

## Teaching French as a Foreign Language in the Multilingual Environment (The Example of Tatarstan Republic)

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**Abstract:** The study is devoted to defining methodological approaches to the formation of students' Foreign language communicative competence in multilingual environment. This research is of current interest due to the worldwide tendency towards integration in the economic, cultural and political spheres and due to the need to develop multilingual personality. The modernization of Russian society, including education, defines the overall learning concept and methodology and sets the scientists the task of developing the particular methodological issues of teaching certain disciplines in order to create the most effective strategies and methods of teaching. We consider this issue using the example of French teaching in Tatarstan Republic, one of the regions of the Russian Federation where the language situation is represented by two state languages, Russian and Tatar. In our opinion, an urgent need to develop new methodological teaching approaches and to write textbooks and teaching aids on their basis is due to the need to use a positive transference of language and speech skills of native tongues while learning other languages for effective students' communicative competence formation.

**Key words:** Multilingualism, bilingualism, Russian-Tatar bilingualism, communicative competence, the set of books, using native tongues as a basis, positive transference, interference, the French language teaching

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### INTRODUCTION

At the present stage of social development, social and cultural integration processes determine the state language policy, the primary focus of which is effective socially important strategies in the sphere of education. Modernization of all levels of education carried out in Russia in the last decades has highlighted significant problems of updating its content and providing its active, developing, multicultural character which is due to diverse and multi-directional requirements of modern society in the terms of rapid globalization.

Social and economic need to intensify educational process sets researchers and all level educational institutions the task of finding the most effective forms and methods of teaching that promote the formation of students' professionally significant competencies and creative thinking. Individuals knowing several languages not only within everyday communication but also at the level of professional activity have more opportunities to get or continue their education abroad, they are more mobile and competitive in the European and global labor market.

In September 2003, Russia joined the Bologna process which currently involves all the major Russian

universities. One of the objectives stated in the Bologna declaration is to create conditions for all citizens of the signatory countries to know at least three European languages. The European Union as a whole is a supranational multilingual organization with its language policy that strengthens multilingualism which promotes a tolerant attitude to the language and cultural diversity of its member countries. This caused a significant increase in interest and motivation to learn Foreign languages but teaching technologies, taking into account the peculiarities of a multilingual audience are still, insufficiently developed.

The Russian Federation is a multinational state with Russian its official language in accordance with the Constitution. However, the republics within Russia have the right to establish their own state languages which are used along with the Russian language. The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most multinational subjects of the Russian Federation with its population of 3,855,000 people (data for 2015) and representatives of >115 nationalities. More than half of the republic's population are the Tatars (53.2%), the second largest nationality are the Russians (39.7%). This fact played a decisive role in the current language situation in the Republic of Tatarstan with its two state languages, Russian and Tatar. Solnyshkina

emphasizes that “in the territory of the Republic of Tatarstan, both at the state and at the household levels, the Tatar and Russian languages have coexisted for a long time complementing and mutually enriching each other” (Solnyshkina and Ismagilova, 2015). Learning two languages. Russian and Tatar, in the Republic of Tatarstan is compulsory in schools and students know in one way or another these two languages.

Thus, a Foreign language in Tatarstan Republic is mastered simultaneously while learning two languages, i.e., learning a Foreign language is carried out in multilingual environment which should be taken into consideration while organizing educational process and writing Foreign language textbooks in order to create a full language personality.

**Literature review:** According to sociological data, about 70% of the world population, in a varying degree, knows two or more languages. Language is one of the key forms of the individual socialization by means of language the transmission of socio-cultural experience, scientific knowledge and skills from generation to generation is carried out and it helps a person adapt to life in society and act consciously within it, respecting all the rules and requirements imposed on him/her by some form or level of social-role interaction.

The study of multilingualism as a distinctive feature of modern education began in the 70s of the last century. Currently, person's multilingualism is perceived not only as a way of his/her communicative competence but also as a means of access to the rich world cultural heritage. Multilingualism allows a person to create the ability to adapt to constantly changing conditions of modern life, based on a more complete understanding of the world and a deeper analysis of similar situations in his/ her own and other cultures.

