

# Educational Potential of Multicultural Language Teaching (on the Russian Language Teaching Experience)

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**Abstract:** The educational potential of the language teaching environment does not often become the object of a special scientific description due to several objective reasons. The model of subject-subject educational relations between the Teacher and the Student in the conditions of the multicultural educational environment is analyzed in this article. This model is focused on supporting the relative autonomy of the individual in the process of teaching within the pedagogical process and is aimed at creating conditions that ensure the formation of humanistic value orientations based on the principle of cultural appropriateness.

The article emphasizes the equivalence of the positions of participants in the educational space, the need to build a psychologically comfortable and humanistic interaction between them. The authors note that a new type of educational interaction should be of a dialogical nature and should be based on the principles of pedagogy of cooperation. Dialogue as the main form of interaction between subjects of the educational process implies a meeting of positions and points of view, in the process of which the views, ideas, opinions that could form the personality are determined, specified, enriched and transformed. The socio-cultural aspect of dialogue is important, where the dialogue participants are interpreted as the subjects of the dialogue of cultures.

The discursive model of learning allows us to consider the text as a means of involving the individual in the cultural heritage and spiritual values of one's own and other peoples (from text to culture and from culture to text). Using the pedagogical potential of the text, the teacher contributes to the formation of the learner's necessary general educational competencies and his socio-cultural worldview. The article concludes that the educational text can be considered not only as a didactic unit but also as a unit for modeling cultural code, as a key tool for the formation of a person's spiritual culture of the learner.

**Keywords:** Language multicultural teaching, subject-subject educational relations, a dialogue, the dialogue of cultures, linguistic-sociocultural educational aspect, a pedagogical potential of a text.

## INTRODUCTION

In conditions of globalization, expansion of international relations, and intensification of intercultural and language contacts multicultural education becomes one of the priorities of national higher schools. It is aimed at educating young people in the spirit of respect for all nations, on the formation of skills to communicate and interact with representatives of different social groups, faiths, and nationalities, on understanding and evaluating the uniqueness of other cultural systems without losing their originality. The subjects of the philological cycle possess enormous potential in the development of multicultural education. They contribute to the formation of the individual and its value-oriented targets, acquiring spiritual and moral and social experience. The educational value of philological education does not cause any doubt, because language is seen not only as of the main instrument of communication and cognition but also as the most important means of cultural transmission, the cultural

code of the nation. The study of language models the sociocultural space of students forms their ideas about the world around them, and helps to determine their place in it. However, the achievement of educational and upbringing goals largely depends on the modeling of the educational process itself: the proper alignment of relations between participants in the educational space, specially selected didactic material and forms of organization of educational activity, etc.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methodological apparatus of research corresponds to the theoretical and methodological principles of pedagogy, psychology, the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most important factor and condition for an effective educational process is the interaction of its subjects. The subject-subject relations acquire a special significance in the conditions of the multicultural educational environment. This type of attitude is aimed at supporting the autonomy of the individual in the teaching and upbringing process and is aimed at

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creating conditions that ensure the formation of humanistic value orientations based on the principle of cultural appropriateness.

The subject-subject relationship between the teacher and the student reflects the basic postulates of the humanistic approach in education and training. They are such relationships, which are based on the mutual aspiration of the participants of the educational space for joint activities based on the ideas of mutual understanding and mutual acceptance. The humanistic paradigm of pedagogical education proclaims dialogue as the basis for interaction between the teacher and the student. This dialogue manifests "individual characteristics of partners and creates humane, trusting relationships, expressed in support, helping behavior" (Panarina, 1996, 4). The value attitude to the individual trainee, taking into account his characteristics (including ethnic, social, religious, etc.) entails the creation of a special, psychologically comfortable educational environment. The formation of such an educational space is possible if the principles of pedagogy of cooperation are observed, which places each participant of the educational process in the subject position in teaching, development, and upbringing.

The main principle of multicultural education is dialogue learning. Dialogue is a system of communicative and semantic interaction between a teacher and a student. The goal of the dialogue is "the increment and critical exchange of knowledge of objective and subjective nature, as well as the expansion of the social and communicative experience of the subjects of the educational process based on self-analysis and the development of their senses" (Kagan, 1988). Dialogue implies a meeting of positions and points of view, in the course of which the views, ideas, opinions and interests forming the personality are determined, specified, enriched and transformed. It is through dialogue that a multidimensional value-semantic communication is built. In the course of this communication, students consciously, actively and creatively accept the personal and subject experience of the teacher (Bochkareva, 2008).

