Formation of Sociocultural Competence among Foreign Students

Alyona Ivygina[1], Evgeniya Pupysheva[2] and Dinara Mukhametshina[3]

Abstract

The objective of the current study is to experimentally test the pedagogical conditions aimed at ensuring the efficient formation of sociocultural competence in foreign students by using local history texts in the lessons of Russian as a foreign language (RFL). The efficiency of the formation of sociocultural competence by including linguistic and local history information was revealed by means of an experiment using the methods of observing students during the educational process, questionnaires, testing and conversations between students and teachers. The results of the experiment conducted in two groups, a control group (CG) and an experimental group (EG), show that the inclusion of local history texts in the process of studying Russian as a foreign language significantly increases students' interest in intercultural contacts, develops respect for the customs of another culture, fluent speech, deepens the knowledge of norms and values of one's native culture and other cultures. It was revealed that after conducting the experiment, the number of students with an advanced level of language proficiency in the experimental group increased from 8.8% to 23.5%, while in the control group it decreased from 11.8% to 8.8%. The results obtained during the experimental work make it possible to conclude that the level of sociocultural competence in the experimental group, consisting of preparatory course students who were trained with the use of local history texts, is higher by all the components than in the control group of students who studied Russian without using local history texts. These results are indicative of the positive experience of the formation of linguistic competence as part of sociocultural competence in the lessons of Russian as a foreign language at the Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University and the possibility of its further use.

Key words: Russian as a foreign language, sociocultural competence, cultural and linguistic competence, linguistic and local history competence, local history.

Introduction

The most important goal of teaching a foreign language is the formation of communicative competence (Billig, 1997), which includes both linguistic and sociocultural competence, because

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[1] *PhD in Philology, Assoc. Prof., Department of Russian Language and Literature, Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, Russia,* *linguistika@mail.ru*

[2] *PhD in Pedagogical, Assoc. Prof., Department of Russian Language and Literature, Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, Russia,* *evpupysheva@yandex.ru*

[3] *Assistant, Department of Russian Language and Literature, Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, Russia,* *nurievadinara@yandex.ru*

communicative competence cannot be formed without the knowledge of the sociocultural characteristics of the country of the studied language.

Having initially emerged in the works of N. Chomcky, the notion of "communicative competence" initially received the following definition: "... mental representations of language rules acting as the internal grammar of an ideal speaker and a listener" (Chomcky, 2002). Over time, it was expanded and differentiated. The elements of communicative competence, which implies the ability of people to "understand, generate foreign language expressions in a variety of socially determined situations, taking into account the linguistic and social rules, that native speakers adhere to" (Galskova, 2003), include linguistic (language), sociolinguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural and strategic competence (Shatunova et al., 2019).

The term "sociocultural competence" in Russian methodological science emerged in connection with the works of van Dyck and the "Council of Europe on cultural cooperation", according to which the examined term is defined as "the ability to interact adequately in situations of everyday life, to establish and maintain social contacts using a foreign language" (Muraveva, 2011).

The problem of forming sociocultural competence, in particular, of students who study a foreign language, the methods used to solve it, attracted the attention of many scientists. The works of N.G. Bragina (Bragina, 2013), Yu. E. Prokhorov (Prokhorov, 2017) et al. are devoted to studying sociocultural stereotypes; the questions of the interaction of language and culture are covered in the works of E. M. Vereshchagin, V.G. Kostomarov (E.M. Vereshchagin, V.G. Kostomarov, 2005) V.I. Karasik (Karasik, 2002), et al.;the works of a group of foreign scientists led by a Spanish researcher M. Celce-Murcia (Celce-Murcia, 1995) are devoted to the study of the structure and content of sociocultural competence, as well as the issues of its formation.

The cultural component is the determining factor in order to form sociocultural competence, since it is responsible for the perception and mastering of foreign language culture. It is not by chance that the researcher S.G. Ter-Minasova calls a foreign language lesson a crossroads of cultures. Continuing this idea in her textbook "Languages and Intercultural Communication", she expresses the idea regarding the need to learn a new language inextricably from the world and the culture of the people who speak it (Ter-Minasova, 2008).

Foreign students, studying the Russian language, are faced with moments that can later lead not only to problems with the mastering of the language, but also cause difficulties in adaptation.

Linguistic and cultural competence is designed to facilitate and accelerate the process of the adaptation of a foreign speaker in new cultural and linguistic conditions.

I.N. Savchenkova states that "the comprehension of Russian culture by foreigners studying in Russia occurs through the prism of "local color", expressed in the cultural and historical identity of the region where the educational institution is located ..." (Savchenkova, 2012).

The method of incorporating local texts, through which a foreign speaker gets acquainted with the cultural heritage of a particular region, will not only create a situation of a dialogue between two different cultures, but will also facilitate the fastest familiarization of students to the culture and traditions of Russia, which will help to shape the idea of the Russian mentality, without which it is impossible nowadays to fully master the Russian language. Therefore, it is quite important for the formation of sociocultural competence to use various forms and methods for introducing regional and cultural information.