The phenomenon of multilingualism and, in some interpretations, bilingualism is the object of studies by many Russian and Foreign scholars belonging to different scientific schools and even to different areas of knowledge, since multilingualism is a complex phenomenon and the object of interdisciplinary studies at the junction of a number of sciences: Linguistics, Sociology, Philosophy, Pedagogy, Psychology and psycholinguistics. The development of various aspects of multilingualism was the object of research in the researches of J. Vendryes, B. Leopold, F.P. Filin, L. Bloomfield, E.M. Vereshchagin, U. Weinreich, L.V. Scherba, M. Swain, N. Chomsky, N.V. Imedadze, M. Siguan, W.F. Mackey, E. Lanza, M.M. Mikhailov, G.N. Chirsheva, N.V. Baryshnikov, S.G. Ter-Minasova and others. Some researchers suggest a clear distinction

between multilingualism and bilingualism (especially in terms of bilingual education, involving the implementation of the educational process in a number of disciplines in a Foreign language); the others see them as a ratio of the general to the particular.

According to, the definition given by Hamers and Blanc (2000), bilingualism is a state of an individual who “has an access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication”. There are several ways of forming the individual bilingualism:

- Parallel study of two (sometimes more) languages at an early age in the family
- Mastering the second and other languages in another community
- Language training at the various stages of education. Therefore, Hamers and Blanc (2000) determine simultaneous (since birth) and consequent (acquired afterwards) bilingualism

Valdes and Figueroa (1994) distinguish between indirect (forced in a society) and selective bilingualism associated with more or less free choice of language for the study. According to the degree of language usage such researchers as Baker (2002) and Grosjean and Li (2013) distinguish latent or hidden (for example, the ability to understand but not to speak) and functional (the level of the active application) bilingualism (Grosjean, 2008). Some scientists understand bilingualism in the other way. So, Zograf connects this term with the term “multilingualism” and defines, it as the use of several languages, depending on “the correspondence to the communicative situation”. According to Weber and Homer (2012) multilingualism is not interpreted as the sum of several distinct languages but rather as “linguistic resources and repertoires”.

Filin proposes to distinguish between multilingualism in the narrow and broad sense. In his opinion, multilingualism in the narrow sense “means to be more or less fluent in two or more Foreign languages; multilingualism in the broad sense means to have relative knowledge of Foreign languages, the ability to use them to some extent in certain areas of communication”.

Multilingualism can be interpreted as an individual and social phenomenon. The sociolinguistic aspect of multilingualism is the parallel use of two or more languages for communication in multilingual socio-cultural environment. In this respect, we consider bilingualism as a particular phenomenon of multilingualism. In our opinion, multilingualism is the ability to speak several languages at a different level and one or more of them are being learnt and mastered. The

language situation in the Republic of Tatarstan can be described as a state bilingualism because of two state languages. According to Kharisov and Kharisova (2014), “the term “multilingualism” is also understood as the distribution of the various languages in society, the ability of individuals to communicate by means of multiple languages. The Republic of Tatarstan is multilingual because there are representatives of more than a hundred nations and nationalities”.

Some researchers have also used the term “natural” bilingualism as the vast majority of high school students study both Russian and Tatar at the same time. In view of this historically and politically formed situation both official languages in the school environment will inevitably come into contact with a Foreign language and such multilingualism sets researchers and methodologists some problems in modern education. It would be competent in terms of didactics and teaching methods to try to find the way to regulate the language interaction process, rather than simply rely in this issue on chance.

In modern linguistics, there is an opinion that Foreign language learning should be based on the mother tongue and culture that is the learners’ previous linguistic experience. The significant psycholinguistic argument in favor of comparison in language teaching is that any Foreign language is new (strange) for a student and in order to be mastered, it is forcedly laid on the already stuck in the individual’s mind the concepts and codes of basic functional language that helped to realize his/her socialization. In the context of multilingualism, the learner usually has a communicative competence in different languages. Mostly, it is expressed in the native language as the basis for the other languages acquired. Individual’s communicative competence in the other languages will be less or partially expressed.

In language education, the main purpose of Foreign language teaching is to develop the communicative competence of language personality. This is the “knowledge, skills and qualities of language personality that allow this personality to be efficient in speech and thought” (Karabulatova *et al.*, 2013). Russian and Foreign researchers do not mostly dispute the possibility and practical need to involve the previous linguistic experience of the individual at certain stages of Foreign language learning. This idea is the basis of the theory of positive transference of formed skills into new speech conditions. However, in this regard, there is an inevitable problem of overcoming the so-called “negative” interference, i.e., the impact of semantic and logical-syntactic patterns of the native tongue on the Foreign-language speech patterns and as a result distortion of the latter.

