

**Title:** The Genre of AZBUKA as a Multimodal Representation and Tool of Acquisition of Russian Language in the Culture Classroom

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The paper presents the overlooked genre of AZBUKA as a powerful resource for supporting development of basic skills and competences in Russian language-culture in the Elementary-I college classroom. It argues that the interactive and multimodal nature (Kern) of this genre not only allows for introducing learners of Russian to authentic literacy practices, discourses, images, and commonly reproduced mini-texts that influence and facilitate language production – but also provides students with a format which enables them to creatively apply their multiple intelligences (Gardner) and engage in cultural exploration, discoveries, and authentically communicative multimodal use of Russian in the classroom and beyond.

The paper reports on successful application of this approach at Westfield State College, MA that allowed the students to develop Creative Literacy Projects as a meaningful and lasting application of their textbook-based learning, cultural and artistic in-class experiences, and independent research. Based on the heuristic principle of understanding by design (Wiggins, G. & J. McTighe), these projects allow participants to engage in spontaneous game-like activities in which language understanding and production is supported by predictability of unraveling communication, multimodal representation of meaning and text, recursive language, and references to reproducible mini-texts experienced before. The students shared these entertaining projects with their classmates, college and regional communities to support their emerging communicative competencies in Russian and contribute to the celebration of the Year of the Russian language in the World. The paper is accompanied with samples of students' AZBUKA projects and multimodal representations of texts, video clips of in-class presentations, and pictures from the projects' theatrical exhibits on two campuses.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Basic Books.

Kern, R. G. (2000). *Literacy and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford U. Press.

Wiggins, G. & J. McTighe. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.