

“The role of intercultural competence in teaching Russian as a foreign language”

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In recent years one of the most significant changes in language learning and teaching has been the recognition of the cultural dimension as a key component of language learning. This change has transformed the nature of the experience of teaching and learning languages. The objective of language learning is no longer solely defined in terms of the acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language (Council of Europe, 2001). Rather, course objectives are now also described in terms of intercultural competence, which is “the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (Meyer, 1991, p.138).

Teachers of Russian language today are expected to promote the acquisition of intercultural competence in their learners. Thus, the present paper aims to investigate the opinions and attitudes of American teachers of Russian on intercultural competence teaching and to see how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes are reflected in their classroom applications at the beginning level. The paper will focus on data and findings collected from teachers of Russian by means of a questionnaire. The findings will reveal how Russian language teachers at the beginning level integrate culture into their teaching in order to develop intercultural competence in their learners. The presenters will give examples of how language and culture teaching can be integrated and what cross-cultural activities can be used for the beginning level of Russian.

Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meyer, M. (1991). Developing transcultural competence: case studies of advanced foreign language learners. In D. Buttjes & M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating languages and cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.