

K. Nurdin, D. DeWitt, A.V. Sukhoverkhov

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM SPACE: THE CASE STUDY OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANT IN RUSSIA

This article presents the results of a case study that puts the classical and new educational models and methods to the test through practical implementation by a French foreign language assistant in Russia. On that basis, the authors revise the modern theories of language and intercultural communication. The research emphasises that for the efficient acquisition of foreign language and the development of cultural competences it is necessary to design a “learning microculture” and unique “ecology” of the classroom.

Keywords: second-language acquisition; learning microculture; situated learning; linguistic authenticity; intercultural competence.

Introduction

In the digital era which we live in, technology is invading almost all sectors of work. The phenomenon of ‘digitalisation of work’ has begun to disrupt the labour market, and digital skills are required to remain connected and up to date [1]. In the education sector, multimodal digital media such as video courses enable learners to see, hear and respond. That makes learning more effective and interactive [2, 3]. Digital materials provide the technical scaffold to enable learners to hear the genuine ‘melody’ or ‘romance’ of the unfamiliar language, forming the first representation of the country of origin and its citizens. The formation of such ‘mental images’, consciously or not, determines the conceptual and aesthetic classification of languages, as well as the intercultural ‘spread of authenticity’ [4]. It predisposes one’s future cultural and linguistic preferences, and could affect eventually the choice of the country one would wish to visit during their lifetime. In this regard, Claudine Moïse [5] states that the vernacular appears to be “a product to exploit, an authenticity token in the eyes of the tourists who came in order to find a ‘true’ way of life and being...” [5. P. 97]. Moreover, studies also show that these first intercultural, tourism-based encounters significantly facilitate further learning of the preferred language or country [6].

Audio or video records give an impression of the culture and a feeling of its ‘authenticity’. However, a further step towards the promotion of true cultural and linguistic authenticity is attained with the introduction of the Foreign Language Assistant (FLA) program. If we acknowledge Durkheim’s statement that language is ‘a collective representation’ that embodies all the concepts that makes each nation unique, then FLAs are not just ‘promoters’ of their mother tongue at universities in foreign countries but also are the representatives of a particular social (cultural) identity for their students. In January 1989, a ministerial circular confirmed this purpose by stating that the FLA is “a guarantor of language authenticity; he can highlight its multiple varieties, contrasts, accents, and specifics for each region or country. He bears witness to cultural and linguistic reality” [7].

Our research on practice at the Kuban State Agrarian University confirmed the above statement. The students attending the French course conducted by the FLA were ‘first-time tourists’ and ‘consumers’ of authentic culture and the teacher was, at certain times, a cultural ‘object’, a ‘showplace’ that represented the image and identity of the

country. However, because many FLAs are not familiar enough with the language of the visiting country, they encounter cultural and pedagogical difficulties which are mainly: (1) identifying appropriate methods to organise and explain the necessary class activities without knowing the language of the learners, and (2) determining *universal means of communication* for a two-way learning bridge between differing cultures and languages.

In the case study presented, an action-oriented pedagogy was employed for a ‘cultural turn’ in language learning methodology [8–10] with reference to the theories and practices that emphasise systemic integrity of actions, language, thought and culture in both first and second language learning [11–13]. Foreign language instruction employs various cultural models which Liddicot [8] differentiates as the static and dynamic views of culture for foreign language instruction. In the static view of culture, foreign language instruction treats culture as facts and artifacts to be learnt such as information on the country, their people and their lives, while the dynamic view of culture considers foreign language instruction to include culture as *a set of practices* in which people engage and involve together with linguistic and non-linguistic practices of culture [8]. Students could successfully learn the factual cultural competence by themselves, but *how language is used* in a particular cultural context and how it represents ways of living is more effectively practised with FLAs. In our research, special attention was also paid to the ‘learning microculture’ that emerged as a result of interaction between teacher and students, which played a crucial role in the language/culture acquisition. In this regard, the main aim of this article is to present the results for a practical and theoretical solution of the abovementioned methodological/pedagogical problems and discuss the main findings of our research: the mediating role of classroom ‘microculture’ for the effective learning of language and the acquisition of relevant cultural competences.

Our research is based on the following theories and methodologies that, in our view, are crucial for foreign language teaching and learning:

1. *An ecological approach to the learning process that takes into account connections and relations between the learner and the sociocultural and physical environment* [14–16].

