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CULTURAL ASPECTS IN LEARNING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE[1]

Strengthening of international contacts justifies necessity of effective cross-cultural communication. Entering into a dialogue, people are in a search of the best and more complete means of establishing, transmission and correct understanding of information. Therefore, the focus of the current research is to highlight the relationships between language and culture in a process of learning Russian as a foreign language.

Language is the foremost tool of transmission of culture. Hence, the cultural aspect has a particular value in communication in order to achieve understanding and cooperation between people. Culture comprises of spiritual and material values accumulated from generation to generation, with certain constant character, which is, at the same time, specific to every nation or ethnic group. The wide-known definition of a culture suggests that it is the "integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour that is both a result of and integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. Culture thus consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, symbols."[2] The complicated composition of this phenomenon was also underlined by the American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn: "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action." – This sophisticated nature of culture may

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[2] Stevens, M. A. et al., *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, Shanghai 2008, 430.

give certain indication to attitudes, life values, orientations, and relation to the world of an entire nation and a single person. "Culture is an ambiguous set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour."[3] Therefore it is essential to understand not only the language as a means of communication, but also cultural background of words and phrases, what leads to effective interaction between communicants.

The issue of mutual influence of language and culture has always been of a widespread interest. Researchers have underlined the dialectical relationship between language and culture. Lotman says: "No language (in the full sense of the word) can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have, at its centre, the structure of natural language."[4] Thus teaching of a foreign language will be inaccurate and incomplete without the study of a culture.

In this regard, there has been increasing interest in intercultural communication and formation of intercultural competence among students in studying foreign languages. Researchers (Y. Lotman, H. Spencer-Oatey, R. Hanvey, Milton J. Bennett, E. Vereshchagin, V. Vorobyov, V. Kostomarov, V. Maslova, S. Ter-Minasova, and others) study the different types of relationship and interaction between culture and language, describing their development and operation of the process in a modern cross-cultural communication. The discipline combines the study of language and culture. The purpose of cultural linguistics is to investigate and to describe the cultural space through the prism of language, and to analyse national component in semantics of language units. "Cultural linguistics is a science that arose at the intersection of linguistics and cultural studies. It investigates cultural manifestations of people that are affected and entrenched in language."[56] Defined cultural components in language units have certain symbolic value and are transmitted through communication. As Vorobyov points out, "cultural linguistics is a complex scientific discipline of synthesising type, which studies the relationship and interaction between culture and language in its functioning. It reflects the process as integral structure units in the unity of their linguistic and extra-linguistic (cultural) content using a system of methods and

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[3] Spencer-Oatey, H., *Culturally Speaking. Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*, London 2008, 3.

[4] Lotman, Y. – Uspensky, B. – Mihaychuk, G., On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture, *New Literary History*, 1978, vol. 9, no. 2, Soviet Semiotics and Criticism: An Anthology, 211–232.

[5] Маслова, В. А., *Введение в лингвокультурологию. Учебное пособие*, Москва 1997.

[6] All translations from Russian to English were made by the author of the article.

with a focus on modern priorities and cultural establishment (a system of norms and human values)."[7]

Cultural linguistics depicts an individual not only as a speaker, but also as a representative of certain culture. Language reflects the culture of a speaker. Thus, the features of a linguistic identity of an individual are reflected in usage of certain language units. Therefore, the problem of the relationship between language and culture also requires consideration of extralinguistic factors in studies of related disciplines such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and others.

Teaching Russian as a foreign language involves presentation and explanation of culturally significant words and phrases. In the process of learning student does not only possess a foreign language as the means of communication and transmission of information. Yet it also becomes a bearer of certain cultural code that allows him or her to engage in dialogue about foreign language. One becomes able to understand surface information, and to grasp concealed intentions and meanings. Language is an essential tool in the process of learning and interpretation of other cultures in human consciousness. Ter-Minasova says: "Presentation of a word with a cultural component of meaning in teaching foreign languages is associated with human communication, promoting intercultural tolerance and communication."[8]

Speakers of different languages encode different aspects of reality which are important to them. Thus, culture seems to be one of the conductors of national and/or personal consciousness. According to Matsumoto, "culture is as much an individual, psychological construct as it is a social construct. To some extent, culture exists in each and every one of us individually as much as it exists as a global, social construct. Individual differences in culture can be observed among people in the degree to which they adopt and engage in the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours that, by consensus, constitute their culture. If you act in accordance with those values or behaviours, then that culture resides in you; if you do not share those values or behaviours, then you do not share that culture."[9]

