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## Using the folklore and poetry by Sergei Yesenin in Russian as a foreign language lessons: an online class

### Использование фольклора и поэзии Сергея Есенина на уроках русского языка как иностранного: онлайн-класс

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#### Abstract


Object of the article: Russian as a foreign language classes. Subject of the article: the method of creating an artificial language environment in classes with students from Asia and Africa who study Russian as a foreign language. Material of the article: an online experiment on the use of materials of Russian folklore and the artistic heritage of the poet of the early XX century Sergei Esenin in classes with foreign students. The purpose of the article is to identify the national axiology in Russian poetry. The purpose of the article is to show the features of the online lesson of Russian as a foreign language. Methodology: holistic hermeneutic analysis of the song on the poet's verses "Above the window the moon" with the involvement of biographical commentary and historical-literary context. The results of the study consist in the development of a methodology for analyzing the text with foreign students, aimed at a holistic perception and understanding of the poetic text.

#### Аннотация

Объект статьи: уроки русского языка как иностранного. Предмет статьи: способ создания искусственной языковой среды на уроках со студентами из стран Азии и Африки, изучающими русский язык как иностранный. Материал статьи: онлайн-эксперимент по использованию материалов русского фольклора и художественного наследия поэта начала XX века Сергея Есенина на уроках с иностранными студентами. Целью статьи выступает выявление национальной аксиологии в русской поэзии. Задача статьи – показать особенности онлайн-урока русского языка как иностранного. Методология работы: целостный герменевтический анализ песни на стихи поэта «Над окошко месяц» с привлечением биографического комментария и историко-литературного контекста. Результаты исследования заключаются в разработке методики по анализу текста с иностранными студентами, которая

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**Keywords:** foreign language, national worldview, Russian traditional culture, folklore, Sergei Yesenin's work, media environment.

## Introduction

Every country and its people have their own national worldview, which can be described and understood through cultural a priori, codes, and archetypes. The development of the theory of national worldviews in Russian science was carried out by the philologist and culturologist G.D. Gachev, who in monographs described the national existence of Russia through a system of dendronyms, paying great attention to the semantics of birch, oak, and fir (pine) in Russian linguoculture (Gachev, 1995). Such culturological constants allow a deep immersion into the national peculiarity of the country, which is a productive factor for studying the Russian language as a non-native language. So, Martin Heidegger's idea that language, primarily the language of literature and poetry, is the home of being (Heidegger, 1991) is also relevant. In Russian as a foreign language lessons, it is necessary to refer to classic literature, the works of A.S. Pushkin, L.N. Tolstoy, F.M. Dostoevsky, S.A. Yesenin, A.A. Blok, and others (Belozubova, 2015). However, as a rule, if the names of 19th century writers are known even to foreign students, teachers actively refer to them (Petrova, 2021), while 20th century authors are poorly known or have never heard of them, while, for example, the works of Sergei Yesenin are closely related to the traditions of Russian folklore, which can be productive in Russian language lessons for foreigners. The legacy of Russian folklore is also actively used by methodologists in classes with foreign students (Petrova, 2020).

## Materials and methods

The founders of the methodology of teaching RAF remind us that there is nothing more important than live communication in lessons, which would be aimed at creating a detailed monological or dialogical statement, the ability to express one's opinion and justify it, which is always determined by the metatask, namely the desire to create a strong, stable ego-identity (Astakhova, & Reshetov, 1998). However, the digital reality in which all layers of society exist today, and which affects all types of modern art and science (Dudareva, 2022), sometimes dictates its own rules.

направлена на целостное восприятие и понимание поэтического текста.

**Ключевые слова:** иностранный язык, национальный образ мира, русская традиционная культура, фольклор, творчество Сергея Есенина, медиасреда.

In the context of the transitional nature of the culture of the 21st century, globalization, and the *digital turn* in the modern humanitarian space, the discipline of "Russian as a Foreign Language" is also undergoing changes that concern both philosophers and cultural scholars (Dudareva, 2022). Its methodology is changing first and foremost, with the communicative method being considered the main method today. However, with the development of the media environment, which involves both the language speaker and the recipient to varying degrees, teachers are forced to master its resources and select the best patriotic and culturally oriented material for lessons with foreign students, in order to continue to strive for the student's holistic immersion in the Russian national world. Often, it is necessary to create an *artificial linguistic environment* for this, which is especially relevant for online classes. In this context, it is axiologically significant to appeal to the heritage of Russian folklore, since in Russia literature is closely related to oral folk art. Let us turn in this context to the work of Sergei Yesenin, who loved and studied Russian folklore.

Of course, the teacher himself must choose the text for hermeneutic analysis for a foreign student who is not yet familiar with the poet's work. To achieve the goal and objectives, the methodologist must use the following general scientific methods: analysis and systematic selection, systematization, and generalization of material. The article reproduces a holistic hermeneutic analysis of the song on the poet's verses "Above the window the moon" with the involvement of biographical commentary and historical-literary context.