The foundation of the ecological approach to the learning process is the concept of ‘affordance’. For example, popularity of technical devices and telecommunications application software like WhatsApp, Skype, Viber,

and Line creates *social affordances* for others (including the older generation) to use them for learning. On the other hand, in many developing countries we can see very weak sociocultural affordance for second language acquisition because learning a foreign language may not be an advantage in one's future career [17, 12]. In this regard, the main and the initial task of the FLA or any other teacher is to create all necessary educational 'affordances' for learners of foreign language, at least within the classroom space. In ecological and learner-oriented pedagogy, the instructor also needs to adapt to the learners and consider the possibility of learners changing their actions depending on their perception of the system and the behaviour of the learning community, while providing learners with the freedom of choice to use appropriate tools, and for self-directed learning [15, 12].

2. *A methodological priority of holistic, situated, and intuitive learning over analytical, formal, theoretical, and grammar-centred learning* [18].

A holistic, situated and intuitive approach integrates action, emotions, context, and culture when learning a foreign language. It includes ideas of multiple intelligence theory, emotional intelligence, situated learning, translanguaging pedagogy, and multiliteracies theories [19, 20]. The types of cultural elements, which can be embraced in language instruction, correlate with Big-C and Little-c cultures. The elements of Big-C culture refer to an achievement culture, such as art, literature, music, architecture, heritage of civilization and thought, while Little-c culture refers to behaviour culture and culturally-influenced beliefs, perceptions, or ideas [21, 22]. This behaviour culture is referred to as 'micro-level culture' by Risager [23] and refers to behaviours and ideas such as customs, habit, foods, dress, leisure, beliefs, values, morality, institution and norm, social identity, social interaction, and daily routines. Hence, foreign language instruction with a holistic and situated approach should attempt to immerse the learner in both Big-C and Little-c cultures (replicated within a classroom space) and avoid reducing language learning just to the studying of grammatical rules.

3. *Theories that present sociocultural, intersubjective, and distributed models of language's nature and emphasise that shared memory, social interactions, (meta)cultural competence are crucial for the understanding of language emergence and learning* [24–29].

Language is not a fixed, universal skill or a system that pre-exists in the brain. As Hodges and Fowler [26] show, language is a dynamic, distributed, and collective entity embedded and embodied in specific contexts. Furthermore, language originates through real-life interactions and coordination among users in cognitive and communicative activities [27]. Only after these communication practices, prescriptive language 'rules' and structures are *theoretically* abstracted and decontextualized in order to simplify and systemise language teaching/learning.

Language cannot also be considered as an autonomous system; it is a part of distributed cognition and shared memory. Language is heterogeneous because it presupposes interactions with phenomena such as perception, action, brain, body, environment, artefacts, and different media [27]. Situated meanings are 'locally produced' dur-

ing conversations, as we engage in understanding and responding to earlier contributions, based on the emergent and self-organised processes that connect the person's brain, body and environment [27].

Implementation and 'case study' of these theories and methodologies in the Kuban State Agrarian University help us to: (1) revise and integrate modern studies of language; (2) practically evaluate models of the teaching/learning process; and (3) address the problem of language nature and emergence from an educational perspective.

First, we would like to consider how through interaction in the class, an 'in-between language', a special microculture and initial ecological 'affordance' were created that enabled the introduction of the French language and naturally scaffolded further learning. This approach will let us question how to bridge a 'communication gap' and get a better understanding of 'communicative distances' in the classroom.

The Microculture and Ecosystem of a Classroom

Becoming acquainted with a new language and culture is always not an easy task for both teacher and students, and especially for FLAs who are not familiar enough with the native language of the students. Our case study revealed in classes the solution to four problems for learning that optimise the educational process.

The first problem was a wide-ranging 'language barrier'. In the classroom space, the main solution comes from the support of those who have some proficiency in the foreign language. These students help to clarify tasks for other learners and direct the teacher's teaching towards appropriate levels of learning simplicity/complexity. However, even these students may not have vocabularies sufficient to convey all the necessary meanings for a real educational process. Therefore, the lecturer must invent on the spot new, universal means of communication that could be comprehensible to students with any level of linguistic competence.

