

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

## Discursive Features of Russian as a Foreign Language Textbooks: Respond to Negative Russia Image Stereotypes

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### Abstract

The article analyses the didactic space of the Russian as a foreign language textbooks and manuals within the pedagogical discourse in terms of intercultural communication theory. It discloses the influence of national stereotypes on the image of Russia in the foreigners as a sketchy primitive idea on this social phenomenon formed during certain period of time. The paper highlights the necessity of altering the vector of stereotypes issues research taking into account their design properties and functions, in order to boost intercultural communication.

The research characterizes the understanding and implementation of intercultural approach by the authors of contemporary Russian as a foreign language textbooks. It focuses on discursive strategies and tactics of establishing intercultural communication. Strategic component promotes didactic communication, when Russian as foreign language textbooks didactic space acquires associative, dialogue and polyphonic nature. The paper reveals positive and attractive for the foreign contacts Russia image within the analyzed textbooks and manuals. It elicits discursive features of Russian as a foreign language textbooks as a soft power tool that contributes to leveling negative (stereotypical) image of Russia and establishing the dialogue of cultures. The authors prove the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language to be based on essential support of the Russian language as a powerful resource of consolidating forces that strengthen the fundamental positions of the Russian Federation in the new geopolitical space.

*Keywords:* textbooks, stereotypes, the Russian language, communicative-pragmatic strategies.

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### Introduction

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The dialogue of cultures in the modern world, is becoming one of the key factors for the coexistence of peoples, and the intercultural approach is recognized as one of the leading cultural approaches to teaching foreign languages. These aspects are relevant for teaching Russian as a foreign language (hereinafter – RFL), since the didactic space of a foreign language (hereinafter – FL) textbooks and manuals is intertwined with the national discourse, which is influenced by the country's position on the world stage and other countries' policies towards it.

Misunderstanding and / or denial of another culture's values and norms in the modern society leads to tense interstate relations. The social phenomenon “the image of Russia” is often influenced by national stereotypes (typical images) that have developed over a certain time as a schematic, simplified representation of this phenomenon. Stereotypes are formed and manifested in the speech through factual information containing a description of events, their assessment and interpretation (Bobrova, Kuznetsova, 2020).

The state image on the world stage compiles of a number of factors: politics, economy, culture, tourist attractiveness, social climate, etc. As of today, Russia continues to be an antagonist for foreigners, moreover this image is demonized. The term demonization is used as a technique when forming an idea of the country, is associated with intimidation, is based “on the complication of entities” and mainly has a negative character (Ott, 2020, p.61). Foreign mass media use vocabulary with negative connotations to form the negative image of Russia, and colourful epithets, military, theatrical, and political metaphors dominate. Real state of affairs within the country and its actions in the world are distorted “by deliberate, primarily verbal, influence on the minds of the people, staff or individuals for its cognitive suppression” (Zheltukhina, Paramonova, 2020, p.29). The repulsive image of the country, leading to the latter appearing as an absolute evil in all its manifestations, creates the effect of demonization, which becomes the climax of discredit during information and psychological warfare (Ivanova, 2016, p. 29).

Representing a part of intercultural perception and interaction, national stereotypes seem ambivalent. They reduce the effectiveness of intercultural communication due to misunderstanding, misinterpretation, can cause conflicts or communication failures. At the same time, they adequately reflect the characteristics of a particular national and cultural community, and help navigate in intercultural communication (Sorokina, 2013).

Often, attempts to integrate stereotypes into the education content are aimed at their eradication, overcoming and removal. In the field of RFL teaching, it is relevant to alter the vector of pedagogical research of the problem: not to fight the stereotypes, but to take them into account and use their design

properties and functions in order to boost the intercultural communication (Ibid.). Thus, the role of RFL teaching materials in promoting a positive image of Russia as a target language country is relevant and requires further research.

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

The aim of the study is to identify pedagogical strategies and tactics that determine the discursive features of RFL textbooks in their correlation with the use of pragmatic aspects in teaching, which makes the educational process a *soft power* tool, taking into account the stereotypes of the social phenomenon “the image of Russia”.

The main objectives of the research are:

- identified communicative and pragmatic influence strategies on the potential reader (student), used to achieve educational goals, since the didactic component of the textbook involves relying on them;
- improved intercultural communicative competence based on them, taking into account the training process based on the dialogue of cultures as a key linguodidactic concept.

