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# Training Specialists in Rare Languages at Kazan University: With an Eye on Integral Vision

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## Abstract

This article describes the experience of Kazan University in teaching Swahili, Afrikaans and Indonesian. The study is essential due to the discovery of new directions in the study of rare languages at Kazan University, the need for theoretical understanding of the educational process, and the identification of students' priorities for studying languages in a rapidly changing world marked by the intensive interaction of languages and cultures.

The aim of the study was the experimental justification of the theoretical model of co-studying languages and cultures based on the experience of teaching and learning rare languages at Kazan University.

In the course of the study, general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, a systematic approach, a descriptive method, and a comparative method as a system of methods and analysis were used to identify the common and special patterns in teaching rare languages.

The introduction of research results into the educational process ideally aims at the formation of integral thinking among students as a new way of understanding the world, since 'a person as a resident on the planet must think and act in a new aspect, not only in the aspect of an individual person, family or clan, states or their unions, but also in the planetary aspect' (Vernadsky, 1988).

The research results are of theoretical and practical significance for the continuation of study of rare languages, development of the content of language disciplines, as well as for advancing the theory of foreign languages acquisition.

*Keywords:* rare languages, Oriental and African languages, linguistic and linguocultural identity, comparative method, integral vision.

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## **Introduction**

The article describes the experience of training specialists in rare languages at Kazan University. Kazan Federal University (founded in 1804), one of the oldest classical universities in Russia, from the first decades of its existence, has become a leading center for the study of oriental languages and oriental studies. At Kazan Federal University, traditional oriental languages have been studied and continue to be studied: Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and Turkish. Several decades ago, Korean, Japanese, and Hindi were introduced. Kazan is traditionally a unique center of Eastern culture in Russia, where, along with Christians, there is a significant number of Muslims who have been familiar with Arabic-Persian written culture since time immemorial. The term of Kazan Oriental Studies, which, in a narrow sense, is understood as the traditional university Oriental Studies with rich academic tradition and, in a broad sense, as the centuries-old acquaintance of the Kazan Tatars with the Eastern cultures of Arabs, Persians, Central Asian peoples, Turks, exhibits amazing flexibility in the world integration processes and demonstrates the ability to rapidly learn the modern directions of Oriental and African studies. Recently, the number of languages studied at Kazan University amounted to more than twenty (including Western ones), among which there were new languages that had never been studied at the University: Indonesian, Swahili, Afrikaans, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

The solution of a number of pedagogical and methodological problems of teaching rare languages is promising within the model of co-studying languages and cultures. An example of such a model is given by Guruleva (2009). The author of the model put forward several new principles of the process of learning language and culture: the principle of introducing a native speaker of language and culture into the educational process; the principle of creating a natural language environment in the classroom; the principle of the systemic interaction of the disciplines of the linguistic and cultural cycles, etc.

The authors of the book 'Terra Linguæ: In the realm of language, languages in the world' (Kondakov & Chugayeva, 2018) propose their own model of co-studying the languages and cultures. The book attempts to describe seven major world languages (English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, German, French, and Russian) and nine national languages of RF in the paradigm of language and culture interaction. Distinctive features of the approach are comprehension of the uniqueness of the language structure, understanding the other culture, national mentality and the inseparability of the connection between the language and the culture of the people speaking it. The authors highlight additional principles of co-studying language and culture, that is, the ones of unity of linguistic and lingua-cultural originality and historicism (Chugayeva, Fattakhova, & Yuzmukhametov, 2019), emphasizing the necessity to disclose 'the totality of the essential features of the language system' (Plotkin, 1989, p.125).

The principles of the unity of linguistic and linguocultural originality and historicism were taken as a basis for teaching rare languages at Kazan University. Together with a rare language, a student also chooses optionally a Western language or an Oriental language. At the same time, the comparative method of teaching languages is considered as the leading method due to which overcoming of inter-lingual interference is achieved, the lingua-cultural aspect of teaching is strengthened, students are motivated to study languages; the ability to see the integral cultural and linguistic picture is formed, perceiving each linguistic phenomenon as part of the whole.

