

# Realization of Sociocultural Approach in Teaching of Russian Language in Primary School

Irina V. Khairova & Svetlana Y. Bechurina  
Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, RUSSIA

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The importance of the problem under study is due to the realization of socio-cultural approach in teaching of Russian language in primary school allows to solve problems of multicultural education necessary in modern society successfully. However, in Russian linguodidactics the theme is not well-developed; concrete means, forms and methods of the socio-cultural aspect's realization in teaching of primary school students are not determined. In this regard this article aims to determine effective methodic means and conditions of socio-cultural aspect realization in teaching of primary school children during the lessons of Russian language. The main method of the research was pedagogic experiment in which participated more than 300 4<sup>th</sup> form students of the Republic of Tatarstan. The results demonstrated in the article prove the efficiency of the presented means while working with cultural concepts on lessons of Russian in lower grades; structures of Russian lessons based on similar concepts of different languages; recommendations for project activities organization among junior students which promote getting socio-cultural knowledge. The article is addressed to primary school teachers, students and everyone dealing with questions of language teaching and education.

*Keywords:* multicultural education, cultural linguistics, socio-cultural approach in language studies, cultural language concept

## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale

The modern world is characterized by the process of globalization and is connected with culture unification tendencies and the internationalization of one or several languages. On the one hand, values of cultural and linguistic diversity are getting stronger and national minorities are aspiring to preserve their identity. On the other hand, the world community realized the necessity to prevent national and cultural conflicts. All this foregrounds the problem of transition to multicultural education. From the position of existing concepts, multicultural education is determined as a complex multidimensional pedagogic phenomenon, which can be

Correspondence: Irina V. Khairova,  
Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Russia, 420008, Kazan, Kremlyovskaya Street, 18.  
E-mail: ira-hair@mail.ru  
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considered as a type of motivated socialization of schoolchildren.

Modern Russian multicultural education is a rather new thing which occurred to be an alternative to international socialistic education and determined as the development of educational space with linguistic, cultural and spiritual polyethnic diversity and as a means of tension reduction in the society. (Kolobova, 2006) New paradigm of Russian education reflects peculiarities of modern society development situation, centered on the activity of man-creator, who participates in all spheres of social life and discovers social experience and cultural norms created by the humanity. In this context multicultural education allows to include a man in the past, present and future of culture, set relations between culture (as connection of people) and civilization (as connection of things). Multicultural education is a process in the course of which new generation understands ethnic, national and world culture, enriches itself spiritually and develops global ideology, forms readiness and ability to live in multicultural and multiethnic environment.

### **Role of “Russian language” discipline in solving problems of multicultural education**

“Russian language” classroom discipline has high potential in solving problems of multicultural education, because language is a means of knowledge forming and saving. According to A.A. Leontiev, language is the whole meaning system which includes both linguistic and objective meanings reflecting qualities and features of the modern world. (Leontiev, 2003) Results of human ken are reordered in words. Linguistic world-image is created from the results of human ken. But at the same time each language creates its own world-image in which not only universal, but ethnical and cultural experience of the nation speaking the language is reflected. The question about the necessity of studying language as a part of culture phenomenon is important for modern strategy of Russian linguistic education. There are two terms used in methodology and practice to name the approach to Russian language study – culturological approach supposing mainly the development of the idea about Russian culture as a material and spiritual value, education of love to Russian nation, creation of Russian linguistic world-image, understanding peculiarities of Russian language and its authenticity. (Bystrova, 2007); and socio-cultural supposing knowledge about cultures of different nations, human society, current society conditions in which a student develops. (Arkhipova, 2004)

In the aspect of solving problems of multicultural education the realization of socio-cultural approach in Russian language learning becomes very important, because the term itself is semantically wider and correlates with principles of global education using dialogue of cultures.

