

**Formation of the Image of the Russian World as an Aspect of Sociocultural Adaptation of Foreigners in the Process of Teaching the Russian Language / *A formação da imagem do mundo russo como aspecto da adaptação cultural de cidadãos estrangeiros no processo de ensino de língua russa / Формирование образа Русского мира как аспект социокультурной адаптации иностранных граждан в процессе обучения русскому языку***

*Nina Aleksandróvna Kozlovtseva\**

*Natália Nikoláevna Tolstova\*\**

**ABSTRACT**

This article intends to analyze the real image of the Russian World, the main construction of which is the Russian language. Education given in Russian contains not only unique knowledge, but also special values and a system of views reflecting the essence of the Russian World. Today, education is becoming one of the most effective instruments for implementing Russia's soft power. A growing influx of international students into Russian universities is increasing the role of preparatory colleges which organize purposeful and systematic work on socio-cultural adaptation of foreign citizens. During this work, the teachers of Russian as a foreign language (RFL) face the task of forming an objective, and at the same time, attractive image of the Russian World. This article outlines the main ways to solve this issue.

**KEYWORDS:** Russian World; Education in Russian; Preparatory college; Sociocultural adaptation; Edutainment

**RESUMO**

*Neste artigo é analisada a imagem atual do mundo russo, que é um componente básico da língua russa. O estudo da língua russa, que traz em si não só conhecimentos únicos, mas sobretudo valores e um sistema de pontos de vista que refletem a essência do mundo russo, torna-se um dos instrumentos mais efetivos para a realização da política do "poder suave" em nosso governo. Em razão de uma afluência crescente de ouvintes estrangeiros em instituições russas de ensino superior, aumenta o papel das faculdades preparatórias, nas quais se realiza um trabalho direcionado e sistemático de adaptação sociocultural de cidadãos estrangeiros. À época da realização deste trabalho coloca-se diante dos professores de russo como língua estrangeira a tarefa de formar uma imagem do mundo russo ao mesmo tempo objetiva e atraente. No artigo são delineados os passos fundamentais dessa tarefa.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Mundo russo; Estudo de russo; Faculdade preparatória; Adaptação sociocultural; Edutainment

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\* Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Department of Language Training, Moscow, Russia; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2323-0752>; [nina\\_kozlovtseva@mail.ru](mailto:nina_kozlovtseva@mail.ru)

\*\* Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, Department of Language Training, Moscow, Russia; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4062-0063>; [tolstova.natalia@mail.ru](mailto:tolstova.natalia@mail.ru)

## **АННОТАЦИЯ**

*В статье анализируется актуальный образ Русского мира, базовым конструктом которого выступает русский язык. Образование на русском языке, несущее в себе не только уникальные знания, но и особые ценности и систему взглядов, отражающих сущность Русского мира, становится одним из наиболее эффективных инструментов реализации политики «мягкой силы» нашего государства. В связи с увеличивающимся притоком иностранных слушателей в российские вузы возрастает роль подготовительных факультетов, на которых проводится целенаправленная и систематическая работа по социокультурной адаптации иностранных граждан. Во время проведения этой работы перед преподавателями русского языка как иностранного (РКИ) стоит задача формирования объективного и в то же время привлекательного образа Русского мира. В статье намечены основные пути решения данной задачи.*

*КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: Русский мир; Образование на русском; Подготовительный факультет; Социокультурная адаптация; Эдьютейнмент*

## **Introduction**

The current stage of Russia's social, historical and political development is characterized by the actualization of the role of the Russian World, which implies not only the concept of preservation of the cultural identity and sociocultural development of the people that arose after the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR), but also the transcontinental supra-national community, developed back in the 10th century, which united native speakers and culture-bearers. It is the Russian World that is the most natural instrument of Russia's soft power,<sup>1</sup> aimed at the integration of Russian citizens, the diaspora community and people who feel mental and spiritual connection with Russians in the framework of a single identity, as well as the translation of the most universal value and cultural components of "Russianness" outside the country (ASTAFYEVA; KOZLOVTSEVA, 2017).<sup>2</sup>

The question of the Russian World is open-ended. This phenomenon is of interest to scientists from different social and humanitarian disciplines: philosophy, cultural studies, linguistics, history, political science, ethnology, etc. (N. I.

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<sup>1</sup> "Soft power" is traditionally defined as one of the forms of political power (authority), characterized by the ability to obtain the desired outcomes through voluntary participation (involvement), sympathy and attraction, unlike (in contrast to) "hard power," which implies coercion. The three elements that comprise "soft power" are the cultural values of the nation, its ideology and foreign policy (diplomacy) (NYE, JR, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> In the original: "русскости".

Kostomarov, D. S. Likhachev, O. N. Astafyeva, V. Yu. Darensky, V. A. Nikonov, V. A. Tishkov, A. V. Pavlovskaya, V. L. Tsymbursky, P. G. Shchedrovitsky, E. V. Ostrovsky, S. N. Gradirovsky, B. V. Mezhujev, V. G. Kostomarov, Yu. E. Prokhorov, R. Ya. Yamilov, A. A. Gromyko, A. A. Kara-Murza, A. A. Zaliznyak, I. B. Levontina, A. D. Shmelev<sup>3</sup> *et al.*).

Taking into account the overall results obtained by researchers, the Russian World can be defined as a transnational sociocultural space, an integrative field of culture based on the interactions of its (cultural, social and personal) actors, whose boundaries are determined by shared values and norms. The key constructs of the Russian World are the Russian language and the culture based on it. In this, culture is understood in its broadest sense as, “a set of both formal and informal institutions,

