INNOVATIVE METHOD OF TEACHING BASED ON POLYCODE TEXTS

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Abstract
At present, due to the development of new technologies in the information and communication space, we can observe a significant change in social and educational communication. In this regard, the importance of polycode texts in the process of language teaching increases, thus attracting the attention of philologists and methodologists.

By polycode texts, we understand semiotically charged texts in which the verbal component and the iconic range accompanying it perform the communicative task.

It is well known that a student receives most of the information through vision; meanwhile, it is difficult to overestimate the role of visual signs, especially at the initial stage of training. The non-verbal tools used in language teaching are diverse and numerous, from tables and diagrams to educational films with subtitles.

The proposed research focuses on the typology of polycode texts that are used in the work with Chinese students studying Russian. The purpose of the study is to describe the effectiveness of each type of the polycode text at different stages of teaching the Russian language. The analyzed material is educational and advertising texts in Russian and Chinese.

Keywords: Innovative method of teaching, polycode texts, Russian language, educational texts, advertising texts.

1 INTRODUCTION
Nowadays, teaching practice requires modern teaching techniques and introduction new inventory in the educational process. We can notice that a special attention is paid to the polycode text in the learning activity. More and more philology and non-philology students are offered a number of language activities that involve dealing with a polcode text.

Polycode texts are denoted as a synthesis of verbal and iconic components in the language and should be perceived as a single text, the accuracy of which is possible only with the correct reading of the verbal, graphic and cultural-specific components [1]. It is obvious that the characteristic feature of the modern polycode text is the special role of the visual register. Particular attention to the poly-code texts in teaching is dictated by the fact that their number of has recently significantly increased and they are very useful from the interdisciplinary point of view.

The proposed article describes innovative methods of applying polycode texts in teaching the Russian language to foreign students at the Preparatory faculty (the faculty of the Russian Language and General Educational Disciplines), where after one academic year of study, which is 10 calendar months, the student must master Russian in the amount of the first certification level and basic knowledge of specialized disciplines, for example, medical students, in addition to the Russian language, should acquire skills in working with scientific texts of such disciplines as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology [2]. We consider in detail the work with polycode texts of various degrees of difficulty in teaching theoretical disciplines (Phonetics, Morphology, Lexicology of the modern Russian language and ancient Slavic languages) in Russian at the Philological faculty of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University).

2 METHODOLOGY
The theoretical basis for the study is relied upon the theoretical works by E.E. Anisimova [3], L.S. Bolshakova [4], O.I. Maksimenko [5], Yu.A. Sorokin and E.F. Tarasov [6], where the features of polycode texts, their structure and their various types are described. The research by Yu.A. Sorokin and E.F. Tarasov examines the texts the structure of which consists of two inhomogeneous parts:
• verbal (speech);
• non-verbal (belonging to other sign systems than natural language).

The typology of texts by G.V. Eiger and V.L. Yukht [7] proposes the opposition of mono- and polycode texts. «Polycode texts in a broad semiotic sense should also include cases of combining a natural language code with the code of another semiotic system (image, music, etc.)». At present, the term polycode text still has a wide use, by which is meant, first of all, the text where the message is encoded with semiotically heterogeneous means. A necessary condition for attributing a text to the category of a polycode text is its paralinguistic active character, i.e. its paralinguistic means must contain information or introduce additional content into the one that is offered by the verbal component.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Features of polycode texts

A polycode text has a special set of structural, lexico-semantic, graphic, pragmatic and cultural-specific characteristics. A specific feature of the polycode text is the synthesis of the above-listed characteristics, without the special role of any of them. The difficulty in the perception of the Russian polycode text is primarily due to its structure, therefore it is necessary to teach students to read and produce polycode texts in the Russian language. The process of decoding polycode texts in Russian must take into account verbal and non-verbal signs, so these texts are of a higher order and complicated.