New anthropologic approaches to language study and orientation of language education on culture, on means of conceptualization and categorization of knowledge about the world, greater attention to the development of language personality, its mentality also change the idea about the role of native language in learning foreign ones. Correlation of certain phenomena in native and foreign languages is carried out then on the wider background of linguistic world-images, sphere of concepts, cognitive and associative fields correlation. (Madzhidova, 2011)

Consideration of culture realia, conceptual world division peculiarities, connotation aspects diversity, metaphors, knowledge of inner word formation peculiarities, secondary nomination correct studies of all language levels. Implementation of linguocultural concept in teaching languages (both native and foreign) improves the content of Russian language education in which should be reflected such problems as interrelation between language and culture, national

linguistic world-image, national and cultural world semantics, basic cultural language concepts, etc.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research methods**

The main methods of the research were problem analysis of psychological and methodological, culturological, linguistic, methodic sources of theoretical and practical character; modeling method, design method; ascertaining and forming experiments; analysis of author's retrospective experience; statistic of the experiment results processing; analysis of the obtained empiric data.

### **Purpose and objectives of the research**

Purpose of the research is to prove theoretically and to develop basic methodological means and realization conditions of socio-cultural aspect in the process of education and upbringing of schoolchildren on the lessons of Russian language.

For the purpose realization were determined the following basic scientific-theoretical and practical objectives: to study current processes in education, linguistics, methodology of teaching Russian language in primary school on the modern stage; to determine potential abilities of programs, course books, didactic materials and aids on teaching Russian in primary school in the aspect of multicultural education; to develop special methods of work with the most important cultural language concepts on Russian lessons, and also culture oriented lesson models which help a teacher to carry out the socio-cultural aspect in the process of junior students education; to organize and hold the pedagogic experiment on realization of socio-cultural teaching of Russian language in primary school.

### **Stages of the research and their contents**

The research had several stages.

On the ascertaining stage diagnostic complexes were developed to determine the level of the knowledge about Russian culture and culture of foreign nations among 4th grade students. On this stage was used the complex of culture oriented questions and tasks developed on the basis of L. N. Novikova diagnostics. (Novikova, 2005) Some examples of questions and tasks of the complex: 1. Finish proverbs: Measure thrice...(cut once); Be of use and curry your business on...(in the country where you were born); No pains..(no gains); Old friends...(are better than new ones), etc. (proverbs from the primary school course). 2. Underline the animal (fish, insect, bird) which in Russian culture means such human traits as: grubbiness – (bear, **pig**, donkey); stubbornness – (**sheep**, goat); cunning – (wolf, **fox**, donkey); hurd-working – (**bee**, butterfly, raven), etc. 3. What did red color mean in Russian culture? (beauty) 4. Name nationalities which live in Russia. 5. Name Russian favorite traditional food which was eaten daily. 6. What do highlighted words in famous phrases from fairytales by A.S. Pushkin mean? (Material is taken from the fairytales studied in primary school and includes sentences with old words which are not used in modern Russian). 7. Name: a) Russian cuisine dishes; b) folk games; c) crafts spread in Ancient Rus; d) names of evil spirits; e) public holidays; h) folk sayings; i) ancient Russian names; j) words important for a Russian man.

On the forming stage the complex of questions to determine the dominium of socio-cultural knowledge of 3 languages: English, Tatar, Russian was given to the

schoolchildren. It included questions connected with traditions and customs, cultural achievements of integrative character, everyday-life realia, "language" position is indirectly presented in all of them. Question samples of this complex for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students: Tatar national holiday celebrated at the end of spring; what is Tatar Santa Clause's name; in Russian all animals, birds, fish answer the question "Who?" what question do they answer in Tatar; in Russian it is a small building for storage of old and unnecessary things, in Tatar it means – palace; in Russia Maslenitsa symbolizes the beginning of spring, how do Tatars name this festival; how shall you address other people in England; English verb which is the same as Russian noun meaning bright performance; International organization fighting for ecological cleanness on the planet, etc.