The second problem was to provide students with educational props to maintain their attention so that they do not lose interest during the lengthy explanations on vocabulary or general grammatical rules (duration of a lecture is an hour and a half in Russia). The solution to these tasks is providing *ostensive definitions* (based on demonstration of defined objects or processes), context cues and hints as well as a reference to shared memory (previous experience). These 'situated' learning methods enabled intuitive learning among students, brought vividness to the educational process, merged 'linguaging' with real situations and minimized the conceptual interference of the students' mother tongue.

The third problem was cultural linguistic and non-linguistic biases. The first day of the course revealed that learners see and explain the unfamiliar via the familiar, showing linguistic/cultural biases of perception and 'conceptualisation', thus providing empirical evidence for the 'soft' version of 'linguistic relativity hypothesis' [29, 30]. For example, it is typical that beginners in the classroom tend to show a natural curiosity and try to compare the different meanings of the same (similar) word in both

languages. Usually, they smile when they recognise French words that sound like Russian but which may signify different things. For example, Russian students easily and with enjoyment recognise the words '*chanson*', '*à faire*', '*pomme d'or*', '*bistro*' and are interested to share with classmates and their teacher the Russian meanings which differ from the French. This little 'likeness' builds the first bridge between the two cultures, creating an in-between microculture and a medium for the exchange of meanings and ideas. Furthermore, such 'familiarity' with words makes students more self-confident about their linguistic skills and knowledge.

With hindsight, we could say that this specific 'experience' of cultural 'proximity', similarities between both languages, helped us to qualify Janet Lukens' assumptions on 'communicative distances' and 'intensities of ethnocentrism' [31. P. 143–158]. Our students discovered for themselves many similarities between their 'in-group' (Russian) and 'out-group' (French) cultural realities. At the same time, becoming aware that they could not rely on 'ethnocentric' interpretations, students showed a natural curiosity towards the unfamiliar and surprisingly new 'there' of French culture.

The fourth problem was a methodological (educational) transition of activities in class from students' perception (listening, watching, reading) to their action (speaking, writing, interacting). The main aim of it was to turn abstract (theoretical) 'language forms' into veridical 'coordination devices' that "serve to foster successful achievement of the joint aims of groups of individuals" [32. P. 175]. It is shown by many studies that even speech perception is based on and correlates with understanding (realisation) of actions [33, 34]. Therefore, even if students have understood the main differences between the two languages and the different concepts conveyed, learning cannot reach its maximum proficiency potential without 'practice' facilitated by a teacher and an 'ecosystem' of the classroom. Here we could recall that Marcel Mauss [35] paid particular attention to the fact that "even the most elevated collective representations have no existence, are not truly such, except insofar as they command acts" [35. P. 58].

For the accomplishment of this task, several comfortable conditions ('affordances') were created in class whereby students could feel that they are able to express themselves in a foreign language, intuitively understand each other and even create projects, in spite of their constant grammatical errors and obstructively 'tight' vocabulary. In the development of this competence, the most essential is the advancement of students' 'improvisation potential', creativity, and spontaneity in situations of 'linguistic uncertainty'. This is certainly the last and the most difficult step to do in a class because for many learners it seems impossible and they prefer to resort to their mother tongue when in situations of uncertainty.

Among the four educational problems, we focused on the fourth one—how to make the learning of language and authentic culture effective, embodied, and directed (inspired) not only by teachers but also students. The solution to this problem is essential because it is naturally integrated with and resolves the earlier problems. Let us

consider some theories and interventions that were tested in classes for its solution.

Personally, Socially and Technically Scaffolded Learning

It is evident that creativity among students without a counterbalanced creativity in the teacher is like phonetics without phonology—a lot of noise and very few 'logos'. Gladys C. Lipton [36] says that "FLAs must absolutely avoid teaching in a routine manner. Rather, they must be creative to capture the interest of students" [36. P. 878]. The real practice of classical, vocabulary- and grammar-centred methodology based on textbooks and long explanations of grammatical subtleties written on handouts or the blackboard has shown that, in the first half of the lectures, students were losing their interest, began to chat with each other or even fell asleep. To avoid that in our classes, traditional exercises of 'oral production' were transformed into 'oral interactions', where dialogues rather than just text readings were fostered, thus shifting from the transmission model of education to a participation model [37]. This transition significantly improved the effectiveness, ease and emotional richness of teaching and learning in the classroom.