Mahmudova believes that “Foreign language teaching must be built on the basis of the native one, raising thus, the native language and a Foreign one to a higher level in terms of awareness of linguistic forms, generalization of linguistic phenomena and this idea can be extrapolated to the situation of forming the multilingual personality”. The study of different language interaction experience is still of theoretical and practical importance, especially, in terms of providing the most efficient formation of bilinguals’. Foreign language speech competence. Wherein the communicative competence “can be represented as an integrative property of the personality his/her ability to understand and produce Foreign-language statements in various socially determined situations, taking into account the language and social rules that are observed by native speakers and as a set of skills that according to the purpose, means and methods are adequate to different communication tasks” (Ostroumova *et al.*, 2014).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Mastering a Foreign language by students, the Tatar-Russian bilinguals, is based on two previously learned languages while under subordinate multilingualism as a major source of positive transfer (transference, transposition) as well as negative interference will be the dominant language, i.e., the one that is really native for the students. In general, the nature and extent of the language interaction is determined by the level of students’ bilingualism development. The bidirectional influence on Foreign language acquisition causes the need for methodically competent management of learning process that would involve additional resources of bilingual personality, expressed in an already existing language and operational experience.

The material of our study is the set of books in the French language for the 9th grade of the secondary school, compiled by the scientists of Kazan Federal University V.N. Vassilieva, F.F. Kharisov, L.R. Nizamieva, G.I. Nazarova. This set of books is one of the textbook series for secondary schools by the same researchers, it takes into account the multilingualism of the educational process in the Republic of Tatarstan. The entire series includes 7 years of learning French as a Foreign language, as in usual, non-specialized schools, a Foreign language is studied by students from the 5-11th grades, i.e., from the age of 11-17. The idea of creating a series of textbooks comes from the concept of the cognitive and practical activity methods developed by V.N. Vasilyeva,

G.I. Nazarova and L.R. Nizamieva. The methods of the research were scientific methods such as analysis and synthesis of theoretical materials and empirical data, survey, questionnaires, pedagogical monitoring.

Positive and negative transfer of skills is a process that is hidden from direct observation, often spontaneously and unconsciously taking place in the individual. However, it can be partially regulated under purposefully organized learning process. The desire to control transfer system as the key to any learning process inevitably leads researchers to the need for a comprehensive study of the mechanism of this phenomenon itself and the conditions of its existence. The effectiveness of the internal transfer process while acquiring languages can only be judged according to the results of speech activity. Of course, the languages that form the natural bilingualism in Tatarstan will have unequal influence on the acquisition of the particular components of the Foreign language linguistic system; the basis for the transfer will be the most similar studied phenomena. And, the more knowledge about language grammatical phenomena the students will have the faster and more efficient the process of analytical study in establishing similarities and differences and transference of language skills into Foreign language speech conditions will take place.

The objectives of the study in multilingual environment in Tatarstan are students' understanding the differences between synthetic languages with inflectional and agglutinative systems as the Russian and Tatar languages, respectively and the languages of the analytical type such as French. Language patterns of analytical languages are reduced mostly to the clear and simple formulas; these languages have strict word order in a sentence where the transposition of words is rather rigid. So, while teaching French phonetics at the beginning level similar sounds can serve as a basis in the languages (French Russian, French Tatar) but they can lead to the negative interference. As for mastering, the peculiarities of French spelling, the native languages are of no use because of the difference between the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets as well as significant difficulties in establishing a sound-letter correspondence in a Foreign language on the background of native language, negative interference.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Multilingualism is taken into consideration while teaching grammar as well: comparing tense-aspect forms of verbs, expressing grammatical categories of nouns, adjectives and adverbs. It is impossible to do without

using the native languages as a basis in vocabulary learning. New lexical unit semantization is not possible without comparing their collocation, combination and usage with the units of the Russian and Tatar languages; this is what, guarantees, the accuracy and correctness of the subsequent selection of lexical equivalents in Foreign speech to express the desired content.

Multilingual environment involves the very combination of teaching aids in which the representation of the phonetic, grammatical and lexical aspects of the Foreign language would be based on the positive transference of language and speech skills formed during the other language learning, in our case, they are Russian and Tatar. Keeping these conditions contributes to the successful formation of the communicative competence which we regard as the ability for effective Foreign language communication at cross-cultural level. The basis for communicative competence is the language and speech skills as well as the abilities of the individual to self-improvement of formed communicative skills.