Kostomarov and Vereshchagin (1990), Akishina (2002), Kulibina (1987), Zavadskaya and Yudina (2012) and a number of other Russian scientists underline an important role of linguistics and local history in classes for learning Russian as a foreign language in their studies. The inclusion of local history material that reflects the realities of national life and represents the cultural heritage captured in folklore and works of outstanding writers is one of the most important conditions for the most successful mastering the Russian language by a foreign student in RFL classes. The important role of using local history in RFL classes is marked in scientific articles by such scientists as Otmenitova (1996), Nekipelova (2001), Anisimova (2015), Basharova and Farhetdinova (2008), Shalkevich (2002), etc.

The key role of culture in language teaching is highlighted in the studies by foreign scientists such as Byram (1989), Collings (2007), Broger (1992), Hyde (1998), Kaikkonen (2001), Kramsh (1993), etc.

For instance, Cross, referring to culture as a collective experience of a group of people, which includes their thoughts, feelings, values, behavior, communication and interpretation of sensory stimuli, notes that living in a culture environment is probably the best way to realize the problems and difficulties of intercultural communication (Addai-Mununkum, 2019; Cross, 2000; Strunc, 2018). Therefore, immersion of a foreign student into the language environment can be a prerequisite for better language acquisition through cultural values and categories and the formation of intercultural competence.

In his turn, Byram considers intercultural competence as a hierarchical structure, which also includes a sociocultural component, involving the ability to gain new knowledge about a foreign culture and the ability to operate with knowledge, skills, and relations in real intercultural communication practice (Byram, 1997).

According to Sandra J. Savignon, "Culture is recognized as instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence, in both their first and subsequent languages". She considers the model of studying language and culture within the framework of a wider historical spectrum of methods or approaches to teaching a language, drawing attention to the fact that multicultural education should primarily represent the variability of cultures of both a country, a region, a city of a studied language, as well as represent a native country's culture. This contributes to the formation of ideas about the diversity of cultures as the norm of coexistence and mutual development of cultures in modern multicultural communities among students (Savignon, 2002).

Kramsh draws attention to the relationship between language and the context in which it is used, emphasizing: a) the culture of texts, including oral and written ones; b) the attitude of students to these texts; c) the culture of a group of students in which the relationship between a teacher and students takes place (Kramsch, 1998).

In recent years, the teachers of Yelabuga Institute of KFU have also been closely studying issues related to the training of foreign citizens and their most comfortable immersion into the new language environment. In particular, Zakirova *et al*. note that "most of the foreign undergraduate students of Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University do not possess common cultural and professional competences, what indicates a low level of adaptedness of students in a social and educational environment of a small city" (Zakirova *et al*., 2017). Kazakova and Shastina, studying the issue of the impact of sociocultural differences on the formation of students' internal motivation, conclude that "foreign students coming to study from different countries (Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, and Turkmenistan) tend to experience mental and even physical discomfort, which strengthens their general belief in achieving their goal" (Kazakova & Shastina, 2019; Girdzijauskaite et al., 2019; Trofimova et al., 2019; Grakhova et al., 2019; Kosorukov and Maksimov, 2016).

In this article, we turn our close attention to the consideration of the sociocultural competence, which, undoubtedly, being the key competence in studying any subject area, acquires particular importance in teaching language to a non-native speaker learner, since the teaching of Russian as

a foreign language at a university is intended to realize the interconnected communicative, cognitive, and sociocultural development of students by linguistic means. Mastering the sociocultural competence by foreign students should form certain sociocultural knowledge, abilities, and skills (hereinafter referred to as KAS). The sociocultural competence maturity implies mastering the following KAS: the knowledge of sociocultural types including the regional one; the knowledge of key term meanings that reveal the content of the sociocultural competence; the ability to perceive an unfamiliar culture, to understand the specifics of its bearers' worldview, to communicate with its representatives; the ability to perceive and understand sociocultural features and respect the sociocultural diversity of the foreign language culture under study and its representatives.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to carry out an experimental study of pedagogical conditions aimed at revealing the effectiveness of using local history texts and its possible impact on the level of formation of linguistic competence as part of sociocultural competence in the foreign student audience of the Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University (hereinafter referred to as YeI KFU).

Despite the great interest in the culture-oriented linguistic component of teaching RFL in scientific and methodological literature, there remains a need to create educational materials on local material in each region of Russia (Dominova, 2013). This is caused not only by methodical necessity but also by the state policy in the field of education. State educational standards of higher vocational education, denoting levels of proficiency in foreign languages, provide linguistic and cultural knowledge and linguistic and local history knowledge, including the idea of the main stages of the country's history of the language being studied, cultural monuments preserved on its territory, linguistic realities associated with the most important historical events, cultural-historical and social associations (Order, 2018).

