Abstract

The article is devoted to the description of the multimodal textbook "I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use" for foreigners studying Russian as a foreign language, with the level of language proficiency not lower than II certification (B2). Phraseological units / idioms are special speech expressions that function in each language and reflect the peculiarities of the culture and historical experience of the nation. Phraseological units / idioms occupy a significant place in the lexical thesaurus of the national language, so a high level of language proficiency involves the active use of idioms in speech.

The idiom is a stable combination of words, the meaning of which is not determined by the meanings of its components. Accordingly, the literal translation of such idioms into other languages is impossible, phraseological units can only be learned by heart. Therefore, the understanding of idioms and the more correct use of them in speech is particularly difficult for foreigners who study Russian as a foreign language and have insufficient knowledge of etiquette and stylistic norms: often an error in the use of phraseology units puts a foreigner in an awkward position, thereby increasing the language barrier.

The teacher of Russian as a foreign language has to look for effective ways to present phraseological units and activate their functioning in the speech of students. In this article we introduce a multimodal textbook which presents innovative methods of working with the most popular idioms in the modern literary Russian language and we implement different innovative techniques when teaching Russian idioms. For example, new idioms can be introduced with the help of the technique of visualization. Working out the correct pronunciation and the skill of selecting an idiom in the flow of sounding speech occurs with the use of voice assistant.

The multimodal textbook also contains a system of exercises aimed at activating the use of phraseology units in speech. In case of difficulty in identifying idioms students can use a special electronic dictionary included in the edition. To systematize educational information it is divided into modules, each of them ends with a quiz for self-testing. The multimodal textbook "I speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use" was successfully tested at the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) at the lessons of Russian as a foreign language with foreign students of both philological and non-philological specialties.

Keywords: multimodal textbook, Russian as a foreign language, idioms, foreign students, innovative techniques, proficiency.

1 INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have actively entered the life of contemporary society. They have shifted the emphasis in the supply and reception of information, changed the modern type of thinking, which is manifested in various combinations of polycodes. For modern people, just verbal text (that has been the main way of constructing a picture of the world and the transmitter of information for a long time) becomes insufficient for the implementation of its communicative purposes in modern society, as today other means of constructing meanings, other means to form identity come to the fore. Therefore, for the last two decades, the problem of polymodality (the theory of multimodality in foreign studies and research) has been one of the most pressing challenges of interdisciplinary research.

Adopted in the classical educational environment linear representation of information is being replaced by polycode texts as modern students perceive information differently, and many traditional textbooks are not effective enough in terms of presenting information and methods of its consolidation. Consequently, the tasks of the modern educational paradigm are:
1 development of new techniques that
   o meet the new educational standards of the XXI century,
   o raise students’ motivation,
   o allow to achieve best results in training;
2 creation of multimodal textbooks (textbooks of new generation).

Russian methodologists have already made attempts to create digital (multimodal) textbooks [1, 2, 3, 4]. However, the task of creating multimodal textbooks on Russian as a foreign language is still relevant. This is due to objective reasons as the Russian language with its complex morphological structure is really one of the most difficult to learn languages. In addition to grammar the section of lexicology – phraseology is also one of the most difficult section to learn for foreign students. This is due to the fact that the phraseology of each language is complex and unique as it is the reflection of national specifics, culture, customs, traditions, folk wisdom. Using idioms properly requires special national and cultural knowledge.

In addition, we can explain the complexity of learning phraseological units by the fact that their meanings are not the total meaning of the lexemes included in the structure of the phraseology (the idiom). Phraseological units are not created, but reproduced in speech, so foreign students have to learn phraseological units by heart. But as we know learning by heart too much information is rather hard and boring process. Therefore, many foreign students are not interested in learning Russian phraseology and do not use Russian idioms in their speech. The works of many Russian and foreign researchers are devoted to this methodical problem [5, 6, 7 etc.].

The proposed article describes the textbook “I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use”, which was created by the authors and tested in the classroom on Russian as a foreign language with students of the faculty of pre-University training and with students of the 1st and 2nd years of study at the faculty of Philology and Engineering Academy of Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University).

