



## Local history text as a didactic education unit in the practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language

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### Abstract

The modern methodology of teaching Russian connects training with the formation of a several of important competencies, the key role of which is played not only by linguistic, communicative, but also linguistic local studies, within which linguistic studies are also recognised as a component of sociocultural competence. To study the culture of a country where a foreign student is located, the personality traits of speakers, their picture of the world. This approach is relevant in the field of training teachers for their further professional implementation in a multicultural space, as well as their familiarisation with the national moral, cultural and historical values of their people. And in this sense, it is the local history text as a didactic unit of instruction that can be considered the necessary link for the realisation of the trinity, in which, when used wisely, language, culture and human activity are combined using the interconnection of words, text and artefact.

*Keywords:* linguistic local studies competence; didactic unit; cultural text; teacher; communicative situation

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## 1. Introduction

The text as “a work of the language-creating process, being complete, objectified in the form of a written document, literary processed in accordance with the type of this document, consisting of the name and a number of special units, combined by different types of lexical, grammatical, logical, stylistic connection, having a certain focus and pragmatic installation” (Yartseva, 1998) is one of the most important categories of linguistics, through which both language learning and the expansion of students' background knowledge occur. It becomes an example of “the real use of linguistic units, that is, their actualisation in speech, ... turns out to be the only source of knowledge of students in the field of lexical and grammatical organisation of a foreign language, showing them how different linguistic units are used in speech” (Klementsova, 2012).

In the teaching of Russian as a foreign language (hereinafter – RAF), the text acts not only as educational material, but also as a didactic unit, which plays an important role in developing foreign language proficiency in a foreign language. C.L. Kramersch (1993), emphasising the relationship

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between language and the context of its use, speaks of the necessity to pay attention to: a) the culture of the text, including spoken and written text; b) the attitude of trainees to this text; c) the culture of a group of students in which the relationship between a teacher and students takes place.

Understanding how important the implementation of the national-regional component is in the education system of the future generation, the practical task of this article was to search for possible ways to include local history material in preparatory courses for the study of RAF. Such a study also becomes relevant in the system of training RAF teachers in multi-ethnic Russia, given the regional component, training for multilingual educational complexes created in the Republic of Tatarstan. Solving it, the authors selected local history literary texts, developed a set of tasks for them, which, in the authors' opinion, will allow both better mastering the Russian language and assimilating and consolidating foreign students program information on the discipline, familiarising the Yelabuga as multinational region of Republic of Tatarstan.

### *1.1. Literature Review*

The focus of attention of specialists in the sphere of teaching a foreign language, who are in search of ways to increase the effectiveness of language training, is a text filled with cultural content. This understanding is reflected in the conceptual methodological scientific works of Russian scientists: T.M. Pakhnova (2000) and L.M. Khodyakova (2012).

D. Hymes was one of the first to express the idea that language proficiency fully not only knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but also the conditions for their use in society (Hymes, 1972). And in this regard, familiarising with the culture of that society, whose language is mastered by a foreigner, plays an important role (Yentürk & Dağdeviren-Kırmızı, 2020). The interrelations of language and culture, the role of culture in language teaching are also the subject of research by M. Hyde (1998), P. Kaikkonen et al., (2001).

Many researchers attribute the relevance of this study to the fact that the knowledge and skills acquired in RAF classes are reinforced and activated in real situations of a particular region that arise when the foreigner is immersed in a new language environment (Chupanovskaya & Maklakova, 2019). In this regard, in the authors' opinion, one of the urgent areas for overcoming the language barrier and acquaintance with traditions, customs, rituals is working with a local history text: "... the text is artistic, popular science, journalistic, official-business style, reflecting historical and cultural values of a multinational region, aesthetic in content, structure and lexical content, contributing to the formation of linguistic regional, or linguistic and cultural competence" (Ivygina & Pupysheva, 2017).

Local history material can become the basis for the implementation of linguistic competence in classes in Russian as a foreign language, should reflect the cultural and historical aspect in language teaching.

The Republic of Tatarstan is a region with a unique geographical location and with more than thousand-year history. Modern Tatarstan is a multiethnic, multinational and multi confessional society. The pedagogical staff of the republic, taking into account this specificity, is being prepared based on K (P) FU, including at the Yelabuga Institute. The multicultural space of this university encourages a foreign student to learn not only the culture of native speakers of the language but also the culture of the region of study (Halitoglu, 2020).