The importance of the study is emphasized by the introduction of new rare Oriental and African languages in the bachelors training process, which should be focused on obtaining relevant knowledge about a swiftly changing world, getting information about the commonality and differences of languages and cultures of the peoples, the processes of migration and interaction of different cultures.

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

The purpose of the study was the experimental justification of the theoretical model of the languages and cultures study based on the material of such rare languages as Swahili, Afrikaans and Indonesian languages taught at Kazan University. A special attention is paid to the urgent tasks of training modern Orientalists and Africanists, not only with good language skills, knowledge of the culture and history of the people studied but also with extensive ideas concerning modern international, global processes in economics and politics, interaction of cultures.

### **Literature review**

When working on the research, we relied on the works of Russian authors writing on various aspects by pedagogy and methods of teaching languages and cultures. In particular, we examined the work of Guruleva (2009), "Basic Principles of Organization of Language and Culture Co-Study Process in the System of Poly-Cultural Model of Higher Linguistic Education", where the author considers a model of co-study of languages and cultures. The team of authors of another book, "TERRA LINGUÆ: In the Realm of Language, Languages in the World" (Kondakov & Chugayeva, 2018), examined practical examples of co-study of languages and cultures based on seven world languages and twelve local languages of Russia. The work by Plotkin (1989), "Construct of the English Language", contains interesting thoughts for a full-fledged study of a particular language on the example of English. Also, for the purpose of forming global thinking among students, we turned to the works by Vernadsky (1988), "Philosophical Thoughts of a Naturalist" and the work by Ursul (2012), "The Formation of Global Thinking: a Spatio-Temporal

Perspective”. An outline of the history of Kazan Oriental studies is contained in the fundamental work of the Russian historian Valeev (2019), “Orientalism at Kazan University (1807–20s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)”. To consider some features of Swahili, our article contains quotes from the work by Gromova and Petrenko (2004) “The Tutorial of Swahili”.

## **Methodology**

Given the nature of the data of the study, we used general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, a systematic approach, a descriptive method, and a comparative method as a system of techniques and methods used to identify common and special patterns in teaching rare languages. The results of scientific and pedagogical research of local and foreign experts in the field of teaching rare languages were studied and summarized.

## **Results**

The Kazan School of Oriental Studies from the very beginning was aimed at the development of the eastern territories of the Russian Empire, a comprehensive study of the languages and cultures of the peoples of Siberia, Central Asia and the Far East, Muslim and Christian languages and cultures. Since 1804, a special oriental university direction has been created in Kazan to teach students Oriental languages and cultures; research academic work has been launched to describe the languages, traditions, customs of the peoples of the East; numerous works, textbooks and dictionaries have been created. A powerful impetus to the development of Russian Oriental studies was given by the prominent scientists of that time: the three Khalfin brothers [Sagit, Ishaq and Ibrahim] (Turkish-Tatar language), Ch.M.Frähn (Semitic languages and Farsi), A.K. Kazem-bek (Turkish-Tatar language and Farsi), I.N. Berezin (Iranian studies), F.I. Erdman, I.F. Gotvald, O.M. Kovalevsky (Mongolian studies), D.P. Sivillov (Sinology), I.P. Voitsekhovskiy (Manchu studies), V.P. Vasiliev, S.I. Nazaryants (Armenian studies), P.Ya. Petrov and F.F. Bollenzen (Sanskritology), A.V. Popov (Kalmyk studies), as well as the sources of Ugro-Finnish and Turkic-Tatar philology were I.N. Kholmogorov, N.I. Ilminsky, I.A.Baudouin de Courtenay, V.V. Radlov, M.P. Veske, N.F. Katanov. In the Soviet times, the tradition of Oriental studies was continued by such outstanding scholars as M.I. Makhmutov, M.N. Nugmanov, D.G. Tumasheva and others. Nowadays Oriental and African Studies are being actively developed at Kazan University. Since 1989, after the revival of the Department of Oriental Languages, eleven languages have been taught: Turkish, Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Indonesian, Vietnamese, Old Ottoman and Old Tatar and two African languages: Afrikaans and Swahili (Valeev, 2019).

