,286, respectively).

Studying in Russia, international students master the Russian language, primarily intending to obtain a professional education. It is known that long-term residence in a foreign country, delving into any foreign language and other culture expands consciousness, enriches the individual: develops productive intercultural communication, forms mutual understanding, creates a dialogue of cultures, leads to interchange and reciprocal development between countries. Learning the language of the host country helps international students to master professional skills, develop scientific, social and everyday ways of reflection and self-understanding. In a new country, in unusual conditions, it is difficult for students to do without the task-oriented assistance of a teacher.

In order for foreigners to enter the Russian socio-cultural and educational space as soon as possible, teachers working in a foreign university audience must have the technology, pedagogical models and mechanisms of intercultural communication, which is the basis of professional-pedagogical activity (Filimonova et al., 2018, p. 5).

2. Problem Statement

With the ideas described above, the authors considered it necessary to dwell on such a problem as the problem of adaptation and socialization of international students in Russia during their study at

Russian universities and in the process of obtaining professional education. International students can overcome difficulties they encounter with the help of an interactive project that is being implemented at the Moscow Polytechnic University.

3. Research Questions

What stages of social adaptation does an international student go through in the process of studying Russian as a foreign language in Russia?

How is it possible to help students socially adapt to a foreign environment?

How to teach foreigners to receive new information in the process of exploring Russian culture?

How to form foreign language communication among students in different types of speech activity?

What activities is it necessary to undertake inside universities to form intercultural competence?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to offer teachers of Russian universities working with international students a system of interactive work within the Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture to facilitate undergraduates' sociocultural adaptation.

5. Research Methods

The empirical methods of pedagogical research have been used in work: (observation, scrutiny of student' creative works (essays, research papers), the study of the experience of other universities and sociological research methods: interrogation, questioning, interviewing, and testing. The linguistic method has also been used. In the course of the study, stating and verification experiments have been carried out.

6. Findings

Getting a professional education in a foreign language in an unfamiliar country is a complex process, which is determined by the fact that a student is exposed to many problems. During this period, young people who have arrived in a foreign, non-native cultural environment intending to obtain a professional education, experience a real cultural shock, from which it is difficult to find a way out. They consider their homeland as:

Their national and cultural environment, where they do not have to adapt every time to other people's values, patterns of behaviour, norms, where they do not have to integrate into someone else's national and cultural integrity having its own inherent meanings (Shcheglova et al., 2009, p. 54).

The situation of shock is aggravated by the fact that this new environment is also foreign-language, so an international student in a Russian university has to solve a multi-level, complex task, an important part of which is socio-cultural adaptation. The difficulty also lies in the fact that international students are "the socialized, mature individuals formed under the influence of the environment in which

they were brought up. As a rule, they have a certain life position, goals, a system of values and value orientations” (Ivanova & Titkova, 2003, p. 4).

Researchers Ivanova, Logvinova, Shirikova distinguish the following levels of socio-cultural adaptation of international students: actively adaptive, adaptive, passively adaptive, non-adaptive (Ivanova & Titkova, 2003, p. 36).

Students of the first and second levels of adaptation perceive themselves either partially as a member of a new socio-cultural environment, or as having a high level of social activity, as well as high quality of external and internal culture.

Passively adaptive and non-adaptive students, on the one hand, are characterized by a desire to preserve the previously formed restricted lifestyle, on the other hand, they are likely to demonstrate a low level of social responsibility, a tendency to deviant behaviour.

In order to reduce the percentage of students belonging to passively adaptive and non-adaptive levels, many events have been developed at the Moscow Polytechnic University, the purpose of which is to facilitate the socio-cultural adaptation of students and to replenish the ranks of adaptive and actively adaptive students. These events allow including a student into a staged socially significant activity together with Russian students.

The above-mentioned authors distinguish several stages of the organization of socially significant activities: 1) cognitive; 2) the stage of realization of the possibilities of the institution of higher professional education; 3) the stage of involving international students in different types of socially significant activities; 4) the stage of individual regulation of the process of socio-cultural adaptation (Ivanova & Titkova, 2003, pp. 64–65).

On the basis of the Moscow Polytechnic University many events that enable students to be gradually involved in activities contributing to socio-cultural adaptation are being carried out.

These events include the festival “We are for peace”, thanks to which students overcome adaptation difficulties that arise in the field of relationship between different ethnic groups (see the third stage); Student Conference (SSTC), the participation in which allows international students engaging in cognitive activities, during which the stage of individual regulation of the process of socio-cultural adaptation is involved, since the teacher, in the process of joint interaction, has the opportunity to provide targeted assistance to the student experiencing social difficulties.