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<sup>3</sup> KOSTOMAROV, N.I. Dve russkiye narodnosti. (Two Russian nationalities). *Literature and Life*. Available at: [[http://dugward.ru/library/kostomarov/kostomarov\\_dve\\_russkie\\_narodnosti.html](http://dugward.ru/library/kostomarov/kostomarov_dve_russkie_narodnosti.html)]. Access on: 15/10/2016; LIKHACHEV, D.S. *Zametki o russkom. (Notes on the Russian)*. Moscow: Sov. Russia, 1984; ASTAFYEVA, O.N. Natsional'naya kul'tura i kul'turnaya politika sovremennoy Rossii. (National culture and cultural policy of modern Russia). *Social and humanitarian knowledge*, Moscow, Vol.2, p.7-25, 2016; DARENSKY, V.Yu. Ukraina kak lokal'nyy fenomen Russkogo mira: istoriosofskiye i kul'turologicheskiye aspekty. (Ukraine as a local phenomenon of the Russian World: historiosophical and culturological aspects). *Crimea in the context of the Russian World: society and culture. The collection of materials of the scientific-practical conference*. Simferopol, 2006, p.42-48; NIKONOV, V.A. Russkiy mir: smysly i tsennosti. (Russian World: meanings and values). *Meanings and values of the Russian World*, 2010. Available at: [[http://russkiymir.ru/events/docs/Смыслы\\_иценностиРусскогомира202010.pdf](http://russkiymir.ru/events/docs/Смыслы_иценностиРусскогомира202010.pdf)]. Access on: 08/04/2016; PAVLOVSKAYA, A.V. *Russkiy mir. Kharakter, byt i nravy. (The Russian World. Character, life and customs)*. In 2 volumes. Moscow: The Word, 2009; TSYMBURSKY, V.L. «Ostrov Rossiya» vs «Ostov Rossiya». (“Island of Russia” vs “Ostov Russia”). *The Russian Archipelago*, 2001. Available at: [[http://www.archipelag.ru/ru\\_mir/history/histori00-03/sembursky-ostrovross/](http://www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/history/histori00-03/sembursky-ostrovross/)]. Access on: 20/08/2016; OSTROVSKY, EV; SCHEDROVITSKY, P.G. Rossiya: strana, kotoroy ne bylo (Russia: a country that did not exist). *The Russian Archipelago*, 1999. Available at: [[http://www.archipelag.ru/ru\\_mir/history/history99-00/shedrovicky-possia-no/](http://www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/history/history99-00/shedrovicky-possia-no/)]. Access on: 20/08/2016; GRADIROVSKY, SN; MEZHUYEV, B.V. Russkiy mir kak ob'yekt geokul'turnogo proyektirovaniya. (The Russian World as an object of geocultural design). *The Russian Archipelago*, 2003. Available at: [[http://www.archipelag.ru/ru\\_mir/history/histori2003/gradirovsky-russmir/](http://www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/history/histori2003/gradirovsky-russmir/)]. Access on: 20/08/2016; KOSTOMAROV, V.G. Russkiy mir kak tsivilizatsiya. (The Russian World as a civilization). *Meanings and values of the Russian World*, 2010. Available at: [[http://russkiymir.ru/events/docs/Смыслы\\_иценностиРусскогомира202010.pdf](http://russkiymir.ru/events/docs/Смыслы_иценностиРусскогомира202010.pdf)]. Access on: 08/04/2016; PROKHOROV, Yu.E. Natsional'nyye sotsiokul'turnyye stereotipy rechevogo obshcheniya i ikh rol' v obuchenii russkomu yazyku inostrantsev (National sociocultural stereotypes of speech communication and their role in teaching the Russian language to foreigners). Moscow: Pedagogy-Press, 1996).; YAMILOV, R.M. Russkiy Mir vs Anglosaksonskiy Mir: voprosy, vozmozhnosti, strategiya. (Russian World vs Anglo-Saxon World: Questions, Opportunities, Strategy). *Humanitarian scientific research*. Moscow, n. 3, p.77-85, 2015; GROMYKO, A.A. Russkiy mir: ponyatiye, printsipy, tsennosti, struktura. (Russian World: concept, principles, values, structure). *Meanings and values of the Russian World*, 2010. Available at: [[http://russkiymir.ru/events/docs/Смыслы\\_иценностиРусскогомира202010.pdf](http://russkiymir.ru/events/docs/Смыслы_иценностиРусскогомира202010.pdf)]. Access on: 08/04/2016; KARA-MURZA, A.A. Kak vozmozhen Russkiy mir?. (How is the Russian World possible?). *The Russian World portal*, 2010. Available at: [<https://russkiymir.ru/publications/190920/>]. Access on: 12/04/2018; ZALYZNYAK, A.A.; LEVONTINA, IB; SHMELEV, A.D. Klyuchevyye idei russkoy yazykovoy kartiny mira (Key ideas of the Russian language image of the world). Collection of articles. Moscow: Languages of Slavic Culture, 2005.

phenomena and factors that affect the preservation, production, transmission and dissemination of spiritual values (ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, civic, etc.)” (DECREE No. 808, 2014).<sup>4</sup>

This article is based on a pragmatic approach to the Russian World, according to which the Russian World should already not only be declared as a sociocultural community, but also act as a “soft power” of Russia. It should be implemented for specific purposes, tasks and activities.

Understanding the Russian language as the basis of the Russian World, the concentrate of its culture (LIKHACHEV, 2015), is the reason for its increased role in contemporary government policy. Under such circumstances, there is an understanding of the activities in the Russian language as, “the issue of Russia's national security” and Russia’s “strategic national priority” (The Federal Target Program *Russkiy yazyk*, 2015);<sup>5</sup> and on the other hand, the importance of the Russian language is recognized as one of the elements of a “soft power” that contributes to the pursuit of Russia’s foreign policy interests, as well as the formation of a positive attitude towards Russia and Russians in the world (Kontseptsiya gosudarstvennoy podderzhki i prodvizheniya russkogo yazyka za rubezhom, 2015)<sup>6</sup>.

The study of Russian by foreigners, on the one hand, helps them to understand the values of the Russian World and its sociocultural norms, and, on the other hand, is a basic requirement for those who want to receive education in Russian, which is considered quite prestigious in the academic world.

The main objective of this article is to determine the potential and the ways to form the image of the Russian World as an aspect of sociocultural adaptation of international students to Russian reality in the process of studying RFL.

For this purpose, public documents, scientific literature and periodic publications were reviewed to shed light on the impact of the activities and education in Russian on

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<sup>4</sup> In the original: “совокупности формальных и неформальных институтов, явлений и факторов, влияющих на сохранение, производство, трансляцию и распространение духовных ценностей (этических, эстетических, интеллектуальных, гражданских и т.д.).”

<sup>5</sup> In the original: “вопрос государственной безопасности России» и «стратегический национальный приоритет” (The Federal Target Program *Russkiy yazyk* (The Russian language) for 2016-2020, approved by Decree No. 481 of the Government of the Russian Federation, 20 May 2015).

<sup>6</sup> «Kontseptsiya gosudarstvennoy podderzhki i prodvizheniya russkogo yazyka za rubezhom» (The Concept for State Support and Promotion of the Russian Language Abroad), approved by the President of the Russian Federation, 3 November 2015.

forming the image of the Russian World, as well as to describe the practices in forming the image of the Russian World in the process of teaching the Russian language to international students (evidence from the work of the Preparatory colleges of Russian universities).

## **1 The Russian Language as the Basis of the Russian World**

In accordance with the objectives of the article, it is important to define the essence of the Russian World. Based on the analysis and systematization of existing studies, it was determined that

The Russian World is a trans-border supra-ethnic sociocultural community characterized by the flexibility and dynamism of adaptation to world change. It brings together people who are interested in and share the values of Russian culture and who are not indifferent to the fate of Russia, regardless of their country of origin and residence, religion or mother tongue, with the aim of preserving and translating the values of the Russian World through the formation of an adequate image of Russia worldwide (KOZLOVTSEVA, 2017, p.289).<sup>7</sup>

The Russian language, as the main element uniting the Russian World, was pointed out already in the first works devoted to this community; most researchers tend to consider it a “world-forming” component of the Russian World.

The recognition of the Russian language as a significant construct of the Russian World is no accident, because world view of people and ways of interaction with them are shaped through language (native language), which contains its value system and culture. People identify themselves always in close connection with their language. Even when forgetting the native language, they still continue thinking based on its coordinates (KOSTOMAROV, 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> In the original: “Русский мир представляет собой трансграничную надэтническую социокультурную общность, характеризующуюся гибкостью и динамичностью адаптации к мировым изменениям, объединяющую на основе добровольного участия всех людей, интересующихся и разделяющих ценности русской культуры и небезразличных к судьбе России, вне зависимости от страны их происхождения и проживания, вероисповедания или родного языка, с целью сохранения и трансляции ценностей русской культуры посредством формирования адекватного образа России на мировой арене.”

