

Organization of Master Classes for Foreigners Learning the Russian Language

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Abstract. the article is addressed to teachers of Russian as a foreign language. The article describes a popular form of education - a master class, its capabilities and main advantages in comprehending language and culture (change of activity type, minimal language training of students, a wide range of opportunities to get acquainted with the culture of native-speakers of the target language, etc.). It also provides recommendations for the organization of master classes for foreigners learning the Russian language.

1. Introduction

When studying any foreign language, the most important favorable factor is communication with its native-speakers and immersion in the linguistic and cultural environment. Therefore, various forms of student tourism are so popular: foreign exchange programs, internships, etc. However, for various reasons, foreigners in the country of the language to be learnt are not always able to make friends, communication, and often contacts with native speakers are limited to meetings with teachers in standard classes on grammar, vocabulary, listening in almost the same way as it would be in their native country in language classes or courses at any level.

Therefore, an additional pressure is often placed on teachers of Russian as a foreign language: not only organizing the learning process for foreigners, but also leisure time, out-of-class activities, etc. A very effective form of work with foreign students, in our opinion, is a master class.

2. Urgency and literature review

Master class is a form of education that has recently been very popular both in the field of education and leisure activities. The areas of activity here are also different: from playing the piano and computer programming to sewing, mastering various psychotechnics and teaching methods.

According to the generally accepted definition, a master class is "a special genre of generalization and sharing pedagogical experience, which is a fundamentally developed original method or an author's technique based on its principles and having a certain structure". It is a very effective method of transmitting the experience of training and education [2; 2].

2.2. When reviewing literature and online resources, the following can be noted.

First, the number of materials on master classes in teaching Russian as a foreign language is small, for example, a master class on creating Christmas tree decorations [1], on a Russian song [4].

Secondly, as a rule, the authors propose in this field and in other fields, the product of a very narrow character, i.e. a description of the creation of a specific product that is associated with a certain

type of activity but there are no works on the general methodological, psychological foundations of organizing master classes.

Thirdly, if we are talking specifically about print publications in various areas of activity, a large percentage of foreign authors should be noted (J. Wolf, K. Fopel, R. Macchi, etc.).

3. Research objective

The objective of our article is to consider the advantages of the master class as a form of working with foreigners in the study of the Russian language, as well as to develop recommendations for organizing such master classes.

4. Advantages of the master class

What are the benefits of the master class as a form of organizing work with foreigners learning Russian?

First, master classes allow you to take a break from the monotony and sameness of standard classes (for both students and teachers) especially if you can spend them outside the university (in the museum, theater, music school). The unusual form stimulates interest in the subject of study (language).

Secondly, when conducting master classes the same as any work with foreigners, the teacher should always take into account the level of language training of the participants but in this case the adjustments will be minimal since the main work is usually a hands-on setup. Verbal means may well be ancillary, giving way to the presentation and direct demonstration of a particular activity. And work for the improvement of language skills not being the main goal of the lesson will still continue (listening, learning new vocabulary and grammatical forms).

Thirdly, exploring the culture of its speakers contributes to the rapid and high-quality mastery of the language (this is what they are going to the country of the studied language for). Culture in this case is understood in a very broad sense, in cultural terms, as everything created by man. This is not only achievements in the field of arts, science and technology but also the culture of everyday life (organization of work and leisure, daily routine and communication, and much more). The master class is nothing but a form of representation of certain aspects of culture.

Fourthly, so the range of areas in which master classes can be organized is as wide as the culture is diverse. The teacher focuses on his or her abilities and interests as well as on the capabilities of the university. This could be a cooking master class (cooking a Russian dish) or a master class on making a postcard for a holiday or a Christmas ornament [1]. If the teacher's pedagogical baggage has additional education skills (music or art school, dance or sports training, etc.), the implementation of these skills will only have a beneficial effect on students developing both their cultural and linguistic horizons. This will be achieved by both acquaintance with a dance, a song or playing a musical instrument (modern or folk) and by the creation of crafts in one of the traditional folk styles. The options are various.

Fifthly, master classes can be held not only by university professors but also by other people - specialists in a particular field. Moreover, Russian students who have the necessary skills and are interested in some kind of activity can also be such specialists. Russian students can be invited as assistants to conduct a master class. Meeting native speakers (not teachers) is very important for foreign students. Even if no strong connections are made and a lack of communication in Russian is not eliminated, the format and the situation of communication will change that will have a positive impact on the educational process.

