

# Development of Linguistic and Regional Learning Competence of Foreign Students

*(through the example of a teaching guide  
“Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia”)*

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**Abstract** – The paper deals with one of the possible solutions to the problem of developing linguistic and regional study competence in teaching a foreign language based on the material of historical cultural area of Western Siberia and its capital, Novosibirsk city. The article describes the methods and techniques for working with texts of the textbook "Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia." The manual was created in accordance with the didactic and methodological principles of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Mastering the types of speech activity involves a close relationship with the phonetic, lexical and grammatical aspects of the Russian language and is carried out on the basis of the text centered approach to teaching.

**Keywords** – *linguistic and cultural approach, linguistic and cultural studies, linguistic and regional study competence, regional and cultural background, historical and cultural space, communicative requests.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The modern methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language is based on the linguistic and cultural approach, according to which the study of Russian language is inseparable from acquaintance with Russian culture. The concept of the need to learn a foreign language in close connection with the culture of native speakers has been perceived for a long time in the methodology of language teaching as an axiom. Therefore, at present, methodological studies are based on the linguistic and cultural approach to language teaching and consider it as one of the most important aspects of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

Linguistic and cultural studies are understood by the founders E. M. Vereshchagin and V.G. Kostomarov as cultural studies oriented to the objectives and needs of learning a foreign language [1]. Under this paradigm a linguistic and cultural direction was formed, involving mainly the study of language units with a national-cultural component. At the same time, vocabulary is developed with a cross-cultural component (background and non-equivalent vocabulary), country study information affecting the most diverse aspects of the country

life of studied language: its history, literature, science, art, as well as traditions and customs [2].

It is impossible to talk about perfect knowledge of a foreign language without serious preparation of country study: the language is saturated with cultural realities, such as terms, concepts reflecting national specificity and actively present in the daily life of a particular country. The use of country study information in the learning process provides an increase in student cognitive activity, expands their communicative opportunities, favors the formation of their communication skills and abilities, as well as positive motivation, gives an incentive to work on the language independently and contributes to solving educational tasks. [3].

The linguistic and cultural approach serves for fixing country study information in language units and contributes to the enrichment of the subject-informative plan. Based on the linguistic and country study component, students develop knowledge about the realities and traditions of the country, join in the dialogue of cultures, and get acquainted with the achievements of the national culture and its contribution to the development of human culture. Language facts, reflecting the characteristics of the national culture studied through the language are the subject of linguistic and country study. That is, background knowledge of native speakers and their behavior in communication acts is traditionally considered as a main object of linguistic study.

Linguistic and regional study as a part of linguistic and country study has the same goals and objectives, but in relation to a particular region, taking into account the local component. Linguistic and regional study in the practice of RFL are understood as getting foreign students know the peculiarities of nature, population, as well as the history, traditions and culture of a particular part of the country, locality in the process of learning Russian language in order to develop student communicative skills, linguistic and regional knowledge [4].

Linguistic and regional study competence is also considered as one of the elements of communicative competence,

representing it as a combination of regional and cultural background knowledge and linguistic and regional study knowledge and skills. The regional-cultural background knowledge is thought of as the system of knowledge about the local culture, extracted from the language units with regional and cultural connotation and learned by foreign students through the study of Russian language in the language environment. Linguistic and regional study knowledge and skills are determined as the ability to apply this knowledge in language skills in various situations of intercultural communication, i.e. use language units with a regional cultural background in accordance with their paradigmatic, syntagmatic and associative connections, adequately understand, perceive, interpret statements containing the analyzed lexical units, use them according to the norms and rules of Russian language, which results in successful communication within sociocultural area of the region [5].

Linguistic and regional study is important for teaching Russian to foreign students of Russian universities. Studying linguistic and regional information envisages the inclusion of lexical units with a regional cultural background in the educational process. Such units are non-equivalent and background words and phrases, dates, onomastic vocabulary (toponyms, anthroponyms, chronyms, etc.) associated with a particular region or city in which foreign students live and study. These lexical units become the basis for developing linguistic and regional study competence of foreign students, which is one of the elements of communicative competence. Linguistic and regional study competence is the combination of regional and cultural background knowledge and linguistic and regional study skills and abilities.