As we know, the language and thinking patterns of people speaking a common language are inextricably linked to and reflect the intuitive knowledge of the experience (SEPIR, 1993) represented by stereotyped forms in each culture. At the same time, oral communication performed by a representative of a particular culture is “a sign of confirmation of one’s ownership of this culture” (PROKHOROV, 1996, p.8).<sup>8</sup>

Philologist and culturologist D. S. Likhachev spoke about the existence of the conceptual sphere of the Russian language, which means the cultural synthesis, including both the general culture of a nation and its particular manifestations, “The language of a nation is the concentrate, the algebraic expression of a nation’s whole culture” (LIKHACHEV, 2015, p.251).<sup>9</sup>

The Russian language expresses its own way of perceiving and conceptualizing the world by native speakers. The values inherent in the language and transmitted by it create a unified system of views, and a collective philosophy of the society, which is mandatory for all native speakers. This concept is called linguistic world view (APRESYAN, 1995).<sup>10</sup>

Researchers of the Russian linguistic world view have singled out a number of its key components: attentive attitude to human relationships, delineation of legality and justice, understanding of unpredictability of the world, perception of life as a necessity to mobilize human forces (ZALYZNYAK; LEVONTINA; SHMELEV, 2005), etc. These elements are implemented in a number of linguistic concepts.<sup>11</sup>

The Russian language is the key construct of the Russian World not only because it is an important element of Russian culture,<sup>12</sup> but also because it is the only

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<sup>8</sup> In the original: “знак подтверждения “собственного я” как “своего” для данной культуры.”

<sup>9</sup> In the original: “Язык нации является сам по себе сжатым, если хотите, алгебраическим выражением всей культуры нации.”

<sup>10</sup> In the original: “языковая картина мира.”

<sup>11</sup> The term “concept,” which comes from the Latin “conceptus” that means “thought”, “notion,” is interdisciplinary. It covers several scientific areas dealing with the concepts of thinking and cognition, storing and processing information. The notion of “concept corresponds to the idea of the meanings, reflecting the experience-knowledge contents, the resulting contents of the entire human activity and the world acquiring processes in the form of some knowledge “quanta” (KUBRYAKOVA, E.S. *Kratkiy slovar' kognitivnykh terminov* (A brief dictionary of cognitive terms). Moscow: MSU, 1996). In linguistics a concept is understood as a set of lexical items, the meanings of which are the content of the national linguistic consciousness and form a “naive world view” of native speakers.

<sup>12</sup> In this case culture is understood in accordance with “The Fundamentals of the State Cultural Policy” as “a set of both formal and informal institutions, phenomena and factors that affect the preservation, production, transmission and dissemination of spiritual values (ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, civic etc.)”

state language<sup>13</sup> of the Russian Federation. In addition, the Russian language is the state and official language in Russia, Belarus, and the official language of institutions in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The Russian language as an international language is used for communication and intercultural interaction. Russian is one of the six official languages of the United Nations, and it is an official language, or a working language, in a number of international organizations such as the IAEA, UNESCO, SCO, OSCE, CIS, EurAsEC, etc.

Despite the fact that the Russian language has a relatively high status, the number of Russian speakers is decreasing. In the Soviet period there were 350 to 500 million Russian speaking people in the world; by 2012 this number decreased to 250 million people (according to a study by the Ministry of Education and Science, in 2015 it was 260 million people). And by 2025, according to forecasts, the number of Russian speakers will be 152 million people (AREFIEV, 2006)<sup>14</sup>.

In the context of the current state policy of Russia, the Russian language is understood as:

- a) the basis of the history and culture of Russia;
- b) the official language of Russia;
- c) the language of international communication and an important instrument of interaction in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) area;
- d) a means of self-identification (both ethnocultural and linguistic) of the diaspora community;
- e) official or working language of major international organizations;
- e) a means of forming a positive image of the Russian Federation as an instrument of Russian influence in the world (Kontsepsiya gosudarstvennoy podderzhki i prodvizheniya russkogo yazyka za rubezhom, 2015)<sup>15</sup>.

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(DECREE No. 808, 2014). Culture, understood in that way includes “such areas of human practice as science, education, economics, philosophy, art, literature, politics” (ASTAFYEVA, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> The state (official) language is a language that performs the function of integration within the Russian state in the political, social and cultural fields. As a symbol of Russia, it is a language of public administration, legislation, legal proceedings (DYACHKOV, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> AREFIEV, A.L. Skol'ko lyudey govoryat i budut govorit' po-russki? (How many people speak and will speak Russian?). *Demoscope Weekly*, n. 251-252, 19.06-20.08.2006. Available at: [<http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0251/tema01.php>]. Access on: 18/05/2018

<sup>15</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

Based on this understanding of the Russian language, its four key functions can be distinguished:

- 1) Communicative (interactive) function is the most common and original function of the language, playing a key role in establishing international dialogue as well as increasing the effectiveness of public rhetoric, etc.;
- 2) Integration function consists in uniting different nationalities and cultures of the country into a unified sociocultural realm on the basis of the state Russian language;
- 3) Socialization function assists a foreign citizen to learn patterns of behavior, psychological attitudes, sociocultural norms and values through the Russian language in order to successfully exist in Russian society;
- 4) Translation function implies the coding and transmission of relevant information about Russia and the Russian World to foreign countries in order to form a positive and relevant image of the Russian World in the global arena.

Stemming from the description of these functions, they have different focuses: the integration and socialization functions are internal (they are implemented within the domestic policy of the Russian Federation), the function of translation is external (implemented outside the country in the framework of Russia's foreign policy activities), and the communicative function serves both as internal and external focuses.

In the context of this article, Russian plays a crucial role as a language of international communication. It caters particularly for the functions of socialization and translation (Table 1)

Focus	Function	Description of the function	Role in forming the image of the Russian World
<b>Internal</b>	<i>Socialization</i>	Assistance to foreigners to learn sociocultural norms and values of the Russian World through the Russian language in order to successfully exist in the territory of the Russian Federation.	Interaction with Russian speakers, participation in Russian language courses. The selection of educational material for such courses should be based on the relevance of modern life in Russia, practical applicability and communication.
<b>External</b>	<i>Translation</i>	Formation of an adequate image of the Russian World, Russia and Russians in global arena.	Control of the content of training materials in teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) and the learning process based on them. The selection of material should take into account the need to



			debunk stereotypes about Russia and the need to form an adequate image of modern Russia and the Russian World.
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**Table 1.** Functions of the Russian language in the context of forming the image of the Russian World

The Russian language as a basis of the Russian World also contributes to the implementation of Russia's soft power. According to the Global ranking of soft power by The Portland agency, a country's cultural attractiveness is calculated and determined by the language influence index (according to the George Weber's (WEBER, 1997) formula, which takes into account 6 main factors and an additional one).

1. *Number of primary speakers* (max. 4 points). Russian is the eighth most spoken language in the world by number of native speakers. In 2016, there were 268 million Russian speakers in the world (including 154 million in Russia) (SIMONS; FENNIG).