## RESULTS

### Results of the experiment's diagnostic stage

The results analysis showed the following. (In the experiment participated more than 300 4th grade students of the Tatarstan Republic. In the article results on the example of 2 classes are demonstrated). Students coped with the 1st task rather successfully, however, far from everyone were able to complete all 6 suggested proverbs. Many students didn't manage to complete the 1st and 2nd proverbs, one girl noticed that "had never heard the 1st and 2nd proverbs". Although the majority of students did the 2nd task successfully, some children weren't able to name animals which meant laziness, sleepiness, faith, restless. Only a few students coped with the 3rd task. Among the most frequent answers were "blood", "pain", "sufferings", "love". The most difficult for students was the 4th task of the diagnostic complex: schoolchildren have vague knowledge about the nations which live in our country. There were students who weren't able to name even one nation; others named only Russians and Tatars; some students even noticed that in Russia lived only "Japanese and Chinese people". Many students can't distinguish such notions as nationality and religion; country and nation; republic and inhabitants. F.e., in some works schoolchildren wrote: "Russians, Russianians, Russish, Muslims, Orthodoxers". The task to define some obsolete words from A.S. Pushkin fairytales included in the school program occurred to be very difficult. A part of students wasn't able to define correctly such words as *dushegreyka* (fur coat), *arshine* (yard), *brocade*, noblewoman of the 16th-17th century in Russia with the inherited nobility, *galley*. Answering the 7th question were named extremely few traditionally Russian dishes. Among the most frequent answers were: *pelmeni* (mince stuffed in dough and boiled), bread, *semolina porridge*, *blini* (crepes), *borsch*. Besides, children named food not belonging to Russian cuisine, f.e. Big Mac, chips, etc. Speaking about folk sayings students remembered the following ones: if a black cat crosses your way – unhappiness will come; if birds fly low – it will rain; don't whistle – there will be no money, etc; some children wrote proverbs instead of sayings or created their own ones: find 100 rubles and be happy; don't argue and have many friends. In many works questions about traditional Russian crafts, folk games, public holidays, and ancient Russian names were left without an answer. Determining words important for a Russian man were named: thank you, hello, mother, God.

According to laws of mathematic statistics we distinguished low (under 25% of completed exercises), medium (26%-50% of completed exercises), sufficient (51%-75% of completed exercises), high (76%-100% of completed exercises) levels of culturological knowledge domain. Following results were obtained in the group under the experiment: 10% had sufficient level of culturological knowledge domain,

60% - medium level and 30% - low level. In the control group 7% had sufficient level of culturological knowledge domain, 28% - medium level, 35% - low level.

Summing up, the ascertaining stage of the experiment showed that the majority of students had low or medium level of culturological knowledge about Russian nation.

### Results of the experiment's forming stage

On this stage of the experiment according to the answer results were developed matrixes, then levels of socio-cultural knowledge domain were determined. The results are presented in the table (Table №1).

**Table 1.** Results of the sociocultural knowledge diagnostics among 4<sup>th</sup> grade students

Classes	Number of students	Low level of socio-cultural knowledge domain	Medium level of socio-cultural knowledge domain	Sufficient level of socio-cultural knowledge domain	High level of socio-cultural knowledge domain
4 A	25	8 %	76%	16%	—
4B	26	19 %	54 %	27 %	—

Analyzing children's answers, it should be pointed, that some questions were quite difficult for students. F.e., answering the 11th question ("A thing used and meant to be given to second-hand"), children gave the following answers: "inheritance", "pre-owned", "pig in a poke" and even "it is impossible". Or, f.e., among answers on the 13th question ("A present you don't expect to get", supposed answer is "a surprise") were "gain", "car" and "PSP" (a computer game for children). From our point of view it is due to the fact that answering questions of that kind demands schoolchildren to have certain strata of thought, wit. There were funny answers, f.e., question № 7 ("Hot dogs", which became popular in Russia) was answered not by "hot dog", but "Belka and Strelka" (the first animals flew around the Orbit). We were glad to see that children knew organizations which fought for the good of our Planet, because despite of the answer "Greenpeace" was named WWF (World Wildlife Fund).