The importance of the development of linguistic and regional study competence is reasoned primarily by the needs of linguistic and cultural adaptation of foreign students. During the first year of study, foreign students get in a new sociocultural, academic and language environment, and therefore they need psychological and informational support. Linguistic and cultural information is one of the necessary means of establishing relationships with a new sociocultural environment, overcoming cultural shock.

Every year new foreign students come to study at Novosibirsk State Technical University (NSTU), and Russian language teachers have to solve questions of adaptation of students in "Russian Language" and "Country Study" courses within the minimum period of time. There is no doubt that in order to accelerate adaptation in the country of the studied language, information about the region and city of residence is the most relevant for students. However, base textbooks of Russian as a foreign language, published in Moscow and St. Petersburg, contain information about the realities of the cities mentioned above. At the same time, foreigners studying in other cities of Russia are primarily interested in the city of residence. The use of information of a regional nature helps to increase the motivation to learn a language [6, 7]. The current situation makes teachers of other cities create teaching guides and manuals based on linguistic and regional information.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The concept of the integrated course is justified by the principles of language learning and teaching considered to be a core in the interdisciplinary and integrated approach. The principle of comparative learning and teaching, the principle of bilingual learning or learning and teaching based on the native linguistic culture of a learner, the principle of interdisciplinary and integrated learning and teaching are the basis of the course. The concept implies that the employment of background acquired knowledge and communication skills developed by students in a native language can eliminate learners' difficulties in developing the same skills and abilities in a foreign language due to comparative analysis of both language systems.

The principles of language learning and teaching are widely discussed in literature. The concept of foreign language learning that implies the employment of background knowledge acquired by students in native language while developing the same skills and abilities in a foreign language is described in the works [2, 4, 8, 9].

However, the overview of the existing university curricula shows that they do not include the courses that take into account the principles of comparative, interdisciplinary and integrated learning and teaching. Hence, there is the necessity for the course aimed at developing language and communicative competences on the basis of the principles above [10].

The theoretical basis of study, according to the principle of science, was the theoretical foundations of language education and methods of teaching Russian as a foreign language. The methodological basis of the study consists of philosophical statements about the unity of empirical and theoretical approaches in scientific research and teaching. While working on the article and the manual the author used the following methods: theoretical analysis of linguistic, methodical and educational literature, text selection method, lexicographical, semantic analysis of vocabulary, method of learning process observation, method of discussion with foreign students, statistical method of processing data obtained during training.

The texts of linguistic and regional study orientation with vocabulary reflecting the specificity of the historical and cultural space of Novosibirsk were used as material for the teaching guide "Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia". The reference sources on Novosibirsk and Internet resources were used as sources.

## III. RESULTS

Thus, the relevance of writing and using the textbook is due to the following factors:

- a) the importance of developing linguistic and regional study competence to meet communicative needs of foreign students;
- b) the insufficient representation of lexical units with regional-cultural background, reflecting the specificity of the historical and cultural space of Novosibirsk, in teaching guides;
- c) the need to resolve the contradiction between the needs of foreign students in mastering linguistic and regional studies

competence and the lack of proper meeting these needs in the educational process.

The principle of a linguistic-cultural orientation of the learning process is based on the following ideas: widespread use of authentic materials in the educational process and expansion of student background knowledge on their basis, the inclusion of vocabulary with a national-cultural component in the lexical minimum of a foreign language, extensive use of speaking topics that create conditions for simulating intercultural communication situations in the educational process.

The principle of taking into account of motivation implies that learning leading motive is novelty and interest in the material being studied [6]. New knowledge for students about the region and the city of residence should be on the base of the regional component content:

- the name of the region and its center, the national language, the regional boundaries, waterways, climate, natural resources, leading industries and agriculture, transport;
- the natural monuments, reserves, typical animals and plants of the region;
- the major historical events, prominent personalities;
- the names of well-known theaters, museums, cultural and architectural monuments in the region;
- crafts, traditions, customs, holidays.

General didactic principle of clarity in teaching, presented in the teaching guide by photographs and illustrations [11] raises interest in learning and makes it more accessible.

The above mentioned requirements are met by the idea of creating a new teaching guide [12, 13], taking into account the regional component.

