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Features of teaching Russian as a foreign language on the basis of local history texts

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Abstract

The paper deals with topical issues of teaching Russian as a foreign language (RAFL) and the peculiarities of teaching, taking into account the Linguistic-cultural component. Linguistic-cultural component is considered as materials on regional studies, local history, history, culture and the basics of legislation. Mastering this material will allow students of RAFL courses to master a wide range of background knowledge about the country, traditions, etc. A typology of textbooks on RAFL is given. The most frequently used textbooks on RAFL are examined from the point of view of the material containing a linguistic-cultural component and features that must be taken into account when working with local history material.

Keywords: Teaching Russian as a foreign language, RAFL, local history text, linguistic-cultural component, text adaptation;

1. Introduction

The main tool of the teacher in the process of teaching foreign students is a textbook on Russian as a foreign language.

The subject of our study is local history texts, as one of the ways and means of forming students' motivation to learn the language, conducting classes in a more lively and interesting way; an important role in this belongs to the availability of visual materials: monuments, historical places, natural objects of the region, museums of the city, museum expositions, etc.

Firstly, we examine some concepts of linguoculturology and regional studies. For example, regional texts that have long been used in textbooks on RAFL, are texts about Russia and Moscow. Sometimes you can find a text about St. Petersburg, and about any other cities or places, but it is difficult to find the text about the city that is not associated with the name of some famous person. Linguoculturological texts can be devoted to the description of the customs, traditions, life of a Russian person, a small town or village where he was born.

Studying etiquette forms of communication, reading various texts and performing a practical set of exercises, the student learns the linguistic-cultural component. Lexical units, reflecting the content of the linguistic-cultural component, present cultural information about the speakers of the language. Such lexical units help to understand the cultural peculiarities of the linguistic society, its character, way of life, and way of thinking. V.V. Vorobyev considers that Linguistic-cultural information is knowledge of the entire system of cultural values expressed in language [10].

The student can receive this knowledge and skills from the situations of communication presented in the textbook. The educational program on Russian language as a foreign language for the elementary level should have the following necessary communication situations: in the administrative service, in the dean's office; in the store, at the pharmacy; at the airport, at the railway station; at the post office; in the bank; in the dining room, in a cafe, in a restaurant; at the library; at the university; in the city; in the theatre, in the cinema, in the museum, on excursions; at the doctor's office; telephone conversation [9]. The list is quite broad and varied, but how fully these topics are presented in the textbooks. It is also important in what forms the students receive the material, in the form of a dialogue, comments, a text, a list of words and expressions, etc.

2. Analysis of textbooks

The textbooks of RAFL should contain topics for communications; the requirements include the following topics: a story about yourself, family, interests; study and work, profession; schools, colleges, universities in Russia and their home country; the study of foreign languages, their role and importance in human life; learning Russian; the way of life of a person, traditions, customs; free time, leisure, interests, hobbies; city, the capital of the country, hometown; country (Russia, home country) geography, history, economy, culture; famous Russian people of science and culture and famous people in their native country; ecology: nature and man.

We have analysed some educational complexes on RAFL elementary level (A1) due to the linguocultural component stated in the requirements of the RAFL educational program. The choice of these educational complexes can be explained by the fact that a large number of teachers use these textbooks in their work. The educational complexes that we selected were developed and published mainly in Moscow publication centres (Moscow, St. Petersburg), together with these textbooks, we have also examined several textbooks of regional publishing houses in order to compare the linguistic-cultural component and its volume in the textbook.

The textbook of RAFL «Road to Russia» is a set of four manuals (from A1 to B2), accompanied by audio-discs for listening and grammatical minimum in Chinese [1]. The manual is aimed at adult learners, mostly Chinese listeners. It contains an extensive phonetic material, exercises for writing. It has an active work on the most difficult issues for Chinese students (writing, speaking). Etiquette forms correspond to the forms stated in the requirements for the program. In the discursive parts, you can find friendly/informal and official communications. The assignments are aimed at encouraging students to participate in communication. At the same time, the texts for reading are not very diverse. It is necessary to use additional materials for developing communicative competence, learning linguistic and cultural component, and developing grammatical skills.

The textbook of RAFL «Once upon a time» consists of two books (from A1 to A2) with an audio appendix and a workbook with grammatical and practical exercises [5]. This manual is aimed at adult students; there are no recommendations on the composition of the group. The manual includes phonetic exercises and exercises, and also contains materials aimed at developing communicative competence and developing communication skills. Each lesson includes the theory and practice of forms of speech etiquette. In the dialogues presented in the textbook, variants of answers are used and this makes further communication impossible: «I do not know», «I do not understand», «I do not speak Russian» etc. The texts for reading are more diverse than in the previous manual, but the texts are sufficiently voluminous, requiring preliminary work with the dictionary. Units are accompanied by group and pair games and they are aimed at repeating the material in the form of active communication. Using a workbook with grammatical and practical assignments, it is also necessary to involve additional materials aimed at developing communicative competence, developing grammar and mastering the linguistic-cultural component.