2 METHODOLOGY

Along with General scientific methods, such as analysis, synthesis, observation, and experiment the authors used particular methods such as quantitative method (the written works of students before and after using multimodal textbook “I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use” were analyzed in terms of the number of mistakes made in the use of Russian idioms), and a method of linguistic experiment. The experiment consisted in implementing in two experimental groups (levels B1 and B2) the material which was presented to the students with the help of the multimodal textbook. Then the students wrote the same test work as the foreign students in groups, where the same Russian idioms were presented with the help of classical methods. The results of the linguistic experiment and the structure of the multimodal textbook “I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use” are introduced below.

3 RESULTS

The textbook “I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use” can be used both for self-study of the most popular phraseological units by foreigners and for joint work of foreign students with a teacher.

The structure of the multimodal textbook includes the Introduction and 9 units (lessons). The Introduction (see Figure 1) offers the definition of phraseological units, states the objectives, and describes the content and the structure of the course. Each of the lessons of the multimodal textbook includes training material, multimedia component, interactive exercises and self-control tests. The material is arranged on the principle from the easiest to the hardest.
As you can see in Figure 1, the content of the course is shown on the left that simplifies the search for the needed unit and allows to start learning from the place where the student stopped.

At the beginning of each unit there is a checklist to identify specific practical tasks that are given to the student. We believe this is necessary from the methodological point of view to increase motivation. In addition, the achievement of this goal contributes to another feature of the multimodal textbook: the subject is indicated with the pronoun of the 1st person singular (I).

For example, in Lesson 1 (see Figure 2): "I will get acquainted with several phraseological units. Having done these exercises, I will be able to:

- determine the meaning of these phraseological units,
- recognize these idioms while listening and reading,
- use them properly in written and oral speech".
Further follows a list of phraseological units (5-10 units) to be learned in this unit. Moreover, in the first lessons each idiom is initially accompanied by an interpretation but in the final lessons students are to find new phraseological units in the text and to choose their interpretation by the method of exclusion.

Each phraseological unit in the textbook is accompanied by an illustration and an audio recording of the pronunciation of the idiom (see Figure 3).

In case of difficulty during working with idioms the student has an opportunity to seek help in the Electronic phraseological dictionary contained in the multimodal textbook. Moreover, the units in our textbook provide necessary grammatical explanations of the use of a particular idiom in speech (see Figure 4).
The multimodal textbook contains a variety of exercises, such as:
- relate the meaning of the idiom to the picture;
- listen to the interpretation and choose the right idiom;
- put the idiom in the correct (grammatical) form;
- fill the gap to reconstruct the idiom (write a missing lexeme), etc. (see Figure 5).

![Figure 5. Types of exercises.](image)

The student can start doing the next exercise in case he/she correctly performed the previous one.

At the end of the unit, the results are summarized in the form of a checklist and the student receives congratulations on the successfully performed task (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6. Results and Congratulations.](image)

The following lessons, along with exercises to consolidate the skills of using new phraseological units, contain tasks in which the student must remember the material of the previous lessons (see Figure 7). That allows to observe the principle of continuity of educational material and bring the skill of using Russian phraseological units in the speech of foreign students to automatism.
After studying the material of the three units, students are offered a test for self-examination. If the student gives a wrong answer, the field in which the incorrect answer was written is highlighted in red and the student is asked to correct his or her mistake. After successfully completing the test tasks, the student moves on to the next lesson.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the experiment prove that the students who studied Russian phraseology using the described multimodal textbook “I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use” made 27% fewer mistakes in the final test than foreign students who studied phraseology in the traditional method without the use of digital technologies. In addition, the authors received feedback where the students expressed gratitude. They noted the following advantages of the multimodal textbook:

- simplicity of its structure, which facilitated its use;
- availability of the presentation of the material through the use of graphic presentations, audio and reference material;
- colorful design;
- interactivity (game character);
- efficiency.

On the example of using the multimodal textbook “I Speak Russian as a Russian: Russian Idioms in Use” as an example, the authors showed the expediency of presenting the material on Russian as a foreign language in the XXI century with the help of polycode (multimodal) texts consisting of several parts (semiotic codes): verbal (speech) and non-verbal (belonging to other sign systems: visual signs, auditory, etc.). This ensures their effectiveness at all stages of the pedagogical process: the introduction of new material, its consolidation, repetition, and control.

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