To improve further interactivity, compensate for the narrowness of our conjoined vocabulary and colour the monochromatic nature of grammar exercises, we also resorted to silent movies. As proven by many researchers, films are a good starting point for novice learners that puts language in a relatively natural context [38]. In class, fragments of films were also used as an encouraging and 'self-explaining' educational prop that visually scaffolded the understanding (explanations) of dialogues and small texts.

Indeed, movies could represent language for different educational levels and present various 'cultural types' ranging from jargon and regional dialects to urban speech [39]. Nevertheless, due to the artificial and artistic nature of film scripts (film-directors project their own representation of reality), some researchers, like postmodern thinkers, are sceptical about the role of films for the demonstration of general cultural and linguistic authenticity. However, on this issue, there is an alternative point of view that movies are materials produced by native speakers for native speakers' use and that their authenticity lies in the reproduction of communicative events [40]. In this regard, unlike dialogues we could find in textbooks, films can provide insights into the reality of native speakers and, thanks to their special motivating feature, they help beginners learn faster and remember essential vocabulary better [41, 42].

When we started to use silent films in classes, we also had another strong theoretical presumption that non-verbal communication is universally understood and could be an effective ground for the first cultural and educational interactions. As pointed out by Loretta F. Kasper and Robert Singer:

<...> silent films convey meaning totally through visual imagery: its usefulness as a tool for ESL instruction may not be immediately apparent. <...> research in psychology maintains that visual processing is at the foundation of our language development

[Piaget and Inhelder] <...> psycholinguistic studies note that creating imagery associations to new vocabulary and language structures improves learning [43. P. 16–17].

Famous French actor Louis de Funès also stated that “‘Silent movies’ actors were very lucky: that it was silent in fact, there was no loop-hole speech <...> speaking is an easy solution. They (actors) had to express themselves [emphasize body language, in order to be understood by everyone]” [44].

In classes, we tried to confirm these statements (and our theoretical presumption) with three different groups of students from various departments, all beginners in French. They watched fragments of two movies in class. The first one was *The Artist* made by Michel Hazanavicius, in which Jean Dujardin, the main character (Artist), was interviewed by journalists [45, time 00:03–01:20]. It was a most difficult fragment for the students to interpret because there were few clues that could explain (cue) the content of the dialogue. Nevertheless, they were tasked to write in Russian *probable* dialogues describing what they had seen. If Louis de Funès’ statement appears correct, we should find nearly the same dialogue in each group. It turned out that in spite of the fact that they generally understood the action’s setting, only 30% of the dialogues were similar, with few variations. The other portion was dialogues which had completely different summaries, some were inspired by the film and some were not.

To some degree, this scaled down the theoretical value of our initial theory and confirmed studies that showed that the perception (interpretation) of movies has a strong subjective nature and is just an illusion of self-evident reality [46]. Differing interpretations of the film’s fragment also validated theories that culture, acquired life experience, and individual characteristics influence various ‘cognitive styles’ in understanding [47–49].

Considering these results, we decided to show students a fragment of the second movie with context-rich clues: *Le Gendarme à New York*, starring Louis de Funès. We chose a two-phased approach for this one: students watched a muted fragment three times (we called it ‘the English lesson’ [50, time: 00:00–00:40]) and then wrote their own versions of the possible dialogues from their observations. Next, we listened to it again with sound and compared the dialogue in the movie with the students’ written interpretations. It turned out that because actions presented in the movie were embedded with rich clues from the context (for example, a blackboard with a written representation of an English grammar lesson), nearly all of the students wrote dialogues similar to the original.

For the next class, their dialogues were translated into French to be performed by students. This exercise allowed students to express their own ideas in French, fully understand them because they remembered the scene they referred to, and even explain these ideas to their peers when asked by the teacher. Writing in Russian a text from their imagination and then acting it in French helped learners to form more solid, context-sensitive skills (and memories) of French vocabulary and could be a good example and argument in favour of translanguaging pedagogy [51. P. 140–158; 52].