However, the most difficult were the questions connected with knowledge of traditions and national holidays. In this part schoolchildren missed the majority of questions and gave many wrong answers. All this is in spite of the fact that such holidays are celebrated on the school-wide level. Maslenitsa and Nowruz are celebrated annually in all schools of the Tatarstan Republic. As a rule the celebration is accompanied by a concert where traditional songs and dances are performed. There organized exhibitions of folk crafts many of which children did themselves on after-school classes. All guests of these festivals are traditionally treated by national dishes: blini on Maslenitsa and Tatar traditional dishes on Nawruz.

### Methodic means and conditions socio-cultural aspect realization in the process of upbringing and education of junior schoolchildren

On the forming stage of the experiment were proved theoretically and checked experimentally means, methods, lesson models of socio-cultural teaching of Russian language; developed and given lessons with the use of elaborated materials; worked out pedagogic recommendations for primary school teachers and pupil teachers on how to form socio-cultural competence.

First of all the realization of socio-cultural approach in teaching of Russian language in primary school can be done using texts with national and cultural component, working with similar components in other languages learnt by pupils,

(in modern methodology of teaching Russian language it is impossible to combine language and culture without organized work with concepts represented in the language by one word or another), also applying material (non-verbal) objects of culture (national household items, utensils, clothes, pieces of national applied arts, painting, music, sculpture).

Already at the beginning of this century Austrian school "WORTER UND SACHEN" ("Words and things") demonstrated the importance of culturological approach in many branches of linguistics, mainly in lexis and etymology.

A word, according to many scientists, not only transmits information, but in itself is an instrument of thought and is able to accumulate culture, cultural meaning. At the present time the fact that a word is a social cultural and historic phenomenon which has complex dialectic relations with the most important categories as "intellectual culture" on the one side, "language" and "word" on the other is undoubted. In the latter half of the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century new actual linguistic category appears – concept. The term "concept" has a lot of definitions nowadays. The connection of concept and culture caused the appearance of the notion "cultural concepts", which is also treated ambiguously. Cultural concepts are defined as "key words of culture" (Stepanov, 1997, Arutyunova, 1999). Considering cultural concepts, scientists see the reflection of nation's thinking, mentality and world perception peculiarities in inner content of words. They are determined as elements of culture through which it is possible to understand specific character and peculiarities of national culture in general. The appearance of the notion "concept" is embodied in tendencies to consider a word taking into account its conceptual and worldview aspects. (Novikova, 2005)

According to Verzhbitskaya concepts (keywords) may be used as a method of culture studying, supposing that different cultures can be interpreted through their keywords. The scientist thinks that giving a pull at the thread (keywords such as "soul" or "grief") it is possible to "to unravel the tangle of attitudes, values and expectations embodied not only in words, but also in collocations, set phrases, grammatical constructions, proverbs, etc." (Verzhbitskaya, 2001)

One of the tools used while working with concepts is the analysis of the keyword meaning, consideration of contextual collocation of words, semantic relations with other words of the same culture; eliciting of the semiotic opposition; study of different nominations of one and the same object; regard to word etymology; explication of the assessment system. (Tilman, 1999) Though the conceptual analysis may include whether all the above mentioned tools or only some of them depending on the aims and purposes of the study, and also the specificity of the described material under consideration. (Tilman, 1999)

In the course of the article we will study Russian language lesson structure based on the work of similar concepts of different languages. The series of such lessons was called "The encyclopedia of one word". Lessons like this not only form socio-cultural competence, but also develop students' linguistic feeling, create interest to the subject, because history of a word allows students to see the language alive, changing, make a real linguistic micro study.

The basic linguocultural goal of such language may become a study of different nations' culture through concept keyword. Lessons may include the following modules:

1. Word introduction (Lesson objective and problem statement);
2. Work with linguistic dictionaries (Dictionary of Russian Language by S.I. Ozhegov (Ozhegov, 1986), Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language by V.I. Dahl (Dahl, 2014), Etymology dictionary by N.M. Shanskiy (Shanskiy, 1978), School word-formation dictionary of Russian language by A.N. Tikhonov (Tikhonov, 1978), dictionary of synonyms, dictionary of antonyms).