At the same time, the linguodidactic process is based on essential support of the Russian language as a powerful resource of consolidating forces that strengthen the fundamental positions of the Russian Federation in the new geopolitical space.

### **Literature review**

Modern era witnesses cross-cultural communication playing an essential role in the foreign languages teaching, and the issue of minimizing the negative reaction of other cultures representatives while teaching remains of paramount importance (Bouzekri 2019; Otroshi 2019]. According to French researchers, the textbook discourse should provide space for the variety of students' cultures (Piccardo, Yaïche, 2005). The relation between language, socio-cultural context and self-identification of the individual depends on the place of the culture and the language, their relationship in the FL teaching (Windmüller, 2015). The relevance of including the intercultural approach into the teaching process is confirmed by the documents of the Council of Europe, while the main goal is to educate full-fledged citizens of multicultural Europe who are able to tolerate cultural differences (Beacco et al., 2015; Akkari, Radhouane, 2020)

However, the European multicultural approach is not always applied to Russia. On the one hand, today the

Russian language has the status of an international language at the UN level, according to MAPRYaL, the number of speakers exceeds 500 million people, on the Internet it has gained the second place after English (Kirov, 2015, p. 124). On the other hand, Russia has historically been involved in geopolitical confrontations, which contributes to a large number of negative stereotypes which makes it unattractive for foreigners (David, 2017). This situation has predetermined changes in the field of learning Russian by foreign students: instead of humanitarian motives for studying the Russian language as a language of high literature and culture, utilitarian and professional interests are being noted. Often, knowledge of the Russian language is associated with life well-being, since it can act as an effective tool in the field of business, production, technology, tourism and science (Tareva, 2019, p.1297).

The main ways to get to know the target language country are textbooks and manuals that are responsible for certain social images of the country (Richa, Heath, 2020, p. 5). Definite language tools selected by the textbooks and manuals authors form the addressee's outlook, the attitude to certain events and phenomena in the target language country. As of today, RFL is becoming an educational tool for a person who is able to comprehend the cultural heritage of the target language country and adequately perceive a multi-variant picture of the world (Kolesnikova, 2016).

We agree that education as a long-term project requires time to prepare and train a foreign citizen, but at the same time has an enormous potential, since students are the future of any country. As a result of the internationalization of education, the social role of educational institutions as an important element of the economic and political life of the state has significantly increased (Akifi, 2019, p. 5). According to many authors, international educational relations and educational services are becoming one of the most important soft power tools in the educational sphere. Considerable impact through national education contributes to worldview values and attitudes in young people. By acquiring social capital: accumulated knowledge, contacts, fellowship, new friends, students become guides to the language and the culture of the country where they studied (Tareva, 2016; Li, 2018; Makarova et al., 2020). RFL textbooks and manuals become a local, but effective tool for building a positive target language country image, interacting with the student's value system, model of the world, as relying on the information in the textbook is strong (Ardatova, 2015, p. 223).

The nature and direction of communication relations are of particular importance in teaching RFL. One of the leading principles in language education is anthropocentric, when the student becomes the central subject of education and intercultural communication. The appeal to the person as a multidimensional system of thinking and speech activities has led to the understanding that an integral characteristic of the textbooks' written language is dialogical nature, aimed at the joint meaning construction (Gerasimova,

2011). The RFL textbook becomes a “didactic basis”, a recommendation for necessary or possible actions for the effective Russian language acquisition at the appropriate level (Tareva, 2017).

## **Methodology**

The authors argue that the main purpose of the RFL textbook is to train a specialist for intercultural communication as his / her main professional field. The methodological basis of the paper relies on intercultural and pragmalinguistic approaches, as well as an interpretative and evaluative method in the RFL textbooks and manuals acquisition.

The intercultural approach clarifies the dialogue of cultures as a key concept of linguodidactics in the process of RFL teaching as a result of changing attitudes to the phenomenon of culture in linguistic educational practices. The intercultural approach puts forward the ability to participate in the dialogue of cultures as the main goal of teaching and learning. This goal forms a socially and humanistically determined educational standard that embodies the education of an individual ready to interact with a foreigner on the basis of the culture comprehension, being able to better understand the national identity, re-evaluating it from the foreign communication partner's stance (Intercultural Foreign Language Education, 2014).

Complex modern international context in which Russia is being involved prevents from achieving this educational ideal. It is essential to prepare “students for ideological antagonism of the native and target cultures”, which complicates the didactic decisions in the intercultural communication (Tareva, 2019. p. 51). Therefore, the issues related to the content of educational materials focused on intercultural education hold relevance.