The socio-cultural aspect of dialogue, which interprets participants in the dialogue as subjects of the dialogue of cultures, acquires special significance in the educational process. The concept of dialogue of cultures was developed by domestic and foreign scientists of the 20th century. (Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Kagan, Lotman, Bibler, Feuerbach, Buber, Cassirer,

and others). In their scientific works, culture appears as a form of simultaneous being, communication of people of different cultures, a form of personality development in this dialogue (self-determination), etc. According to V. Bibler, "a dialogue understood in the idea of culture is not a dialogue of different opinions or views, it is always a dialogue of different cultures (in the limit of cultures of thought, various forms of understanding) (Bibler, 1990: 299). As B. Bibler notes, "a new meaning, a new idea, a new vision" is formed precisely at the borders of cultures.

Thus, to get a dialogue between cultures, according to V. Bibler, it is necessary to be able to distance oneself from one's own culture and understand another's culture as one's own.

M.M. Bakhtin in his studies develops a dialogic concept of culture. An outstanding philosopher and culturologist define dialogue as mutual understanding, an uninterrupted exchange of vital meanings, merging and at the same time preserving the distance. M.M. Bakhtin believed that only another culture is able – precisely because of its otherness – to put such questions that will provoke the disclosure of new sides, new meanings of culture: "Another's culture only reveals itself more fully and deeper in the eyes of another culture (but not in its entirety, because other cultures will come that will see and understand even more). One meaning reveals its depths, meeting and touching another, another's meaning: between them begins a kind of dialogue that overcomes the isolation and one-sidedness of these meanings, these cultures" (Bakhtin, 1979:333). In this way, the dialogue of cultures is a type of intercultural interaction that is characterized by the existence of mutual perception of two or more cultures. Dialogue of cultures is recognized as the leading, fundamental principle of teaching in the modern methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language. The problems of interaction between language and culture acquire the status of a key in foreign language education, the content of which is the facts of the country culture of the studied language in comparison with the native culture of the students. Strengthening the cultural and educational aspect of language education is considered as one of the ways to increase the effectiveness of cultural self-determination of students. It is a way of developing cross-cultural literacy among students and recognizing oneself as a subject of a certain cultural environment (Isaev, 2013).

The idea of the interrelation between language and culture underlies the linguocultural approach in the

teaching of the Russian as a foreign language. The study of the language in the context of the culture of its bearers, the development of not only linguistic but also communicative and cultural competence occupy an important place in the teaching of Russian as a foreign language.

Thus, the teacher's explanation the difference in spelling rules associated with the use of the personal pronouns "I" and "you" to English-speaking students helps to reveal a number of cultural differences as well. In Russian the first person pronoun "I" is not written in capital letters (except for the beginning of a sentence). But the pronoun "you" can be written with a capital letter in case of addressing one person in an official business communication situation. Self-belittling is a valid characteristic of the Russian mentality.

"Culture and language are connected in many ways and the interconnections can be studied from a variety of different perspectives" (Kövecses 2017). For the linguistic and cultural approach in the teaching of Russian as a foreign language, two tendencies of the interpretation of language and culture for educational purposes: « from the facts of language – to the facts of culture "and" from the facts of culture – to the facts of language». Within the framework of this approach, the main objects of:

- equivalent vocabulary;
- background knowledge, which are is inherent in the native speakers and are is absent or otherwise interpreted in a foreign culture;
- non-verbal means of communication reflecting the peculiarities of the national mentality of native speakers;
- tactics of speech behavior in various situations of intercultural communication;
- the reflection of cultural traditions in fiction.

The second tendency recommends the construction of an educational process from facts of culture to the facts of language, emphasizing the importance and value of studying primarily culture. Taking into account all of the above, we conclude that effective communication is possible only if the foreign student is not only mastering the linguistic means of expression of information, but also a system of ideas about traditions, history, culture, and the realities of the country of the studied language as a whole, which will allow to

"penetrate" the national picture of the world. Thus, culture through language and language through culture is the main way of comprehending the Russian language by foreign students.

The main means of familiarizing a foreign language speaker with the cultural heritage and spiritual values of the Russians is the educational text in Russian, selected and adapted taking into account certain linguistic means (lexical, grammatical, stylistic). Texts contribute to the assimilation and consolidation of linguistic knowledge of students, as they reflect the value bases of Russian culture and are the source of cultural information. The text material:

- gives an idea of the important phenomena of Russian reality,
- helps to understand the features of Russian identity, the specifics of the mentality,
- allows forming an attitude to the realities, traditions and customs of the people of the language being studied,
- considers actual problems of the modern world, based on history and culture.

Educational texts selected for study in a foreign audience:

- should be important for Russian culture,
- should be relevant for the students themselves,
- should reflect the social, historical and cultural parallels,
- should correspond to the interests and needs of the trainees, depending on what social roles they are to fulfill, in what speech contacts to enter in the process of real communication.

