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TEACHING ENGLISH FOR PORTUGUESE NATIVE SPEAKERS: THE CASE OF BRAZILIAN APPLICANTS AT KURSK STATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: The article deals with the problem of pre-University training of Brazilian applicants at the Russian medical university. The author describes two directions of teaching English – professional and sociocultural, and innovative pedagogical technologies used. In our conditions, studying English becomes the means of getting to know Russian culture.

Keywords: pre-University training, applicants, sociocultural adaptation, pedagogical technologies

1. Introduction

Globalization is transforming higher education. Pushed and pulled along by the forces of globalization, internationalization presents many exciting opportunities to higher education institutions and systems. At the same time, real risks and challenges are inherent in this complex and fluid environment. At stake are issues of competitiveness and relevance, requiring new kinds of strategic thinking, and acting with regard to the international dimension by all types of higher education actors (Altbach, P.G., 2010: 23). These trends have become actual at Russian medical universities training foreign students. There is an urgent need in choosing teaching methods relevant for the foreign students.

Kursk State Medical University is the first medical university in Russia to teach foreign students in English. KSMU acts as a subject of the international education market from the 1990s. The first foreign citizens from India, Morocco and Syria began to study at Kursk State Medical Institute in 1992. In 1993, the faculty for the foreign students was organized, later renamed to the international faculty. The University's aim is not only to increase the number of foreign students, but also to improve the system of their training, taking into account the requirements of the world labor market, for this purpose, innovative forms of education are introduced in educational activities (Sklyar, E.S., 2018).

2. Objectives of the study

The process of teaching foreign students in Russian universities is of interest to specialists in various fields. The objective of this study is to show the experience of teaching English for the Brazilian applicants of Kursk State Medical University with the usage of active methods of teaching. The study also focuses on the linguistic and sociocultural adaptation of the applicants before entering KSMU.

3. Methodology

Foreign students are not the native speakers of English, and this fact complicates the task of forming their professional competencies in the process of studying medical sciences. Therefore, the center of pre-University training of foreign citizens at KSMU carries out the preparatory courses in English (as well as the courses in Russian, Biology and Chemistry). The educational program is of 240 hours of teaching English, far exceeding the number of hours for teaching the other subjects. The additional general education program in English is aimed at mastering lexical and grammatical material and the basis of English for Medicine necessary for the implementation of a student's communicative needs, and solving the following tasks:

- to know English to the extent necessary for communication in the educational, professional, social and cultural spheres;
- to know the basis of English for Medicine necessary for studying at a Russian medical university;
- to be psychologically prepared for the learning activities in the new socio-cultural environment (Center of pre-University Training, 2018).

Brazilian applicants were studying English at the secondary schools. For the determination of their level of knowledge, they are given a test at the beginning of their course of English. The obtained results help the teacher to design an individual educational trajectory for each applicant according to his/her initial knowledge of English.

The course of teaching English for the foreign applicants has two directions – professional and sociocultural. The applicants get not only linguistic and cultural but also regional study competence, the significance of which is relevant to their successful integration into the new sociocultural environment.

The almost complete absence of the English language environment is a serious factor that reduces the foreign applicants' communicative activity. Nevertheless, in the process of the fur-

ther studying at the university, English becomes the means of communication between Brazilian students and students from the other countries as they study in multinational groups.

The educational process is complicated by the fact that the teachers of English do not know Portuguese. Information perceived by the Brazilians in English is subject to codification in their native language. In our opinion, the teacher should take into account the interference of the Portuguese language, for this purpose the comparative analysis of the lexical and grammatical phenomena of English and Portuguese is made during each class. In this situation, the applicants become the active subjects of the educational process as they introduce the teacher to the peculiarities of their native language. The usage of comparative analysis contributes to the development of the applicants' cognitive skills and promotes their motivation for studying English.

4. Result/Findings

In the process of studying the topic 'Peculiarities of doctor and patient communication' we use a Russian-Portuguese Phrasebook (Rodionova, M.A., 2004: 288); the applicants translate the phrases from it from Portuguese into English (column 2 of Table 1), then the teacher checks the correctness of the translation (column 3) using the same phrases from the Phrasebook in Russian (column 1).

**Table 1. Examples of translation according to the scheme
'Portuguese – English – Russian'**

Russian	Portuguese	English
Я чувствую себя неважно.	Não me sinto bem.	I feel not well.
Меня тошнит.	Estou enjoado.	I have vomiting.
У меня кружится голова.	Sinto tonturas.	I am dizzy.
У меня болит здесь.	Me doi aqui.	I have a pain here.
Боль острая.	É uma dor aguda.	The pain is acute.
Болит постоянно.	Dói-me sempre.	The pain is constant.

Professional vocabulary, particularly the words denoting different body parts and organs, is introduced the same way using Portuguese – Russian dictionary.

In conditions of the absence of the literature about communication of doctors and patients in Portuguese, we use the book *250 Brazilian jokes*, namely the jokes about doctors (Franco, P., 2013: 58), for the introduction of medical vocabulary and clichés of doctor – patient communication. The applicants listen to the recording of the jokes in Portuguese (the disc with recordings of native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese is available), and then they receive an assignment to write down or retell them in English.

At the end of the course of studying English, the applicants with a high level of knowledge get the tasks of increased complexity, for example, to translate a dialogue from the textbook in Russian (which is used at the classes in Russian) into English.

