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**PROBLEM OF UPDATING MATERIALS FOR TEACHING  
RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Elena A. Selyutina (a)\*, E. T. Sakharova (b)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Chelyabinsk State Institute of Culture and Arts, Ordzhonikidze Street, 36A, Chelyabinsk, Russia, L22502@ya.ru,  
+79634743672

(b) National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Lenin Avenue, 30, Tomsk, Russia, sakharovaet@gmail.com,  
+79539168433

***Abstract***

In the teaching of the Russian language as a foreign language, there is a problem of constant updating of teaching materials. Educational texts should not only form the competence of studying Russian as a foreign language, but also take into account an individually-oriented approach and influence the process of acculturation of foreign students. This acculturation, which is an integral part of the formation of communicative competence, allows us to update linguacultural information and develop new methods for increasing the effectiveness of teaching Russian language as a foreign language. In addition, this helps to increase the involvement in the process not only of the student, but also of the teacher, who is emerging from the situation of regular repetition of used models. The instructional text serves as a demonstration of linguistic patterns, so we can say that the information about the regional geography is recognized by the student as a background. But the text can and must work with the cognitive level of the language personality, with a field of meanings and values. In the teaching of foreign students, the concepts of Russian mass culture can play an important role, since it serves as a universal communicative code that can create a single field for the formation of one's own statement. The presented lesson "VizborandVizbor" is included in the communicative-speech workshop for ethnically diverse groups studying Russian at a basic level. Tasks summarize the material on the topic "Free time, rest, interests".

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## **1. Introduction**

Methodology of teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) requires constant updates of training materials. It appears to be related to the information society we all live in, which builds up cultural and other types of texts and changes meaningful realms and concepts of our present-day world. The students, especially the younger ones, are very susceptible to these changes, may be even more than their teachers (Selyutin et al., 2016). That is why many of the training materials, even when remaining relevant language-wise and grammatically, lose its cultural value.

As an example we'll refer to "Road to Russia", a textbook popular with many teachers working with foreign students. This course was reprinted repeatedly (in our work we use the 12th edition, 2013), it contains a lot of exercises on all of competence levels of RFL, and can be used for preparation for testing at any level. But from our point of view this course uses some materials that needs to be updated. For example, introducing grammar material, the authors place a singer Also and a tennis player Anna Kournikova alongside with other well-known Russians. These seems a bit off, because both of them became famous in the early 2000s, but now they has practically disappeared from the context of modern culture and are insignificant for foreigners as well as for our compatriots. (Anna Kournikova was known more for being a model and a girlfriend of a singer Enrique Iglesias rather than as a successful tennis player, Also – for participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2000). We understand that to cognize Russian view on the world it is necessary to work with the realms that are significant for the nation. That's why, probably, the authors of "Road to Russia" released another course called "Russian Season" (Nahabina et al., 2015).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The texts for the textbooks not only must help building a competence level of RFL, but also must have a personality-oriented approach and influence the acculturation of foreign students. Acculturation is an integral part of building the communicative competence. It is acculturation that allows actualizing the information about the country and its culture. The process of acculturation is connected with formation of a new worldview for a person who decided to learn a foreign language.

## **3. Research Questions**

The optimization of traditional teaching methods and the development of new techniques undoubtedly increased the effectiveness of teaching Russian as a foreign language. We believe that constant updates of visual teaching materials can increase the involvement of both a student and a teacher, who gets an opportunity to avoid repetition of the same old worked-out models (Selyutin et al., 2017). The authors of the RFL teaching courses always explicitly stipulate that it's necessary to continuously update visual and textual materials while maintaining the approved and verified structure. "We want to make the users of our textbook feel the vagaries of modern Russia" (Olga Horohordina). Moreover, in any classroom there are the students with representational thought. For them visual materials in the classroom is directly connected with the overall performance: the involvement of different types of analyzers create psychological comfort at the lessons.

Studying foreign language, students don't simply study grammatical models, they also accumulate knowledge about the realms of a different culture, its stereotypes, concepts, symbols, culturemes, ideologemes, frames, etc., which make them form a secondary linguistic personality and a worldview of new language. Galskov and Gez, teaching methods specialists, believe that the indicator of the formation of a secondary linguistic personality is the ability to take "full participation in intercultural communication" (Galskova&Gez, 2006, p. 65). They rely on researches conveyed by Karaulov and Khaleeva and propose, while teaching a foreign language, to take into account the cognitive (thinking) and non-cognitive (emotional) aspects of the emerging personality.

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

Obviously, the process of formation of the secondary linguistic personality is complex and have many stages, and a huge role is assigned to the text, which is a main source of acquiring primary language knowledge (especially at levels A 1 and A 2). Because educational texts mainly fulfill the function of demonstrating linguistic regularities, we can say that the information about the country is recognized by the student as a background one. In reality, the text can work and should work with the cognitive level of the language personality, i.e. with a field of meanings and values. In the terminology of Karaulov, in this field there is a large amount of cognemes (i.e. frames, idioms, precedent texts, etc.) (Karaulov, 2010).