Orientation to the realities of Russian reality determines the subject of training texts, the choice of topics for communication during classroom hours. Relevant in a foreign audience are topics that relate to the areas of social, sociocultural, vocational, information, as well as recreation. Within the framework of classes in Russian as a foreign language, it becomes important to model situations of verbal communication in the most diverse spheres of communication. In this connection, it is especially important to illustrate the situation of Russian reality rather than to illustrate the mistakes that foreigners can

make in the context of the Russian socio-cultural environment. Besides, it is necessary to identify ways to resolve conflict situations and contentious issues, taking into account the norms and rules of behavior of Russian speakers. In the process of education, it is important to anticipate, explain and prevent inadequate associations that are conditioned by the cultural, historical, and socio-psychological characteristics of Russian culture. The problematic discussion of issues relating to the Russian mentality, the worldview system, and the way of life of Russian people, the ethics of their behavior and communication, will allow foreign students to understand and accept Russians, avoiding conflict situations and misunderstandings. The use of problematic material in the classroom will provide not only communication adequate to the conditions of communication but also will create the socio-cultural competence of foreign students. Thus, the text in the lessons of Russian as a foreign language is not only a didactic unit but also a unit for modeling cultural code, a key tool for the formation of a person's spiritual culture. The text is a unit of culture working in both directions – from the culture to the language and from the language to the culture.

That is why it is important to use authentic texts in language classes – shortened but minimally adapted. Any adaptation, artificial simplification changes the stylistic register of the text, distorts its cultural register.

It is important to note that the study of the Russian language and Russian culture should be built in the context of a dialogue with the native language and the native culture of the students. One should take into account the context of "meeting cultures" of different peoples (comparison, matching of the same phenomena in the studied and native cultures). Comparative analysis in this case, allows learners to better understand their own, native culture and see its role in the formation of a global common cultural space.

A bear, a balalaika, vodka, a matryoshka – these are the stereotypes with which foreign students usually come studying to Russia. Reading, cultural programs, communication with Russians, quizzes about Russia, etc. – all this helps teachers in Russia to change stereotyped presupposition of Russia. Leaving the country, students often laugh at themselves and regret that they "have not taken a single photo with a bear."

In this regard, the culturological preparedness of the Russian as a foreign language teacher acquires special significance. The teacher should have a formed

presupposition knowledge fund about the trainees (taking into account the specifics of life, lifestyle, national characteristics). In the classroom, the teacher acts as an intermediary between the cultures of different peoples, the organizer of intercultural communication (Richards, 2005). Effective interaction between participants in the educational process is possible only in conditions of respect for the principles of mutual respect, tolerance, openness, personal values, humane interethnic communication, etc. The most important task of the teacher in the lessons of Russian as a foreign language is the cultivation of respect for the other, studied culture, customs, understanding and "acceptance" of what at first seems confusing and alien. Overcoming stereotypes, penetrating the system of values of Russian culture – all these prepare students for effective intercultural communication, develop a tolerant attitude to the representatives and phenomena of another linguistic culture.

## SUMMARY

Summarizing the described features of modern language multicultural teaching, we should say that the design and usage of new subject-subject language learning model and the search for new forms and tools should not destroy the previous models of subject-object relations – they must exist in correlation with each other. There is reach positive experience in that previous subject-object model: planning the methodical structure of the lesson, selecting training material, thinking through the forms, methods and techniques of current and final control, regulating and activating the attention of students, their stimulation to be involved in independent, individual and group work. «Reenvisioning language teaching and learning requires more adequate conceptualizations of culture and human action. Activity theory is a powerful and effective tool for conceptualizing and working toward deeper intercultural communication. When we make language activities, the unit of analysis for language teaching and learning, we can move beyond accounts of culture as stable, bounded, and homogeneous» (Deoksoon, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Speaking of the text as the main didactic unit in the dialogic and linguocultural approaches to the Russian as a foreign language teaching, we should deduce this unit in terms of methodology to a higher level – the discourse. As a result, we should talk about the

discursive competence of the teacher in modern education in the field of teaching foreign languages. The discursive competence presupposes both the creation of linguoculturally coherent and cohesive texts, as well as the knowledge of different types of discourse (their construction and interpretation following the communicative situation and extralinguistic features of communicants) (Shadursky, 2009).

Thus, the language multicultural education, based on the ideas "from the facts of language – to the facts of culture" and "from the facts of culture – to the facts of language", is seen as the process of mastering the cultural space of the Russian language from the culture of a given nation, ethnos to a national and world culture. This process is focused on spiritual enrichment, the formation of globalism and planetary consciousness, the readiness and ability to live productively in a multiethnic, multicultural environment, which often differs significantly from the national one. Linguistic and cultural competence is gradually transformed into a certain integrative quality of personality, which is realized in the ability to positively solve intercultural problems with representatives of different cultures through verbal and nonverbal instruments of a foreign language (the Russian language) and its culture.

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