Another peculiarity of polycode texts that is of great interest to teachers of Russian as a foreign language is the content of its verbal component. Students can face a number of challenges while translating the verbal component of a polycode text. Thus, for example N.M. Dugalich stresses out the necessity of keeping in mind the temporal character of a polycode text as it is often connected with social and cultural events. Furthermore, the translation must be carried out with regard to the iconic component of a polycode text «as it is can illustrate precedent phenomena of a national or regional level» [1].

3.2 Functions of polycode texts in learning activities

Polycode texts perform a number of functions in educational activities; the most significant are the following:

• attractive (to attract the attention of the addressee);
• informative (to announce certain information; participate in the formation of the content of the text);
• expressive and aesthetic (to influence the emotions and aesthetic perception of the addressee);
• contact (to create a situation of live communication).

Let us note that these functions help students to ‘work out’ a polycode text that is to get acquainted with its message taking into account both verbal and iconic components. This will help to better understand the character of the text, the author’s intention and, afterwards, perform well while doing different kinds of learning activities (analysis, explanation, retelling, description, and translation).

3.3 Types of polycode texts in teaching Russian as a foreign language

All polycode texts involved in learning activities are aimed at facilitating the understanding of the studied rules, definitions, concepts, and norms of the language. A schematic representation of the language material allows students to reproduce the essential aspects of the studied rules, definitions, and concepts. The main task of visualization is to facilitate the memorization of a specific language material, the use of which causes the greatest difficulties in assimilating the norms of the Russian literary language.

Let us consider in more detail the types of polycode texts that are used in teaching foreign students.

Texts with strong creolization are the subject or situational pictures that serve to comment on the lexical meaning of words and phraseological units, facilitate the independent use of new language for the student in the context, prevent speech errors, stimulate the production of a new text based on the
polycode one. The verbal part does not exist in isolation, without any interaction with the iconic component; it is directly oriented to the image or refers to it, and the image acts as an obligatory element of the text. So, the drawings provide an understanding of individual words and phrases. Illustrations can be used to explain the derivational meaning of prefixes (выносить ‘take out’, еносить ‘bring in’, переносить ‘transfer’), suffixes (for example, -ик ‘-ik’), distinction of homonymous roots, verbs of motion. With all these the picture performs two main functions: comments on the meaning of the words or phraseological units and stimulates the use of certain vocabulary.

An example of students’ work with policode texts can be the activity on translating an advertising text from Russian into their native language. Thus, Chinese students may be offered a task to translate an advertising text from Russian into Chinese and vice versa. As an advertisement is a policode text, its iconic and verbal components can be decoded only in combination. The deep meaning of the verbal part is supported by the iconic component.

In the advertisement image (see Figure 1), we can see a photo of a popular young Chinese pop artist, Zhou Jelong (Jay Chou), who is drinking Sprite. Imagery is created by verbal means: ‘凉心凉，心飞扬’ ‘Coolness puts a chill on the heart, the heart flies’. At the bottom of the advertising image there is the signature of the singer (autograph), on the left we can see a picture of lemon and ice, which supports the words ‘coolness’ and ‘puts a chill’.

In this example, we note the interaction of two types of codes: the iconic component includes a photo of the singer, the use of colors of the already known in the market product (green for the background, singer’s clothes, bottle, ice, font; and yellow for lemon, a sign on the company’s logo and a bottle cap; all these carry the idea of naturalness). The iconic component has a denotative meaning, as it names a well-known product, a verbal component, that has a metaphorical meaning, reflects the creative thoughts of the authors of the advertisement: thus, the lexical unit with the semantics of cold is used twice: 凉 ‘cool’ and 透 ‘puts a chill’; and we observe the use of the word 心 ‘heart’ which is not directly related to the advertised product.

This type of texts includes advertisements, posters, cartoons, etc. Based on their communicative aim, they are best of all used at the lessons of Russian with beginners as they do not have a good command of the language and the iconic component contributes to better perception and translation. Non-philology students can also benefit from the activities involving texts with strong creolization, as they bring in some additional information that can be helpful in broadening extralinguistic knowledge and improving professional communicative skills.