This raises an issue of searching and creating a collection of some cultural and background knowledges which would enable speakers of a language to understand each other. For example, Belyanin notes that "the cultural component of the meaning of a word is its extra-linguistic content, which reflects national culture. Background knowledge exists in the form of multiple logical implications and presuppositions."[10] That is why mutual cultural knowledge would help speakers of the same language to understand each other, as the foundation of the realities

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[7] Воробьев, В. В., *Лингвокультурология: теория и методы*, Москва 1997, 36–37.

[8] Тер-Минасова, С. Г., *Язык и межкультурная коммуникация*, Москва 2000.

[9] Matsumoto, D. *Culture and Psychology*, Pacific Grove 1996, 18.

[10] Белянин, В. П., *Психолингвистика: Учебник*, Москва 2003, 153.

of the participants of communication. Nonetheless, some researchers note that "actualisation of the communicative essence of background knowledge points out to the existence of a certain 'communicative minimum' required for the implementation of communication. Not a whole meaning, 'standing' behind the word for a native speaker, is demanded for communication and seems to be a prerequisite for the correct perception. Moreover, this amount of meaning is often difficult to determine even for a native speaker."[11]

Understanding among people relies particularly on learning language units: symbols, signs and key concepts. They create a general-purpose pattern for dialogue between cultures. Language units bear the potential of cultural background of a different character. Therefore, idioms and precedent phenomena are of a high importance for a speaker of foreign language.

The well-known classification of precedent phenomena was proposed by V. Krasnych, D. Gudkov, I. Zakharenko and D. Bagaeva. They defined and described four types of the precedent phenomena: precedent text, precedent situation, precedent statement and precedent proper name. They argue that the precedent text "is familiar to any average member of cultural-linguistic community", for example, titles of works of fiction, lyrics, advertising and political texts.[12]

Precedent situation is "a real single situation, minimised invariant of perception of which, including representation about the action itself, its participants, the main connotation and evaluation, is part of the cognitive base of the cultural-linguistic community and is familiar to almost all its members".[13] They understand the term precedent statement as the popular quotes from different texts and proverbs.[14]

One of the most controversial types of precedent phenomena is a precedent proper name. Linguists interpret the concept as "personal name associated either with a well-known text, usually related to precedent text (e.g., Pechorin), or with the precedent situation (e.g., Ivan Susanin)".[15] The group includes the names of historical figures, writers, artists, singers, etc. Precedent names may acquire

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[11] Иванищева, О. Н., *Язык и культура: учебное пособие*, Мурманск 2007, 56.

[12] Багаева, Д. В. – Гудков, Д. Б. – Захаренко, И. В. – Красных, В. В., Когнитивная база и прецедентные феномены в системе других единиц и в коммуникации, *Вестник Московского университета. Серия 9: Филология*, 1997, № 3, 62–85.

[13] Багаева, Д. В. – Гудков, Д. Б. – Захаренко, И. В. – Красных, В. В., Прецедентное имя и прецедентное высказывание как символы прецедентных феноменов, *Язык – Сознание – Коммуникация*, 1997, Выпуск 1, 82–103.

[14] Багаева, Д. В. – Гудков, Д. Б. – Захаренко, И. В. – Красных, В. В., Когнитивная база и прецедентные феномены в системе других единиц и в коммуникации, *Вестник Московского университета. Серия 9: Филология*, 1997, № 3, 62–85.

[15] Багаева, Д. В. – Гудков, Д. Б. – Захаренко, И. В. – Красных, В. В., Прецедентное имя и прецедентное высказывание как символы прецедентных феноменов, *Язык – Сознание – Коммуникация*, 1997, Выпуск 1, 82–103.

secondary, common meanings with a set of associations (for instance, Napoleon – "arrogant leader").