2. *Number of secondary speakers* (max. 6 points). Russian is the sixth most spoken language in the world by number of secondary speakers.

According to official sources, the Russian language is being studied by about 10.5 million adult foreigners. At the same time, the number of students learning Russian in the former Soviet republics reaches 3.2 million, while in other foreign countries 1.3 million with 230,000 students in higher education. In addition, Russian language courses are conducted in foreign Russian Centers for Science and Culture, where about 19,000 people study annually (THE Federal Target Program *Russkiy yazyk*, 2015).

3. *Economic power of countries using the language* (max. 8 points). According to the World Bank, Russia is the sixth-largest economy in World GDP rankings. Considering that the Russian language has an official status not only in Russia, but also in a number of foreign countries and territories, their economic level must be taken into account.

4. *Number of major areas of human activity in which the language is important* (max. 8 points). The Russian language plays a significant role in the world community, because it is the most important instrument for understanding the values of Russian culture, education and science by other peoples.

5. *Number and population of countries using the language* (max. 7 points). Today, the Russian language is used by residents of 19 countries (SIMONS; FENNIG, 2018). The

total population of these countries is more than 0.5 billion people, i.e., about 7% of world population.

6. *Socio-literary prestige of the language* (max. 4 points). The level of influence of language is largely due to its role in the global network of knowledge translation. This indicator is of particular importance to the transition into information age, which is characterized, inter alia, by the creation of a knowledge society.

The study of the languages of the world, which are used as knowledge translation tools, in 2014, included 3 main resources:

- the results of the UNESCO Index Translatorium project aimed at determining the degree of translatability of languages, as well as the direction of the implementation of such translations;
- posts of bilingual and multilingual users of Twitter;
- statistics of the edits made by bilingual and multilingual users of Wikipedia (RONEN, *et al.*, 2014).

In the wake of the research, its authors proposed the network of influence of languages. Thus, in the network of book translations (more than 500,000 authors, 78,000 publishers in 148 countries), Russian is considered to be one of the languages with the highest number of translations (to and from). It is the fourth among the languages with translations from Russian and the seventh among the languages with translations to Russian.

Of great importance in determining the socio-literary prestige of the modern Russian language is the fact that over the past few years the Russian-language Internet has risen to the first place in Europe in terms of activity and the number of users and the 2nd place in the world ranking of content creation and consumption in the Russian language, as well as the number of national domains (.ru and .рф), which occupy a worthy place in international cyberspace.

An additional point is given for being an official UN language. As stated previously, the Russian language has this status.

Thus, Russian is on the 4th place in the ranking of the world's most influential languages after English, French and Spanish (10 SAMYKH vliyatel'nykh yazykov mira, 2016).

Returning to the question of the role of the Russian language as a means of knowledge translation, we cannot fail to mention education given in Russian, which is one of the most important tools for forming the image of the Russian World.

## **2 The Role of Education in the Russian language in Forming the Image of the Russian World**

The Education in the Russian language, being a complex tool for forming the image of the Russian World, reflects its history, culture, modern life and the mentality of Russians. It is given in Russian and based on the leading achievements of Russian science.

Today the state policy of the Russian Federation is promoting education in Russian in three main directions:

- 1) establishment, development and support of Russian schools abroad;
- 2) attracting foreign citizens and the diaspora community to obtain secondary professional and higher education in Russia;
- 3) popularization of open education in Russian, which implies the development and implementation of additional general education and professional programs in distance education, using information and communication technologies (KOZLOVTSEVA, 2017, p.62).

The result of such state activity should be:

- a) improving the quality of general education in Russian beyond the borders of Russia;
- b) ensuring the demand for Russian general education;
- c) education of students based on Russian traditions and culture;
- d) socialization of students (KONTSEPTSIYA russkoy shkoly za rubezhom, 2015).

One of the priorities of promoting education in Russian is to attract foreign citizens to obtain higher education in Russia. A special website, *Studyinrussia.ru*, has been launched for this purpose. The website allows students to learn more about the specifics of education in Russia, top universities, possible forms of education, and also about scholarships for studying in Russia. Through this website the organization *Rossotrudnichestvo* and foreign missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

Russian Federation selects foreign citizens and compatriots abroad for studying in Russia at the expense of the Government of the Russian Federation.

According to the *Russian Statistical Yearbook 2017*, in the 2016/2017 academic year the number of foreign students studying in higher professional education establishments and scientific organizations of Russia amounted to 244,000 people. This is 1,500 more than in the previous academic year (ROSSIJSKIJ statisticheskiy ezhegodnik, 2017). “Strategy 2020” is aimed to increase the proportion of foreign students getting education in Russia to 10% by 2020 (STRATEGY 2020).

It is necessary to recognize that growth is mainly due to the influx of students from the CIS and neighboring countries. For example, in the 2016/2017 academic year, 186,800 people from the CIS, the Baltic States and Georgia were studying in Russian universities (ROSSIJSKIJ statisticheskiy ezhegodnik, 2017).

One of the ways to increase the proportion of foreign students (including from non-CIS countries) in Russian universities is to increase the prestige of Russian education in the global market of educational services.

In order to maximize the competitive position of a group of leading Russian universities in the global research and education market, the government program, *Project 5-100*, was launched. The result of this Project should be the formation of modern Russian university leaders with an effective governance structure and a high reputation in study and research. These universities should be consistent with global development trends and react quickly to changes. The following are the key goals for the Project:

- to bring at least five universities from among the project participants into the one-hundred best universities in the world, according to the three most authoritative world rankings: Times Higher Education, Quacquarelli Symonds and Academic Ranking of World Universities.
- to have no less than 15% international students;
- to have at least 10% international professors amongst the staff (GOVERNMENT Decision No. 211, 2017).

In the above context, when promoting Russian education, a significant issue is the requirement to speak Russian, without which it is impossible to master the education program successfully.

The main way to prepare for entering Russian universities is to study at preparatory faculties (DECREE of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 1304, 2014). According to the current legislation, the comprehensive preparatory program includes a Russian language course as well as a number of courses for chosen specialist fields.

Taking into consideration the fact that the Russian language is dominant in the curriculum, and there are sufficient hours for studying it, it is no exaggeration to say that the preparatory faculties play a key role in forming the actual image of the Russian World.

### **3 Actual Image of the Russian World in the Mind of Society**

What is the current image of the world in the minds of Russian society and what should be the actual image created during the process of studying the Russian language? The image of the Russian World has two main directions: internal and external. The internal image of Russia is significantly influenced by the *Russian national idea*, which took shape during the historical process and is fixed in the national mentality and genotype supported by a cultural and civilizational code (SHVEDKOVSKY, 1997). The external side of the image of the Russian World includes cultural phenomena and personalities recognized as a Russian contribution to world civilization.

The central component of the image of the Russian World is the *image of Russia*. The image of the Russian Diaspora can be considered a supporting image. The image of Russia as a “huge and unknown” country is a perception of the foreign community, without taking into account its regional components. Traditionally, the image of Russia is limited to representations as a country of Christian tradition and heritage.

