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**THE INFLUENCE OF STORYTELLING METHOD ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF FOREIGN STUDENTS STUDYING
IN RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (RFL)**

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Abstract. *In the context of the modern world's globalization, language learning and developing communicative competence in students gain significant importance. The rapid integration of various cultures and the need for effective cross-border communication underscore the urgent need for adaptive educational strategies. As interactions between cultures expand, the ability to communicate effectively becomes a crucial skill for personal and professional success. The purpose of this study is to confirm the effectiveness of the "storytelling" method in Russian as a foreign language lesson in order to improve communication skills and develop Russian-language communicative competence among foreign students. To achieve this goal, the following research methods were used: analysis of scientific and methodological articles published in peer-reviewed journals, as well as the development of special test items to diagnose the level of development of communicative competence. Based on the analysis of the content and component structure of Russian language communicative competence, three criteria with corresponding indicators were identified to ascertain the levels of its formation among foreign students in RFL education. The results of the study confirmed the effectiveness of the teaching methodology, which has important practical significance for the development of education of foreign students in the field of the Russian language and helps to improve the quality of teaching at the university. This research contributes to solving the scientific problem related to forming Russian language communicative competence in foreign students. In our opinion, using the "storytelling" method in RFL classes aids in developing Russian communicative competence among foreign students.*

Keywords: *foreign students, storytelling, Russian as a foreign language (RFL), Russian-language communicative competence (RLC).*

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Научная статья

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ВЛИЯНИЕ МЕТОДА СТОРИТЕЛЛИНГА НА РАЗВИТИЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ ПО СПЕЦИАЛЬНОСТИ РУССКИЙ КАК ИНОСТРАННЫЙ (RFL)

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Аннотация. *В условиях глобализации современного мира, изучение языка и развитие коммуникативной компетенции студентов приобретает важное значение. Быстрая интеграция различных культур и необходимость эффективной трансграничной коммуникации подчеркивают острую необходимость в адаптивных образовательных стратегиях. Поэтому, по мере расширения взаимодействий между культурами возможность эффективно общаться становится важным навыком для личного и профессионального успеха. Цель данного исследования заключается в подтверждении эффективности метода "сторителлинг" на уроках русского как иностранного языка с целью улучшения коммуникативных навыков и формирования русскоязычной коммуникативной компетентности у студентов-иностранцев. Для достижения этой цели использовались следующие методы исследования: анализ научно-методических статей, опубликованных в рецензируемых журналах, а также разработка специальных тестовых заданий для диагностики уровня сформированности коммуникативной компетентности. По результатам анализа содержания и компонентной структуры русскоязычной коммуникативной компетентности для констатации уровней ее сформированности у иностранных студентов в обучении РКИ были выделены три критерия с соответствующими показателями, в соответствии с которыми были разработаны тестовые задания и осуществлена диагностика иностранных студентов на констатирующем и заключительном этапах экспериментального исследования. Результаты исследования подтвердили эффективность методики обучения, что имеет важное практическое значение для развития образования иностранных студентов в области русского языка и способствует повышению качества обучения вуза. Данное исследование способствует решению научной проблемы, связанной с формированием у иностранных студентов русскоязычной коммуникативной компетентности. По нашему мнению, использование метода «сторителлинг» на занятиях РКИ способствует формированию у иностранных студентов русскоязычной коммуникативной компетентности.*

Ключевые слова: *иностранные студенты, сторителлинг, русский язык как иностранный (РКИ), русскоязычная коммуникативная компетентность (РКК).*

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Introduction.

In the context of obtaining higher education in Russian universities, foreign students must quickly and sufficiently master the Russian language for further studies. Knowledge of the Russian language by foreign students is necessary in all spheres of Russian society, as Russian is not only the state language but also the language of Russian television and the internet, educational seminars, forums, the language of science and education, and a means of communication.

In connection with this, new approaches to teaching Russian to foreign students are emerging, which are associated with the use of interactive methods and the latest pedagogical technologies [1-3, 13]. One such technology is the method of "storytelling." This method is actively used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes [8, 9, 11] because its use not only ensures the effectiveness of mastering the educational material but also develops imagination, speech skills, logical and critical thinking, and analytical abilities of students [7, 10].

Research by experts in teaching using the storytelling method for various age groups studying EFL has shown promising results [14, 15, 18]. It is believed that narratives provide clear information, which facilitates language learning [12].

However, there has been limited research on the use of the storytelling method for Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) in modern education. According to studies, digital storytelling is gaining increasing popularity [5, 6, 16] as visualization enhances the effective presentation of the story's theme, adds dynamics to the narrative, and engages listeners in the events being narrated. The use of modern technologies in classes employing the storytelling method promotes the learning of a foreign language while allowing students to demonstrate their IT skills [4, 17, 19].