## Results

In online teaching RAF, especially outside of the language environment, it is particularly important to immerse oneself in Russian reality, which can be achieved by using authentic culturally charged song material rich in historical realities (collection of articles, Sushko et al., 2017), while activating verbal and non-verbal means during the lesson. Of course, working with authentic material at the initial stage of learning

(A1-A2) always presents a number of difficulties, but as modern experts rightly point out, "poor language proficiency, which significantly complicates work with authentic songs, does not make it less necessary and therefore should not be a reason to refuse their use in the beginner audience" (Gridneva, Vladimirova, 2020, p. 63).

Over the past ten years of its development, the concept of culturological or cultural texts has been introduced into the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Referring to these texts assumes familiarity with the historical and cultural realities of the country, its basic national constants, or, to use the language of culturologist and philologist G.D. Gachev, *cultural a priori*, given to each people (Gachev, 2008, p. 42). This must be taken into account by the teacher who is constantly looking for new methods and never stops experimenting in order to establish the process of intercultural communication. In Russian language classes, students are introduced to *another* way of seeing the world axiologically and ontologically, taking a journey to another country and its culture. A Russian language class is always a crossroads of cultures (Abazova, 2012, p. 100).

An example of one of the online experiments could be a lesson on "Speaking and Singing in Russian: The Creativity of Sergei Yesenin." The teacher's task is to interest students in the personality of the Russian poet, his poems about the homeland, mother, and Russian nature. In the poetry of this author, the theme of the homeland is of paramount importance, and the concept of "homeland" is expressed primarily through ethnoconstants, namely the archetype of the tree, the image-symbol of the Russian field. Phytonyms and dendronyms "birch", "poplar", "willow", which serve as a symbol of Russia in the poetry of the early 20th century author, are especially relevant for linguocultural analysis. Russia is a country with a special landscape, natural space, which determines the perception of the world as a whole and the perception of language in particular since language is a home for being, according to the ideas of famous philosophers and cultural scientists (this theory of the interconnection of landscape and image of life is from the European school).

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher should introduce the students to the portrait of Sergei Yesenin, drawing attention to the Slavic appearance of the poet: curly golden hair, blue eyes, which, it should be noted, will be an

anthropological feature of the lyrical hero and his poetry. When we watch a collage video of the poet's poems (the poem "The Moon Above the Window" is played; performed by Yan Frenkel, a fragment taken from the film "The Crown of the Russian Empire") and see young Yesenin holding a balalaika, we draw attention to this and ask questions to the student audience. What musical instruments are there in their country? Do students play musical instruments? "All the subtleties and all the depth of problems of interlingual and intercultural communication become particularly clear, and sometimes simply realized, when comparing foreign languages with native ones, foreign culture with one's own, familiar one" (Ter-Minasova, 2008, p. 48). At this moment of intercultural dialogue, the focus is also on patriotic education, which is impossible without knowledge of the basics of both one's own native culture and foreign cultures. Despite its short form, the poem is complex in terms of ontological and axiological perception, so it is necessary to listen to the song based on Esenin's lyrics once again. A successful choice would be a choir or folk ensemble performing the song. For Russian oral and musical culture, choral culture is important, as singing is often accompanied by dances, which have a ritual and ceremonial character (such a performance was demonstrated by the Kuban Philharmonic Choir named after G.F. Ponomarenko).

The teacher then shows a photo sequence of Russian trees - birch, poplar, and willow. The teacher emphasizes to the students that every country has its own characteristics of nature and landscape, which is expressed, among other things, in language, literature, and art. Fields, steppes, and trees are symbols of the Russian national image of the world. In this context, the teacher asks about the landscape and climate of the countries where the students in the online experiment are located. As practice shows, students can already talk about the climate and nature of their country at the final stage of A1 learning (the oral part of the preparatory faculty exam ends with a story on the topics "My Family", "My Friend", "My City", "My Country"). Analysis of this culturological text, and poetry (song) in Russia, as a literary-centric country, always translates cultural meanings, can be offered to students both at the initial stage of studying Russian as a foreign language, and at the advanced stage.

## Conclusion

Oral folklore is the spiritual foundation for the Russian people. Without folklore, it is impossible to understand the aesthetic ideals of Russian literature. Although it is not the easiest section to study in Russian language classes for foreigners, exposure to folk and song material develops the inner world of modern young people, raises the moral and ethical level, and allows for a smooth and deep immersion in the national Russian world. The use of the song with the lyrics of the Russian poet Sergei Yesenin, "Moon Above the Window," allows you to get acquainted with the historical realities of Russian folk life. In this case, folklore is perceived comprehensively, philologically, and culturologically. Students learn new words: "talyanka," which means Russian accordion, "poplar," "lime," symbolizing national archetypal constants of the Russian world, and "early morning," meaning very early, semantically marked expression in Russian national culture, since it is associated with custom for a Russian person to get up early, start the working day early (here you can recall a number of proverbs on this topic). Such a lesson allows, together with students, to form personal ideas about the national culture of Russia, to gain individual knowledge in the process of text analysis, and not just information in finished form. Students not only activate their speech skills, but also expand their knowledge of Russian artistic culture. Thus, there is a process of co-creation between a teacher and a student, a student and a student, during which we strive for a detailed monologue/dialogical statement.

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