The perception of Russia and Russians in the world is also influenced by everyday culture (culture of everyday life). Russia is considered “inconvenient for living” when compared to western standards of quality life. The social aspect of the image of Russia at the present stage is characterized by perceptions of social inequality, a decrease in life expectancy, an increase in mortality, a worsening of the healthcare system, an increase in alcoholism and drug addiction.

The key factor in the formation of both the “internal” and “external” image of the country is traditionally considered to be the geopolitical component. Russia is characterized by being between the “West” and “East,” which determines the “special path” of the country.

In the emerging image of Russia, we can distinguish a stable component, expressed by the stereotypes of the perception of the masses. At the level of ordinary consciousness, stereotypes about Russians were broadcast and supported by media materials on the criminal past of Russian compatriots, the “Russian trace” in political and criminal spheres, and the social tension of Russian society. Sources of negative information were also the Russian media (SEMENENKO, 2012). In addition, stereotypes about Russia were widely broadcast in the western (especially American) mass culture (cinema, music, literature, etc.). For example, the most popular image of a Russian person in American cinema is a criminal element with one or more criminal terms, the main values of which are money, fights and alcohol. Russia in such films appears as a destitute country in poverty, in which there are no democratic values and elementary concepts of morality.

A single list of stably relayed stereotypes determines the perception of the Russian mentality by the West in a certain coordinate system. In this regard, the myth of the “mysterious Russian soul” is so stable, which explains almost all behavioral patterns that are irrational or do not comply with European norms. The analysis of such representations is conducted by modern researchers of the Russian language abroad. In their papers the imposed characteristics of the Russian World are correlated with extensive empirical material on the Russian mentality, life and psychology of modern Russians (SEMENENKO, 2012).

Traditionally, stable stereotyped associations with Russia include vodka, frost, ballet, cap with ear flaps, Siberia, and the Kremlin. In the sphere of politics – communism, corruption and oligarchs. The negative impact on the image of Russia is caused by the unsatisfactory social climate in society. Natural resources and the richest heritage of culture are considered as positive components. Military power and the ability to withstand the influence of the United States are also viewed positively rather than negatively. The positive factor is the authority of the head of country – V.V. Putin.

However, from the point of view of the foreign public, the named characteristics of the image of Russia for the most part counterbalance each other (SEMENENKO, 2012).

As mentioned above, the image of the Russian World is formed not only from the central image of Russia, but also from the image of the Russian emigration supported by a number of emigration waves. In this regard, it is worth saying a few words about the problem of identification of emigrants. It seems that to understand this problem we need M.M. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism: the process of self-identification occurs in a dialogue with the image of "another," another culture (BAKHTIN, 1979).

Thus, for the emigrants of the post-revolutionary period, the basis of self-awareness was primarily identification with the multicentury Russian culture and its values. Thus, considering the conceptosphere of Russian culture of the 20th century, scientists traditionally include representatives of the "white emigration" in it, the cultural intelligentsia, which carried out its creative activity beyond the borders of the country (for example, M. Bulgakov, D. Shostakovich, S. Prokofiev, I. Bunin, E. Neizvestny, M. Gorky, etc.), and formed a special, unique culture of the Russian emigration, based on nostalgia for an eternally lost homeland.

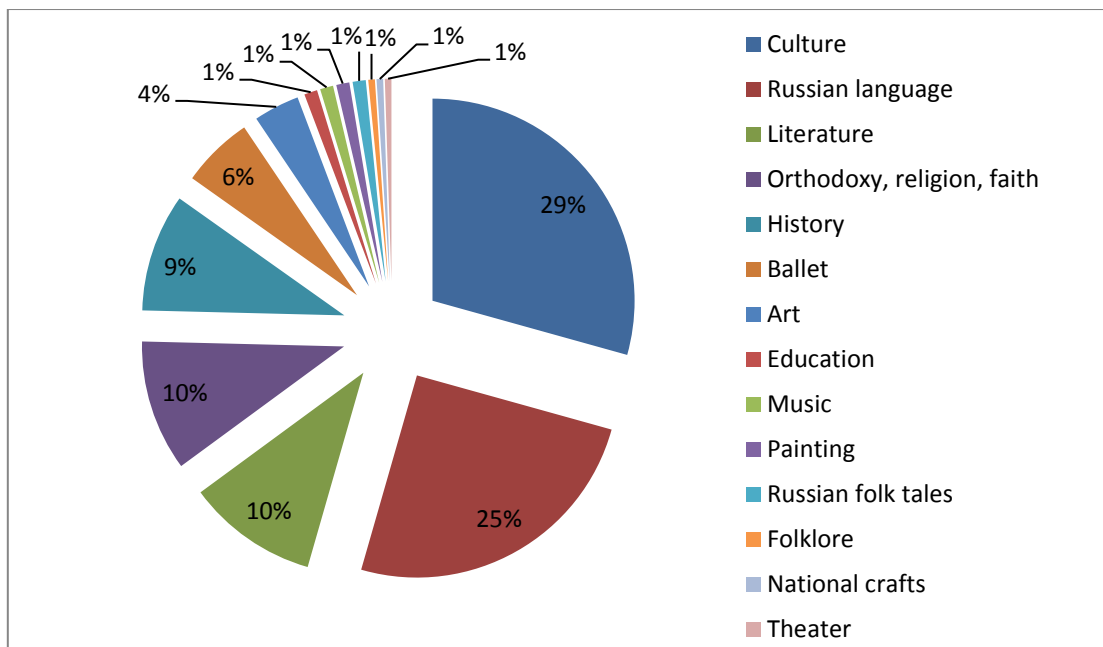
This allows us to talk about the special cultural identity that is being formed among the representatives of the Russian World, in contrast to the civil (state) identity of Russians. In this sense, in the image of the Russian World as a community based, first of all, on a community of cultural and ideological values, it is not the geopolitical, but the cultural-spiritual component that dominates.

Questions of the description of the image of the Russian World existing in the mind of the society were solved within our framework conducted in 2015 – 2017 using questionnaires in social networks VKontakte and Facebook. The number of respondents in this part of the survey included not only Russians and Russian diaspora, but also foreigners from near and afar (total – 759 people from 69 countries, of which 288 were foreign compatriots, 168 – Russians and 303 foreigners) (KOZLOVTSEVA, 2018, p.62).

The task of the survey was to determine the signs of Russianness implicit in the minds of society. Respondents were asked to name not more than three associations with the "Russian World." As a result, about 250 associations were recorded: facts and phenomena of Russian culture (Figure 1), Russian World personalities (Figure 2),

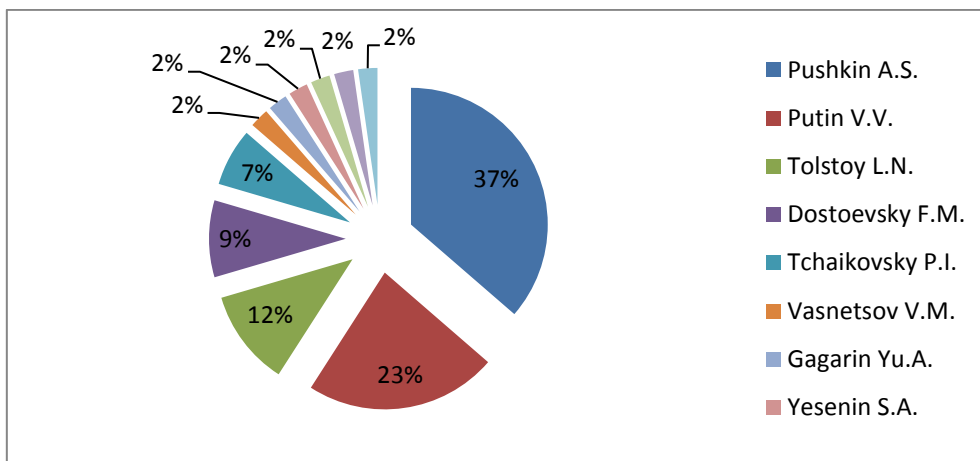
Russian cuisine (Figure 3), geographical and natural names of Russia (Figure 4), moral and ideological values of the Russian World (Figure 5), which form altogether the image of the Russian World.