Organizing the work on the lesson a teacher may make students work in groups or pairs, set investigational tasks (what is the meaning of suffixes in words from one family of words, what is the difference between synonyms); listen to reports prepared by students.

3. Understanding of the phraseological material in which the given work is used.

4. Life of the word in literature.

5. Use of texts with national and cultural component.

6. Work with material (non-verbal) objects of culture (painting, music, national household items, etc.)

7. Creative project task which supposes the application of linguistic and cultural data on the topic, its extension, systematization, expression of personal attitude towards the cultural phenomenon under consideration.

For example, during the lesson while working on the concept "horse" students may choose from the following tasks: 1. Write a text on one of the following themes using the materials we have in the classroom: "A day of a horse in a country", "History of horses", "History of carriages of different nations". 2. Make up questions for brain-ring. 3. Make up "horse" dictionary. 4. Prepare tasks for "Guess the song about horse" game. 5. Give description to a painting with a horse in it. 6. Write or analyze a favorite poem about a horse.

Teacher may vary the number of modules and their sequence according to aims and purposes of the lesson, background knowledge of children, etc.

Let's demonstrate how one of the modules can be realized (module 5: Use of texts with national and cultural component).

*"A horse in the household is like an oven in the house" – says a proverb. Without a horse a peasant couldn't neither plough a field, nor take the road. A horse was a treasure; fairytales were composed about it; songs were sung; and even when cars had substituted horses, the motor capacity was still measured in horsepower.*

[Vocabulary work: horsepower is a unit of motor, vehicle capacity, equal to 736 watt].

*In Bulgaria Todoritsa, Horse's Day is still celebrated. In this day in Sofia outskirts horse races are prepared; red and white ribbons are weaved into mane, adorned by twigs of geranium and basil – symbols of spring. Riders put on new embroidered shirts and specially prepared hats. After that hurdle races begin in a field. Winners get presents and a cake. (by A, Strizhov) (Strizhov, 2007)*

- What is the theme of the text?

- What is the main idea of it?

- What types of speech were used? Prove

- Which Tatar national holiday has similar event as on Todoritsa? (Sabantuy)

Tell about the holiday. What does it mean for Tatar nation?

*"Horse in Tatar culture has always been a friend and support. It has been a tower of strength. In dark and silent nights a frisky horse carried away from gloomy, dark thicket back to the road, travels were made and ship timber was fallen for the tsar on the horse. Saddled up the horse Tatar warriors entered in Pugachev's army; Tatar horseman fought in one array with the heroes of the Great Patriotic War.*

*Not coincidentally, horse race is a part of the compulsory Sabantuy program. Teenagers from 13 to 15 years old participate in it. Horses are being prepared long before the festival: they are taken care of, fed, looked after. When Sabantuy is closer they warm up their hooves.*

*There is a wonderful tradition among Volga Tatars: to prize not only the fastest, but also the horse which came the last. It is usually done by elderly women. They come to Sabantuy with a present: tablecloth, shawl or towel handmade in their youth. The latest horse is seen as a human child offended by the fate. It is always true to give a hand to a humiliated. It has always been in the character of workpeople."*

Summarizing the work with the texts following questions can be made:

- What is common in attitude towards horses in Tatar, Russian and Bulgarian cultures?
- What qualities do nations endure it with?

However, not all symbols are perceived similarly in different cultures. This is due to concepts verbalized in different languages according to the character and peculiarities of material, spiritual and social cultures and the mentality of certain ethnos, in tight relations with linguistic and pragmatic facts.

For that matter concept BIRCH (within the context of linguoculturological approach we determine concept as a mental subject which has a mark of the spiritual human image of a certain culture) is very interesting. The perception of the symbol does not coincide in Tatar and Russian cultures.

In traditional Russian culture birch is a mythological tree, symbol of the femininity, love, maternity, memory of the passed away relatives. S.A. Esenin called Russia "the country of birch chintz". In the perception of a Russian native-speaker birch is an essential associative attribute of the national idea, artifact and mentafact of Russian culture.