The set of books for the 9th grade (the 5th year of study) as the example of keeping the multilingual environment conditions in the formation of the students' communicative competence consists of a textbook, teacher's book, reading book and CD. The textbook includes seven thematic units (France contemporaine, Mass-medias, Ma ville natale Kazan, Vie quotidienne et communication, Ecologie, Aimez-vous lire, Logement), trilingual dictionary, appendix and tests for listening. National-regional linguistic component is in the following:

- Rules generalizing studied grammatical phenomena of the French language and their equivalents in Russian and Tatar, i.e. by comparing with the native languages at the stage of the orienting basis of speech acts
- Educational material containing national realities
- Exercises based of the Russian and Tatar languages
- French-Russian-Tatar dictionary

The introduction of each unit contains activation of the studied vocabulary with the aim to immerse the student into the language atmosphere by means of another language in a real or imaginary situation and the exercises for students' communication skills developing in dialogues. In the 9th grade when students' standard pronunciation is formed, the section "Phonetics" contains the exercise for correcting sounds in words and phrases without using the native languages as a basis. However, at the beginning, the phonetic comparison with the native languages seems to be appropriate and very productive, taking into account the occasion of negative interference.

Despite being similar, many sounds of Foreign and native languages are different, clear differences can be traced in stress and melodic of phrases as well. The phonetic aspect of speech is drilled on the basis of an audio application on the CD-ROM which includes dialogues from the “Introduction”, “Phonetics” as well as records of some exercises for repeating after the speaker.

In the rubric, “Vocabulary” new and already known vocabulary grouped according to semantic key concepts and it helps to activate an existing vocabulary and enrich it with new language units. The students understand, the meaning of the words which are introduced by the teacher with the help of visual aids, context, interpretation, translation, linguistic guess. In order to give students more linguistic knowledge, the textbook is equipped with French Russian Tatar dictionary, using the native languages as the basis. Here are some examples:

- Magazine (m): illustrirovanniy, zhurnal, rəsemle zhurnal
- Marchand (m): togovets, kupets, satuchi, kupets
- Marecage (m): boloto, sazlik
- Menage (m): semya, gailə
- Mensuel (m): ezhemesyachnoe pechatnoye izdaniye, ai saen chiga torgan basma
- Message (m): soobsheniye, həbər
- Mode (m): de vie, obraz zhisni, yashəu rəveshe
- Mosque (f): mechet', məchet
- Muraille (f): stena, divar
- Myosotis (m): nezabudka, kugərchen kuze

The exercises for mastering and activating vocabulary are based on speech patterns. The units of the textbook also contain comments (the study “Orthographe et grammaire”) and exercises for forming students’ spelling skills and overcoming the negative interference of native languages. Special attention is paid to systematizing the rules on placing diacritics that is the peculiarity of the French language (rubric “Apprendre à mettre des accents”). In order to consolidate, these skills the textbook provides the following tasks: notez et reprenez les mots suivants qui n'ont pas d'accent; expliquez pourquoi on met un accent aigu dans les mots suivants; mettez un accent grave; mettez un accent circonflexe dans les mots soulignés; mettez les accents dans le texte.

The process of grammar skills formation and development has several stages. The first stage is the formation of referential basic action, i.e., the explanation and learning of the grammar rules while comparing them with the Russian and Tatar languages. If using Russian as a basis while learning the grammatical forms of a Foreign language is traditional, the use of the Tatar language in

this set of books is an innovation that studies in the secondary schools of the Republic of Tatarstan. Using two languages as a basis at the same time helps students to understand quickly and become more aware of the essence of explained grammatical phenomena. Here are some examples of grammatical phenomena, given to students for study and comparison:

Verbal pronouns, replacing direct and indirect objects. It is stated that in the Tatar language, there are pronouns that replace nouns and function as indirect objects. Thus, unlike French, there is no difference between the replacement of animate and inanimate nouns: J'y ai appris beaucoup d'informations (de ce livre). Yaottuda (iz etoy knigi) pocherpnul mnogo svedeniy.-Min annan (bu kitaptan) bik kup m glumat aldim. Je suis très content d'elle (əd'Alfia). Ya ochen' eyu (Alfiyey) dovolen.-Min annan (Ifiyad n) bik kan gat'.