The textbook of RAFL «5 Elements» consists of three textbooks (from A1 to B2) [4]. The training complex includes an audio-disk for listening and additional materials: a teacher's book and multilevel tests with questions of increasing complexity. Textbook consists of modules. Modules are organizational and methodical units, united by one theme. The material from one module is repeated and expanded by the material of the subsequent module. The manual is aimed at working with an «open» group, whose composition can be changed from time to time. The organization of the textbook allows the teacher to change the course program and to adjust to the students. The manual contains a large number of training assignments for mastering the lexico-grammatical material and developing oral communication skills. The manual includes assignments for the introductory phonetic course. A list of internationalist words is given. Etiquette forms are presented at the beginning of the textbook, they correspond to the requirements mentioned in the program. The textbook consists of 20 units (5 modules). After each module, knowledge is checked in the form of a test. Tests are in the textbook. The texts and themes for communication are various. This textbook is focused on the development of communicative competence, but the additional material for mastering the linguistic cultural component and developing grammatical skills should be used.

Thus, the analysis has showed that the textbooks correspond to the requirements of RAFL program for elementary level. The best development of communicative competence and the study of linguistic-cultural component is achieved by using additional materials.

The most fully linguistic-cultural component is represented in local history texts. In the Explanatory Dictionary, D.N. Ushakov gives the following definition of local history text: «the study of a region, the study of an individual locality, a regions as a part of nature, history, economy, social life, etc.» Local history studies regional phenomena, for example, history, toponymy, urban mythology, cultural and other features of the city, the life and work of prominent citizens, and even the private history of residents. [8] A study of the history of the region, the collection of information and the storage of various materials can be seen in local history museums. Their goal is to acquaint people with the history of the region, the lives of people who lived here many years ago, their way of life, culture. For example, Tomsk Regional Museum presents the following expositions: «Siberian peasants free and serf», «Uyezd. Guberniya. Region», «Battle Glory of Tomsk citizens» and many others.

Thus, the local history text is a text where topological, historical, economic and other peculiarities of the region are presented.

The use of local history texts at the lessons of the RAFL helps students to understand the cultural and historical environment of the region, to form a complex of cultural, communicative and test competencies. In the domestic plan it helps a foreign student to adapt and to be oriented in a new environment.

In the works of some researchers this issue is studied. S.V. Petrova in her paper «Development of students' speech skills on the texts about their native land» describes the development of speech skills and abilities among students, that allow freely and coherently to express their thoughts in oral and written form in accordance with the situation of communication. In the paper the author gives methodical working methods about the formation of students' speech skills using local history text. S.V. Petrova offers texts with assignments, they can be used at Russian language lessons and after-hours activities [6].

Another author is N. N. Shturbina. In the paper «Psychological and linguistic features of teaching functional styles to advanced students at advanced stages (on the basis of local history)» she highlights some theoretical issues related to the method of teaching Russian as a foreign language, the inclusion of foreign students in Russian culture and their mastery of a new socio-cultural content [7]. We are talking about an integrated approach to study, about the role of local history and regional studies in this process. The author of the paper tells about the problems of selecting texts. The paper is devoted to some psychological and linguistic problems of working on texts of local history topics with foreigners at the advanced stage.

Using local history texts to create a textbook would significantly enrich the linguistic and cultural component of the textbook, but due to the lack of an extensive database of local history texts targeted at foreign listeners, taking into account their level of Russian language proficiency, a teacher has to adapt the texts taking into account all these parameters.

In the Dictionary of new methodological terms and concepts, there is the following definition of adaptation of text and types of adaptation: «Adaptation of the text - simplification, adaptation, facilitation or complication of the text in accordance with the level of language competence of students» [2]. Assessing the complexity of a text, the number of unfamiliar lexical units (words), unknown syntactic structures and their role in conveying semantic information are taken into account.

A strong adaptation of the text (a general qualitative change in the speech structure of the text, an average adaptation of the text) is highlighted. Significant changes due to small abbreviations and synonymous that replace difficult places are made. Weak text adaptation (shortening of large blocks of text, preserving the content core or identifying certain content lines and conditional adaptation text) is made with the preservation of a meaningful sequence of the main body of the text. In the linguodidactics, rules and instructions for the adaptation of the texts are formulated taking into account predicates of different orders, where the author's intention or purpose of the message, elements of general content and minor details are singled out [2].

Before proceeding with the text adaptation, it is necessary to select the material we are going to work with. While selecting materials, we are guided by the requirements that were put forward by N. S. Bolotnova in the manual «Fundamentals of Text Theory». They are as follows: «the text should 1) educate; 2) report new information; 3) have impact on the mind and heart of the student; 4) awaken interest in the subject and enrich the student with special knowledge»[3].