Taking into account the interdisciplinary links with such subjects as Biology and Chemistry studied at the preparatory courses, we have designed the simulation games ‘A Class in Biology’ and ‘A Class in Chemistry’. During these games, one applicant with a high level of English who plays a role of a teacher gets a preliminary task to make questions on a certain unit of these subjects studied by the applicants. Then he/she asks the other applicants these questions. To participate in these games the applicants use the material studied at the courses in Biology or Chemistry. The teacher becomes the facilitator of the imitation game and evaluates the applicants’ level of English and their ability to communicate and interact in the academic group.

Moreover, the preparatory courses in English become the means of socialization of Brazilian students in KSMU, the city and the country. We share the E.Yu. Kosheleva’s point of view that at the initial stage of entering a new macro- and microenvironment, most foreign applicants have a low level of awareness of Russian customs, traditions and culture; of the existing system of higher education in the country. Many students, for the first

time, have a problem of internationalization, the need for communication with the people of different social, ethnic, national norms and cultures (Kosheleva, E.Yu., 2011: 4).

Studying a foreign language is often viewed as a way of getting to know the world's culture, the cultural achievements and peculiarities of different nations (Passov, E.I., 2003: 12). Each language is closely connected with culture, it indicates the culture, is an obligatory precondition for the culture's development in general. The English language commonly considered as a tool of forming linguistic and cultural competence in the process of getting to know the culture of English speaking countries, in our case, becomes a tool of getting to know Russian culture. In fact, English is used as the language of mediation in the dialogue of Russian and Brazilian cultures. Studying the aspects of Russian culture promotes the formation of tolerant attitude to it.

In order to reveal the applicants' stereotypes of Russia, we were using the method of associative analysis. During their first class of English, Brazilian applicants were asked to name all the things they associate with the notion 'Russia'. We have analyzed the frequency of these things' mentioning (table 2).

Table 2. The results of associative analysis with the notion 'Russia'

Applicants' answers	Amount of being mentioned
Vodka	5
Socialism; Beautiful Orthodox churches and cathedrals; Cold weather	4
Big country; Rude people; Serious people; Wonderful girls	3
World War II; Matryoshka; Smoking women; Old unusual buildings	2
Kursk State Medical University; Bad food; Nice places; Moscow; St. Petersburg; Parks; Beer; Many squares; Nuclear power station; Balalaika	1

As you can see in the table, the lexical and semantic field of verbalization of the concept 'Russia' is associated with everyday

objects, different realities of historical and modern life. The analysis has shown that the associations of the Brazilian applicants are often based on the negative stereotypes of Russia. This negative character is caused by insufficient knowledge of Russian ethnic culture, as Brazilian respondents have just arrived to Russia.

At the English classes, the applicants read the texts about Russian customs, traditions and holidays and compare them with the Brazilian ones. They also watch documentary movies *Brazil revealed* and *Russia revealed*. In the process of watching, the teacher asks the applicants to comment upon Brazilian ethnic and cultural realities and promotes their comparative analysis with the Russian ones.

The ethnic and cultural aspect is also used in the process of studying the topic 'Healthy food': the applicants are given the task to write the recipes of Brazilian national cuisine in English. It is followed by the discussion if these dishes are useful for health in the nutritionists' opinion.

In the process of learning English, the applicants become acquainted not only with cultural information of a general nature (geography, history and culture of Russia), but also with the information associated with the specifics of the city of Kursk and Kursk region. It is important because Brazilian applicants get to know the culture of Russia by means of the culture of the region in which they get higher education. They read and translate the texts about the history of the Kursk and its landmarks. Then the applicants see the landmarks of Kursk during the excursions organized by the teacher. There usually have guided tours to the museum of history of KSMU, the museum of local history, the museum of archaeology, the ecology museum, A.A. Deineka art gallery and the Roman Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In modern Russian pedagogy, a museum is viewed as a social institution, which is a model of perception of classical heritage and modern culture and focused on the development of a personality's values (Troyanskaya, S.L., 2007: 11).

In our opinion, the use of innovative technologies of museum pedagogy is an effective tool of forming country study competence as the component of communicative competence.

After the excursions, the applicants are asked to write the essays with their impressions of their visits. Here are the fragments from their essays:

‘The ecology museum is really interesting. The designer’s work is great. It is innovative and makes people think about recycling and helping Earth. I liked the visit there a lot and I hope I go there more times to see the new works.’ Gabriela C.

‘Our group’s visit to the museum of local history was very interesting. Before visiting it, I did not know that Kursk is a very ancient city. I got many facts about Kursk and its history. The exhibition about the Soviet period is especially interesting’. Isabella M.

5. Discussion

We have worked out and introduced the approach of teaching English for the Brazilian applicants based on the comparison of English and Portuguese language systems and taking into account the linguistic interference of Portuguese. Imitation games designed and implemented in the process of teaching English are based on the interdisciplinary links with Biology and Chemistry that promotes formation of analytic and critical thinking.

The formation of linguistic and communicative competences is aimed at successful adaptation of the future students in the new sociocultural environment and upbringing of the individuals capable to tolerant perception of Russian culture.

For the better results of teaching Brazilian applicants it is necessary for the teachers to know Brazil’s national educational traditions, to be flexible in choosing and repositioning the teaching methods and to have ethnopsychological competence.

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CORE AND NON-CORE DISCIPLINES IN RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: For any speciality, the equality of sciences is impossible, and therefore the taught disciplines are not equal. In the most general form, this can