Kazan School of Oriental and African Studies has always had its own specific features due to the location of the Kazan region, i.e. at the intersection of Eastern and Western cultures. Muslim Kazan Tatars themselves are a part of the Eastern cultural tradition, that is, professing Islam and having been associated with the Arabographic written tradition for several centuries, they not only met, but also partly borrowed the way of life typical of the Muslim East. This also applies to everyday traditions and philosophy. Giving Muslim names to children, studying Arabic and Persian in madrassas, getting acquainted with the literature of the East, Volga Türks became a part of the world Muslim Ummah, still remaining part of European cultural environment of Russia. This very twofold cultural essence of Russian Muslims generated interest in comparing languages, traditions, cultures of the West and East: hence, the origin for the comparative method in Kazan, both in teaching languages and in research to identify typological similarities and differences of various languages, which accelerates the educational process of rare languages acquisition.

The development of Oriental and African Studies in Kazan has recently faced certain organizational and methodological difficulties, since the tradition of oriental studies, interrupted in the Soviet period, was to be revived again. The collaboration with the specialists from Orientalists and Africanists departments of Moscow State University should be mentioned, who have provided substantial support to their Kazan colleagues in opening new areas of training at Kazan University since the 2000s. Textbooks, manuals, and reference books were donated, workshops were held, lectures on Oriental and African languages were given. Owing to the support of our Moscow colleagues, it was possible to conclude memorandums of cooperation with African institutions, in the framework of which language training for teachers and students is carried out.

Until 2014, African languages were not taught at Kazan University despite the fact of not extinguishing interest to African studies. The Ethnographic Museum, founded at the University of Kazan in 1815, used to take immense pride in its African collection presenting a variety of exhibits: masks, musical instruments, combat and hunting weapons of tribes of Cameroon, Sudan, Uganda, Somalia and other African countries, as well as traditional African tribal clothing (Fattakhova, Gromova, & Juzmukhametov, 2017).

Since the Swahili, Indonesian, and Afrikaans languages began to be taught in Kazan for the first time, the task was to develop a teaching methodology and organize such an educational process that would solve the urgent issues of training modern Orientalists and Africanists not only with good language skills, knowledge of the culture and history of the people studied but also with extensive awareness about the domestic and foreign policies of governments in the context of international situation, global processes in economics. Choosing teaching methods, Kazan teachers were guided by the experience of scientists from the Institute of Asian and African Countries at Moscow State University.

### ***Kazan University Experience in Teaching Swahili, Afrikaans and Indonesian***

At present, Russia is regaining its presence on the African continent but so far, there is the shortage of personnel with knowledge of African languages, both for diplomatic missions of the Russian Federation in Africa and for the missions of large Russian companies in Africa developing nuclear energy, mining, construction, machinery, equipment, and etc. The demand for specialists with knowledge of African languages in academic, state and private structures in the context of Russia's return to the continent was stated at the forum 'Training of highly qualified specialists for African countries' held by KFU in 2014.

In 2014, two groups specializing in Swahili and Afrikaans were opened at Kazan University. At first the educational process was arranged in line with textbooks and dictionaries of Moscow and St. Petersburg main teaching aids. At the same time, paying tribute to the traditions of Kazan University with the origins of comparative studies by Baudouin de Courtenay, the comparative method was used in teaching African languages. The educational program included the study of Swahili and Afrikaans along with the second language, Arabic and German, respectively.

#### ***Learning Swahili***

Swahili is widespread in Eastern and Central Africa being the official language in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and the working language of the African Union. The interest shown in Swahili is conditioned by the economic and academic ties of Tatarstan and East Africa countries.