## **2. Method**

The study is dedicated to the formation of linguistic competence as an integral part of intercultural communication in the process of teaching Russian to foreign students (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan,

Tajikistan) at the stage of pre-university training at the Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University using materials from regional texts related to the historical and cultural space of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The linguo culturological methodology of modern language education developed in the domestic (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1990) and foreign methodological science was represented by the synthesis of two teaching models: “language – goal, culture – means” and “culture – goal, language – means”. Passov (2000) states, “Culture is a value, and it is all of them that determine everything, and not “knowledge and skill”.

In this article, assignments are presented prepared for local texts about Yelabuga, its history and sights, the implementation of which, in the authors’ opinion, will help to realise language competence in the classes for teaching Russian to foreign students of YI KFU. Fulfilment of tasks based on these texts, in the authors’ opinion, will facilitate the introduction of foreign students to various forms of national culture, understanding of which will allow a student to most fully immerse in the language environment.

When developing assignments for local history texts, a number of features was taken into account:

1) Each task set to accomplish certain linguistic competencies (grammar, vocabulary and speaking) for the corresponding previously identified levels of language proficiency of a group of students studying at preparatory courses at YI KFU in 2018-2020. (A1, A2, B1);

2) The level of tasks of foreign students and the difficulties that arose in them at the initial stage of learning the Russian language;

3) Assignments are distributed in 3 sections, according to their subject, which will help to comprehensively and in a balanced manner conduct classes for foreigners to study.

The assignments prepared for local history texts at teaching the Russian language to foreigners but also at including them in both the optional and the main course of teaching RAF. The student, in addition to knowledge of the vocabulary, gets acquainted with the local culture, which allows most fully immersing in the language environment. Local history content was divided into three thematic blocks: 1. The city of Yelabuga and its history. 2. Prose about Yelabuga. 3. Famous personalities and significant events of the city of Yelabuga. When developing the first block, tasks were built considering the following criteria:

1) Understanding of the text and the realities reflected in it, through analogies familiar to a student;

2) The interaction of obtaining and consolidating knowledge, acquaintance with the history of the city of Yelabuga;

3) The focus of tasks on the elimination of previously identified difficulties of the student in mastering the language.

Each text from the first thematic block is accompanied by assignments that reveal the degree of understanding of a text by students, the ability to operate on acquired knowledge and consolidate it, as well as to identify difficulties encountered, their causes and possible corrections. The first block includes text and tasks to it. Tasks are divided into 5 parts and implement various learning tasks. The first part of the tasks of the second block includes a number of questions on a read text, which require an oral answer, which takes into account the understanding of a text and the ability to project knowledge of one’s culture on the realities highlighted in a text. They are aimed at checking awareness of students on a text. Unlike the first in the second block, two texts are attached to the tasks, where the first serves as a brief reference and leads to the main topic of the subsequent text, and the second offers tasks that reveal the degree of understanding of a text by students, the ability to operate on acquired knowledge and consolidate new ones, as well as identify difficulties encountered, their causes and the

possibility of correction. In the third block, reproductions of paintings by the Yelabuga artist I.I. Shishkin, who perform the function of illustrating the material described in a text.

In this article, the authors describe possible tasks for the research of local history text from the second thematic block, united by the theme “The Prose of Yelabuga”. In the second block, two texts are attached to the tasks, where the first serves as a brief reference and leads to the main topic of the subsequent text, and the second offers tasks that reveal the degree of understanding of the text by students, the ability to operate on acquired and consolidate new knowledge, as well as to identify difficulties encountered, their Reasons and possibilities of correction. The text, which serves as a brief reference, is accompanied by a series of questions requiring an oral answer, which are aimed at revealing an understanding of the text read.

Linguistic local studies are also relevant for teaching Russian to foreign students of Russian universities, providing for the inclusion in the educational process of a regional component – linguistic realities that reflect the specifics of a particular region, including local history texts that contribute not only to the formation of linguistic competence, but also the needs of linguistic and cultural adaptation of foreign students (Nekipelova, 2001). Experience of N.F. Basharova and G.D. Farkhetdinova (2008) is interesting in the aspect of this study since they describe methods and techniques of practical work on individual local history texts. An effective means of forming the linguistic and linguistic competence of foreign students can only be systematic work.

