

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

## Educational Text as a Vector Dominating Intercultural Communication

Anastasia V. Zinkovskaya\* (a), Veronika V. Katermina (b),  
Vladimir A. Plaksin (c)

(a) *Kuban State University, ul. Stavropolskaya 149, Krasnodar, Russia*

(b) *Kuban State University, ul. Stavropolskaya 149, Krasnodar, Russia*

(c) *University of Finance under the Government of Russian Federation*

*(Krasnodar Branch), Krasnodar, Russia*

*anastassiaat@rambler.ru*

---

### Abstract

The article under consideration shows that in the modern world of communication and educational needs an educational text performs several functions at the same time: educational and developing socio-cultural competence of the student which in its turn ensures immersion in learning a foreign language in the social and cultural environment. The study of the educational text as a vector of the formation of intercultural communication makes it possible to analyze these and other important functions based on the material of textbooks for students of Russian as a foreign language as well as the English language and it makes it possible to identify the technologies necessary in the study of a foreign language from the standpoint of intercultural communication. In this regard, the actual tasks of linguoaxiological studies and linguodidactics are the revision of the system of formed linguistic educational trajectories and attitudes. As a method for studying a theoretical part, axiological and axiometric methods were chosen in order to describe the interaction of three basic constituents – “language – consciousness – culture” of the studied language. The results of this study are of practical importance in choosing an effective educational text that will help to develop a student's cultural, cognitive and intellectual orientation.

*Keywords:* distance education, digitalization, educational text, intercultural communication, language, linguoaxiology, linguodidactics.

© 2021 Anastasia V. Zinkovskaya, Veronika V. Katermina, Vladimir A. Plaksin

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Published by Moscow City University and peer-reviewed under responsibility of TSNI-2021 (Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity)

### Introduction

---

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: anastassiaat@rambler.ru

The beginning of the XX century is characterized by rethinking in the axiological system including the values of education and this concept is defined by a number of scholars as an “axiological revolution”. Socio-economic reforms, the rapid pace of life, the economic crisis, the transition to a market economy overthrew in an instant what seemed unthinkable until recently. “Old” values seemingly irrefutable are being replaced by “new” value orientations alien to the previous practice.

There have been many events that have entailed the instability of the previous educational postulates and with them educational values, the replacement of some postulates by others, the integrity and significance of not the only system (though fully and thoroughly known) but several new very attractive ones making the old system of values (Becher 1987; Kaur 2019; Zinkovskaya 2019, 2020).

There is a change in the plane perception of the subject of education; the trajectory of pedagogical thought is now becoming not just acceptable but in every possible way approved and supported. Development through instability and subsequent branching is a real phenomenon and a person needs to deal with this. These are some inevitable laws of modernization, the strategy of which is the main ideology of the modern development of all aspects of social life including education (Tareva 2011; Ter-Minasova 2000).

Understanding general educational meaning of a foreign language would not be complete if we did not mention the idea which was first voiced at a particular period of time that the study of a language is a true means of knowing the characteristics of a people, its character. This idea was very productive during the period of time marked by the desire for “international rapprochement of people and peoples.”

A traditional educational text has a structured content that is inscribed in an educational event aimed at transmitting knowledge assimilating it and successfully applying it in practice. It should be noted that when studying a text of any type, researchers turn to a hermeneutic approach aimed at a special type of understanding and interpretation of information in it which leads us to the necessity to talk about a special type of communication. As T.V. Karikh notes, “communication between people at all levels of the sociocultural organization of society is carried out through the exchange of actions of generating and interpreting hierarchically organized content-semantic structures – texts that have an intentional, motivational and target dominant. We are talking about an adequate interpretation of this dominant without which there can be no dialogue as a semantic contact” (Karikh 2010 : 89). The main communicative task of the educational text is to master scientific concepts and conclusions as well as to describe various processes, techniques and structures.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

In the context of these innovative tendencies in linguistic education one should dwell on a number of provisions the study of which will be of particular interest in the near future from an axiological perspective.

Firstly, it seems very interesting to consider mentality as a socio-psychological phenomenon which is an integral part of axiological and archetypal individual space of a person, the content and structure of which can be found in the themes of the text that make up its psychosemantic and semiotic field. From the standpoint of teaching language and culture, it is important to find ways and techniques to influence this personal space.

Secondly, the study of the political and axiological space of a person who is in search of his sociocultural and intercultural identification in the process of studying a foreign language and culture is promising.