Methods

Research Design

To solve the tasks of the study, the following methods were used:

– theoretical methods of research: analysis of psychological, pedagogical, and sociological literature; synthesis, involving the comprehensive examination and study of the development of sociocultural competence on the basis of sociocultural (Safonova, 1992; Ter-Minasova, 2008; Byram, 1989, etc.) and culture-oriented linguistic approach (Vereshchagin, & Kostomarov, 1990,

etc.) in order to determine the content and specifics of the formation of sociocultural competence in foreign students;

– empirical methods: questionnaires, developed by Soikina (2003), Pakhotina (2014), Gerasimova (2001), which allowed identifying 4 levels of formation of sociocultural competence (advanced, high, intermediate, and low) on the basis of three components: motivational as a leading characteristic of cognitive activity, cognitive, and axiological. The choice of these components is determined by the structure of sociocultural competence and correlates with the structural parts conventionally distinguished in it: linguistic and cultural, sociolinguistic, and socio-psychological (Pakhotina, 2014; Ter-Minasova, 2008; Frolova et al., 2019);

– specially developed and adapted authentic texts with tasks, containing country-specific information on the Republic of Tatarstan, its cultural constituent and historical heritage. The content of texts, including specially developed tasks of subtests "Reading", "Listening", "Speaking", "Writing", is aimed at specifying the content of techniques of formation of linguistic and local history competence as part of sociocultural competence in foreign students in the regional conditions on the basis of YeI KFU.

Participants

The study participants were 68 Turkmen students from the Preparatory Department of the YeI KFU at the age of 18 to 24, who study Russian as a foreign language for full-fledged communicative interaction to obtain a state certificate as a mandatory document guaranteeing admission to higher educational institutions of Russia (Leonteva, et al., 2018). At the initial stage of language learning at a higher educational institution, the possession of the communicative competence at a basic level (A2) is typical for the students of this department, which allows that only the key communicative needs are met in a limited number of situations within the social and domestic as well as social and cultural spheres of communication. In this regard, the students have only fragmentary knowledge about the national and cultural characteristics of the country and the region of the language being studied and are not able to adequately interpret the sociocultural information.

Instrumentations

Thetesting and assessment materials of the conducted study included the data of the ascertaining experiment based on the questionnaires developed by I. V. Soikina (Soikina, 2003), S. V. Pakhotina (Pakhotina, 2014), M. G. Gerasimova (Gerasimova, 2001), which made it possible to identify 4 levels of SC formation (advanced, high, intermediate, and low) according to three components: motivational, cognitive, and axiological.

The questionnaire developed by Soikina (14 questions with answer options and 2 questions, the answers to which had to be ranked) allowed revealing the motives for studying the Russian language and the levels of formation of the motivational component.

This questionnaire is useful for the current study, as it makes it possible to identify the external (passing the exam, getting a good grade, receiving an education) and internal motives (the need and willingness to carry out professional communication in the Russian language). The level of correct answers was determined in the aggregate: low – 0-5 points; intermediate – 6-10 points; high – 7-12 points; advanced – 8-16 points. The analysis of the results and the levels of formation of this component are presented in Table 1 (the column "Motivational component").

The sociocultural questionnaire by Pakhotina, consisting of three parts and aimed at identifying the levels of formation of the cognitive component, contained tasks for understanding the non-verbal and verbal forms of speech (the 1st and 2nd parts), the knowledge of mentality, the geographical, economic, and cultural features of the country of the language being studied (the 3rd part). The level of knowledge was determined in the aggregate: low level of knowledge – from 1 to 32 points, intermediate – from 33 to 66 points, high – from 66 to 86 points, advanced – from 87 points and above. The results of the analysis are given in column 2 "Cognitive component".

The level of cultural polycentrism (axiological component) was identified using the questionnaire by Gerasimova. Students were offered a set of 26 statements, with which they had to agree or disagree. Each statement concerned a certain side of inter-ethnic relations. Each ethnocentric statement was rated by one point: 0-5 points – a low level of ethnocentrism; 6-12 points – intermediate; 13-20 points – high; 21-26 points – advanced level.

The analysis of the data of questionnaires is represented in the column "Axiological component").

In the experimental group, the didactic material selected by the authors of the article was tested on the basis of local history texts and specially composed assignments, each of which was aimed at mastering certain linguistic competencies (grammar, vocabulary, and speaking) for the

corresponding pre-determined levels of language skills of a group of students enrolled in the preparatory courses of YeI KFU for the 2017-2018 academic year (A1, A2, B1). In accordance with the methodology of organizing an experimental study, the diagnostic sections were made at the beginning and at the end of the training experiment aimed at determining the level of formation of sociocultural competence in students. In order to establish the reliability of coincidences and differences in the results of the diagnostics of students from the experimental and control groups, Student's T-criterion was used, which is shown in Table 3.