A variety of extracurricular activities is explained by the fact that “thoughtful and carefully organized extracurricular work helps to remove the language barrier; develops the ability to communicate with different people beyond the standard situations; cultivates their initiative, independence, creative effort, helps them adapt to a foreign-language socio-cultural environment” (Filimonova et al., 2019, p. 4).

We can list many of other significant events that contribute to socialization, but, in our opinion, only within the framework of the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture*, which we will dwell on below, it is possible to combine and organize all the four stages of activity, mastery of which promotes a higher and more qualitative achievement of levels of social adaptation (the level of adapted and actively adapting students).

Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture

In modern pedagogy of higher education, there have been designed most thoroughly two technologies facilitating the socio-cultural integration of international students: the technology of social and cultural self-determination of a person in a foreign language space (intersubjective determination of an individual) and the technology of pedagogical support of a personality in the process of foreign socialization and acculturation (Filimonova et al., 2019, p. 151).

In the first case, the personality realizes self-determination in a foreign language society and culture. These technologies are used in the first months of training (at the preparatory faculty). The second technology is used directly in the process of independent socialization and personal inculturation into Russian society and culture. According to Guruleva (2016), it “helps to strengthen the subjective position of a personality of an international student, to achieve self-determination in a foreign language society and culture, to master and acquire his or her own social and cultural experience” (p. 152).

This technology can be implemented with the help of the *Club of International Enthusiasts of the Russian Language and Culture*, the concept of which we propose in this article.

With the help of the *Club of international lovers of the Russian language and culture*, it is possible to solve the following problems:

the problem of encouraging the motivation for learning the Russian language and the rational use of the student’s native language (or an intermediary language) in accordance with the nationally-oriented approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language;

the problem of using it in accordance with communicative goals and objectives, as well as for obtaining new information in the process of exploring Russian culture;

the problem of forming a foreign-language communicative situation in different types of speech activity;

the problem of creating intercultural competence;

the problem of developing students' independent work skills;

the problem of stimulating and promoting reflective skills;

the problem of forming the vocabulary and linguistic competence of foreigners through active acquaintance with the history, art and literature of Russia;

the problem of destroying intercultural stereotypes, immersing an international student into the linguistic environment, living Russian culture.

The project of the organization and work of *the Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian Language and Culture* is based on the linguocultural method of synthesized deep acquaintance with the Russian history, art and language.

The mechanisms for the implementation of the *Club's* project are single and periodic events to actualize the interest of foreigners in studying the Russian language, motivating international students to deep and multilateral understanding of the Russian world view.

Periodic forms of work of the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture* should be “Literary Lounge”, “Russian Film Lecture Hall”, “Historical Round Tables”. Single events are presented in the form of games and competitions. These are quizzes, contests, excursions.

It is well known that the audience uses mainly information-receptive and reproductive methods. During the learning process of the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture*,

the methods of problem, heuristic and research education are most actively used. In the first case, during the classroom activities, the recipient is passively assimilating the information, the student receives ready-made information, processed by the teacher. In the second case, active teaching methods are mobilized, which allows students to collaborate with the teacher interactively; besides, the student receives great opportunities to carry out the independent learning process.

In the process of intercultural contacts, which arise during the preparation of various events, representatives of particular cultures demonstrate different patterns of behaviour (Ai, 2017). Active interaction of international students with each other must lead to their mutual understanding (Lewis, 2003).

Here are examples of the types and stages of events of the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture*, which contribute to active sociologization of international students:

Events (types and stages of work) of the Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture

A). Intra-university (inter-university) competition in Russian among international students.

Timed to coincide with the Day of the Russian language – June 6th. The competition is held in two stages:

1) written part:

test that includes questions on grammar, vocabulary, linguocultural studies (it is possible to turn this stage virtual),

creative work (mini-essay);

2) oral part:

linguistic block (tasks allowing participants showcasing their level of language proficiency);

linguocultural block (tasks related to the history, culture, geography of Russia);

monologue (phonetic features, grammatical correctness and speech coherence are evaluated) – prepared in advance or directly during the competition.

A multi-level organization of the competition is possible (elementary, intermediate, advanced levels of language proficiency).

Prospective results: increasing students' motivation to learn the Russian language; growing interest in the history and culture of Russia.

B). The number of excursions "Russian estate culture"

(Kolomenskoye, Tsaritsyno, Kuskovo, Kuzminki, Arkhangelskoye, Ostafyevo).

Prospective results: the participants will learn about the culture of the Russian estate; will receive information about historical epoch and people associated with these estates.