The use of such an approach allowed students to discuss the cross-cultural meanings expressed by facial expression or body language. In the case of *Le Gendarme à New York*, it leads us to comment on how concepts such as ‘being rich’ or ‘being poor’ are expressed through non-verbal cues by French people. For example, the concept of ‘being poor’ was conveyed in the film by the gestures of Louis de Funès as he referred to a proverb “*se serrer la ceinture*” (to tighten one’s belt) and allowed students to have a context-sensitive grasp of the common French phrases. We believe that exercises like these help to improve ‘dialogic imagination’ [53], social and emotional intelligences of the group through the realization of individual (perceptual) differences of its participants. Using silent movies as a pedagogical prop (in the context of translanguaging) also supported the students’ attempts to shape their own vocabulary in a specific situation without ‘interferences’ from the teacher. Therefore, this case study could be an argument in favour of the fact that language learning is a form of social action [32] consisting in a “continuous adaptation of linguistic and other semiotic resources in response to locally emergent communicative needs” [54. P. 342].

From Spatial to Social Affordance

For the improvement of student-student and students-teacher interactions and the creation of a favourable atmosphere for discussion in the foreign language, another theory was put to the test—the significance of the arrangement of the classroom space. As some researchers indicate, the right organisation of space encourages and sustains interactions between the teachers and students as students are motivated to engage in discussion not only with the teacher but also among themselves [55]. Initially, the desks in the class were arranged in two parallel rows. Proficient students usually took the place in front of the teacher, while other students preferred to take the ‘safe’ and ‘peaceful’ rear seats. In changing this, our class was organized in a ‘horseshoe arrangement’ where students could see each other’s faces and were not able to hide behind their hardworking peers. In our case, this arrangement improved the interactions in class and, most importantly, encouraged the students, with the support of the teacher, to correct mistakes made by their peers. This collaboration among students with different levels of linguistic proficiency helped to establish ecologically, socially and technically ‘scaffolded’ and self-organized learning processes. Such socially scaffolded learning gives students the awareness that they can direct or influence the education process and be an active part of it.

The practical implementation of this educational strategy allows us to revise and further advance the concept of the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (ZPD). According to theory, the ZPD is “a phase in development in which a person is unable to perform a task alone, but can eventually accomplish and internalize it with the help and supervision of someone more experienced” [56. P. 2–3]. Our experience and studies of other researchers show that, at any stage (level) of learning, the main thread is defined not by the lecturer but by the students. With their interventions, difficulties or new ideas, they model language taught in a

course in a unique way. In this regard, Joan Bliss wrote: “< . . > in the school context, the (Zone of Proximal Development) is not characterized by an invariant task because the negotiation between teacher and child may change it” [57. P. 39].

This lets us state that the educational process could be seen as a nonlinear system and classes as dynamic, self-organizing systems that are based on interactions and previous socially inherited experience. In such systems, the teacher is the ‘constituent’ that has his or her own Zone of Proximal Development and just partly formalizes the plan of the lecture, which largely emerges from specific interactions during the class.

Foreign Language Learning and the Emergence of Microculture

Jose Louis Lalueza and his colleagues define education “as a process of (re)construction of a culture in which old and new meanings are shared in some way by different actors” [37. P. 17]. This definition expresses the very essence of language learning and teaching. At the beginning of the course, we noticed that students’ usage of their mother tongue to help each other in some translation, was an erroneous initiative. Later, it conditioned situations wherein all students’ participation and comments were exclusively in Russian and not in French, as they had formed their beliefs that they could not express themselves otherwise.

To change this negative trend, we supported in-class initiatives for the explanation of problems and the articulation of questions in French. However, what we had acquired after several classes was something different. Because of the diversities of questions and a dramatic lack of common vocabulary, most of the time ‘hint dialects’ were used—special clues, context explanations, ostensive definitions that could not be understood by a stranger visiting the class (or a student who misses classes) since their meanings were formed in the previous days of learning. By the middle of the course, each student group had constructed its own ‘microculture’, ‘hint language’ and implicit ‘intersubjective agreements’ grounded in previous lectures (discussions, interactions). This microculture, with its unique language, was maintained and transmitted by the group-shared memory. Of course, this new, intersubjective, in-between language was a ‘merge’ of French, Russian and universal/situated nonverbal forms of communication but it helped to scaffold the learning process and improve students’ social intelligence, emotional intelligence, skills of creative and intuitive learning and most importantly, bridge practically the French and Russian language and culture.