Other language units that carry important and rich cultural information, are idioms. They include key concepts of culture that define national identity of language, reflect cultural and historical experience of a nation, form identity and preserve it for future generations. Therefore, special attention ought to be paid to the interpretation and usage of phraseology as culturally significant items in learning foreign languages. As Telia notes, "1) the majority of idiomatic units have cultural and national originality, […] 2) in the collective subconscious memory of native speakers the intertextual connection of phraseology is preserved with a certain cultural code, […] 3) the repeatability of phraseological signs contributes to an intergenerational broadcast of culturally significant settings and thereby – formation in the process of learning and usage of a language as a cultural identity of a separate person and cultural and national identity of a nation"[16]

Thus, language units may have different cultural potential in everyday life, in the processes of education and socialisation. Such units are instrumental in studying foreign language, as they bear rich potential for effective cross-cultural communication. This study may produce material to study psychology and consciousness of an entire nation and reveal features of the individual "picture of the world".

Acquisition of culturally significant linguistic units by students provides effective understanding of a foreign language. It is a helpful prerequisite for learning foreign language, as it may depict language on its functional level and in close relationship with the culture, including the world culture as a whole. Cote points out: "Culture is more than a collection of attributes or facts; it is a style of life, an orderly way of coping with the infinite complexities of reality. Language is only one way a culture expresses its style. Language therefore conveys a great deal of information about how a culture sees the world."[17]

Thus, learning a foreign language involves the cultural-linguistic and cross-cultural orientation which facilitates removal of ethnic tensions, promotes tolerance towards representation of other cultures. Description of features of the other culture gives students the essential information, which is sufficient for adequate communication. Effectiveness of cross-cultural communication is determined not only by practical language skills, but also by knowledge of foreign culture. In this regard, one of the most important issues of foreign language teaching is

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[16] Телия, В. Н., Первоочередные задачи и методологические проблемы исследования фразеологического состава языка в контексте культуры, in: *Фразеология в контексте культуры*, Москва 1999, 13–24.

[17] Cote, M., *Language Reflects Culture*. [online: <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/archive/saskindian/a85sep21.htm>, cit. 2016-05-04].

overcoming the cultural barrier. Understanding of cultural code provides insight into the national and cultural features (mentality) of native speakers. It facilitates the use of peculiar linguistic representations of reality in communication.

There are some classifications of language realities which reflect certain culture. Ivanova offers one of the classifications that consists of four major groups: domestic realities (dishes, drinks; clothing, hats, fabrics; economic realities; monetary units; measures of weight and length; buildings; means of transportsation, trade establishments; musical instruments, etc.), concepts of state and public life (settlements; state, political parties, public organisations and institutions, enterprises; titles, degrees, administrative positions; trends, members of organizations, beliefs; population, religion, church, education system; media; holidays, dances, games, songs, beliefs, etc.), realities of the natural world (names of plants, animals; landscape and natural phenomena); onomastic realities (names of historical personalities; literary characters; literary works, printed publications, toponyms; historical and architectural monuments).[18]

Other well-known classification was created by Vinogradov, who defined six groups of language realities:

1. Domestic realities (dwelling, clothing, food, types of labour, money, musical instruments, folk celebrations),
2. Ethnographic and mythic realities,
3. Realities of natural world (animals, plants, landscape),
4. Realities of the government and social life (actual and historic),
5. Onomastic realities (anthroponyms and toponyms),
6. Associative realities (colour symbols; folkloric, historic and literal allusions, language allusions, animalistic symbols, vegetative symbols).[19]

All classifications focus on non-equivalent vocabulary that contains national and cultural attributes and reflects its traditions and history. Defining and studying such a vocabulary facilitates understanding of people's life, historical and social changes.

In order to determine the reflection of Russian culture in a process of learning Russian in the Czech Republic, I carried out an investigation among students who study Russian in three Czech universities: Charles University in Prague (Faculty of Arts and Pedagogical Faculty), The Palacký University Olomouc (Faculty of Arts) and the University of Ostrava (Faculty of Arts). The survey involved 177 student respondents.

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[18] Иванова, Н. А., *Сопоставительно-типологический анализ безэквивалентной лексики (на материале русского, немецкого и французского языков)*, Москва 2004, 227. (Дисс. канд. филол. наук: 10.02.20.)

[19] Виноградов, В. С., *Лексические вопросы перевода художественной прозы*, Москва 1978, 174.

The largest group consisted of students, who have learned Russian for over three years (135 people); the second group involved native speakers (33 people); the smallest group was composed of students who have learned Russian for less than three years (8 people), and those who have learned Russian less than one year (1 person).

The questionnaire consisted of three parts.