Data Collection

At the first stage (2017-2018), the study of scientific and methodological literature on the topic of research was carried out, the participants of the experiment were identified, the material was selected (3 questionnaires) to conduct the ascertaining experiment in order to identify the levels of sociocultural competence. These questionnaires are easy to use, understandable for perception by foreign students, do not take much time for the implementation and processing of data. At the second stage (2018), the groups of students from the Preparatory Department were determined to participate in the control and experimental groups with the relatively equal indicators detected at the initial stage by the results of a survey. In the experimental group (34 students), the didactic material included the local history materials, such as specially selected texts containing regional geographic information about the region of study. The training was conducted without violating the curriculum and study program (Mueller et al., 2019). The control checks (assignments, tests), a conversation with students, and checking the background knowledge of students in a specific linguistic social environment, showed the effectiveness of the work, which was confirmed by the method of statistical data processing – Student'sT-criterion**.**

Data Analysis Techniques

The experimental study was carried out according to the following plan:

1)   the objectives and tasks of the experimental study were adjusted;

2)   a questionnaire survey was conducted; statistical processing of the data allowed identifying the levels of formation of sociocultural competence at the initial stage of the experiment: advanced, high, intermediate, or low by three components (motivational, cognitive, and axiological);

3)   groups of students of the Preparatory Department studying RFL were identified for the

control and experimental groups, with relatively equal initial indicators revealed by the survey results;

4)   the authentic local history texts with tasks, developed by the authors of this paper, were tested in the experimental group;

5)   statistical processing of the data based on the questionnaire survey allowed calculating the arithmetic mean before and after the experiment on the basis of Student's t-test.

Research Design

The linguacultural methodology of modern language education developed in Russian (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990) and foreign (Cross, 2000; Byram, 1989) methodical science is represented by the synthesis of two learning models "language as a purpose, culture as a means" and "culture as a purpose, language as a means". Passov notes: "Culture is values, and they determine everything, not "knowledge and skill" (Passov, 2000).

Analysis of the current state of the formation of sociocultural competence (SC) shows that a special role in the implementation of the idea of sociocultural adaptation belongs to the languages with which the direct and indirect "dialogue of cultures" is carried out. This competence was diagnosed in accordance with three components: motivational, cognitive, and axiological.

The motivational component assumed the elucidation of the motives for studying the Russian language and value orientations. For this purpose, the questionnaire by I.V. Soikina (Soikina, 2003) was used, which includes 14 questions with possible answers and 2 questions, the answers to which needed to be ranked. This allowed identifying low, intermediate, and high levels. The low level is characterized by the fact that the need for the formation of SC is not realized. Motivation has an external character (higher education, career, etc.). Cognitive interest is slightly expressed. At the intermediate level, the need for the formation of SC is still not fully realized and accepted by an individual (Gabidullina et al., 2019). Motives have both external (higher education, career, etc.), and internal character (the need for communication, knowledge of the culture of the country of the studied language, etc.). At the high level, awareness and personal acceptance of the goal of forming SC are combined with highly expressed motivation, a high level of cognitive activity and readiness to communicate with people from other cultures (Korableva et al., 2019a, 2019b). The advanced level is characterized by stable motivation, the pronounced cognitive activity, and the ability to carry out intercultural communication.

The cognitive component, for the identification of which the sociocultural questionnaire by S.V. Pakhotina (Pakhotina, 2014) was used, revealed the knowledge of sociocultural characteristics and realia of the country of the studied language. The analysis of the data also revealed low, intermediate, high, and advanced levels of knowledge in the field of sociocultural knowledge (Shevchenko et al., 2018; Gerasimova et al., 2018a, b; Laužikas and Miliūtė, 2019; Lorincová et al., 2019; Mullakhmetov et al., 2018).

The axiological component assumed to reveal the level of cultural polycentrism with the help of the questionnaire by M.G. Gerasimova (Gerasimova, 2001). The low level of cultural polycentrism is characterized by the fact that the understanding of another culture proceeds from the position of values and norms of a person's own culture. The student does not show interest in learning the traditions and customs of the country of the studied language (Kuznetsova et al., 2019). The intermediate level is characterized by the fact that the student tries to perceive cultural diversity as the norm, realizes that the assessment of another culture from the position of values and norms of his or her own culture is wrong. The high level is characteristic of those students who perceive cultural diversity as the norm of the coexistence of cultures. The advanced level of cultural polycentrism is characteristic of those students who show the ability to realize their place and role in modern society throughout the dialogue/polylogue of cultures (Tarman, 2018; Bozhkova et al., 2019; Caplinska and Ohotina, 2019; Ishchenko and Magsumov, 2019a,b).