The teaching guide "Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia" is a collection of texts and exercises. It is addressed to students who have training in the certification level of language proficiency, students of inclusive education, as well as to all who are interested in the history of Siberia. The teaching guide provides students with opportunities to study lexical units with a regional and cultural background, not only in the classroom with a teacher, but also independently. The teaching guide introduces students to the most important realities of Siberia, i.e. the objects, facts, phenomena and personalities in their cultural and historical contexts.

The purpose of the teaching guide, along with the development of knowledge about Siberia, is to contribute to the enhancement of student linguistic and communicative competence, not only to provide students with a set of language units necessary for successful communication, but also to lead them to understanding a broader historical, cultural and social context, to develop their ability to "penetrate into the "soul" of the studied language, into the "flesh" of the culture of that nation, with which intercultural communication should be carried out" [14]. This, according to the principle of upbringing education, helps to cultivate respect for the culture of the country of the language being studied.

The teaching guide is based on authentic text materials taken from information sites. According to the modular teaching principle, the teaching guide consists of 2 parts: "Siberian Land", "Novosibirsk: history and contemporaneity." Each part is divided into lessons. Thus, part I consists of 3 lessons: "History and geography of Siberia", "Krasnoyarsk: from the past to the present", "Omsk: from the fortress city to the megalopolis" Part II has 9 lessons: "Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia", "Sights of Novosibirsk", "Theater Novosibirsk", "City Business Card", "Novosibirsk State Technical University", "Founder of the city N.G. Garin-Mikhailovsky", "Legendary pilot A.I. Pokryshkin", "Brilliant scientist Yu.V. Kondratyuk", "Siberian architect A.D. Kryachkov".

The texts of the teaching guide are set out according to the principles of motivation and availability of didactic material, they are informative and interesting as well, pre-reading and post-reading tasks are aimed at mastering lexical and grammatical material, developing various language skills: reading, writing, speaking. Texts are accompanied by special commentaries, including language units, in which originality of national culture is manifested most clearly. The number of such lexical units includes country-oriented vocabulary, which has strong national-cultural semantics.

According to the principle of functionality, i.e. increasing Russian language practical knowledge level, as well as the principle of taking into account the needs of students, while performing exercises based on the text, students master various ways of conveying information depending on the situational conditions, text genre, communicative intention, addressee of a statement. They learn to reduce and expand information, respectively, changing the genre of statements. The texts create a semantic basis for the independent construction of statements and participation in speech act.

The teaching guide focuses on the phonetic and lexical-grammatical aspects according to the principle of complexity and differentiation (mastering the types of speech activity in close relationship with aspects of the language).

When working on correcting pronunciation, students are invited to follow a teacher to repeat difficult-to-pronounce words and expressions; special attention is paid to the pronunciation of numbers.

When mastering lexical and grammatical material selected in accordance with the principle of minimization, the following types of tasks are used:

1. Reading the comments on the text.
2. Reading the new words, writing down the translation.
3. Finding the synonyms for the following words.
4. Finding antonyms for the following words.
5. Explaining how you understand the meaning of words and expressions.
6. Continuing the rows of words.
7. Forming (if possible) pairs of perfective - imperfective verbs with corresponding case.

8. Making combinations of words (or sentences) with the following verbs.

9. Choosing the appropriate verb.

10. Completing the text with the correct form of the word (the verb and the short participle are given in parentheses).

11. Continuing the series of words (verb + nouns).

12. Writing the verbs from which the following participles are formed.

13. Replacing passive constructions with active ones (and / or vice versa).

14. Choosing the correct form (short or full) of participles.

15. Determining of what parts these compound words consist.

16. Writing the verbs from which the nouns are derived.

17. Determining from which nouns the adjectives are derived.

18. Determining from which adjectives and how (with what suffixes) the superlative degree is formed. Make word combinations.