Local history texts selected for studies should be interesting. They should contain and describe the most striking information of local history. The main task in the adaptation is the preservation of word characteristic of the region. Taking into account the main stages of the principles of the text adaptation process, given by N.S. Bolotnova, we distinguish the following:

- simplification of grammatical and syntactic bases;
- removal of morphological forms that are unfamiliar at this stage of training;
- selective preservation of the words-«regional markers», key words, accompanied by a comment if necessary;
- the use of international equivalents instead of Russian unfamiliar words.

A local history text, even for elementary listeners, has to be modified with significant adaptation since it is more complex than texts intended for study.

Adaptation of the local history text on the example of the passage from the text «On conquest of Siberia by Ermak»: (text)

Table 1

Original text	Adapted text
<p><i>1. In the 15th century. Ancient Moscow Russia finally got rid of the Mongol-Tatar yoke. After that, the Russians themselves went to conquer the east. In the late 15 century. By the armies of Ivan III Kazan was taken. But to keep it was not possible and the Tatar Khan got it back.</i></p> <p><i>Great success in conquering the eastern lands was achieved by Tsar Ivan the Terrible. They are in the 16th century. Two very</i></p>	<p><i>1. In the 15th century, Ancient Moscow Russia was freed from the Mongol-Tatar yoke. Then the Russians began to conquer the East. At the end of the 15th century, the troops of Ivan III conquered Kazan, then the Tatar Khan returned the city.</i></p> <p><i>Tsar Ivan the Terrible (Ivan IV) was able to conquer Siberia. In the 16th century, the Cossacks conquered and annexed to Russia two fortified cities, Kazan and Astrakhan.</i></p>

<i>powerful fortresses Kazan and Astrakhan were captured and annexed to Russia. These cities were very rich, and also had an important strategic and commercial significance.</i>	<i>These cities were very rich and had an important territorial and commercial significance</i>
<i>2. In ancient times, there were many energetic people in Russia, eager for adventure. They formed Cossack detachments on the lower reaches of the Don. Where could raids on neighboring states or trade with them. Naturally, such people simply could not help but touch the idea of conquering vast eastern lands.</i>	<i>2. In the XVII century in Russia there were many energetic people, they loved extreme adventures. These people collected Cossack detachments on the banks of the Don River. Where they could attack neighboring states or trade with them. Cossack detachments decided to go to the east, conquer Siberia.</i>

The text was changed, the meaning of the text is completely preserved, the syntactic constructions are simplified, difficult words and expressions are deleted, some Russian words are replaced by internationalisms. These texts can be accompanied by different tasks, the first type of tasks - pre-text assignments, unfamiliar words can be rendered, which must be disassembled for better understanding of the content. The second type of task is reading the text, i.e. the text itself. And the third type of tasks - post-textual ones, which are focused on understanding the content of the text, the ability to find the necessary information in the text when answering questions, the ability to correctly and fully formulate their answer, more often such tasks are made out in the form of a test. During the lesson with the text, you can draw up a plan with the students and make an oral paraphrase according to this plan.

Let's imagine a fragment of the task that involves reading and discussing the local history text:

Answer the questions:

- What did Ivan the Terrible add to the Russian state in the 16th century?
- What did Ermak do after he won the capital Kuchum?
- In what year did Ermak embark on crusade?

In addition to the questions for discussion, the task will include tests in lexis and grammar, related to understanding the content and interpreting the text.

Here is an example of the post-text practice:

1. Choose one correct answer:

- Who won Kazan first?
 - A) Ivan the Terrible
 - B) Ermak
 - C) Stroganov
 - D) Ivan III
- In what direction were the lands conquered?
 - A) West
 - B) South
 - B) East
 - D) North

Working with such material and subsequent assignments can cause certain difficulties in mastering, for example, the complexity of vocabulary and factual material. But the work organized in this way will help the development of speech skills, since the subject matter of such texts is quite interesting, diverse, understandable, and the systematic submission of such material will contribute

to the formation of cultural and historical knowledge among foreign students in the training of RAFL

3. Conclusion

One of the most important aspects of the RAFL training is the teaching of the Russian language in the aspect of Russian culture and history, and this also takes into account the introduction of new laws of the Russian Federation obliging foreign citizens to pass a compulsory examination. In this regard, the use of local history material for the training of foreign citizens becomes relevant, allowing them to get acquainted with the culture and history of the region in which they are located, and, of course, with the history of the country as a whole.

Many researchers work in the direction of using local history text in the lessons of RAFL, develop techniques for adapting the text, the principles of material selection (L.Yu. Podruchnaya, N.L. Shturbina, S.V. Petrova, T.F. Novikova, N.Yu. Chibisova and others).

Methodists, teachers consider the local history aspect of the study of the RAFL to be important and try to take it into account, based on the materials of the textbooks they use. The main features that a teacher may encounter when using such texts are text selection. There is also the need for text adaptation taking into account the level of student language proficiency, careful preliminary work with lexical material that can be found in the text, the development of tasks of different types (pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading). However, the result of all this work will be the lessons that give students knowledge and information they need to get acquainted with the city where they live and study, give an idea of the local mentality, and also make the classes more interactive and diverse (walks around the city, visiting museums, etc).

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