This image is a complex reflection of the Russian World both in the minds of Russians, and in the minds of compatriots abroad and foreigners. From our point of view, it is the complex approach that ensures the integrity of the image. Meanwhile, there are also a number of associations that are more characteristic of Russians (A.S. Pushkin, the flag), compatriots abroad (buckwheat, carnival, fairy tales) or foreigners (birch, borsch, caviar).

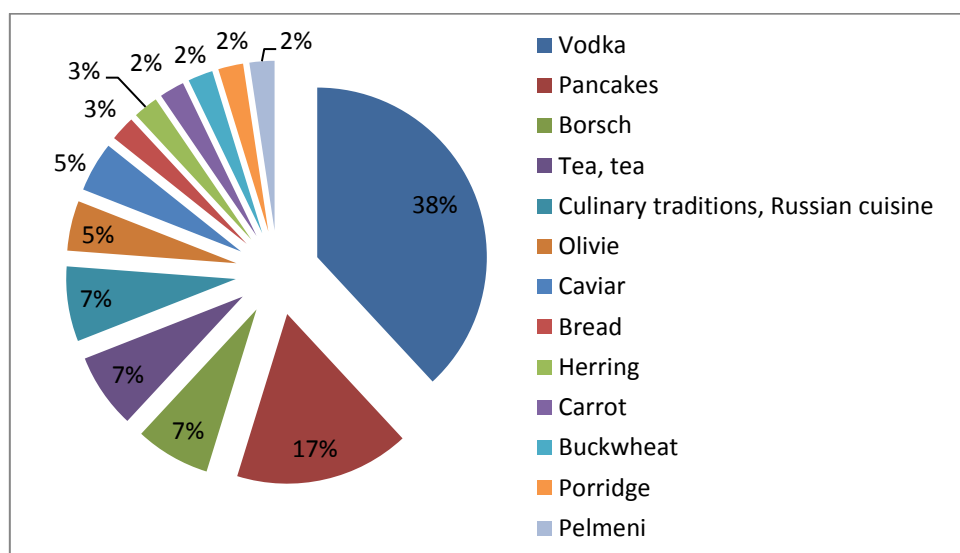


**Figure 1.** Facts and phenomena of Russian culture

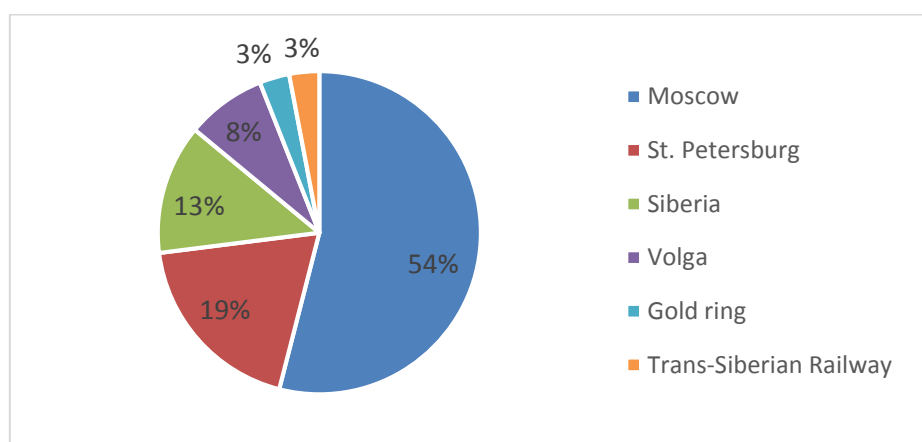




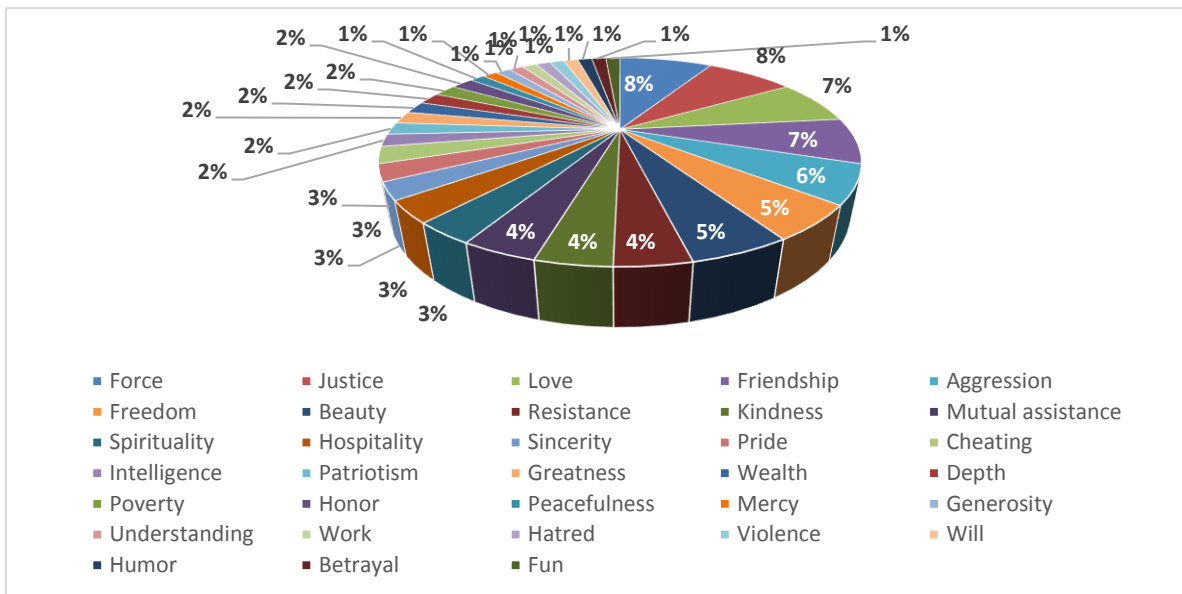
**Figure 2.** Russian World personalities