Sample

The experiment involved 2 groups of students — one control group (34) and one experimental group (34). The selection criteria for this group are as follows: poor command of the Russian language, low level of motivation and cognitive interest, poor formation of sociocultural knowledge and skills, and the minimal level of positive experience of interacting with people from different cultures.

The results of the experiment are presented in Table 1. The results of the formation of sociocultural competence among foreign students.

Table 1

The results of the formation of sociocultural competence among foreign students of the YeI KFU.

Level	Motivational Component	Cognitive Component	Axiological Component
Advanced	5 (7.35%)	3 (4.42%)	3 (4.42%)
High	4 (5.88%)	4 (5.88%)	5 (7.35%)
Intermediate	8 (11.77%)	7 (10.29%)	10 (14.7%)
Low	51 (75%)	54 (79.41%)	50 (73.53%)

Data Collection Tools

This article attempts to present the practical side of the formation of linguistic and local history competence as a component of sociocultural competence during the lesson of Russian as a foreign language. One of the possible ways of its formation in the framework of mastering Russian language by foreign students in preparatory courses is the introduction to language and culture through a local history text reflecting the historical and cultural heritage of the Republic of Tatarstan, which also includes the Yelabuga district with its richest millennial history.

The linguistics and local history education of foreign students of Russian universities are also relevant for teaching the Russian language. This includes the regional component in the educational process, such as language realities reflecting the specificity of a particular region, including local history texts that contribute not only to the development of linguistic competence but the needs of linguistic and cultural adaptation of foreign students (Dominova, 2013; Nekipelova, 2001; Masood et al., 2019).An effective means of forming linguistic and local studies competence of foreign students can only be achieved by systematic work, involving, according to the authors of the article, working under this methodology, the use of a set of adapted local history texts and tasks to them.

Data Collection

The materials of this article present the data of an experimental study that reveals the motives for learning a language, especially the formation of linguistic and local history competence, taking into account pre-identified levels of language proficiency. The means for data collection were the tasks to local history texts, prepared by the authors and used in classes with foreign students with an appropriate level of language skills. Completing assignments based on these texts, in the authors' opinion, will facilitate the introduction of foreign students to various forms of national

culture, embodying the foundations of the people's world view, understanding of which will allow them to immerse themselves in the language environment. The experimental work, preceded with the local history text, was conducted from 2017 to 2018 and included three stages (ascertaining, forming and controlling). The experiment covered 68 students, including 34 students from an experimental group and 34 students from a control group.

Data Analysis

The authors applied the following data analysis procedures: at the ascertaining stage, using a set of diagnostic procedures (questioning, observation, interviewing), the motives for studying the Russian language were identified; when evaluating linguistic and cultural competence, the main diagnostic tool for students was the test tasks developed by the authors (the objects of control were knowledge of sociocultural stereotypes, regional studies knowledge); at the final stage, a specially developed assessment-level complex (including local history texts) was used, indicating the dynamics of the formation of linguistic and local history competence after the inclusion of local texts in the RFL training system.

Findings

The purpose of this study is to identify, theoretically substantiate and experimentally approbate the pedagogical conditions that ensure the effective formation of the sociocultural competence in foreign students through the use of local history texts in the classroom. In the authors' opinion, the acquaintance with regional texts and the linguistic work therewith allow the formation of the phonetic, grammatical, lexical, and communicative skills as a whole, the formation of an idea of the Russian mentality, mastering of the Russian language, and as a result the increase in the level of the sociocultural competence of the YeI KFU foreign students.

In the course of the study, four levels of the sociocultural competence of students were formed at the initial stage of the experiment.

- The low level of the sociocultural competence development is different in that the knowledge of the culture and realities of the country of a foreign language being studied are rather superficial while the learners are able to communicate in a foreign language in far from all situations and have certain difficulties in choosing adequate forms of verbal communication regarding the interlocutor's replicas. The implementation of the

communicative process is difficult due to insufficient mastering of the "background knowledge." In the end, students are not able to meet their cognitive needs, have a low level of motivation to master the sociocultural competence.

- The intermediate level demonstrates a sufficient amount of acquired knowledge of a sociocultural nature while the students as a whole are able to apply speech behaviour patterns corresponding to situations of authentic communication in the professional sphere. The necessary "background knowledge," which is inherent in a particular linguistic social environment, is often not very accurate and requires correction. In general, they actively communicate with native speakers without any difficulties, sometimes feel the need to adapt to the "original" speech of the interlocutor. Openness, tolerance and respect for the representatives of a foreign language culture are not sufficiently formed among students.

- The high level implies the deep knowledge of the culture and realities of the country of the language being studied applied competently and systematically, which helps students express their thoughts at a fairly fast pace in communication with representatives of another culture in various fields and industries. They confidently feel when communicating in almost all situations, have a wide range of language tools, and do not feel the need in adapting foreign language speech. They easily find the common and the different in the historically formed cultural patterns of development.