First Part

The aim of the first part was to find out whether students use Russian in their everyday communication and whether they are able to improve their language skills by themselves.

1.1. Students who have learned Russian for over three years (non-native speakers) have been living in the Czech Republic all their life (97 %), the rest of the students has been living in the Czech Republic from 9 to 18 years (3 %).

Most of the students started to learn Russian at school (80 %), some of them started to study Russian at secondary school (8 %) and others at the University (7 %). Fewer students began to learn Russian at home – with their families (2 %), with friends (1 %), at language courses (1 %), or by themselves (1 %).

As it turned out, the students are interested in reading/watching news in the mass media (newspapers, magazines, TV, radio) in Russian (yes – 68 %, no – 32 %), and in reading Russian news portals on the Internet (yes – 65 %, no – 35 %). Almost a half of the respondents usually communicate in Russian on social networks (yes – 41 %, no – 59 %), and speak Russian with their friends or relatives (yes – 51 %, no – 49 %). Hence, most students have an opportunity to improve their language skills in everyday communication, in addition to studying at the University.

In the first part of the survey students also answered how many hours per week they usually speak Russian. Most of them speak Russian from 2 to 10 hours per week (54 %), next group of students speaks less than 2 hours per week (35 %), while the smallest group uses Russian in everyday communication more than 10 hours per week (11 %). These results showed us that most students learn speak Russian principally at the University during their language classes.

1.2. Students who have learned Russian for less than three years (non-native speakers) have been living in the Czech Republic all their life (100 %).

Most of the students started to learn Russian at school (49 %), some at the University (38 %), or by themselves (13 %).

A half of the students search information in the media in Russian (yes – 50 %, no –50 %). Most of them read news and find the information in Russian on the Internet (yes – 62 %, no – 38 %). Almost a third usually communicate in Russian on social networks (yes – 38 %, no – 62 %), and half of them speak Russian with friends or relatives (yes – 50 %, no – 50 %). This part of the questionnaire showed that there is no distinctive feature in the approach to learning Russian among students. Most students of this group neither use social networks for communication in Russian, nor read media in Russian, although it is one of the easiest ways to improve their language skills. These results may be explained by the limited level of their language competence and a lack of self-confidence in communicating with native speakers.

Most students who have learned Russian for less than three years speak Russian from 2 to 10 hour per week (62 %), more than 10 hours per week (25 %), and less than 2 hours per week (13 %). This shows that most of the group only speaks Russian in language classes, as do students from the previous group (see 1.1.).

Drawing from the above, it seems that the students who have learned Russian for more than three years and less than three years (non-native speakers) need to increase their motivation to learning Russian as a foreign language in and out of class.

1.3. Native speakers have been living in the Czech Republic less than 5 years (16 %), from 5 to 10 years (34 %) and for over 10 years (50 %).

Most students began to learn Russian in their families (76 %), fewer began to learn Russian at school (24 %).

Native speakers read the media in Russian (yes – 94 %, no – 6 %), and read news and find information in Russian on the Internet (yes – 94 %, no – 6 %), usually communicate on Russian in social networks (yes – 90 %, no – 10 %), and speak Russian with their friends or relatives (yes – 95 %, no – 5 %).

Most students in this group speak Russian more than 10 hours per week (44 %) and continuously (34 %). The rest of them speak Russian from 2 to 10 hour per week (13 %) and less than 2 hours per week (9 %). Students in this group use Russian as the main means of communication, which allows not only to maintain their Russian communication skills, but also to exchange cultural codes with their interlocutors.
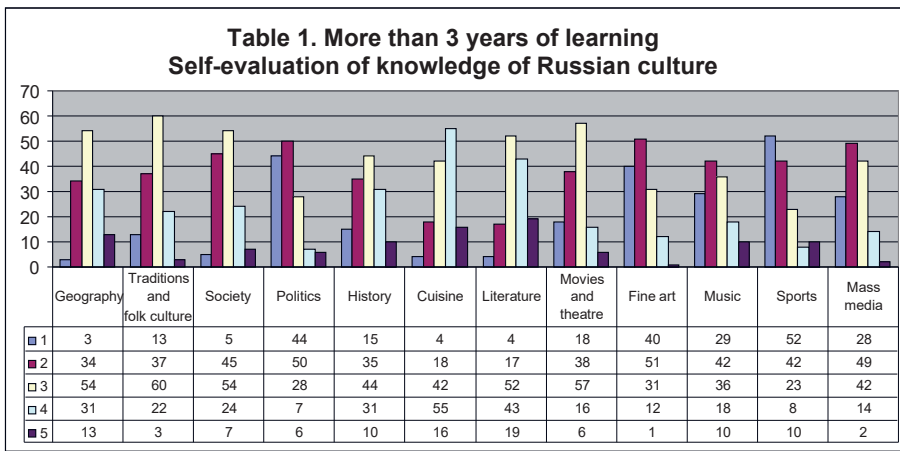
Second Part

