

## Specific features of teaching English language in multicultural space (on the example of the religious educational institutions of the republic of Tatarstan)

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the general questions of the process of teaching a foreign language in the multicultural space. Specifically, the process of (English) language acquisition of the students in the multicultural classes is observed. The article reveals the problems of teaching a foreign language (English) in the schools with the confessional orientation. Some methodical recommendations are offered by the authors in order to improve the process of acquiring a foreign language at the same educational environment.

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### Introduction

The process of teaching foreign languages is always caused by a number of features depending on specifics of the ethnic contingent of pupils.[1]The accounting of a historical, ethnical religious and sociolinguistic background of pupils in the selection of means and methods of training a foreign language, and, therefore, a new culture is efficient and also reasonable.[2] In this regard the special importance is gained by a role and a place of an ethnic factor in a procedure of teaching foreign languages.

Thus, relevance of a subject depends on the need of definition of basic provisions of the concept of multicultural education for the subsequent successful introduction of its basic principles in teaching and educational process; need of studying of influence of a natural bilingualism on process of teaching foreign language at schools of the Republic of Tatarstan; lack of training sources and teaching materials for teaching English at schools with a religious orientation; need of development of additional programs and methodical recommendations for teachers of these educational institutions.[3]

### Method

The Republic of Tatarstan is the only region of Russia which population is presented by the vast majority of representatives of the Tatar ethnicity. In this regard, the religion with the majority of followers in this region is Islam. According to number of the followers, a large number of mosques and madrasah (educational institutions of a religious orientation) function in the republic, and also since 1998 on the territory of the city of Kazan educational activity in the sphere of the higher and secondary vocational professional education is carried out by the Russian

Islamic University.[4] By reason of the fact that work of these establishments is carried out everywhere and all year round, the social procurement for training of highly qualified specialists not only in the field of religious studies, but also experts of a humanitarian and natural-science profile for teaching general educational disciplines in the institutions, and also a number of experts of an economic, juridical and social profile for implementation of productive internal and external activity of similar establishments is formed.

Considering the principles of integration and differentiation, consciousness and native language reliance, it is assumed that the process of acquiring a foreign language in the multicultural educational space improves when applying to a thorough, careful selection of a training material carried by teachers, with the simultaneous use of several guidelines, both for the teacher and for the pupils.

### Main part

Considering the features of training English at schools of the Republic of Tatarstan it should be noted that the population presented by the vast majority of the Tatars lives on the territory of the republic, considering the native language – Tatar. According to Population census (2010) from 3 746 488 inhabitants of the republic, there were more than 53% (2 012 571 people) representatives of the Tatar population. [5]

During the conduct of the research we have visited a number of lessons of English in madrasah "Mukhkhamediya" in Kazan. It should be mentioned that the choice of educational institution as a platform for carrying out the research in favor of religious school was not made incidentally.

**Table 1. Ethnic composition of the Republic of Tatarstan**

People living in the Republic of Tatarstan	Number (person)	Percent (from the number indicated nationality)
In total (from the number indicated nationality)	3 786 488	100
Tatar	2 012 571	53,2
Russian	1 501 369	39,7
Other nations	272 548	7,1

One of the general educational disciplines in educational institutions of a religious orientation is English. However, cultural realities of English often conflict to canons and foundations of Islamic society that is a powerful barrier on a way to acquisition of a foreign language as a means of communication.[6] As the experts note, the similar antagonism is caused by the ethnic and religious factors, which do not allow perceiving elements of foreign cultures contradict with national ethics and morals of pupils. In this case there is no need to make any impact on a mental matrix of the pupil, on the contrary our purpose is to strengthen the ethnic identity of pupils and in parallel to stimulate formation of the tolerant personality in model of multicultural educational space.[7]

Besides drastic distinction of cultures of the West and East, we faced a number of other problematic questions which in turn, create barriers underway the dialogue of cultures.

The lack of material goes first in the wide range of difficulties of teaching and studying the English language in similar establishments. Interviews with teachers, and also the analysis of existing guides for teaching foreign languages at religious schools showed that not all the material can be used during the lesson. And if the maintenance of a material meets the requirements of this educational institution, it, often, doesn't correspond to specifics of teaching English as a foreign language.

Another substantial problem is a frequently occurring age variation of pupils of one class or one subgroup which differs in an age gap from 1 to 5 years. This fact significantly complicates educational process as the same information is perceived by pupils of diverse age differently.

The similar situation is observed by considering the levels of English language proficiency presented by pupils. Generally, pupils enter the religious educational institution not from first years of training, but after several years. In this regard, the level of proficiency in foreign-language communicative competence of all pupils differs. Moreover, the large percentage of pupils has never learned English before entering the religious school. As a result, teachers of madrasah and higher educational religious institutions should give lessons for pupils at once for all ages and levels of

proficiency in language that, as a rule, involves an inefficiency and futility of such a lesson.

Despite a set of distinctions in the course of training a foreign language in a religious educational institution, the main requirements for pupils and the acquisition of foreign-language communicative competence by them remain without changes.[8]

The purposes of teaching a foreign language should be oriented to:

- the development of a foreign-language communicative competence (speech, language, sociocultural, compensatory and educationally informative);
- the development and education of the students by means of a foreign language.[9]

Considering the existence of the listed above difficulties in training and teaching of foreign languages, we consider the urge to formulate a number of methodical recommendations for improvement of the process of teaching the English language in religious educational institutions. However, we have to consider the fundamental changes which occur in educative process, namely:

- the change of style of communication between the teacher and pupils – collaborative learning supplants of authoritarian style of education;
- group forms of work start dominating over general questioning;[10]
- in the course of training the pupil and the teacher are put into the situation of a choice necessity (texts, exercises, sequence of work, etc.), showing independence in a choice of this or that additional material according to requirements and interests of pupils that gives personal sense to the process of training foreign languages;
- reflexive abilities - abilities to see themselves "from outside" are developed by the students consistently, as well as the ability to estimate the opportunities and requirements they have independently.[11]

Taking into account the general requirements for carrying out the lessons and level of formation of competences of pupils, we can offer the following number of methodical recommendations:

- 1) selection of a material has to be carried out concerning the age features and level of proficiency in a foreign language;

2) the material has to be picked up considering ethnic ratio of a class;

3) cultural realities reflected in a material, shouldn't contradict with a mental paradigm of pupils (the material has to be neutral according to the content, or reflect realities of actually Muslim ethnoses);

4) it is necessary to consider an ethnic origin of each pupil;

5) it is necessary to use the principle of an interference (a reliance on the native language) in a material explanation.

### Conclusion

Thus, the question of multicultural education in our region remains vital and, at the same time, controversial. On the one hand, there is a lack of special educational resources including educational programs, topical planning, etc. On the other hand, there is a great demand in improving the structural subdivisions within those religious foundations, i.e. it should be taken into account the age, the level of language proficiency and native language reliance.

Therefore, together with the basic principles of teaching foreign languages, recommendations offered above, have to change fundamentally the way of teaching and learning foreign languages in religious educational institutions and to bring positive results in the near future.

### Summary

Regarding the national experience, the special importance is gained by a role and a place of an ethnic factor in a procedure of teaching foreign languages.

The paramount contradiction amidst cultural correlation of West and East hinders the successful acquisition of a foreign language.

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