Texts with moderate creolization are found in textbooks, tables, filmstrips, etc., where, when combining an image and a verbal message, either a verbal component or a graphic one prevails. In the first case, the verbal part is relatively autonomous, independent from the image; the graphic component accompanies the verbal part and is an optional element in the organization of the educational text.
Figure 2 shows an example of a polycode text, which is used, in particular, in classes on the lexicology of the Russian language with foreign students.

Традиционный русский дом и его части:
1) крыша
2) труба печи
3) окно
4) светелка
5) забор
6) усадьба
7) сад

Figure 2. Traditional Russian house – izba.

In the represented figure we can see an example of an image that complements the text and tasks on the lexicology of the Russian language with foreign students. The figure shows изба ‘peasant's log hut’. Being a very specific to Russia phenomenon this lexical unit needs a lot of explanation. The topic of this lesson is active and passive vocabulary of the Russian language.

Obviously, the figure separated from the context does not have a valuable meaning, but being a part of explanation on passive vocabulary it is an obligatory component of the learning activity as it helps teachers to explain precedent names known to native speakers but strange to foreigners.

Texts with moderate creolization can be used in groups of pre-intermediate or intermediate students, as they have sufficient communicative skills, can read and write in Russian, are able to distinguish synonyms.

Texts with weak creolization involve language tables, banners, demonstration cards of schemes, the main purpose of which is to reveal a certain regularity, to give a peculiar model of a rule or a concept. Iconic signs are represented weakly here, and the main means of meaning formation are font and color variation, typographic symbols, etc. Graphic tools can exist autonomously, replace or duplicate verbal information.

Figure 3 schematically shows possible uses of the verb of motion идти ‘go’ with prefixes. Importantly, verbs of motion cause a great difficulty in use for foreign students because in Russian they may be formed with the use of prefixes. However, in other languages they are represented by different lexical units. Thus it is very convenient to explain them schematically with the help of a policode text.

Перейти ‘cross’
Прийти ‘come’
Войти ‘enter’
Дойти ‘reach’
Обойти ‘go round’
Зайти ‘come in’
Уйти ‘go away’
Отойти ‘step away’
Выйти ‘go out’
Пройти ‘pass by’
Подойти ‘come up’

Figure 3. The verb of motion идти ‘go’ with prefixes.
Texts with weak creolization can be used at work with intermediate or upper-intermediate student, as their command of the Russian language does not require a lot of use of iconic component.

Another type of polycode texts are multimedia materials. The advantages of using media technologies are in mastering new forms of cooperation and communication not only with the audience or with its individual representatives. The use of media information in the educational process can provide new ways of communication, which are based on the laws of knowledge reproduction and rely on imaginative presentations. The Russian language classes at the RUDN Preparatory faculty are held with the use of educational films where foreign students take part and in which typical situations of student life in RUDN University and Russia are played around.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The use of policode texts is not new for learning activities, especially when working with children. However, introducing these practices into educational process in a university is an innovative experience.

Teaching foreign students involves particular attention to their language level and their future specialization. Thus, in this article we discussed the activities and types of policode texts that can be involved in language learning.

Policode texts, being a synthesis of two heterogeneous components, can be applicable at the lessons with both philology and non-philology students as working out policode texts involves different types of speech activities, such as: analysis, retelling, translation, describing, etc.

Different types of policode texts can be introduced into groups of students with different language level. Thus, texts with strong creolization are better assimilated by beginners; texts with moderate creolization are suitable for pre-intermediate and intermediate students; texts with weak creolization are better perceived by intermediate and upper-intermediate students.

We emphasize once again the importance of using polycode texts in teaching foreign students. The introduction of policode texts greatly facilitates the assimilation by foreigners of theoretical and practical material in Russian, contributes to the understanding of the cultural-specific components of educational texts due to their clarity.

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