The aim of the second part of the survey was to ask students to evaluate themselves in terms of their knowledge of Russian culture and reality. There were offered twelve areas: geography, traditions and folk culture, society, politics, history, national cuisine, literature, movie and theatre, art, music, sports, and media. They were

asked to rate their knowledge from 1 to 5, where 5 was the best knowledge of the subject and 1 was the poorest (Table 1).

Students, who have learned Russian for over three years believe to have better knowledge about *traditions and folk culture*, *cuisine* and *literature*.

Average knowledge index emerged in connection with *geography*, *history*, *movies and theatre* and in *society*.
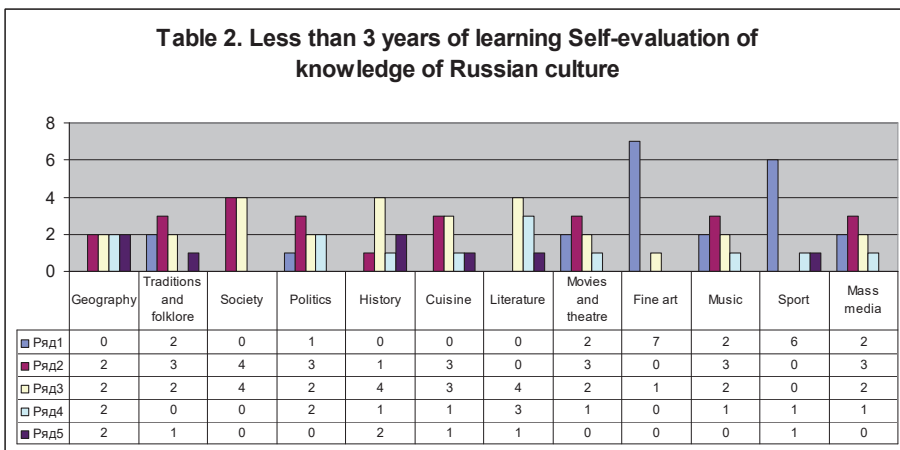
The poorest knowledge, as indicated by the respondents, is about *politics*, *music*, *fine art*, *sports* and *media*.

Table 1. More than 3 years of learning Self-evaluation of knowledge of Russian culture

	Geography	Traditions and folk culture	Society	Politics	History	Cuisine	Literature	Movies and theatre	Fine art	Music	Sports	Mass media
1	3	13	5	44	15	4	4	18	40	29	52	28
2	34	37	45	50	35	18	17	38	51	42	42	49
3	54	60	54	28	44	42	52	57	31	36	23	42
4	31	22	24	7	31	55	43	16	12	18	8	14
5	13	3	7	6	10	16	19	6	1	10	10	2

Students, who have learned Russian for less than 3 years, indicated better knowledge about *cuisine*, *history* and *literature*.
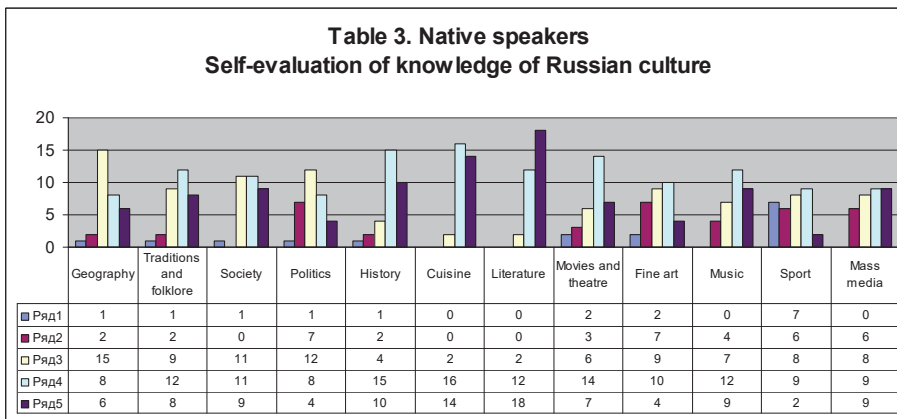
Average knowledge index emerged in connection with *geography*, *traditions and folk culture* and in *society*.