And, sixthly, a master class is a one-time, short-term event. And this is its advantage. Of course, there have long been other forms of organizing work with foreign students aimed, at assisting them in mastering the Russian language, on the one hand, and encouraging these students to communicate with native speakers, on the other hand. This is the participation of foreigners in various long-term activities: clubs, studios, extra-curricular classes or societies etc. [3]. Though, long-term courses are not always convenient for various reasons. The development of a master class will require from a teacher less time than the development of a training course. One-time, but diverse activities help learn the in-

terests, hobbies, abilities of the students and, if required, the teacher can help them find the activity they like.

5. Recommendations for a master class for foreigners organizing

Having described the benefits of the master class we would also like to point out some limitations that should be considered when organizing this form of work, and offer a number of recommendations.

First of all, despite all the advantages listed master classes should not be held too often. After all, one of its advantages is the unusual form, and it should be new to students.

A large number of participants (over 10 people) is not appropriate as in this case the leader will not either be able to monitor the work of everybody, or it will take too much time. In order to avoid these difficulties as well as if the group is more than 10 people, we would recommend the master class to be conducted by two teachers or the leader having an assistant.

We mentioned the fact that classes at master classes are predominantly practical in nature that is why the teacher depending on the level of students' language level makes only minimal adjustments to the explanations (and to the course of the lesson). However, this freedom is relative and consideration of the level of language training is necessary.

First of all, the requirements for the leader's speech common for teachers of Russian as a foreign language are preserved: clarity and loudness, a slightly slower pace, simplicity of vocabulary and syntactic structures.

Moreover, a presentation is necessary for a master class with a foreign audience. It is important because it is easier to perceive a foreign language by seeing rather than by hearing. However the speech must necessarily sound as it is necessary for the development of listening skills. Both the leader of the master class and his assistants say the text as well as make the necessary comments and answer any questions. The text should be presented in a very limited way: even without a picture, the amount of text on one slide should not exceed one or three sentences. Such division of information improves its perception. The presentation should be spectacular and illustrative but at the same time not overloaded with special effects that disperse attention. The speed of the demonstration should take into account not only the speed of the foreigners' reading but also the possibility of translation, putting down unfamiliar words because one of the goals of such activities is learning new phenomena, objects, skills, and therefore their verbal design.

Before conducting a master class the students should (and if the language training level of a group is weak, they must) be given a linguistic task in advance. They can be offered to translate a list of words needed to work in class. Additionally, to consolidate these words the students should do lexical and grammatical tasks (for example, pick up synonyms/ antonyms, make sentences/phrases with these words, make up questions).

A meaningful presentation for a foreign audience should include two parts. The first part is cultural, historical, informative. Whatever the master class is devoted to (handicrafts, Christmas toys, national dishes, Easter eggs), it should be kept in mind that its participants are people of a different culture who are often unfamiliar with not only the subject, but also the cultural sphere it belongs to. This part of the presentation introduces the participants not so much to the product to be created during the class (its history, technology and application traditions), but to the cultural background in which it belongs to and which usually does not require comments for native speakers. So, Russian listeners, of course, may not know the history of origin and various techniques of making New Year's ornaments or painting Easter eggs but the time of these holidays their essence and traditions are understandable for such an audience unlike the representatives of the ASIA Pacific Region countries.

The second part of the presentation (the master class itself) is a technology for creating a product. The presence of this part is necessary especially if it is complicated multi-stage work, if there are too many participants of the master class, and the leader does not have the ability to control the work of everybody.

The last group of requirements concerns the implementation of the project itself. The product created by the participants of the master class should be interesting, vivid, reflecting the culture of the

country (not necessarily Russian culture). For example, crafts of small peoples of the Amur River attract great interest among foreigners. Manufacturing techniques and materials should be simple and consistent with the capabilities of the university (with all the glamor of traditional gold embroidery, its production during the master class is hardly possible, both because of the cost and complexity). It is also necessary to conform safety requirements (work with sharp and cutting tools, hot water, etc.).

6. Conclusion

Thus, having considered the master class as a form of work with foreigners studying the Russian language, we came to the conclusion that this form is very effective, as it introduces not only the language, but also the culture of the country of the studied language in a vivid and interesting way but the master classes organization calls for a number of requirements].

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