- The advanced level is characterized by the constant and creative use of the nationally specified characteristics of the country of the language being studied in speech. The non-verbal techniques and paralinguistic means that are characteristic of this society are freely applied. They freely feel themselves within a new communicative reality. They are fluent in idiomatic and colloquial expressions, tolerant, have a positive attitude to the world, partners in communication (in professional communication within the economic sphere). They know how to analyze the world culture.

Table 2

The level of the sociocultural competence formation before and after the experiment

The Time of ControlCheck	Training Group	Number of Students, %			
		Advanced Level	High Level	Intermediate Level	Low Level
Before the experiment	34 people (EG)	3 (8.8%)	8 (23.5%)	11 (32.4%)	12 (35.3%)
	34 people (CG)	4 (11.8%)	7 (20.6%)	10 (29.4%)	13 (38.2%)
After the experiment	34 people (EG)	8 (23.5%)	14 (41.1%)	12 (35.3%)	0 (0%)
	34 people (CG)	3 (8.8%)	10 (29.4%)	11 (32.4%)	10 (29.4%)

The results of the experiment (Table 2) show that the creation and implementation of these conditions at a pedagogical university stimulates an increase in the level of students' sociocultural competence in the process of teaching a foreign language. It is evidenced by an increase in the level of sociocultural competence of the majority of students from the experimental groups, the development of students' cognitive abilities, their motivation and tolerance towards representatives of a foreign culture, the effective implementation of innovative forms, methods and means of teaching a foreign language.

The results of the pedagogical experiment conducted show that the level of students' sociocultural knowledge significantly increased; their motivation for learning activities increased during the study of Russian as a foreign language at the preparatory courses of YeI KFU; the relationship between students and teachers started being based on the position of cooperation (especially as part of the mutual development of creative tasks and projects); and the communication skills and the willingness of students to cooperate enhanced. At the final stage of the learning experiment, the final testing was conducted to check the effectiveness of teaching using local history texts in the experimental group, which included assignments supplemented by a studied topic.

To summarize the essence and value of the feature studied in the aggregate, the arithmetic mean value was calculated before and after the experiment. The data was introduced in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Table 3

The average value of the levels of competence formation before and after the experiment

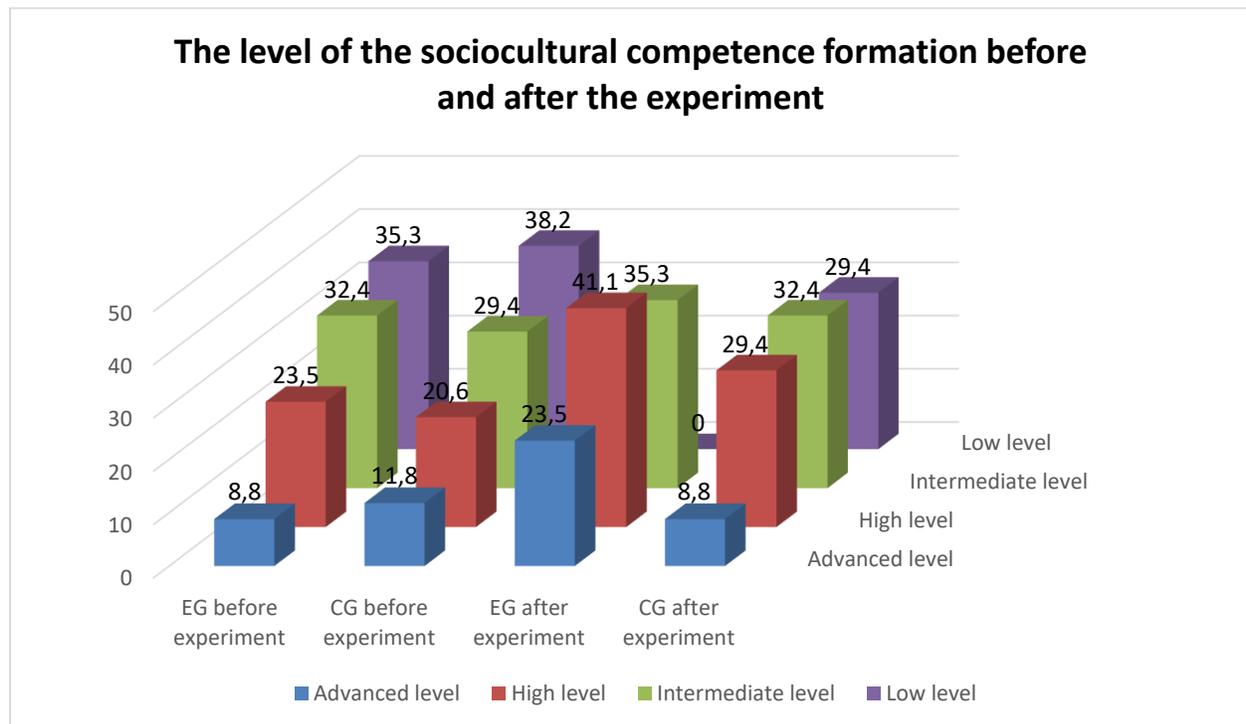| The Time of ControlCheck	Training Group	Number of Students, %			
		Advanced Level	High Level	Intermediate Level	Low Level
Before the experiment	34 + 34 persons	10.3%	22%	30.9%	36.8%
After the experiment	34 + 34 persons	16.15%	35.25%	33.85%	14.7%