The use of proper names in the titles. The Russian-language proper names used in the names of streets, museums, monuments are in the genitive case and in the Tatar language noun phrases are used: the first component is the proper name in the nominative case, the second component is a noun with the 3d person singular possessive affix “so called Izafet construction” (Mingazova and Shangaraeva, 2014; Mingazova *et al.*, 2014), for example: rue Gabdoulla Toukay-ulitsa Gabdulli Tukaya-Gabdulla Tukay urami; monument à Derjavine-pamyatnik G.R. Derzhavinu-G.R. Derzhavin həykəle. The names of the theatres in the Russian language, in addition to the case forms the lexical adding “imeni” (named after) is used; in the Tatar language the relative adjective “isemendəge” with the same meaning follows the proper name: Le théâtre académique national tatar Galiaskar Kamal-Tatarsky gosudarstvenny akademichesky teatr imeni Galiaskara Kamala-Galiəsgar Kamal isemendəge Tatar dəulət akademiya teatri.

The interrogative adjectives “quel” and “comment”: the adjective “quel” corresponds to the Tatar interrogative “nindi” and the Russian “kakoy, kakaya, kakiye” (what): Quels sont vos projets?-Kakiye u vas plani?-Sezne? plannar nindi? The closest equivalent of the interrogative “comment” is the Tatar “nichek” and the Russian “kak” for example: Comment allez-vous?-Kak vashi dela?-Həllə regez nichek?

The textbook section “Exercices oraux et écrits” provides different types of exercises: imitative, transformation, combination. In multilingual education, students are given translation tasks from Russian into French (dites en français) and from French into Tatar (dites en tatar) based on the study of vocabulary and

grammatical phenomena of the French language. Short texts for translation are devoted to the following themes of units: le régime politique de la France, les mass-médias, la tour Suumbiké construite par Ivan le Terrible, la pollution de la nature, etc. Thus, there is parallel language and culture learning. It is through language the information about culture, ethical and aesthetic norms of a lingual society is transmitted. Exercises containing national realities are represented by such tasks as answering questions and finding similarities for example, between the French, Russian and Tatarstan mass media, discussions on a given topic for example, “Les journaux et les revues populaires dans notre pays et en France”, creative tasks such as “Proposez des itinéraires d’excursions à travers Kazan”. In general, given assignments are aimed at providing harmonious interaction of languages that are in contact in multilingual environment, their objectives reflect the interests and potential needs of the students.

The realization of researchers’ methodology in teaching Foreign languages was the result of the holistic, systematic approach to the formation of students’ Foreign language communicative competence in accordance with their multilingualism. Studied out curricula, textbooks, teaching aids, dictionaries can fully provide the educational process of Foreign (French) language teaching, taking into account the natural bilingualism in the Republic of Tatarstan. So, the set of books for the 9th grade analyzed in this study has been used at schools since, 2007 and the experience of its use in the educational process shows the effectiveness of using native languages as a basis in Foreign language learning.

The results of the research on this problem have been presented at international scientific conferences, published in Russian and Foreign scientific journals. Experience of using researchers’ set of books in teaching French at secondary schools of the Republic of Tatarstan is annually discussed at the traditional scientific seminar with international participation “modern French language and its innovative teaching method” for French teachers of Tatarstan. At this seminar, the participants are introduced to the latest studies in the technology of students’ communicative competence formation school teachers share their experience of using them. More than 90% of the teachers participants of the survey conducted among French teachers of Tatarstan Republic, confirmed the high efficiency of the researchers’ methodology used in the formation of the students’ communicative competence.

We believe that the development and testing of such methods on the basis of other Foreign languages will

contribute to improving the quality of Foreign language school education in Tatarstan Republic as well as in other multinational countries and regions.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, we believe that the experience of writing and using textbooks and manuals on Foreign languages, specially designed for the specific conditions of multilingualism should be taken into consideration in modern competence-oriented educational environment formation. Particularly, the results of experiential teaching and using of the researchers’ set of books in the French language for 5-11th grades of secondary schools in multilingual environment prove that simultaneous use of native languages as a basis provides a positive effect in Foreign language learning and promotes the formation of social and intercultural competencies, significantly enlarges students’ scope and forms a multi-faceted language personality, orientating in the modern linguistic space.

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