According to the researcher Redkina, who summarized the works in this methodological field, the text can be considered productive for the learning process if it meets several requirements: It demonstrates perfect speech, stimulates the speech in response, corresponds to the level of teaching RFL, carries information about the country of the studied language, allows to realize monological and dialogical utterance of the learner (Redkina, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account both the relevance of the presented material, and the correlation between the general national field of Russian culture, and adequate presentation of tasks before the text, about the text and others.

Naturally, that kind of work is suitable at the A 2-B 1 level, because the lexicon for the lesson is wider than "Lexical minimum" for the basic and first certification levels. Students will need to work with "Vocabulary" section, which will expand their understanding of the language, and, with the inclusion of new words in regular work at class, will build the basis for expanding the active vocabulary.

#### **5. Research Methods**

For example, let's illustrate the possibility of combining Soviet realities and modern mass culture by the lesson "Vizbor and Vizbor". When choosing materials for lesson, it is necessary to keep in mind the purpose of the lesson and the level of language of the audience. The lesson presented below is part of a communicative workshop for ethnically diverse groups studying the Russian language at a basic level. Students are preparing for admission to various specialties in the field of music (including performer, composition). The tasks summarize the material on the topic "Free time, vacation, interests". This topic is passing through all of the levels of RFL, so the lesson materials can be used for the first certification level. The course of the lesson involves working with texts, performing various tasks (aimed at both

checking the correctness of reading and revising the grammar), watching video clips and listening to audio materials (including the supervision of listening skills).

The proposed material for the lesson is relevant, because it illustrates many aspects of the modern life. During the lesson you can talk about “born in the USSR”, about Soviet singers-songwriters, about the singer and actor Vizbor and about his granddaughter Vizbor, who play jazz music, and also about the show “Golos”, which is aired 1 federal channel. Explaining the specifics of the “Golos” to foreign students, in our opinion, is easy, because it's an adaptation of the Dutch show "The Voice" that is licensed in many European countries (including the post-Soviet space), and have many “clones” of it a lot around the world (for example, “X-factor”, “Idol” or “American Idol”). Therefore, during the lesson, you can made an appeal to the student's personal experience, based on cross-cultural ties. We can show the fragments of the show “Voice” without translating everything that happens on the screen: the students will understand the general meaning, thanks to the background knowledge. Videos almost always find approval in the classroom, because they change the course of the regular work with the textbook and audio materials. In this lesson we use material that is available for free on YouTube.com video hosting. Among the vocabulary section of the lesson there must be words representing musical styles: “folk”, “jazz”, “pop music”, etc. The introduction of this vocabulary is also can not be seen as a problem, thanks to its international origin.

It is much more difficult to introduce information about “born in the USSR”. This is due to the fact that this issue doesn't relate so much to the Russian history, a subject studied by foreign students at the preparatory departments of Russian universities, but rather to the field of sociology or cultural studies. Don't aim to deepen the information on this issue significantly. You can show that nostalgia is a worldwide trend, and the cyclicity of everyday life is manifested not only through the events of history, but also, for example, in the trend for songs of the past. We believe, that the choosing of Vizbor's name and biography for the topic is justified not only by the obvious connection with Vizbor, i. e. events of present days, but also by his popularity in Soviet times. Besides, singer-songwriters were a specific phenomenon for Soviet culture at that period of time.

At the music lesson, you should definitely use the opportunity to sing a song, the text of which was previously analyzed, and the meaning was understood by students (you can verify it with after text exercises). In the course of this lesson, students are invited to listen to the song “Night Road”, which was first performed by Vizbor (“singer-songwriter”), and then to its jazz cover (“ambient” style) by Vizbor (2012). Because we conducted classes with music students, the analysis of the text was accompanied with a comparative analysis of musical styles.

## **6. Findings**

We believe that the concepts of Russian mass culture can play an important role in teaching the foreign students. Recent rethinking of this part of the humanities knowledge made it possible to talk about special functional load that they carry. Mass culture serves as a universal communicative code that can create a single field for the formation of one’s own utterance. This can include general interest in football among people of different nationalities (who can be fans of a one team), a general love for any kind of music (jazz or pop music) or cinema (for example, movies based on comics). In our opinion, as for the

Russ and Russian culture, it's certainly difficult to work with the realities of the recent Soviet past. Another difficulty is to help the student understand that, despite the political and other changes, it is still a part of our culture, that is important for many generations of Russians. Here we have in mind the actual contact of the older generation with the Soviet Union, and some kind of nostalgia among the youth, expressed through the love towards the formal elements of the Soviet style (see, for example, the use of stylized elements in the restaurant business or the fashion industry).

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the lesson materials allow you to practice all types of speaking activity that is necessary for foreign students to master Russian language. During the lesson, the teacher actively uses game techniques, breaks the students' typical view of the lesson and solves the problem of their own involvement in the learning process. Language material is exhibited outside the time limits: due to the free access to the part of the lesson materials on the Internet, a student can repeatedly return to them and, thus, we solve the problem of optimizing the ways of working with students. But, what's more important is that this lesson help with the formation of a secondary linguistic personality and allows you to work with the cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of the learner's personality. This is necessary for the full acculturation of students.

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