Pragmalinguistic approach is a key to the texts' analysis in the RFL textbooks and manuals. They reflect not only the structure of the language, but also its relations to spiritual and cultural-historical nature. Educational texts are considered as a product of speech determined by the needs of communication. The main task is the addresser-addressee influence with the help of language tools suitable for specific communication, for the correct understanding of the author's intention (Filchakova, 2017).

The interpretative-evaluative method in the textbook material acquisition proves relevant and provides one's own attitude development based on the study of the presented factual material. This position is due to the RFL textbooks discourse, related to the author's attitudes to providing cultural and affective motivation for speech activity through the universal problems of communication, the expressing various cultural and value-based meanings by means of the studied language (Schepilova, 2016).

## Results

Communication in education implies not only the transfer of knowledge, understanding, but also the certain interaction strategies. We argue that the didactic component of RFL textbooks and manuals involves relying on a range of communicative and pragmatic impact strategies. The basic strategies that determine the discursive features of the textbooks in the framework of teaching “Russian as a foreign language” are the strategy of positive self-presentation and the strategy of cultures correlation. These strategies rely on certain tactics as ways of implementing the communicative and pragmatic intentions of the educational materials’ authors and make the learning process a *soft power* tool, taking into account the stereotyping of the social phenomenon “the image of Russia”. At the same time, the selection and content of the educational material in these textbooks must comply with the principles of intercultural learning.

To verify the theory, the authors relied on the texts from the RFL textbooks and manuals at a level above elementary, aimed at the foreigners studying Russian at home or in Russian universities, as well as for expats working in Russia. We’ve analyzed twelve textbooks and manuals by Russian authors published in 2007-2019, significant in terms of clarity and implicitness of the author’s intentions.

### Positive self-presentation strategy

Such factors of the development of civilization as the collapse of the globalization vector, the virtualization of the environment, the dependence of a person on information resources have an impact on the communicative and pragmatic strategies for teaching Russian as the language of international communication. There is a distortion of the *soft power* policy functions as a manifestation of the state cultural, moral, and didactic values that are attractive from the point of view of other countries representatives (Tareva, Tarev, 2020). In socio-cultural and political terms, the dialogue of cultures often becomes unfriendly, even aggressive, due to unequal cross-cultural communication, when the dialogue is veiled or openly replaced by a monologue of a foreign-speaking partner. In such a “dialogue”, Russia is given a secondary role, and the dialogue of cultures becomes destructive.

These changes require the active pragmatic RFL textbooks and manuals aspect development, which determine changes in the practice of teaching in the framework of a dialogue of cultures and contribute to the positive image of Russia as a state. In the process of teaching the Russian language, it is essential to form students’ self-respect and respect for the target culture, as well as the foreign language communicative competence of the future specialist in intercultural communication, which allows them to give a communicative rebuff to the information warfare initiators (Dialogue of Cultures. Culture of Dialogue, 2017, p. 134-135).

For pedagogical discourse, the strategy of positive self-presentation is relevant in all ways of communication, being both the main and auxiliary. The main functions of this strategy in RFL educational materials are information (knowledge transfer) and pedagogical influence on the students' concept system (Dimova, 2004, p.63-64). The strategy of positive self-presentation is image-forming and is implemented via the following tactics:

- optimal addressing tactic;
- positive image tactic;
- positive self-presentation tactic.

Optimal addressing tactic is implemented by taking into account the values and interests of the addressee, including family, cultural, educational, and moral aspects. Being a socio-cultural phenomenon, written texts of RFL educational materials embody the values of the society as the utmost behavioral guidelines, which are built on the basis of knowledge and the addressee's life experience. The grammatical and lexical material acquisition in the analyzed RFL textbooks is carried out with the help of content that reflects the values for creating a positive image of Russia through:

1. various cultural spheres (literature, cinema, theater, ballet, music, painting, architecture, art crafts):

*The Tretyakov Gallery is the largest art museum, the richest collection of Russian paintings (Finagina, 2014, p. 21);*

*The I. Moiseev ensemble is the most popular choreographic ensemble, the World Peace Council awarded it a Large Gold Medal (Korchagina, Litvinova 2016, p. 130).*

These examples illustrate positive evaluation which is reflected in the meliorative semantics, expressed by superlative adjectives that emphasize the exclusivity of the described social phenomenon.