Thirdly, the study of the mental structure of a person can have a diagnostic and prognostic function and contribute to the projection of an individual educational trajectory within the framework of linguistic education.

The solution of these and related issues will make it possible to identify value dominants that in the future will ensure the implementation of a new linguistic educational strategy (Tareva 2011 : 245).

### **Literature review**

It should be noted that the “narrowness” of the scope of the subject called “foreign language” was noted at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries. At that time scholars began to talk about the unique developmental and general educational functions of the process of learning a foreign language. This could not but affect the value subordination expressed in the goals of that time. According to K.D. Ushinsky, “the main goal of studying each foreign language should be acquaintance with literature, then mental gymnastics and, finally, if possible, practical knowledge of the language” (Ushinskiy 1861, cit. by: Mirolyubov 2002: 24). L.V. Shcherba saw a general educational significance of a foreign language in the preparation of a thoughtful reader since “only a text in a foreign language creates the habit of disassembling, pondering the text. This is an enormous general educational power of a foreign language” (Materialy ... 1917: 449). In addition, he believed that learning a foreign language helps self-knowledge: “A foreign language at school is the subject from which we learn self-observation, cognition of spiritual life, concentration and deepening” [ibid. : 450]. The general educational value, according to the scholar, also lies in the fact that a foreign language improves the knowledge of one's own language.

E.I. Passov thinks that language and culture are “twin brothers”, one without the other is unthinkable and meaningless and the “leader” in this pair is culture which is the most complex creation of a person. At the same time, concretizing the concept of culture, the scholar rightly notes that understanding culture as a system of spiritual values is the most suitable thing for educational purposes (Passov 2010: 185-186; Panchenko et al. 2019). On this basis the outlines of significant linguistic values are set precisely by the cultural congruity of the process of teaching a foreign language and not by the appropriation of knowledge (“the image of the language”) and skills (“the image of speech activity”) during this process.

### **Methodology**

It is impossible to talk about an educational text in general and about its functions and properties in particular without referring to its terminology. There is no doubt that if the text is educational it is aimed at extracting certain information which is designed to transfer certain knowledge to the recipient of this text and teach the recipient necessary skills to achieve goals and perform tasks within a certain area. The structure of this type of the text is dictated by its purpose and the logical connection of the texts with the educational attitudes set before all participants in the educational process taking into account necessary level of immersion in the studied discipline and ensuring the strength of knowledge acquisition. These attitudes have semantic integrity expressed by the meaningful coherence of the sequence of characters. The diversity of the educational text (textbook, synopsis, abstract, teaching aids, lectures, workshops and other types of educational text) gives us reason to talk about it as a polycode type of text which is characterized by objectivity, logical presentation, unambiguity, lack of imagery and emotionality. We are talking about an educational text within the framework of the “Foreign language” discipline which means that the communication is important not only between a student and a teacher but also within this course. Here we are talking about intercultural communication. If we ignore this factor it will lead to misunderstandings between participants in a communicative situation in a foreign language since knowledge of exclusively lexical units of a foreign language and its grammatical structures cannot guarantee successful communication. S.G. Ter-Minasova defines intercultural communication as “communication between people representing different cultures” (Ter-Minasova 2000: 14). The task of a foreign language teacher lies in the applied concept: to teach a foreign language so that this knowledge becomes an effective means of full-fledged communication. Based on the stated judgments we understand that the content of the educational text as a vector of the formation of intercultural communication must certainly contain not only grammatical rules and tables with lexical units on certain topics as well as excerpts from classical literature but also a content part that will help to learn to understand and interact with other cultures (Khrapov 2019; Kaur 2019; Zhestkova 2017; Strekalova 2019; Lea 2008; Verbitsky 2019). We must not forget about the socio-cultural component which is aimed at developing effective speech communication. There are

numerous examples when foreign language learners do an excellent job of diverse language literacy tests but fail when it comes to knowledge of culture, geography, realities, phraseological units with a regional component, ways of getting out of specific everyday situations, knowledge of etiquette and other mandatory components that form the background knowledge of the student. If we talk about learning English many people know in which English-speaking country New York is located, for example, but not everyone will be able to understand the meaning of the sentence with the following content “I’m flying to Big Apple tomorrow to meet up with some ‘melting pot’ representatives”. Without specific regional information explaining that “Big Apple” is the “nickname” of New York, and “melting pot” represents inhabitants of the United States of America, people of various ethnic groups, united by one goal to make American dream come true this phrase requires some additional explanation with a cultural component.