A peculiar outcome may be virtual tours created by students based on what they have seen.

C). A series of literary meetings (literary drawing room) "Getting to know the works of Russian writers."

They are held monthly. Meetings in February and September are introductory and organizational ones.

Students in advance familiarize themselves with the literary text. The meeting involves a report on the personality and work of the writer; discussion of what has been read, viewing of film adaptations (fragments).

Prospective results: broadening the participants' literary horizons; increasing language fluency; arousing interest in Russian literature and culture, because "for the formation of intercultural communication of international students, it is necessary to offer them language training material filled with information about culture, for example, to make literary texts available" (Filimonova & Panova, 2017).

D). The organization of the quiz "Do you know Russian?"

Participants come together in teams, compete in witty answers to entertaining questions. The goal is to interest the participants, encourage them to further mastering the Russian language.

E). Intra-university photography contest "Russian Word on the Streets of Moscow".

The contest is held in three stages:

Discussion, acceptance and selection of photographs of inscriptions, signs, announcements, which must be accompanied by the author's signature in Russian: name, witty quote, pun. Placement of selected entries on the official website of the Moscow Polytechnic University.

Voting, selection of photos for the final of the contest.

Final work.

F). "Russian film lecture hall".

Monthly film lecture sessions include a joint viewing of a feature film of Russian cinematography of the 20th–21st centuries, a preliminary lecture on the film and a discussion after watching it. The selection of films for the lecture session is focused primarily on the film adaptation of the works of classical Russian literature.

G). Historical "Round Table" discussions

They are held monthly. The topics of the "Round tables" are determined by with the contents of the "Literary Drawing Room" and the "Russian Film Lecture Hall". Much attention is paid to those historical events and phenomena that are reflected in the works of Russian classical literature and Russian cinematography of the 20th 21st centuries.

Suggested round table topics:

"The War of 1812: The View of Russian and French Historians" (based on the results of familiarization with the texts of the novels "War and Peace" by L.N. Tolstoy and "Borodino" by M.Yu. Lermontov. Watching the film "War and Peace").

"Time of Troubles in Russia: causes and outcomes." (based on the results of familiarization with the text of the drama "Boris Godunov" by A.S. Pushkin. The films "Boris Godunov", "1612: Chronicles of the Time of Troubles").

"Reforms in Russia in the 1850–1860s and their consequences" (following the reviews of the novels "Fathers and Sons" by I.S. Turgenev and "Anna Karenina" by L.N. Tolstoy. Watching the film "Anna Karenina" by A. Zarha).

"The role of the revolution in 1905–1907 in Russia" (the novel "Mother" by M. Gorky, the film "Mother" by Donskoy).

“*Social inequality in pre-revolutionary Russia: features and consequences*” (the theme of “poor people” in the works by Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoevsky).

Prospective results: Thanks to this approach, international students are going to have a comprehensive understanding of Russian culture and history.

7. Conclusion

The *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture* promotes faster and less painless adaptation and integration of international students studying at different courses, including senior students as well. Also, it makes it possible to involve a Master degree and PhD students. In this case, the Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture must encompass students of different age, as it is known that socialisation is a lifelong process and, accordingly, students encounter difficulties throughout the entire period of study at a university.

Thanks to the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture*, international students increase contacts with Russian students, learn to be tolerant (Ai, 2017; Lewis, 2003), enhance their communication skills, and feel like members of the student community.

The *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture* becomes pedagogical support for a person who goes through the stages of socialisation and acculturation throughout the entire stage of study at the university.

In the course of mastering a foreign language, it is necessary to study the culture, gain experience, master spiritual knowledge and to realise the place of national history, literature, art in the development of society. We must teach Russian to international students, actively immersing them in a cultural context. However, hours within a classroom are primarily used for practising speaking skills. Therefore, the participation of international students in the events of the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture* has a beneficial effect on socio-cultural adaptation, which is of high, vital importance for students. Such a system of work is in accord with modern pedagogical and educational technologies.

During the stating experiment, in which foreigners who just came to the Club were involved, we noted their self-doubt, poor knowledge of the history, literature and culture of Russia, their ignorance of important Russian realities.

A verifying experiment confirmed our hypothesis that interactive work within the *Club of international lovers of Russian language and culture* helps active members of the Club regularly expand their educational and cultural knowledge about the country of residence and, in comparison with passive participants of the educational process, form a culture of social interaction and master the sociocultural space much faster.

The proposed system of work within the framework of the *Club of international enthusiasts of the Russian language and culture* prepares international students for life in a new objective reality. Therefore, this experience can be used in any university in the country working with different international students.

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