2. Reflection of the Russian history, its glorious and tragic pages: the Moscow history, the foundation of St. Petersburg, the victory in the Great Patriotic War, the destruction and restoration of churches, etc.

The Moscow history is present in most RFL textbooks, it serves as a state symbol, the positive perception of which forms the basis of a favorable attitude to the culture and history of the people as a whole. At the same time, to characterize the capital of Russia, the authors use laudative vocabulary: an interesting city, a large metropolis, an important political, cultural and administrative center of the country (Arkipova, 2007, p. 18).

The story of St. Petersburg is embedded in the context of the history and power of the Russian Empire. Comparing the history of Russian cities – Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod – the authors show the dynamics of the country development, paying attention to the diversity of Russian social life (Demeneva, 2012, p.446; Kapitonova, 2016, p. 49-51).

3. Everyday life details, the desire to show the values of the Russians, close to those of different mentality.

Immanent human activities are fundamental to the human. Description of warm family traditions of celebrating the New Year, visits to theaters, concerts, sports events, cafes, restaurants (Bitekhtina, Frolkina, 2019, p. 64-68), walks in parks and summer holidays, discussion of TV shows and newspaper articles (Antonova, Nakhabina, Tolstykh, 2019, p.101, 148, 234) embody the values of socialization as a social phenomenon and manifest themselves in the outlook, corresponding to the values of pedagogical discourse. Language as a fundamental system of the world perception and world understanding reflects the way of “coding” the self-consciousness of a person, society and the memory of culture. This selection of the educational material corresponds to the principles of intercultural learning, where the educational materials function as a guide to the socio-cultural space.

The optimal addressing tactic is designed to get a response from a potential reader. Optimized potential of educational materials is possible if it is adequate to the cognitive interests of the addressee. Textbook authors achieve dialogical nature based on specialized addressability signals: interrogative and imperative sentences:

*What do you know about it? How nice it is to make gifts! Do you agree with this?* (Korchagina, Litvinova, 2016, p. 82, 84);

*What do you think each TV program is about? Sing with us! Check if you know these words.* (Kapitonova, 2016, p. 93, 94, 96).

Natural communication brings the situation modeled in texts closer to real interpersonal communication. Managing the potential educational materials users' activities serves as a guideline, which implicitly assumes the communicative experience of students obtained in the process of socialization, as well as the professional experience of colleagues who will work with this educational material.

The tactic of creating a positive image of Russia as a country which language is being studied is implemented by focusing students' attention on the achievements and advantages of the state:

1. The state of the art scientific, technical, cultural, and sports achievements recognized at home and abroad at prestigious festivals, competitions, Olympiads, tournaments, and conferences are highlighted:

*the famous director N. Mikhalkov presented a film at the Cannes Film Festival,*

*the Russian swimmer A. Popov won a gold medal at the Sydney Olympics,*

*Russian physicist Zh. Alferov received the Nobel Prize,*

*famous Russian fashion designer Slava Zaitsev showed a new collection of clothes at the International Competition in Paris (Antonova, Nakhabina, Tolstykh, 2019, 45).*

The significance of these and other phenomena is emphasized by the evaluative vocabulary, confirmed by the enumeration of facts:

*the name of D.I. Mendeleev has entered the history of science forever. Its periodic table of elements is used all over the world. In Russia, there is a Mendeleev volcano on the Kuril Islands, there is a Mendeleev Ridge in the central part of the Arctic Ocean, there is a D.I. Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology in Moscow, in 1955 a chemical element with the number 101 was obtained and named in honor of the great Russian scientist "mendelevium" (Arkhipova, 2007, p.34).*

2. The textbooks focus on large-scale scientific discoveries, highlight the status of education in the society, indicating higher educational institutions offering quality educational level:

*biography of the space technology designer V. Barmin is inseparable from "the legendary Baikonur spaceport" and the figure of the designer is associated with other well-known space technology specialists – S. Korolev, V. Glushko, N. Pilyugin, M. Ryazanskiy, V. Kuznetsov, together formed the "Big six" (Makov, Uskova, 2019, 25);*

*Description of university science achievements: "even today, both universities, MCU and St. Petersburg University, are the most prominent educational, scientific and cultural centers in Russia, where world-class specialists graduate from" (Kapitonova, 2016, p. 141-142).*

Positive image tactic is implemented through the use of emotive language:

*convenient city, brilliant career (Rodimkina, Landsman 2019, p. 29-30);*

*beautiful nature, interesting people (Kapitonova, 2016, 11);*

superlative adjectives:

*the most beautiful city of Russia, the largest art Museum in the world, the best works of art* (Arkhipova, 2007, 24);

*the greatest writer of the world and Russian literature, the richest in museums Russian city, the best collections of Western sculpture* (Finagina, 2014, 63)

*Positive self-presentation tactic* is implemented by referring to memorable facts in the history of the country and is designed to give an innovative textbook a socio-cultural significance. The foreign reader learns about the sights of Russia that have made it world famous from the pages of educational materials: Saint Petersburg historical and cultural monuments (Demeneva, 2012, p. 45; 69-70; Chernyshov, Chernyshova, 2013, p. 63), Golden Ring cities (Levina, Nikolenko, 2019, p. 136-143), ancient, small towns – Murom, Ples (Makova, Uskova, 2019, p. 7), Lake Baikal, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (Kapitonova, 2016, p. 289). Information about the urban infrastructure – the construction of the metro, new hotels, highways, skyscrapers in million-cities (Antonova, Nakhabina, Tolstykh, 2019, p. 194; Korchagina, Litvinova, 2016, p. 38, 244.) all this becomes the image of modern Russia promotion. The Russian character, its positive qualities – amiability, hospitality – demonstrates the need to preserve the ethno-cultural specifics, while at the same time showing the difference of peoples on the planet as the worldwide wealth. This approach is designed to minimize the opposition of the concepts *mine* and *someone else's*, transforming the monocultural perspective of the subject “the Russian language” into an intercultural one (Detinko, Kulikova, 2017).

Positive self-presentation tactic is revealed when changing the perception of Russia among foreigners who have come for long-term residence to study and work. Texts become the communication core that presents exact facts of life as an objective reality in the proposed situations. In this regard the texts in the textbooks “In the world of people”, by M.N. Makova, O.A. Uskova and “We live and study in Russia”, by T.I. Kapitonova are of major interest. Starting from the name “Russified” (Makova, Uskova, 2019, p. 32) the texts provide the facts that emphasize the positive changes, stability and attractiveness of living in Russia:

*the interview with an English girl, Jenny, who says she is from Irkutsk: “it's interesting in Siberia, it's a wonderful region with great people, great nature”;*

*the story of the Cuban Yale Gonzales in the newspaper “St. Petersburg News”, who married a Russian girl and moved to the city on the Neva, as people in Russia are sincere and sociable* (Kapitonova, 2016, p. 9, 91).

Educational texts are the main culture guides in contemporary RFL textbooks, they represent it through background knowledge, material and spiritual cultural achievements, events and processes that are of formative importance for the society. The tactics that implement the strategy of positive self-presentation are aimed at

developing one's perception and understanding of another culture, associations of general and special culture nature, and expanding one's horizons (Moiseev and Krasnoperova, 2014).

#### Strategic approach to culture comparison

The mythological nature of the dialogue of cultures in the FL teaching often disguises the problem of the worldwide unfriendly and aggressive intercultural interaction. We argue that when teaching RFL, it is important to ensure the perception of socio-cultural information by students through a balanced acquaintance with the facts of the target language country culture and their own national (ethnic) culture. The significance of intercultural education lies in the simultaneous and complete mastery of both countries' cultures.

The correlation of cultural facts leads to the comprehension that other countries' cultures are different – not just good or bad, and becomes an effective methodological means of teaching. It is important to understand that this teaching method can cause psychological difficulties of perception in students, especially when their native culture negative aspects are stressed (Dialogue of Cultures. Culture of Dialogue, 2017, p. 137-138).

When using discursive strategies, the cultural background should be taken into account as well as, the student's native country involvement in the geopolitical confrontation with Russia, linguistic and cultural ties with Russia, which will prevent both suspicion to the considered cultural facts, and rejection of the well-known facts. Learning the target language native speakers' world should be aimed at understanding the specifics of the speech use, additional historical, cultural and other connotations of the language elements within the text / speech. Special attention should be drawn to realities, that help correctly interpret certain facts and phenomena of everyday native speakers' life, since the intercultural communication is always "based on the 'mutual code', mutual knowledge of the subject of communication between the interlocutors: while speaking / writing or listening / reading" (Brinuk, 2019, p. 20). In this context, intercultural communication mastering acquires axiological characteristics, becomes spiritual, moral, emotional-value, self-creating, pragmatically charged (Tareva, 2019).