## Results

It is impossible to judge the suitability of a particular educational text to solve the assigned tasks of teaching not only a foreign language but also a cultural component without taking into account the opinions of the participants to the educational process.

The answer to the question “Indicate the components of the educational text that, in your opinion, ensure the successful mastering of a foreign language to satisfy a successful intercultural communication” which was stated to the control group of teachers and students (96 students and teachers who are engaged in the educational process of disciplines “Russian as a foreign language” and “Foreign language (English)”) made it possible to single out several leading aspects. Table 1 below presents the survey results.

Table 1. Survey of Teachers and Learners

	Teacher	Learner
Active vocabulary	70 %	50 %
real everyday situations	50 %	80 %*
a large number of exercises for practicing oral speech statements in certain communicative situations	100 %	100 %
educational texts reflecting the current state of affairs in the country of the target language	100%	100%
updated grammatical structures and exercises for practicing this skill	80%	15 % **

\* students clarified that the presented “real everyday situations” must necessarily be based on short educational films if there is no possibility of communicating with a native speaker “live”; they also explained that the use of techniques using VR (virtual reality) technologies with the help of which the student is immersed into the natural language environment would add efficiency to the process of teaching a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication;

\*\*students believe that there is no need to memorize grammatical rules arguing that models of constructing sentences and grammatical structures are better learned when they understand a real situation, that is, when the educational text is “live” and is presented by a native speaker of the target language.

After processing the data obtained in answering the question above, we also asked some clarifying questions that were associated with the authors of educational texts. The results of the survey in Table 2 are of a general nature and do not share the roles of participants in the educational process and take into account the fact that some survey participants gave a positive answer to several questions.

Table 2 Survey about the authors of educational texts

Type of author of educational text	Results
belongs to the culture of the target language (“native speaker”)	65%
belongs to a culture where the target language is foreign	5%
mixed team of authors	45%
it does not matter if the educational text successfully copes with the task of learning a foreign language for intercultural communication	7%

From the data given in Table 1 we can conclude that students consider the communicative method of teaching a foreign language more effective than the grammatical method, however, both types of participants in the educational process definitely agree that the educational text should contain information that will help to successfully carry out intercultural communication.

The data in Table 2 indicate that educational texts compiled by “non-native speakers” are considered the least effective, since, according to the participants in the educational process, this category of authors has a distorted idea of the realities of the culture of the foreign language being studied. However, if the authors are representatives of a foreign language ethnos, the information in the educational text is reliable. The advantage of a mixed team of authors is also accepted positively since they complement each other

adapting the original educational text to the needs, the level of the student taking into account the intercultural communication between representatives of both cultures.

### **Discussions**

Let us turn to the components of an exemplary educational text aimed at teaching a foreign language with an emphasis on the development of intercultural sensitivity where language and culture have a justified proportional relationship. An educational text with a designated purpose has the following components:

- 1) language templates: these phrases and structures provide the basis for skillfully building communication with a native speaker in a given communicative situation;
- 2) vocabulary: carefully selected lexical material on a specific topic discussed in modern society, exercises which are aimed at practicing the use of the indicated lexical units in various contexts and allow each student to apply the knowledge gained through personal experience;
- 3) English “from a native speaker”: common words and phrases used by native speakers in everyday life are analyzed, a regional and linguistic-cultural commentary is given;
- 4) keywords: the lexical component of an authentic language which helps to develop free and coherent oral and written speech based on information extracted from the text from a regional, sociocultural and intercultural component;
- 5) development of speaking skills: the structure of typical questions, answers, templates for maintaining a conversation with a native speaker on everyday topics with the inclusion of words that are really used exclusively by “native speakers” at the everyday level which means that it is impossible to do without the concentration of sociocultural information in this section;
- 6) the development of conversational practice of maintaining a conversation at the everyday level: this section of the educational text is aimed at the practice of social and practical communication based on one's own intercultural experience or through role-playing games as close as possible to a real life situation;
- 7) development of auditory skills: educational texts represent the features of the use of both lexical units and grammatical structures, and pronunciation features (dialects) which must be taken into account in the process of intercultural communication;
- 8) development of reading skills: a part aimed at teaching how to extract necessary information from the

educational text.

The discussed type of educational text is aimed at developing a foreign language skill taking into account characteristics and needs of ensuring successful intercultural communication.