**Figure 3.** Russian cuisine



**Figure 4.** Geographical and natural names of Russia

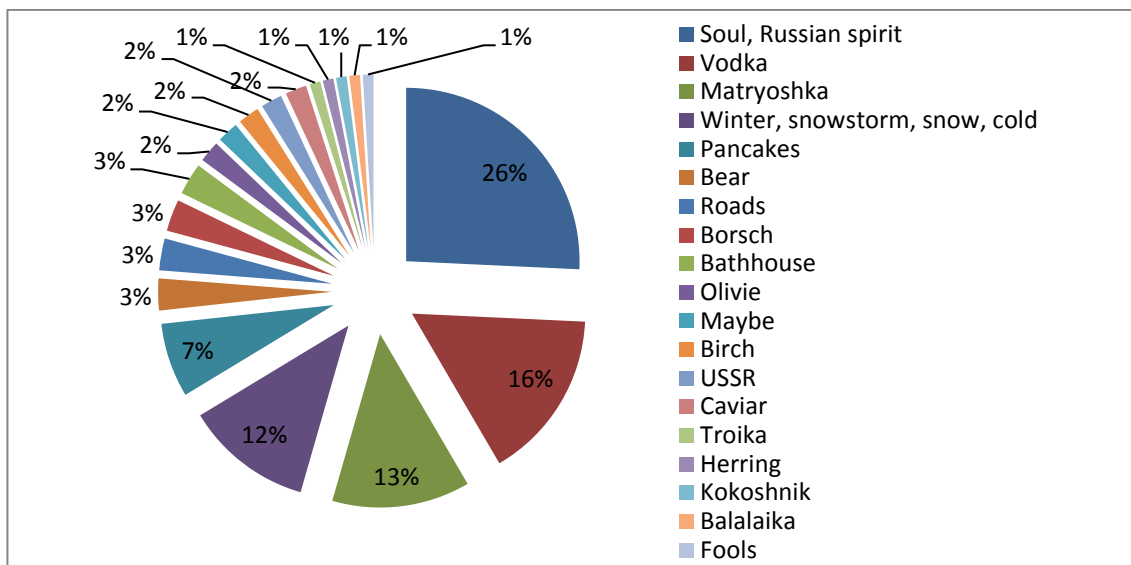


**Figure 5.** Moral and ideological values of the Russian World

Note that along with the positive and neutral associations with the Russian World there are negative ones (for example, aggression, cheating). Thus, for 8% of respondents the Russian World seems to be an artificially created political ideology. Understanding this position is necessary for the formation of an adequate image of the Russian World and the search for ways to adjust it.

The resulting image of the Russian World appears to be a sublimated version of the image of Russia. For example, culturally, it includes significantly fewer names and realities. The image of the Russian World also integrates the representations of compatriots abroad, a significant part of which is related to the theme of nostalgia (for example, associations of “homeland,” “origins,” “common roots,” “home,” “mother,” “childhood”).

Also, through a questionnaire, a number of stereotypes about the Russian World were identified (Figure 6), which do not always correspond to reality and are capable of distorting the notion of the real Russian World.



**Figure 6.** Stereotypes about the Russian World

It is characteristic that the perception of the Russian World on the basis of stereotypes is peculiar not only to the consciousness of foreigners, but also (even more so) to the consciousness of Russian compatriots abroad.

By themselves, stereotypes are not always a negative reflection of ideas about the Russian world, but only the most traditional and well-established in the minds of people. The possibility of biased reflection of reality carry only outdated stereotypes, archaizing and distort the actual reality. Among those mentioned above are vodka (which for a long time was not the main alcoholic drink of Russians, especially in large cities), bears (which in the representations of foreigners they freely walk the streets of Russian cities), the USSR (which is our past, but not the present), the triple, kokoshnik and balalaika (which are elements of traditional Russian culture, but not inalienable attributes of the modern life of the subjects of the Russian World), etc.

The results of the survey conducted in conjunction with the results of other studies allow us to conclude that the actual image of the Russian World is largely clichéd and based on traditional ideas about Russia and Russian culture and does not contain elements of modernity. This, in turn, serves as a catalyst for the creation of new stereotypes about Russia and the Russian World and negative opinions about it (for example, aggression, deception). In connection with this, the debunking of obsolete stereotypes and the creation of an adequate image of modern multicultural Russia is becoming a significant direction of activity related to the formation of an adequate

image of the Russian World (in particular, the work of teachers of Russian as a foreign language).

#### **4 Formation of the Image of the Russian World in the Process of Teaching the Russian language to Foreigners: A Practical Aspect**

A growing number of foreign students in Russian universities have served as an impetus to the emergence of numerous studies devoted to studying the problems of students' adaptation to new living and learning conditions.

When foreign students arrive in Russia, they have to learn cultural norms and values, and patterns of behavior, that are often different from the what they are used to, in order to integrate into a new socio-cultural environment and successfully exist as a member of the host community.

Preparatory college conducts purposeful, planned and systematic work on the adaptation of foreign students through the organization of classroom and extracurricular activities. The efficiency of integration depends on how successfully the adaptation processes proceed.

The formation of an objective and non-stereotyped image of Russia is one of the key aspects of the sociocultural adaptation of foreign citizens. Unfortunately, some researchers note that the information contained in specialized textbooks for foreign students does not always correlate “with its relevance for the native speakers (themselves) and the adequacy of modern Russian reality” (KULIKOVA, 2017, p.55)<sup>16</sup>. In this regard, the RFL teacher needs to select additional educational material, in particular, texts telling directly about the culture, traditions and customs, the nature and life of people in Russia, as well as texts in which the image of the country is presented in an implicit way.

Familiarity with a culture and values unfamiliar to students should not be moralizing and instructive. Due to the difference in cultures and traditions, not all foreign students can be interested and aimed at a deep understanding of Russian culture. In studying the Russian language they rather pursue pragmatic goals in order to continue education in Russia. In this situation, the teacher of RFL is given the task: to

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<sup>16</sup> In the original: “с её релевантностью для самих носителей языка и адекватностью современной российской действительности.”

evoke an interest of a foreign student to Russian culture (starting with the most closely related aspects). We believe that the most optimal tool for solving this task is the use of *edutainment* technology, which involves the inclusion of a variety of modern technical and didactic teaching aids in the educational process. This technology, based on the concept of education through entertainment, promotes “the formation of primary interest in the subject, a further enjoyable involvement in the learning process and a strong interest in the learning process” (ZHELEZNYAKOVA, DIAKONOVA, 2013, p.70)<sup>17</sup>. Today, more than ever, a teacher of RFL should be able to navigate the flow of digital information, filtering out redundant and unnecessary information and at the same time quickly processing the information found. This ability, as well as the possession of a wide range of creative techniques, methods and forms of broadcasting educational information, on the one hand, takes time for preparation, and on the other hand, they optimize and make the learning process more effective. Moreover, for the so-called Generation Z, with which we are dealing in the classroom, the existing digital technologies are not so innovative; they are a natural element of life to them.

Based on the discussion above, we believe that in order to solve the task of forming an adequate image of the Russian World, an RFL teacher should pay attention to the following key points:

- to have a critical approach to the selection of texts, audio and video materials from the Internet which reflect the contemporary Russian World;
- to adapt the content found to the level of Russian language proficiency of foreign students.

In our opinion, one of the main problems faced by RFL teachers at the preparatory college is the absence of vivid illustrative material reflecting the realities and values of the modern Russian World in RFL textbooks. One of the ways to eliminate this disadvantage is to create their own materials and to use video clips, which allows the representation of the process of mastering the language as students understand the actual, living culture of the foreign language.