Arabic was chosen as the second foreign language following the principles of the unity of linguistic and linguocultural originality and historicism, which help explain to the student the extra-linguistic nature of linguistic phenomena. For example, acquaintance with the history of Swahili explains a large number of borrowings from Arabic, and a small number of Persian borrowings. These loans came to Africa through the maritime trade of slaves, ivory, gold, and etc.

The Old Swahili script was on the basis of Arabic graphics with a number of diacritics necessary to adequately reflect the open syllables prevailing in the Swahili phonetic system (Gromova, 2014). In the 19th century, Arabic Swahili writing was supplanted by Latin Swahili writing.

The comparison of the phonetic system of Swahili and Arabic positively affected the understanding of their sound system. So, in most cases, by the presence of sounds uncharacteristic for Swahili, one can determine whether a particular word is an Arabic borrowing in Swahili. With a gradual increase in the studied Arabic words, Swahili borrowings were recognized according to the semantic of lexical units. Bilingual students,

with Tatar mother language, easily recognized Arabic loanwords in Swahili, finding similar words in the Tatar language.

The vocabulary of Swahili includes an impressive amount of Arabic borrowings, represented as *content words* (noun, verb, adjective, and numerals) and *auxiliary words*.

In addition, about three dozen Persian loanwords are found in Swahili which relate to everyday topics and abstract concepts. It is precisely this relatively small group of words that allows us to judge the curious role of the South Iranian merchants, called *Shirazi*, who along with the Omani slave traders brought Islam to the East African coast (Moskvitina, 2017) and contributed to the emergence of a new integrative language, Swahili, on the basis of the Bantu languages.

Thus, we can conclude that the formation of a special layer of borrowed Arabic and Persian words in languages that differ in structure is associated with a significant influence of Muslim culture around the world through all kinds of trade and cultural ties between Europe, East and Africa. We can infer that the spread of the world religions was the initial stage of world globalization when people from different continents joined the same values expressed by common language means (alphabet, religious and scientific vocabulary, etc.).

Studying Swahili and Arabic, students compare languages with each other, find differences and similarities on linguistic and linguocultural levels, draw parallels with other languages (English, Tatar), showing a special interest in comparative studies. That helps to broaden students worldview horizons, deepen their acquisition of language and history. Thus, the principles of unity of linguistic and lingua-cultural originality and historicism, as well as a comparative method help students see the context behind the word, understand the development of the language through the prism of language contacts.

### ***Teaching Afrikaans and Indonesian***

When choosing Afrikaans as an academic discipline at Kazan University, the consideration was taken that the language study should lead to studying South Africa as the most developed African region, as part of BRICS organization. Extensive scientific and fiction literature created in Afrikaans is undoubtedly the source of our knowledge about South Africa.

The Indonesian language was chosen for teaching due to the fact that Kazan and the Republic of Tatarstan have close economic and cultural ties with regions of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia is attracted to Tatarstan by the presence of Muslim population which allows for cooperation in different areas. For

example, Indonesia willingly sends its students to Tatarstan, the Muslim region; it is easier for Indonesian students to adapt with fellow believers. Cooperation is developing in the economic sphere (Halal products, for example, produced both in Tatarstan and Indonesia).

Afrikaans and Indonesian have relatively simple grammar, in both languages nouns lack grammatical categories of *case* and *grammatical gender*, the system of *verb tenses* is maximally simplified, and a simple 26-letter Latin alphabet is used. All these factors help effective mastering of basic grammar and the transition to work with serious speech materials from social and political literature and fiction. At the same time, students studying hieroglyphic and arabographic scripts have to spend much more time to master them, and only then move on to authentic language material. Hence, mastering the Afrikaans and Indonesian languages is much faster than other Oriental and African languages.