### **Conclusion**

As part of our research we came to the conclusion that an educational text of a certain type as a vector of the formation of intercultural communication should have a certain structure taking into account not only logical connections to ensure the complete acquisition of knowledge about the structure of a foreign language but also include information of a special nature aimed at mastering regional, cultural, anthropological and other kinds of knowledge necessary for development socio-cultural competence and thus the ability to correctly navigate in an intercultural situation, show tolerance, take into consideration the needs of the “new” culture and resolve intercultural conflicts if they arise.

### **Acknowledgements**

### **References**

- Becher, T. (1987). Disciplinary discourse. *Studies in Higher Education*. 12 (3), 261–274.
- Dillenbourg, P. (2016). The Evolution of Research on Digital Education. *Int J Artif Intell Educ*. 26, 544–560. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-016-0106-z>
- Karikh, T.V. (2010). Textual activity VS speech activity. *Bulletin of the Volgograd State Pedagogical University*, 7/51, 89-92.
- Kaur, H. (2019). Digitalization of education: Advantages and disadvantages. *International Journal of Applied Research. One Day National Seminar “Digitalization of Higher Education”. Special Issue – 4, 2nd March*, 286-288.
- Khrapov S.A. (2019). Crisis of consciousness: “cognitive response” of anthropogenic civilization. *Voprosy filosofii*. 1. 88-95
- Lea, M.R. (2008). Academic literacies in theory and practice. /Hornberger N. and B. Street (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. New York: 634–645.

- Materialy po reforme srednej shkoly: primernye programmy i ob'yasnitel'nye zapiski, izd. po rasporyazheniyu g. Ministra nar. prosv. [Materials about the reforms of a comprehensive school: preliminary programs and an explanatory notes]. (1917). Petrograd: Senat. tip.
- Mirolyubov, A.A. (2002). Istoriya otechestvennoj metodiki obucheniya inostrannym yazykam [History of domestic methodology of teaching to foreign languages]. Moskva: STUPENI, INFRA-M.
- Panchenko O.L., F.G. Mukhametzyanova, R.R. Khayrutdinov (2019). Challenges and risks of personal security in the context of digitalization of education. Psychology of the XXI century: challenges, search, vectors of development. *Collection of materials of the All-Russian Symposium of Psychologists*. Edited by D.V. Fortunately. Publisher: Academy of Law and Administration of the Federal Penitentiary Service, 640-645
- Passov, E.I. (2010). Metodika kak teoriya i tekhnologiya inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya: kn. 1. [Methodology as a theory and technology of foreign education. Book 1]. Elec : EGU im. I.A. Bunina.
- Strekalova, N.B. (2019). Risks of introducing digital technologies into education. *Bulletin of Samara University. History. Pedagogy. Philology*. 2, 84-88. <https://doi.org/10.18287/2542-0445-2019-25-2-84-88>.
- Tareva, E.G. (2011). Dinamika cennostnyh smyslov lingvodidaktiki [Dynamics of axiological meanings in linguodidactics]. *Lingvistika i aksiologiya: etnosemiometriya cennostnyh smyslov: kollektivnaya monografiya [Linguistics and axiology: ethnocemetry of axiological meanings]*. Moskva: TEZaurus, 231-245.
- Ter-Minasova, S.G. (2000). Yazyk i mezhkul'turnaya kommunikaciya [Language and Intercultural Communication]. Moskva: Slovo.
- Verbitsky A.A. (2019). Digital Learning: Problems, Risks and Prospects. *Electronic Scientific and Publicistic Journal "Homo Cyberus"*. 1 (6).
- Zhestkova, E. et al. (2017). Interactive technologies as a means of forming cultural and professional competencies among students of pedagogical institutes. *Society. Integration. Education. In Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference Society. Integration. Education, Vol. 1. May 26-27, 2017. Rezekne: Rezeknes Academy of Technologies, 2017, 454-469.*

Zinkovskaya A.V., Katermina V.V., and Plaksin V.A. (2020). Remote Technologies in the Field of Foreign Language Teaching as a Part of the Digital Education Ecosystem. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Digitalization of Education: History, Trends and Prospects" (DETP 2020)*, 685-688. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200509.122>

Zinkovskaya, A. V., Buyanova, L. Y., Katermina, V. V., Plaksin, V. A., & Tlekhatur, S. R. (2019). Semiotics and Pragmatics of the Linguoconfessional Model: Modes of Interpretation. *European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 58, 1791–1800. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.03.02.208>.