Working with video materials should be phased: first, reducing any lexicogrammatical and cross-cultural difficulties; second, watching the video; then,

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<sup>17</sup> In the original: “формированию первичного интереса к предмету с получением удовольствия от процесса обучения и стойким интересом к процессу обучения.”

controlling the understanding of the main content; and finally, developing communicative skills and abilities. Exercises offered to students after watching a video should be aimed at consolidating previously studied material, and be similar to real-life communication situations that take into account the contemporary realities of the Russian World. In addition, students can be asked to interpret and compare the situation with the realities, behavior, and traditions accepted in their native culture.

Another way of forming an actual image of the Russian World is to introduce foreign students to the results of sociological surveys. For example, there is a rich collection of infographics including a thematic catalogue on the website of the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM)<sup>18</sup>. It has been established that information presented in the form of infographics is perceived and assimilated by foreign students faster and more easily than a text, because it has already been processed and systematized. Visualization has been used in teaching Russian as a foreign language for a long time, but today it is becoming more relevant, corresponding to the peculiarities of the perception of information by the current Generation Z.

The work with infographics is more appropriate in the second semester, when foreign students speak Russian at the basic level. For example, there is a text discussing family relations and values in one of the RFL textbooks often used at preparatory colleges. But the reality presented in the text is no longer relevant for the cultural perception of Russian-speaking recipients (KOZLOVTSEVA, 2018). In order to provide students with more reliable information, we offered the infographic The Ideal Family, from the visual almanac *Russia in Figures: 2012-2013* (GAMBARYAN; FIRSANOV, 2013). Based on this infographic, listening and writing exercises were developed: the students were given the infographics with some missing figures and words, while the teacher still had a completed infographic version, which he was reading out of turn; the students' task was to fill in the blanks. Thereafter, the completed infographic was used for a discussion of what an ideal family means in the students' countries.

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<sup>18</sup> The activity of VCIOM is aimed at obtaining, analyzing and disseminating reliable information about the state and dynamics of social development, mass consciousness and behavior of various social groups in the country.

We can say that infographics provide opportunities for teachers to prepare various tasks for classes, as well as for students to realize their creative abilities, and develop analytical and critical thinking.

In our opinion, one of the most interesting ways of reflecting the characteristics of the consciousness of modern Russians is Internet memes. The most obvious way of their use in practice of teaching RFL is the formation and development of students' linguistic competence. We find memes which contain wordplay, homophones, homonyms, etc. to be particularly interesting. Analyzing memes, students can understand the principles of syntactic constructions; they pay attention to phonetic, derivational norms and rules, and also learn to use them in practice. Memes are valuable because they are based on humor. Thus, they allow foreigners to understand Russians better and to feel the Russian language.

As noted above, the image of the Russian World implied in society consciousness is extremely traditional; it does not represent contemporary Russian culture. However, Russia is developing, and foreign students should be introduced to modern culture. There are few textbooks where students can find information about the culture of the 20th-21st centuries. For example, there are texts about a world famous Russian pianist D. Matsuev and a talented operatic soprano Anna Netrebko in one of the listening manuals. We believe that there should be more information about modern famous people in the textbook selections. In addition, we should not neglect to acquaint students with modern Russian music. There are almost no song materials in existing RFL textbooks.

It is necessary to pay closer attention to the texts for reading comprehension offered to foreign students. When choosing texts, we also face the above-mentioned problem: information is not always relevant for the native speakers and adequate to contemporary Russian reality. In connection with this, at present, we are using a textbook for reading comprehension addressed to students of the preparatory college (level A2-B1). The textbook is mainly based on the materials from the media and Internet resources.

For example, the following materials have already been approved: two capitals of Russia – Moscow and St. Petersburg; the popular tourist route The Silver necklace of Russia; similarities between Russians and other nations. Note that the textbook focuses

not only on the development of reading comprehension skills, but also on other language activities.

An important component of the educational process is extracurricular activities. One of them is a field trip, where students can learn more about the city where they live and study (in our case, it is Moscow). The authors also organize themed joint lessons dedicated to some important dates in Russian history. Such events help to increase the level of Russian knowledge, as well as to develop a broad culture. For example, an open lesson dedicated to Maslenitsa celebration is held every year. During this lesson students not only learn about this interesting holiday, but also taste traditional Russian pancakes. If there is any opportunity, they even learn how to cook them.

To sum up, during the educational process at the preparatory faculties, much attention is paid to the sociocultural adaptation of foreign students. One of the aspects of the adaptation is the formation of an attractive image of the Russian World, which is adequate to reality. In order to provoke international students' interest in Russian culture and the Russian World, a RFL teacher should select and create additional educational material and use it in the teaching process. In this regard, *edutainment* technology seems to be the most effective. It not only facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and new cultural experience by foreign students, but also fosters enjoyment in learning.

## **Conclusion**

Against the backdrop of the intensification of globalization and migration processes, coupled with existing geopolitical problems, there was a need to find ways to preserve and translate the cultural characteristics of some countries and nationalities. For Russia, this was the concept of the Russian World. Based on the above study, we came to the following conclusions:

- The cultural layer of the Russian World includes both elements of high and everyday culture.
- The current image of the Russian World is quite clichéd and based on traditional ideas about Russia and Russian culture. This often causes the emergence of negative stereotypes and a negative opinion about the country.



- The formation of an adequate image of the Russian World means, on the one hand, debunking existing negative stereotypes about Russia and Russians, and on the other hand, taking into account valuable and contemporary samples of Russian culture.
- Education in Russian is one of the key instruments for implementing Russia's soft power policy of the Russian Federation and contributes significantly to the formation of an adequate image of the Russian World worldwide. At present, various measures are being taken to increase Russian education in international rankings. One of them is the attraction of international students to Russian universities.
- The main way to prepare foreign students for admission to Russian universities is to study at preparatory colleges. At this stage of the educational process, much attention is paid to the sociocultural adaptation of foreigners.
- Due to the fact that existing RFL textbooks do not have enough illustrative and text material reflecting the realities and values of the modern Russian World, a teacher faces the task of creating their own materials, using, for example, Internet resources. In this case, the teacher should select information critically and use this information in the learning process effectively.
- Educational materials developed by teachers and methodologists of Russian as a foreign language act as a type of mediator in the "positive acculturation" of foreign citizens, based on the formation of an objective and attractive image of the Russian World.
- It is known that when it is boring to study and a student does not receive benefits, enjoyment, positive emotions, the degree of memorization almost comes to naught. For this reason, the most effective tool to arouse foreign students' interest in the Russian World is *edutainment* technology, which is based on the concept of education through entertainment.

Statement of authorship and responsibility for published content.

We declare that both authors had access to the research *corpus*, participated actively in the discussion of the results and conducted the review and approval process of the paper's final version.

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Translated by Natalia Tolstova – [tolstova.natalia@mail.ru](mailto:tolstova.natalia@mail.ru);  
Nina Kozlovtseva - [nina\\_kozlovtseva@mail.ru](mailto:nina_kozlovtseva@mail.ru)

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