Speaking of cultures correlating strategy, we admit that the pages of RFL textbooks, provide many examples of axiological nature. This strategy is implemented through a number of tactics that stand for the authors' communicative and pragmatic intentions, that stimulate thinking, analyzing, and engagement in communication processes.

Personalities demonstrating tactic presents precedent names – personalities, selected on purpose:

*E.R. Dashkova, A.A. Akhmatova, M.I. Tsvetaeva, U.A. Senkevich* (Antonova, Nakhabina, Tolstykh, 2019, 124-

125, 232, 235);

*F.I. Shalyapin, M.V. Lomonosov, V.V. Putin* (Chernyshov, Chernyshova, 2013, p. 9, 247, 229);

*D. Mendeleev, N.I. Lobachevsky, F.M. Dostoevsky, B.N. Yeltsin* (Demeneva, 2012, p. 22);

*K.G. Paustovsky, A.P. Chekhov, L.N. Tolstoy, A.S. Pushkin* (Finagina, 2014, 21-47);

*Zh. Alferov, S. Kapitsa, N. Mikhalkov, V. Kramnik, P. Bure* (Korchagina, Litvinova, 2016, 28).

Precedent names being well-known proper names are used in the textbooks as cultural signs, a symbol of certain qualities, Russian historical events. The relevant biographical details: years of life, professional sphere, contribution to the world history, science or culture – helps evaluate not only the image of the country, but also provides an active pragmatic position to the communicant. These facts involve the potential readers while working with the textbooks and form a positive attitude, and appeal to the culture of the target language country.

The identification tactic manifests 2 trends: the identification of personalities and the correlation of historically significant events. RFL textbooks and manuals have the names of famous foreigners that are compared to the names of Russian acknowledged academicians and artists. Positive dialogue of cultures results in unity and solidarity of different nations:

*Personalities from different countries who knew many languages (polyglots): S.A. Polyakov (Russia) and Emil Krebs (Germany), Elihu Burritt (USA), Giuseppe Caspar Mezzofanti (Italy)* (Shaklein, 2018, p. 52-53, 70);

*Evgeny Chernyavsky (Russia), Arvo Utilainen (Finland) and Pent Nurmekund (Estonia)* (Korchagina, Litvinova, 2016, p.23).

The description of historical parallels is another example of identification tactic. A reliable picture of the historical past and present, generalization of historical experience in its comparison with today helps understand the common and specific in the states and peoples development. Such examples alter the intercultural educational paradigm – the students' native and target cultures are given in their equivalent status, mutual intersection and integration:

*The first metro in the world (London, 1863); the first automobile produced in the world (France, 1769); the first university in Russia (St. Petersburg, 1726); the first theater created in Russia (Yaroslavl, 1750)* (Antonova, Nakhabina, Tolstykh, 2019, p.192).

The juxtaposition of historical experience is relevant when comparing historically significant events, providing a reliable picture of the historical past and present. The term *historical parallels* does not imply an absolute identity of social phenomena, but suggests their typical features, manifested in the socio-economic, technical and technological basis, as well as belonging to the same era.

### **Discussions**

Applying RFL textbooks and manuals allows improve intercultural communicative competence through the dialogue of cultures as a key linguodidactic concept. The textbooks' authors rely on certain pedagogical strategies (positive self-presentation strategy and correlation of cultures) to ensure the success of students' cognitive and communicative activities in the sphere of intercultural communication. To have a tolerant attitude to the target culture, adequate reaction to ambiguous attitude to a particular cultural fact, to be an interesting interlocutor for their potential partner in intercultural communication is of paramount importance. The competence formed in this way will boost the communication interaction of the partners in the intercultural dialogue.

### **Conclusion**

The RFL textbooks and manuals analysis in the framework of the didactic space of pedagogical discourse and the theory of intercultural communication has shown that the authors are guided by the addressee, who is often in a situation of non-dialogue of cultures. The contemporary RFL textbooks authors aim to implement an intercultural approach using discursive strategies of positive self-presentation and correlation of cultures. The strategic component promotes communication, when the RFL educational materials didactic space acquires associative, dialogue and polyphonic nature.

The interpretive and evaluative method proves relevant in the material acquisition, when the students encounter other, unusual and unfamiliar cultural facts. This method aims at developing one's own view, expressing an evaluative attitude, trying to understand the historical roots of events and explain their significance in culture, improving the ability of intercultural interaction. The discursive features of RFL textbooks as a *soft power* tool contribute to leveling the negative (stereotypical) image of Russia and establishing a dialogue of cultures.

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