The worst knowledge as students have pointed out they have in *politics*, *movies and theatre*, *music*, *fine art*, *sports* and in *media*.

Table 2. Less than 3 years of learning Self-evaluation of knowledge of Russian culture

	Geography	Traditions and folklore	Society	Politics	History	Cuisine	Literature	Movies and theatre	Fine art	Music	Sport	Mass media
Ряд1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	7	2	6	2
Ряд2	2	3	4	3	1	3	0	3	0	3	0	3
Ряд3	2	2	4	2	4	3	4	2	1	2	0	2
Ряд4	2	0	0	2	1	1	3	1	0	1	1	1
Ряд5	2	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0

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Native speakers of the Russian language denoted that they have better knowledge in *geography, traditions and folk culture, history, society, movies and theatre, music, cuisine* and *literature*.

Average knowledge index among native speakers concerns *politics, fine art* and *media*. The poorest knowledge among native speakers only concerns *sports*.

Table 3. Native speakers
Self-evaluation of knowledge of Russian culture

	Geography	Traditions and folklore	Society	Politics	History	Cuisine	Literature	Movies and theatre	Fine art	Music	Sport	Mass media
Ряд1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	7	0
Ряд2	2	2	0	7	2	0	0	3	7	4	6	6
Ряд3	15	9	11	12	4	2	2	6	9	7	8	8
Ряд4	8	12	11	8	15	16	12	14	10	12	9	9
Ряд5	6	8	9	4	10	14	18	7	4	9	2	9

Third Part

In the third part of the survey students wrote names or titles in different spheres of a culture. The aim was to identify realities important for the students who have learned Russian. The eight categories related to Russian culture included:
1. Well-known historic events connected with Russia.
2. Names of Russian holidays.
3. Russian cuisine (dishes and drinks).
4. Writers, poets and literary works.
5. Musicians, singers and composers.
6. Movies, actors or directors.
7. Popular sports.
8. Famous politicians.

Part 3 of the survey focused on the largest group of students, who have learned Russian for over three years (135 people).

Among the well-known historic events connected with Russia, students identified the Great Patriotic War (55 answers), Russian Revolution of 1917 (51 answers), the Christianisation of The Kievan Rus' (33 answers), the Decembrist Revolt (29 answers), Napoleonic Wars (29 answers) and World War II (28 answers). Other most significant historical events as identified by the respondents include the World War I, the Disintegration of the USSR, the Distemper and Perestroika.

The most famous historic personalities for the students were Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Ekaterina the Great, Stalin and Lenin.

The most important Russian holidays were identified as Christmas (113 answers), New Year (108 answers), Easter (98 answers), Victory Day (75 answers), International Women's Day (58 answers), Defender of the Fatherland Day (40 answers) and Maslenitsa (31 answers).

Key dishes as identified within Russian cuisine were borscht (118 answers), shchi (92 answers), blini (89 answers), pelmeni (86 answers), pirozhki (36 answers), ukha (33 answers). The well-known Russian drinks are vodka (81 answers), kvas (43 answers) and tea (38 answers).

Students were able to list a number of Russian writers, poets and their literary works. On the top of the list can be found such names as Pushkin (127 answers), Dostoevsky (91 answers), Gogol (84 answers), Tolstoy (81 answer), Lermontov (80 answers), Chekhov (69 answers) and Akhmatova (37 answers).

Among the well-known names in music, they listed Tchaikovsky (82 answers), Vysotsky (45 answers), Okudzhava (26 answers), Shostakovich (19 answers) and Pugacheva (13 answers).

In the domain of movies, identified such classics of Russian cinema as: *Walking the Streets of Moscow* (36 answers), Andrei Tarkovsky (30 answers), *The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!* (29 answers), Nikita Mikhalkov (26 answers), *Mirror* (25 answers), *Morozko* (25 answers) and *Stalker* (24 answers).