19. Forming word combinations (numeral + noun).

20. Matching definitions to nouns (which + what).

A special place in the system of lexical and grammatical exercises is occupied by word formation analysis, since the development and activation of vocabulary is impossible without reliance on word formation links. The system of special tasks is aimed at finding root morphemes in compound words, the formation of derivative words with a specific meaning with the help of derivational formants. Knowledge of lexical structure of units, main word-formation models and semantics of derivational elements ensures the development of the skills of analysis and synthesis, the formation of skills in using derived lexemes of varying complexity in coherent speech. All this, without a doubt, significantly enriches the vocabulary of students, expands their speech capabilities, and contributes to the increase in the level of language and communicative competence.

Based on the principle of interconnected teaching of language skills on the basis of common language material, in the process of working on the development of reading skills, students are invited to perform the following tasks:

1. Reading the text. Giving a title to it.

2. Reading the text and explain the meaning of the statement (epigraph).

3. Answering the questions.

4. Making a plan.

5. Choosing from the proposed judgments those that correspond (+), or do not correspond (-) to the content of the text.

The lexical units presented in the texts, according to the principle of taking into account student needs, help to meet the

communicative needs of students. If a foreign student has certain regional information (he knows the names of streets, cultural objects, famous figures and residents), then at the stage of working out the skills of dialogical speech he will be able to simulate dialogues in real communicative situations.

When working on improving speaking skills, in addition to reproductive tasks, the types of tasks according to the principle of situational-thematic organization of educational material are used:

1. Getting ready to retell the text.

3. Making up dialogues according to the model.

3 Being ready to speak about a region (province) of your country.

4. Looking at the appendix to the text, choosing the theater that you would like to visit. Asking what you can see there and how to get to the theatre.

5. Telling if you love theater, how often you go to the theater, what you like to watch (listen to). Have you visited any theater in Novosibirsk?

6. Speaking about the sights of Novosibirsk and the sights of other cities of our country (taking the text as a model).

The highest level of communication skills on a given topic is undoubtedly the ability of a foreign student to compose a coherent monologue, put it in writing and present it orally without relying on a text.

In the process of working on the improvement of writing skills, students are offered the following types of tasks:

1. Writing a letter to your friend, telling him about what you learned about Novosibirsk.

2. Writing what you advise to see in Novosibirsk and why.

3. Imagining you being a journalist. Making and writing interview questions.

All the exercises are aimed at the development of language and speech skills of students. Language competence implies mastering new language means in accordance with selected topics and areas of communication. Speech competence involves the improvement of communication skills in four main, interrelated types of language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing); skills to plan their speech and nonverbal behavior.

The teaching guide uses the following typology of language and speech exercises: substitution drill ("Open brackets", "Complete the gaps ..." etc.), transformational ("Replace the sentence with active participle by passive form ..." etc.), reproductive (question- response exercises), and combinational ("Make sentences with the verbs studied").

In training grammatical exercises, the main attention is paid to the organization of mastering basic grammatical skills, including from automated components.

Speaking (communicative) tasks with a grammatical focus are aimed at the formation of skills in the above-mentioned types of language skills (speaking, reading, listening and

writing). These are situational exercises, role-play games and other exercises based on the text.

Being a speaking product of foreign speakers, a text "is of particular value as a systematic pattern of language functioning within the framework of a theme, context, situation, problem, scope and genre of communication, orientation to a specific addressee." A text reflects a certain social, activity background, expresses a social, professional, personal position [14]. Among the variety of text teaching functions, based on the modeling principle, the author consider a text as a model of speech of certain structure, form and genre, as a model for generating a speech act or communication (text-dialogue) and as a way to manage student learning activities.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

1. A linguistic country approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language is undoubtedly an important aspect of learning a foreign language, and the development of linguistic country competence is an integral part of the educational process of foreign students.

2. It is advisable to develop linguistic and regional study competence of foreign students studying Russian language on the basis of linguistic and regional study material of the place where foreign students live and study. To solve this problem, a teaching guide "Novosibirsk is the capital of Western Siberia" was made at Novosibirsk State Technical University.

3. The teaching guide allows solving a number of important tasks aimed at understanding the culture of the region / country of the language being studied, at the same time shaping the linguistic and speech competences of foreign students. The results of the experiment and the experience of using the teaching guide in the educational process confirm that selected lexical and grammatical minimum and the regional (local history) historical, cultural and social context included in the teaching guide contribute to quick adaptation of foreign students to new realities and increasing their motivation to learn Russian.

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