Language, Microculture, Culture: Theoretical Aspects of Language Teaching

In modern studies, the paradigm that language is based on communication and has a sociocultural nature is often criticized [25, 58]. For instance, some researchers in cognitive science and proponents of the nativist theory of language development, emphasize its biological and cognitive nature, focusing only on individual linguistic competences. However, this position led researchers to the

theoretical cul-de-sac of the problem of language origin [59]. Our case study shows that language is not just the externalization of cognitive linguistic competence or the ability to be creative. Purely competence-oriented learning models focusing on individual cognitive skills could facilitate learners in postmodern ‘language-game’ or be creators of new French idiolects. However, an FLA is more than that; he or she has to create a France in miniature in the classroom, and present language as the cultural system and national heritage, representing social authenticity and cultural memory [60]. From that point, acquisition of language and development of ‘discursive competence’ [61] is, first of all, internalization and re-construction of a studied culture, for example, the specific personal address like ‘*tu*’ versus ‘*vous*’ in the French language and culture [62]. This means that the formation of ‘linguistic competence’ presupposes learning and inherence of a particular ‘cultural’ and ‘intercultural competence’ [10].

Thus, the teaching and studying of language presume multidirectional and multi-centred learning. In class, social and emotional intelligences, cultural signs and symbols, traditions, new forms of non-verbal communication have to be acquired both by the teacher (the FLA) and students [9]. It cannot be only students-centred (students-directed) learning based on the facilitation of their individual activities and creativities, it also has to be culture-centred and teacher-directed learning: that is, in proper time, the teacher must implement the classical transmission model in education [63, 64]. This multi-centred educational process, as well as cross-cultural and interpersonal communication, creates the unique microculture and ecosystem of a classroom that has specific cultural and linguistic ‘dialects’.

We think that the origin of this microculture with its own language (1) has direct affordance in the environment of the classroom, as proposed by ecological linguistics, (2) is rooted in the innate competence and cognitive prerequisites of the learners, as nativists indicate, and (3) is the result of social interactions, as argued from symbolic interactionism and sociocultural approaches [65, 66].

However, language cannot be seen only as a local system, originating in classroom space and emerging within a system of interactions. Language also needs to be seen as a larger, sociocultural system, as ‘semiotic ontology’ or *macroculture* that is relatively independent of particular individuals and transmitted by socially shared and distributed memory; a system that requires cultural and ‘metacultural competence’ for its acquisition [66. P. 106–114; 67; 68].

Ferdinand de Saussure stated that language is “never complete in any single individual” [69. P. 13]. Indeed, the French language as a cultural, distributed, non-local system cannot be known completely by any particular individual (for instance, nobody knows all professional or technical terms specific to each profession). From that point, any language is a heterogeneous (patchy) system, its ‘complete’ knowledge is distributed among different people and its existence is maintained and has been constantly developed by different types of social activities. For Foreign Language Assistants, it means that

he or she has to design courses in a way that, on the one hand, introduces the most essential and typical characteristics of the studied language and, on the other hand, represents knowledge and (meta)competences useful for students' future professions.

Conclusion

The transmission of cultural and linguistic authenticity without knowledge of the students' mother tongue is a daunting challenge for any teacher. Because of its complex nature, this transmission would not be possible without various 'props' and situated 'interventions' that scaffold the learning process. In our classes, we solved this problem by applying ostensive (demonstrative) definitions, context clues, and various hints referring to general and shared knowledge and the memory of the students. Films were another very effective tool for the 'scaffolded teaching approach', confirming the validity of many studies in this field [38, 43].

However, in our research, we faced the fact that the use of silent movies was particularly promising for the improvement of learning. Unacquainted with this approach, most of the students found it interesting. Such films stimulated their imagination and provided them with material for the creative use of the language. Writing dialogues in Russian after watching fragments of silent movies allowed students to realize the variety of individual interpretations and entirely understand their later dialogues declared in French. Such application of silent movies in class also partly *disproved* the theoretical presumption that non-verbal communication is universally understood. Educational practice has shown that some mimics and gestures are culturally-dependant and hermetic for learners and

have to be explained by native speakers. Therefore, language assistants who clarify their meaning allow learners to become acquainted with new forms of non-verbal communication, thus contributing to the development of their *intercultural, social, and emotional intelligences* that 'scaffold' the understanding of verbal communication.