Among popular sports in Russia, students listed hockey (124 answers), figure skating (65 answers), football (46 answers), tennis (30 answers), skiing (22 answers), etc.

In the last domain students identified such politicians, as Putin (132 answers), Medvedev (94 answers), Lenin (31 answer), Stalin (29 answers), Yeltsin (26 answers), Gorbachev (23 answers), Brezhnev (22 answers), Khrushchev (20 answers), Lavrov (18 answers).

The most difficult categories were *sports*, *movies* and *music*, where some students didn't answer anything or identified only one or two words or names.

Conclusion

The results of the survey showed what subjects of the Russian culture are well-known for students who learn Russian as a foreign language, and what domains of Russian culture should receive particular attention in the learning process. In our opinion, students' knowledge of Russian cultural realities is insufficient. It is necessary to propose the way of enhancing knowledges of the Russian culture in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

One of the solutions of this problem can be the inclusion of mass media texts (newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, internet) to the process of language learning. Media sources offer contemporary knowledge about the country, including political, socio-economic, historical and cultural components. In such texts, students can find socio-political vocabulary, terminology, everyday conversations, dialect, slang, etc. Words and expressions from the different mass media should help students to understand modern reality of a country. Media texts are the basis of mastering lexical composition, syntactic constructions, understanding stylistic features of a foreign language. Moreover, they can increase the motivation to study Russian language and its active use in everyday life.[20]

Media language reflects social and historical features of contemporary Russian language, its modality and cultural specifics. That is why it seems important to create a collection of texts which provide understanding of national and historical facts, increase cultural-linguistic competence and implement the principle of effective dialogue between different cultures.

The results of the study were a basis for the developing of a website www.rulang.info for Czech students and teachers of modern Russian language on levels B1–C2. The multipurpose content of the website can be supplemented in any time. The site has four sections: Texts, Vocabulary, Media and Russian language and culture.

The first section contains collection of texts with cultural-linguistic orientation from Russian mass media on different topics: living, traditions and holidays, national cuisine, family and friends, literature, music, art, theatre and cinema, etc. All texts contain actual vocabulary and phraseology used in modern everyday communication. These texts help students to improve their language skills and understanding of the writing style. They also show language processes in contemporary Russian: assimilation of foreign words, using of slang, dialect words, abbreviations, etc. Texts were not adapted, but they were selected according to the topic, specific vocabulary and simplicity of syntactic constructions.

The second section of the website (Vocabulary) contains a list of words, word combinations and phrases, which are used in texts in Russian mass media nowadays. The vocabulary helps students to understand non-prepared speech and non-adapted texts. Its content also represents different concepts which are important for Russian culture and history. With the adoption of the vocabulary and understanding the main concepts of Russian culture students can effectively enter into intercultural communication.

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[20] Рычева, Е. А., *Анализ текстов СМИ на занятиях по русскому языку как иностранному: лингвокультурологический аспект*. [online: <http://www.ling-expert.ru/conference/langlaw6/rycheva-e.html>, cit. 2016-11-21].

The third part contains a list of Russian media sources, where learners and teachers can find different texts for their needs. The media sources are divided into several parts: information portals, news-agencies, social and political media, economic and law media, high-tech and scientific media, sports news, religious media, etc. In every subsection, links to specific media are accompanied by description of the source for easier navigation for learners and teachers.

The fourth part contains a list of various sources linked to the study of Russian culture and language (for example, the innovative multimedia project Russia provides information about key concepts of the Russian culture and mentality).

The proposed mass media materials represent various language contexts, raise questions relevant to particular student audience, stimulate discussions and simulate different language situations. Media texts motivate students to learn Russian language and culture and provide an opportunity for self-assessment and self-control in the process of learning a foreign language.

ABSTRACT

Cultural Aspect in Learning Russian as a Foreign Language

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The paper analyses specific representation and reflection of culture in the process of learning Russian as a foreign language. It identifies some theoretical questions concerning the interrelation and mutual influence between culture and language. It shows the necessity of learning of a foreign language in connection with culture of a country, as it also helps students to be engaged into cross-cultural dialogue. The article presents results of a survey conducted among Czech students who study Russian as a foreign language. It justifies the use of mass media texts in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

Key words: Russian as a Foreign Language, Russian Culture, Cultural Aspect, Communication, Language Learning, Survey.

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