An important element of national culture that contributes to a better study of language is local history knowledge. Learning a language on the basis of local history material contributes to its comprehensive mastery by a foreigner. Work with a local history text, familiarity with which will facilitate the introduction of foreign students to various forms of national culture, embodying the foundations of understanding of which will allow most fully immersing yourself in the language environment. O.P. Konek (2013), N.A. Pilipenko-Fritzak (2013), G.O. Nekipelova (2001), write about the need to include local history texts in the training system of RAF. A local history text, therefore, is faced with the task of realising cultural competence, which, as a rule, is understood as “a complex of extra-linguistic knowledge, skills and abilities of adequate behaviour in the field of foreign language culture, or, in other words, the ability to carry out intercultural communication based on the knowledge of lexical units with the national-cultural component of semantics and the ability to adequately apply them in situations of intercultural communication, as well as the ability to use background knowledge to achieve mutual understanding in situations of indirect and direct intercultural communication” (Naumova, 2011).

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Linguo culture logical competence is defined as “knowledge by an ideal speaker/listener of the entire system of cultural values expressed in a language”. Its private implementation in a particular region of the country can occur through the formation of linguistic competence, the objects of linguistic studies in teaching RAF can be dialect vocabulary and phraseology, phonetic and grammatical features of a local dialect, local onomastics, the language of works of folklore, the language of literary works of writers who were biographically belonged to local region, the language of local historical documents, the dictionary of local crafts (both developed in the past and existing now).

The development of local history competence is possible, firstly, when seeing local history material on a textual basis, and secondly, with a language analysis of this material. In this article, the authors offer assignments prepared for local texts about Yelabuga, its history and sights, application of which,

in the authors' opinion, will help to realise language competence in the classes for teaching Russian to foreign students of YI KFU.

### *Example*

“Stanislav Timofeevich Romanovsky is a Russian writer, born on September 19, 1936 in the city of Yelabuga of the Republic of Tatarstan, the writer's childhood and youth passed here. In 1949 he graduated from the Elabuga school No. 1 named after V. Lenin, then in 1954 – the historical and philological faculty of Kazan State University. After graduation, he worked as a teacher of literature at the Yelabuga Library College. Since 1957 – chief editor of the newspaper Ulyanovsk Komsomolets. Romanovsky wrote a lot for children, was associated with the editors of the magazines “Change”, “Youth”, “Pioneer”, “Murzilka” and others. Throughout his life, Stanislav Romanovsky carried love to his native land, to his dear Yelabuga, to his beloved Prikamye. In many books you will find amazingly true poetic descriptions of our rivers – Kama, Vyatka, Toyma, Kriishi, Tanayka, Karinka, Anzirka, Umyak and even small channels, streams, you will learn a lot of interesting things about more than 50 lakes in the Yelabuga and Tanaev meadows, you will visit in the Big and Small Bor, wander through the Tanaevsky and Mortorsky forests, get to know different ravines, hills” (Ivanov, 2015).

Questions:

1. In which city was Stanislav Romanovsky born?
2. What university did he study at?
3. From the text you will learn that Romanovsky was very fond of the Prikamye River. What rivers can you name?
4. Review the following text.

After reading the brief reference, a student is offered a text and assignments to it. Tasks are divided into 5 parts, each of which implements certain tasks of language teaching. The first part includes a number of questions on a read text that requires an oral answer, which takes into account the understanding of a text and the ability to project knowledge of one's culture on the realities highlighted in a text.

### *Example*

“Each person has his own river. Near it he was born, lived or lives. This river is small – so small that its real name is rarely known.

– What is the river's name? – The local resident will ask you. – There is no. It has no name: it is small.

After will remember:

– Her name is Fun – that's how.

Don't you live near such a river, reader? Or perhaps your river is big and everyone knows about it? Whatever it may be, you will return to its shores...

My mighty river is the Kama. On the map or on the globe it is indicated that it flows into the Volga. And scientists will say that it carries more water than the Volga.

I planned to go all my native Kama – all two thousand and more kilometres – from the sources to the mouth. Somewhere on the train, somewhere in the back of a truck, and somewhere on foot I got to its source – to the village of Karpushata.