Thus, the aim of this article was to assess the effectiveness of the storytelling method in RFL classes in improving the communicative skills of foreign students and fostering Russian language communicative competence (RLCC).

Methodology.

In connection with the research objective, the main tasks of the study were:

- 1) to determine the criteria and indicators characterizing the levels of foreign students' RLCC formation in RFL education;
- 2) to implement an evaluative snapshot and determine the levels of foreign students' RLCC formation in RFL education;
- 3) to identify and justify the pedagogical conditions for using the storytelling methodology in teaching RFL to foreign students;
- 4) to develop and pilot the storytelling methodology in teaching RFL to foreign students.

Authorial conceptual approaches to problem solving and their analysis.

To assess the levels of foreign students' RLCC formation in the process of RFL education, the author applied diagnostic techniques developed by the author: test tasks (on knowledge of lexical and grammatical material, skills in constructing statements in accordance with the norms of the Russian language); creative diagnostic tasks; creative tasks using visual images; modeling of speech situations; situational exercises.

Test scores were assigned based on developed assessment criteria using a 100-point scale to assess the formation of RLCC among foreign students in RFL classes. The level of formation ranged from high (90–100 points), sufficient (89–75 points), satisfactory (74–60 points) to low (59–0 points).

The evaluative stage of the experiment aimed to establish the levels of RLCC formation among foreign students at the beginning of experimental education. This stage involved 120 students from preparatory departments of the university and 7 teachers. The evaluative stage did not involve dividing into experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups.

The testing procedure required a clear sequence of actions. For this purpose, schedules for testing groups of students were developed, indicating the time, classrooms, stages of testing. Testing was conducted in two stages: Stage 1 - 2 hours 10 minutes, Stage 2 - 1 hour 50 minutes; the total testing time was 4 hours, determined by the number of tasks, their complexity, presentation format, method of execution, etc. "Answer keys" were developed for multiple-choice and sequencing tasks.

For the teachers involved in the testing, an instruction with a clear algorithm of its conduct was compiled. Test tasks containing execution instructions were printed and distributed to students at the beginning of the testing.

Prior to this, a survey was conducted where students were asked to indicate which stories they would be interested in reading or listening to.

The structure of each lesson can be conditionally divided into several blocks: reading or listening to the text, questions about the text, exercises (lexical, grammatical, logical); additional information, telling one's own story.

The "questions about the text" block provided for checking the understanding of the read or heard information and also included several questions at the beginning of the lesson that set the audience up for a particular topic, activate attention, and stimulate reflection. Creative ways of using questions were also used: questions with multiple choice answers or those that required answering using one's own reasoning.

After working with the text, the transition to exercises (lexical, grammatical, logical) was made, which activate vocabulary and deepen knowledge of grammatical and semantic-syntactic constructions.

The "additional information" block consisted of illustrative material and additional information to the main narrative: audio and video recordings of songs, poems, movie clips, as well as illustrative material (photos and brief explanations) that helped to paint a complete picture in the imagination, activate attention, and contribute to telling one's own story.

The most important part of the lesson, to which all previous blocks of the class were directed, was telling one's own story. Here, the student had to provide their own narrative (real or fictional), using all the acquired competencies (linguistic, speech, sociocultural). Each lesson included a review of the material from the previous story.

For the implementation of the formative stage of the experiment, foreign students were divided into the EG and the CG. In total, 120 students participated in the formative experiment: 60 in the CG and 60 in the EG. CG participants were taught using traditional methods, while EG participants were taught using the experimental method of "storytelling."

Results and Discussion.

Based on the analysis of the content and component structure of communicative competence in RFL, lexical-grammatical, perceptual-functional, and content-functional criteria were identified to assess the levels of competence among foreign students studying RFL.

The lexical-grammatical criteria aimed at understanding the structure of the Russian language, the use of the lexical system, and constructing utterances in accordance with language norms. Perceptual-functional criteria included processing audio and audiovisual information,

coordinating communication means with speech situations, and interpreting the functions of communication in printed text. Content-functional criteria evaluated the ability to share information, express desires and preferences, initiate and maintain dialogue, and use communication means in oral and written forms corresponding to social interactions.

Following the completion of the diagnostic tasks on the initial assessment, all groups showed approximately similar performance, indicating that they belonged to the same population, and the difference in communicative competence levels among students was not statistically significant. The analysis was conducted based on both quantitative and qualitative parameters.