Figure 1. *The average value of the levels of competence formation before and after the experiment*

The demonstrated results show that for the majority of students, the indicator of the sociocultural knowledge formation moved to the high and intermediate levels. Many students mastered vocabulary, grammar, and knowledge of the norms and rules of behaviour within the non-native environment.

Thus, the above data testifies to the effectiveness of the experimental impact. However, without creating special organizational and pedagogical conditions for the formation of the sociocultural competence intended to actively involve an individual in the process of mastering knowledge and skills, mastering of the sociocultural competence was much more difficult for foreigners.

The efficiency of the sociocultural competence formation in students was determined by the number of tasks performed by them and the level of assimilation of the cultural and social information provided. The demonstrated results confirmed the effectiveness of the experiment.

In order to establish the reliability of coincidences and differences in the results of the diagnostics of students from the experimental and control groups, the Student's T-criterion was used. The calculations showed the statistical reliability of the apparent difference in the indicators of the sociocultural competence formation in students with a probability of a permissible error of 0.05 and a calculation accuracy of 95% (3.47 > 1.96).

Discussion

When developing tasks on the basis of local texts, the authors took into account the difficulties of the students from the preparatory Russian language courses at the YI KFU. The solution of such difficulties will later most effectively fill the gaps in the language mastering. The developed set of tasks develops the ability to carry out intercultural communication, based on knowledge of the semantics of lexical units with a national-cultural component, which will allow a foreign student to fully immerse in the language environment.

The experiments, anticipating the work with local history texts, was conducted from 2017 to 2018 and included three stages (ascertaining, shaping and controlling). 68 students participated in the experiment, including 34 (EG – experimental group) and 34 (CG – control group).

At the ascertaining stage, with the help of a complex of diagnostic procedures (questioning, observation, interviewing), motives for learning Russian were revealed. The analysis of experimental data showed that approximately 44.9% of students from the EG and 49.27% from the CG study the Russian language because it is connected with further educational activities and forms communicative competence; 24.4% from EC students and 22.8% from CG indicated the importance of the Russian language for the future profession and career. Only 13.34% of respondents from EC and 11.28% from the CG noted that they are interested in this subject in terms of the formation and/or development of intercultural competence.

The conducted study made it possible to assert that a third of the students have the lack the motivation to learn the language as a means of promoting the dialogue of cultures; thus, the cognitive interest is minimal.

The observations showed that the students took about 30 minutes to complete all the test tasks. After completing all the tasks of the received testing and assessment variant, the students delivered their works.

Based on the results of checking the test tasks completed by foreign students, the results of the testing and assessment assignment approbation were monitored to determine the level of their sociocultural competence. The test results lead to the following conclusions: 8 (23.5%) students coped almost fully with the task by selecting 39 correct answers out of 40 possible (advanced level); 14 (41.1%) students completed 38 tasks correctly (high level); 12 (35.3%) students chose 37 correct answers (medium level); and 0 students chose less than 30 correct answers (low level). It is not by chance that the researcher S. G. Ter-Minasova calls a foreign language lesson the crossroads of cultures. Continuing this idea, in her textbook "Languages and Intercultural Communication," she talks about the need to learn a new language inextricably from the world and the culture of the people who speak it (Ter-Minasova).During the experiment, it was revealed that students increased their interest in intercultural contacts, respect for the customs of another culture, a positive attitude to contact, speech relaxedness, recognition of cultural differences, knowledge of norms and values of native culture and other cultures, tolerance, etc. Accordingly, the results obtained in the course of experimental work make it possible to state that the level of the formed sociocultural competence in foreign students from the preparatory courses in all components is higher than before, which emphasizes the effectiveness of the formative experiment.

In the conditions of pedagogically organized communication in classes in the Russian language as a foreign language, the students are familiarized with the sociocultural characteristics of the countries of the language being studied. The secondary socialization of students is carried out. During the interaction of students of different cultures, a personality is formed at the turn of cultures, the characteristic feature of which is the interaction of the common to humanity and the national aspects.