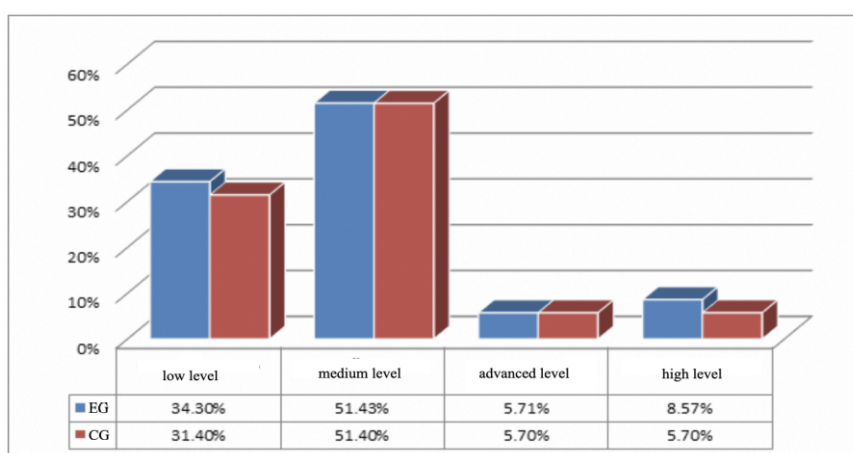
I took off a cap, washed cleanly in the hut and went to the place where the Kama was born. I saw a gentle log covered with velvet grass, in rare birches and bird cherry trees with thick trunks. I have not seen such trunks in bird cherry trees before. On a bird cherry tree, under the clouds, a little boy sat and broke off branches with unripe berries” (Romanovsky, 1989).

*Read the text. List the rivers that are mentioned in it. What rivers flow in your country?*

The second part is aimed at consolidating the acquired knowledge of the vocabulary and includes 4 tasks that are made taking into account the difficulties encountered by students in mastering the Russian language and their understanding of keywords, according to the text read. Example: 1. Find synonyms for the word name. 2. Select adjectives that are related to the word river. 3. Explain the difference between the words ask and ask again;

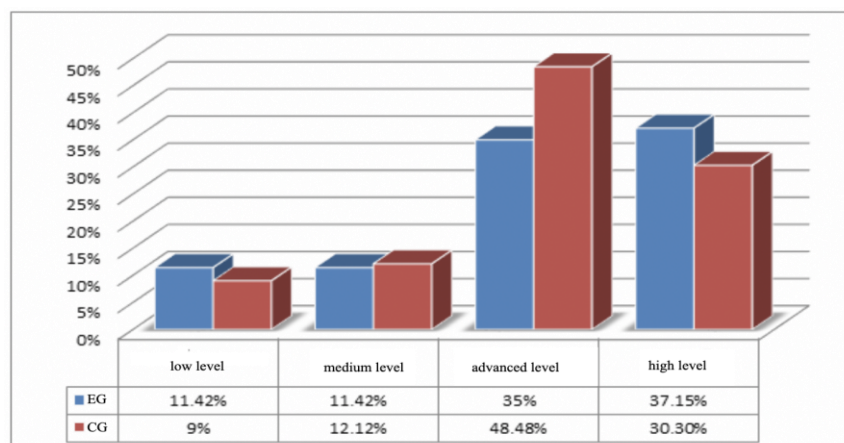
The third part is aimed at filling the gaps among students in knowledge of the declension rule for cases of nouns. Example: Change the case of the noun river. The fourth part of the tasks is aimed at consolidating the understanding of a text and identifying difficulties encountered in reading it. Example: Write out words incomprehensible to you, look at their meaning in the explanatory dictionary. The fifth part of the assignment is to expand the student’s speech abilities. A student is invited to prepare for expressive reading of a text read, and then retelling. This task helps to consolidate the knowledge gained, since the student will repeatedly reread it in preparation for expressive reading and retelling of a text.

Importance of text-oriented tasks developed is that working with a text allows forming students' value guidelines, introduce them to the national and cultural traditions being studied, and expand the active and passive vocabulary of students (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** The level of formation of the linguistic competence of foreign students (based on the results of the assignment of the control educational and communicative situation)

The analysis of the results of testing in the field of the lingua-local history component showed a low level of awareness. In the CG and the EG, high and advanced levels of formation were revealed (5 and 4, respectively). Most of the subjects showed fragmentary, the country which language they studied and the region of residence (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2.** The level of formation of linguistic competence of foreign students (based on the results of the task of the control educational and communicative situation)

The results of the control phase of the experimental work testify to the positive dynamics of the linguistic competence development after the inclusion of local texts in the system of teaching RAF students of preparatory courses in the direction 44.03.05 – Pedagogical education (with two training profiles), the training profile is “Russian. Foreign language”.

#### 4. Conclusion

The conclusion was made that it is necessary to include a national component in the process of teaching.

The regional component helps to form communicative, linguistic, and intercultural competencies during the learning process. Experimental research has shown that options of working with those texts reveal their didactic potential and cultural context. The practical significance of developed methods lays in the special approach to the local history text.

Prospects for further research include testing of obtained materials and preparing a training manual for specialists teaching Russian as a foreign language with the inclusion of local texts in their classes.

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