Results regarding lexical-grammatical, perceptual-functional, and content-functional criteria showed varying levels of competence. Challenges were particularly noted in the use of grammatical structures and verbs. Perceptual-functional analysis identified difficulties in audiovisual comprehension and establishing causal relationships in speech situations.

Qualitative data on the parameters of the content-functional criterion showed that foreign students faced the most difficulties expressing emotional attitudes, providing evaluative judgments, and arguing their own views in both monologic and dialogic speech. However, foreign students did not encounter significant difficulties when providing information about themselves. Describing personal preferences and future plans proved to be more challenging for them. This indicates that students find it difficult to express their thoughts without relying on questions.

The initial assessment of the level of formation of RLC among foreign students revealed differences in lexical-grammatical, perceptual-functional, and content-functional criteria. In particular, a high level of competence was insufficient: only 6.2% in the lexical-grammatical, 2.7% in the perceptual-functional, and 4.5% in the content-functional areas, indicating a significant need for improved language education. Satisfactory levels were more common, indicating a basic level of understanding, but also opportunities for improvement. Notably, a significant portion of students fell into the lower competence groups, especially in the perceptual-functional (29.2%) and content-functional (31.8%) criteria, emphasizing the need for targeted pedagogical intervention to enhance their qualifications and ensure comprehensive understanding of the Russian language in all communication dimensions.

The final stage of the research included a diagnostic snapshot, similar to the initial one, aimed at establishing and comparing the levels of RLC formation among students in the EG and CG to test the effectiveness of the storytelling method. Comparison of lexical-grammatical, perceptual-functional, and content-functional criteria underscored the success of the experimental approach. EG students demonstrated significantly higher levels of RLC formation than CG students across all criteria, indicating the effectiveness of the storytelling method in enhancing the Russian communicative competence of foreign students. Substantial differences in RLC formation between EG and CG highlighted the potential of the storytelling method in teaching foreign languages, suggesting its broad applicability in teaching specialized vocabulary and professional development of foreign students.

In terms of lexical-grammatical criteria, a high level of competence in EG ranged from 11.6% to 13.3%, significantly higher than 5% in CG, with sufficient levels ranging from 60% to 61.6% for EG and 33.4% to 35% for CG. Perceptual-functional criteria showed even more pronounced differences: a high level of competence ranged from 13.3% to 11.7% for EG, absent in CG, and a sufficient level ranged from 58.3% to 63.3% for EG compared to 23.3% to 28.4% for CG. Content-functional criteria also reflected higher achievements in EG: high levels ranged from 13.3% to 15% and 5% in CG, and sufficient levels ranged from 58.3% to 60% for EG compared to 23.3% to 25% in CG.

Based on the results of the final snapshot, we can conclude that after the implementation of the experimental methodology, there was a positive trend in the levels of formation of RLC among EG students compared to the results of the CG, which were trained using traditional methods. As

we can see, the high level of RLC formation in the EG is more than three times higher than in the CG. Significant changes were also observed at the sufficient level – over 50%. There was a noticeable decrease in the satisfactory level among EG students, however, the decreasing trend was not as significant. This was due to a significant decrease in the low level in the EG, which was trained using the experimental method, more than four times less than in the CG.

Overall, foreign students require much more support to achieve significant progress when working with authentic materials in the Russian language course. Therefore, the teacher applies the storytelling method in Russian language classes to facilitate and expedite the learning process, although this requires additional efforts to prepare for this course.

Based on the results of the exploratory experiment, a methodology for teaching RFL using the storytelling method was developed and tested, with the comprehensive implementation of certain pedagogical conditions, including: the functional-pragmatic orientation of speech intentions (stories told); ensuring optimal pedagogical communication in Russian language interactions: "teacher – foreign student", "foreign student – foreign student"; consideration of the national- psychological characteristics of foreign students in the process of teaching RFL.

Conclusion.

The use of the storytelling method was aimed at forming the motivational component of learning in students, which made it possible to reduce the low level of RLC formation. In our opinion, significant positive dynamics in high and low levels were predictable, as the use of the storytelling method stimulated students who, under traditional teaching conditions, reached a sufficient level to actively apply their acquired skills and abilities in situations close to real life, thereby increasing the level of RLC formation, as confirmed in the study. Most students who were at a low level in the CG were characterized by a lack of communicative motivation, and consequently, a low level of activity and creativity.

We see the prospects for further research in the detailed exploration of ways and conditions for implementing the storytelling method in order to apply it in the teaching process of specialized and general terminology, mastering industry-specific phraseology and terminology, which will contribute to the effectiveness of education in universities, as well as the further professional activities of foreign students.

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