When introducing the languages of Afrikaans and Indonesian as academic disciplines, it was necessary to choose approaches to the above-mentioned language and culture co-study. The initial Afrikaans language course is equipped with a full set of study guides prepared by Moscow colleagues, mainly from the Institute of Asia and Africa of Moscow University. This is the basic textbook by Ignatenko (2000), the manual “Linguistic and Regional Studies of the Afrikaans Language” and “Anthology of the Afrikaans Language” by Urb (2013). Upon completion of the initial course, they begin to actively replenish the vocabulary and study more advanced grammar through extensive reading of fiction, socio-political, special literature, etc. Various books on Afrikaans, works of South African authors, and translated works of the World Literature are used for this purpose. They allow the *parallel reading* technique, so that students at the initial level are better able to navigate in the non-adapted Afrikaans text. Later, it is recommended giving literary works of South African authors, since the vocabulary is more difficult, as the Afrikaans language itself is full of idioms and phraseological units.

Translated Russian literary works in Afrikaans were also necessary so as to convey Russian realities in Afrikaans. For the goal to introduce students to the foreign mentality of the people, as well as to be able to express their worldview in the language studied, then reading both translated and original literature becomes one of the most important tools. Thus, for the first time, the task was to create a library in Afrikaans, in order to fully satisfy the needs of mastering the lexical and grammatical levels of the language studied.

The study of Indonesian at Kazan University was introduced three years later than Afrikaans, and therefore it was already clear which way should be taken.

The Indonesian language textbook jointly prepared by the Russian Academy of Sciences and Moscow State University (Demidyuk, Sujay, & Khardzhatno, 2013), was chosen as basic. The textbook meets all modern requirements for the preparation of Indonesian specialists. Along with this, serious language material began to be given on socio-political and military-technical topics. The simplicity of the Indonesian language allows this to be done much earlier than languages with more complicated writing and grammar. Thus, from the first months of learning Indonesian, students develop psychological self-confidence, the ability to learn the language in a fairly short time.

The problem of replenishing the library of fiction in Indonesian, both translated and original Indonesian, was also solved to significantly expand vocabulary.

### ***Practice in a foreign country***

An important role in the training of specialists in rare languages is undoubtedly played by two components: practical classes at the university and practice in a foreign country. We adhere to the approach of going to a foreign country with some knowledge of its language, so that students should do certain activities in the language, for example: find materials for research, communicate with authentic people etc. Let us consider the example of four-week trainings in Tanzania in 2016 and 2017. Kazan students took a language course at the Institute of Swahili Studies of Dar-es-Salaam University in Tanzania. The study of the African language was accompanied by a diversified cultural program: visiting the island of Zanzibar for its unique architectural heritage; nature reserve with giant land turtles, taking a tour of the farm with various spices grow, unique wildlife of one of the national parks (Mikumi), a sort of visiting card of African countries. Students' educational task was interviewing modern Swahili-speaking writers of Tanzania, artists painting in the popular style of Tingatinga.

Such tasks demonstrated students' ability to conduct research showing their readiness for professional activity. Kazan students managed to collect unique material for relevant studies on Swahili language and literature, characterized by significant scientific novelty.

Communication with the local population and acquaintance with the traditions and sights of Tanzania allowed students to immerse themselves in the new culture, eradicate certain stereotypes regarding a foreign country and see the world through the eyes of local residents, as well as compare a foreign culture with their own, revealing the originality of both.

## **Discussions**

The authors of the article stand on the position that the introduction of rare languages in the teaching of Kazan University is due to integral historical prerequisites. There are two aspects. First is the choice of a language.

The choice of the Swahili language is determined by the common culture of Muslims in East Africa and the Middle Volga region of Russia, since initially the teaching practice compares the experience of borrowing Arabic vocabulary from East African Bantu and Kazan Tatars; a significant share of modern vocabulary of the Swahili literary language and the literary Tatar language is Arabic, as well as Persian vocabulary. Hence, native speakers of Tatar without much difficulty learn a significant part of Swahili vocabulary. In addition, there appears some understanding of the Muslim lifestyle characteristics, mentality and culture of the inhabitants of East Africa. Thus, following the principle of co-studying language and culture, on the example of two structurally different languages, students get able to learn historical and cultural communities in different part of the world.