I. N. Savchenkova argues that "the comprehension of Russian culture by foreigners studying in Russia occurs through the prism of "local colouring" expressed in the cultural and historical

identity of the region where the educational institution is located..." (Savchenkova).The use of local history texts during the lessons of Russian as a foreign language affects the socialization process of a foreigner in a new country because it gives the opportunity to include a foreigner in the culture of the language being studied (Magsumov, 2019, 2018; Kireev et al., 2019; Martinez and Tadeu, 2018; Molchanova et al., 2018).E. Cross, speaking of culture as a collective experience of a group of people, which includes their thoughts, feelings, values, behavior, communication, and interpretation of sensory stimuli, notes that living in a culture is probably the best way to fully appreciate the problems and difficulties of intercultural communication (Cross, 2000). Therefore, the immersion of a foreign student in the linguistic environment can be a prerequisite for better language acquisition through cultural values and categories and the formation of the intercultural competence.

The main task at the final stage was the formation of background knowledge and skills in the field of regional culture on the basis of local history texts (Mamadaliev et al., 2018). The dynamics of the process was monitored based on a specially developed assessment complex (including local history texts), the implementation of which was carried out by means of current, intermediate, final control, implemented after the inclusion of local history texts in the system of teaching Russian as a foreign language and analyzing the results of the study. The results of the control stage of experimental work indicate a positive dynamics of the formation of linguistic and local studies competence after the inclusion of local texts in the system of teaching students in the direction of 44.03.05 – Pedagogical education (with two majors), "Russian language. Foreign language".

Prospects for the development of this study may manifest themselves in further testing of the materials obtained in the practice of teaching foreign students with a major in Russian as a foreign language at YeI KFU, preparing a textbook for specialists who teach Russian as a foreign language with the inclusion of local texts in their classes.

Conclusion

Conducting a study on the formation of sociocultural competence in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language made it possible to come to the following conclusions:

1. The formation of the sociocultural competence in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language, ensuring the ability of students to intercultural communication, the ability to enter into an equal dialogue with native speakers, the ability to formulate and communicate their thoughts in

a foreign language during the intercultural interaction within the professional sphere, is considered one of the key tasks in teaching Russian as a foreign language. In this regard, there are several psychological and pedagogical approaches to the understanding of sociocultural competence. Such a diversity of views is quite justified since the structure of the competence considered is flexible and depends on the changes in social life conditions.

2. As a result of the study, the authors achieved the goal consisting in the identification and theoretical and experimental substantiation of pedagogical conditions for the successful formation of the sociocultural competence of students in the process of teaching the Russian language.

3. The essence and content of the sociocultural competence, its role in teaching foreign students were determined. The content of the sociocultural competence generated by students includes sociocultural knowledge, behavioural patterns, attitudes and qualities of the linguistic personality.

4. When developing a model for the formation of the sociocultural competence, the criteria and indicators of the sociocultural competence formation in students were singled out — value-motivational, cognitive, behavioral. In accordance with the listed criteria, it was supposed to evaluate the initial and final levels of the sociocultural competence formation.

5. The main components of the model and the sociocultural competence formation include the goal that can be achieved in solving established tasks, observance of general pedagogical and characteristic for sociocultural education principles of learning by using innovative forms, methods and means aimed at forming the above competence within the learning process. The periodic diagnostics and monitoring of the sociocultural competence formation in students revealed the positive dynamics of the levels of sociocultural competence formation in students during the Russian as a foreign language courses.

Thus, after conducting the experimental work, the number of students who reached the high and intermediate levels of the sociocultural competence formation has significantly increased in the experimental groups. Consequently, the achieved results of the experimental work make it possible to assert that the level of the sociocultural competence formation in students according to all main indicators is higher in the experimental groups than in the control group, which indicates the effectiveness of the work carried out at the formative stage of the experiment.

Thus, the development and introduction of a model of the sociocultural competence formation in students within the higher education environment and the implementation of pedagogical conditions allowed an increase in the level of motivation, empathy and tolerance of students in

communication with the representatives of the foreign language culture. In addition, students' knowledge of the values of native culture and the ability to compare them with a foreign language culture increased. In the course of the experiment, it was also possible to introduce the innovative forms, methods and means of training into the learning process.

Having studied the mentioned problem in the scientific works of Russian and foreign scientists, testing the assembled corpus of local history texts with students studying Russian as a foreign language, the authors came to the conclusion that it is necessary to include the national-regional component in the process of learning Russian as a foreign language with local history texts connected with a specific region of the Russian Federation.

The inclusion of a regional component in the learning process helps teachers to form communicative, linguistic and local studies and intercultural competencies. Experimental work showed the need for the formation of linguistic and local history competence as an integral part of sociocultural one based on a regional component, implemented, for instance, through local history texts.

In addition, the proposed options for working with local history texts in the lessons of reading and speaking allow revealing their didactic potential and introducing them to the cultural context. The proposed recommendations should undoubtedly help an RFL teacher in the practical implementation of the cultural approach and the formation of the cultural competence of foreign students through local history texts.

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