The practical results of our research are the elaboration and promotion of combinatorial pedagogy that reflects the system nature of language and culture, social and individual differences of students and combines different teaching and learning methods. We think that to be effective in the educational process, teachers and students have to integrate linguistic, cultural and individual 'authenticates' [70], macrocultures and microcultures, global and local specifics [4, 66, 71], as well as the rational, intuitive and emotional aspects [72]. That is, this process has to welcome systems and pluralistic educational methods that take into account: (1) languages and cultures of cooperating countries, (2) the individual skills of learners, (3) the ecosystem of the class, and (4) practical (situated) social interactions.

Theories of multiliteracies and multiple intelligences revealed that in the modern world it is not enough for students to be just linguistically or grammatically proficient. Developing society requires professional, interpersonal, cultural and other types of proficiencies. Furthermore, real teaching practice shows that FLAs not only transmit but also mutually create new meanings, values, and forms of communication and share them with their students. Therefore, FLAs both *implement* and *maintain* the day-to-day life and dynamics of culture and *contribute* in petite to the synergy of general efforts to the individual and social development.

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Kevin Nurdin, Kuban State Agrarian University (Krasnodar, Russian Federation). E-mail: kevin.nurdin@etu.unilim.fr

Dorothy DeWitt, University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). E-mail: dorothy@um.edu.my

Anton V. Sukhovikhov, Kuban State Agrarian University (Krasnodar, Russian Federation). E-mail: sukhovikhov.ksau@gmail.com

ЯЗЫК И КУЛЬТУРА В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ: ИЗ ОПЫТА АССИСТЕНТА ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА В РОССИИ

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Кевин Нурдин, Кубанский государственный аграрный университет им. И.Т. Трубилина (г. Краснодар, Российская Федерация). E-mail: kevin.nurdin@etu.unilim.fr

Дороти ДеВитт, Малайский университет (г. Куала-Лумпур, Малайзия). E-mail: dorothy@um.edu.my

Антон Владимирович Суховерхов, Кубанский государственный аграрный университет им. И.Т. Трубилина (г. Краснодар, Российская Федерация). E-mail: sukhovikhov.ksau@gmail.com

В статье представлены результаты кейс-стади, в котором протестированы классические и новые образовательные системы и методы посредством их реализации в России французским ассистентом иностранного языка. На основе полученных практических результатов пересматриваются современные теории языка и парадигмы межкультурной коммуникации. Теоретическими и методологическими предпосылками исследования являются: 1) системный и экологический подходы к языку, культуре и процессу обучения; 2) методологический приоритет целостного, ситуативного и интуитивного обучения над аналитическим, формальным, теоретическим и ориентированным на грамматику обучением; 3) социокультурные, интересубъективные и распределенные (distributed) модели языка и его изучения; 4) идеи трансязыковой педагогики, теории множественного и эмоционального интеллекта. В качестве основного результата исследования мы предлагаем комбинированный (гибридный) метод обучения, который учитывает: а) языки и культуру изучающей и изучаемых стран (транслингвальность, всесторонняя грамотность); б) индивидуальные навыки учащихся (теория множественного и эмоционального интеллекта); в) экосистему учебного пространства (экологическая лингвистика, теория аффорданса); г) социальные взаимодействия с особой микрокультурой, собственным «диалектом» и учебной традицией (ситуативное обучение, социальный скаффолдинг, теория распределенного языка). Реализация на практике системного понимания обучения, культуры и языка позволяет предложить многовекторную и полицентрическую концепцию учебного процесса с нелинейной, динамичной и во многом самоорганизующейся структурой. В связи с этим обосновывается методология изучения иностранного языка, в которой учащиеся в определенной степени определяют или меняют направление и содержание образовательного процесса, сами предлагают и реализуют проблемно-ориентированные задания, формируют социальный скаффолдинг для отстающих студентов, естественным образом вовлекая их в учебный процесс. Исследование подчеркивает необходимость изучения роли «обучающей микрокультуры» и экосистемы учебного пространства для эффективного изучения иностранного языка и развития связанной с ними культурной компетенции. Выявлено, что в микрокультуре учебного процесса возникает уникальный язык-посредник, который объединяет естественные языки (в нашем случае французский и русский) и различные универсальные / ситуативные формы невербального общения. В рамках данной концепции на уроках использовались немые фильмы и создание диалогов студентов на их основе. Протестированный метод позволил студентам на практике осознать разнообразие индивидуальных и культурных интерпретаций и частично опроверг теоретическое предположение о том, что невербальное (визуальное) общение является универсальным и общепонятным «языком».

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