The choice of Afrikaans and Indonesian also reveals a global historical background. The South of Africa was settled by the Europeans with the goal of colonization of Southeast Asia in the Indian and Pacific Ocean. Afrikaans, a creolized version of South Dutch, was developed in South Africa (in modern South Africa and Namibia). Later, when the Dutch East India Company began to exile political prisoners to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa from the Malay Archipelago (present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei), Afrikaans became native to Cape Town Malays, they spoke it in everyday life, professed their religion, Shafi Islam. This is how the historical destinies of Afrikaans and Indonesian (Malay) are intertwined.

Therefore, when teaching Indonesian under the undergraduate program, it is advisable to give such a language like Afrikaans as the second one. What does it give? This provides an opportunity to conduct comparative studies in the field of lexical borrowings (e.g., Dutch borrowings in Indonesian and Malay borrowings in Afrikaans), in the field of intercultural interaction (a study of the origins of the Koran in Afrikaans in South Africa).

The second aspect is philosophical related to the concept of “Global”, or “Integral”. We proceed from the fact that science has always been global in nature and has been and continues to be aimed at the knowledge of man in his integrity with planetary processes and even inextricably linked with the universe. The origins of global thinking and worldview date back to the father of Russian science, Lomonosov. Later, Vernadsky developed a planetary approach to scientific knowledge, attaching particular importance to the creation of the future sphere of reason (noosphere) to science; modern development confirmed this prediction (Ursul, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Kazan university tradition of Oriental and African studies was originally aimed at the comprehension of the diversity of cultures of the peoples of the world. Starting from the 18-19th centuries Kazan University conducted extensive research and analytical work on the study of languages, literature, history, traditions of the peoples of Asia and Africa. The city of Kazan, being the intersection point of Eastern and Western culture, has become for Russia an important center for understanding global processes in the world. In this regard, Kazan developed a scientific, educational and methodical school for the study of languages and cultures of the peoples of Asia and Africa. Today, up to twenty European, Asian and African languages are studied at Kazan University. Current trends in the development of global knowledge outline the unique role of the Kazan region as a conductor of all Russian and European civilization in the modern multifaceted and constantly changing world of the East and West, and more recently, Africa. Graduates of Kazan University are very clearly oriented towards understanding their role in the world.

In the middle of the 19th century, in the era of the Russian Empire strengthening, the Kazan School of Oriental Studies was transferred to the metropolitan universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, and today it is experiencing its rebirth in conditions of deep integration of Russian society into the outer world; hence, rapidly growing number of foreign languages and related disciplines in Linguistics and Culture taught at Kazan University. The teaching of rare languages has recently emphasized the role and ability of Kazan University to penetrate into the subtle spheres of culture of the peoples of Africa and the Asia-Pacific regions. The countries of Africa and Southeast Asia today have become closer than ever to Russia, not only thanks to modern technologies in the field of communications, but precisely through the ability of multinational Russia to understand the soul and characteristics of other peoples of the world. Modern educational programs, research and cultural exchanges are aimed at contributing to this issue. Kazan University graduates work in various areas of international cooperation between Russia and foreign countries. Studies of typological and comparative nature play an important role in bringing nations and peoples closer together; they have always been a strong point of the Kazan linguistic school. Today, such studies expand the range of our knowledge about the similarity of the linguistic and cultural-historical roots of the peoples of Russia and other countries. It is becoming possible to bring our countries closer in the fields of politics, economics and cultural exchanges. Studies into the languages and cultures of Muslim peoples in different parts of the world is especially promising; another integration potential of the Russian nation is that Russia's own Muslim culture makes it easy to communicate with a large family of Asian and African peoples and solve challenging tasks of our time. Currently our students are already acting as national diplomats, communicating with their peers from other countries, and later, armed with the

sufficient knowledge of languages and cultures of the peoples of the world, they will continue their activities for the prosperity of their native country and for the benefit of all mankind.

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