In Tatar folk-songs the word "kaen" (birch) is often used. The symbolization of magic and curative qualities of the birch hasn't almost been preserved. However, in some of them the birch is a symbol of beautiful, slim young lady and of youth, beauty and innocence. Though in Tatar culture birch mainly stands for sadness, grief, melancholy. Moreover, it is considered to be a graveyard tree. Tatars do not plant it near their houses or in the gardens. It is seen in proverb "Kaen utyrtkan kaygyly bula", that means a person who plants a birch will have a lot of sorrow. (Typology of Tatar folklore, 1999)

This peculiarity of concept verbalization drew attention of A. Verzhbitskaya. Analyzing concept "friend" in English culture, the scientist comes to the conclusion that "friends" are considered to be something temporal and replaceable on the contrary to the Russian understanding as something constant. An Englishman may call a friend even a person who has just been met, while a Russian would rather characterize him as "familiar". (Verzhbitskaya, 2001)

Research approach to word may become a starting point for creative projects on Russian language made by students. Then, following themes will be given: "Home in Russian and Tatar languages", "Nature in Russian and Tatar languages", etc. Key nationally marked concepts (way, truth, friend, will, etc.) may become the subject of the research. Because in them rather than anywhere else in the linguistic world-image ethnic mentality is actualized, therefore the study of key-concepts allows looking in the core of national culture.

## DISCUSSIONS

The research has clearly presented culture-oriented character and integrates latest achievements in pedagogics, didactics, psychology and some linguistic disciplines. We think that socio-cultural aspect is the most important line of development of Russian methodology which studies mechanism of the growing personality inclusion into the culture of its nation as a means of students' comprehension of national and foreign cultures. The analysis of academic literature and the data obtained in allied sciences (culturology of education, didactics, pedagogics, psychology) allowed to specify the optimal age for active and more effective involvement of children into the culture through the Russian language teaching. It is from 7 to 12 years old and corresponds to 1st – 4th grades of school. Effectively in this time schoolchildren acquire culture, cultural norms and values, start to evaluate and develop their own attitude towards the essential cultural

phenomena. The analysis of basic education paradigms (cognitive and informational, person-centered, culturological and competency-based) coexisting on the modern stage revealed the necessity of their integration in the process of education. That allowed avoiding one-way research of the socio-cultural aspect in teaching and education. It was determined that multicultural background appeared when a teacher acted as an experienced guide, friend, attentive companion. Cultural capacity of the education was increased through the use of special basic means of education – verbal (culturological concepts including precedent texts) and non-verbal (monuments of architecture, national household items, national clothes, etc.), cultural phenomena which were universal human and national values and associated with certain historical epoch of culture in general. Special methods of work with concepts were developed. Words were considered from the standpoint of the degree how students had acquired them, and the developed methods take this factor into account. Inclusion of one or another cultural phenomenon into education supposes methodological practicability of its use. In the work it is determined by especially developed principles of their choice: culturological, value-oriented, synchronism principle, aesthetic, communicative-activity principle and principle of personal importance of one or another cultural phenomenon.

## **CONCLUSION**

The main results of the research may be considered the following: leading methods of education organization in primary schools are culture-oriented lesson models specified in scripts. The socio-cultural competence under formation contributes to the intellectual development of students, more conscientious and deep understanding of the language system and values of native culture, tolerance in regard to other cultures, and also influences positively on the formation of linguistic, language and communicative competences. Artifacts, as the most important phenomena of culture, are specific means of teaching Russian and basic means of introduction of the world culture values to schoolchildren. The developed methods of work with words and texts increase socio-cultural competence of junior students; reconstruct missing parts of the background knowledge and contribute to equation of student's vocabulary and knowledge about language and culture in respect to native Russian speaker with higher level of socio-cultural competence.

The research demonstrated that socio-cultural competence may be formed only on condition that focused effort on the formation of this type of competence is organized. Through realization of socio-cultural approach in teaching of Russian language problems of multicultural education can be solved successfully. As students acquire knowledge about the world, society in which a person lives and develops; about the nation they belong to; get experience of emotional and value orientation in the world, society, social environment; personality learns social norms and cultural values through their language.

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