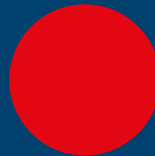


Linda Torresin

# Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language Today Through an Intercultural Approach

Challenges and New Directions



PADOVA  
**UP**

P A D O V A   U N I V E R S I T Y   P R E S S





This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution International License  
(CC BY-NC-ND) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>)

Prima edizione 2024, Padova University Press

Titolo originale: *Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language Today  
Through an Intercultural Approach: Challenges and New Directions*

© 2024 Padova University Press  
Università degli Studi di Padova  
via 8 Febbraio 2, Padova  
[www.padovauniversitypress.it](http://www.padovauniversitypress.it)

Redazione Padova University Press

Progetto grafico Padova University Press

This book has been peer reviewed

ISBN 978-88-6938-431-8

Stampato per conto della casa editrice dell'Università di Padova –  
Padova University Press.

The publication of this book was supported by the Department of  
Linguistic and Literary Studies of the University of Padua within the  
funding program Seal of Excellence @UNIPD  
(RETEACH project; project code: TORR\_MSCASOE21\_01; website:  
<https://reteach.disll.unipd.it/>; CUP: C95F21007290005)

Linda Torresin

**Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language  
Today Through an Intercultural Approach  
Challenges and New Directions**

PADOVA  
**UP**



# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Note on Transliteration and Translation</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1. Theoretical Discussion</b>	<b>23</b>
1.1 Intercultural Education (IE)	24
1.1.1 Culture and Interculturality	26
1.1.2 Teaching Culture and Intercultural Dialogue	38
1.2 Foreign Language Education (FLE)	48
1.2.1 The Connection Between Language and Culture	50
1.2.2 The Transition From Stereotype to Sociotype	56
1.3 Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL)	63
1.3.1 Cultural Dimension as a Cornerstone	63
1.3.2 Textbook Theory	73
1.4 Conclusion	80
<b>2. Critical Issues in RFL Intercultural Theories</b>	<b>83</b>
2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	83
2.2 RFL Literature on IE (2007–2023): A Critical Overview	87
2.2.1 Definitions of Intercultural Communication (IC) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)	90
2.2.2 Culture, Nationalism, and Essentialism	92
2.2.3 Literature and Language	98
2.2.4 Tolerance	103
2.2.5 Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications	105
2.3 Conclusion	107

<b>3. Critical Issues in RFL Textbooks</b>	<b>109</b>
3.1 The RFL Textbook and Its Intercultural Aspects	109
3.2 The Cultural Issue in RFL: From Theories to Textbooks	110
3.3 Content Analysis (CA)	115
3.4 RFL Textbooks: A Critical Analysis (An Italian Case Study)	116
3.4.1 Spaces and Modalities of Cultural Representations	121
3.4.2 Types and Concepts of Culture	125
3.4.3 Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Dialogue	133
3.4.4 Summary and Data Interpretation	140
3.5 Conclusion	143
<b>4. RFL Intercultural Teaching in Current Practices</b>	<b>145</b>
4.1 Methodology and Data Collection	145
4.2 An Examination of RFL Modern IE-Based Teaching Practices	147
4.2.1 Positive Aspects of RFL Intercultural Teaching	151
4.2.2 Negative Aspects of RFL Intercultural Teaching	162
4.2.3 Conclusions and Final Considerations	170
4.3 Conclusion	173
<b>5. How to Teach RFL in an Intercultural Perspective Today</b>	<b>175</b>
5.1 Methodological Principles for RFL Intercultural Teaching	175
5.2 RFL Intercultural Activities: A General Description	184
5.3 RFL Intercultural Activities: Some Examples	189
5.3.1 Intercultural Activity No. 1: <i>In Anna Karenina's Shoes</i>	190
5.3.2 Intercultural Activity No. 2: <i>The End of the Story, or A New Story</i>	196
5.3.3 Intercultural Activity No. 3: <i>Looking for the "Russian Soul"</i>	203
5.3.4 Intercultural Activity No. 4: <i>May the Best Team Win!</i>	211
5.4 Conclusion and Final Remarks	216
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>221</b>

*“the ... challenge is not only to make foreign language learners proficient or competent in using foreign ways of speaking and writing, but rather to implicate them in the lives of others who don't speak and don't think like them, who don't see the world like them and yet on whom they depend and to whom they are answerable”*

Claire Kramersch





## Acknowledgments

First of all, my thanks go to the University of Padua and the Department of Linguistic and Literary Studies headed by Gabriele Bizzarri for supporting this research and funding this publication.

I have a debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Donatella Possamai, who has provided me with constant help and amazing guidance in my professional growth during the past five years.

I would like to offer a special thanks to Claudia Borghetti, who helped me improve this publication with her valuable suggestions, and to Alastair McEwen for the language revision.

My heartfelt thanks to Maria Chiara Pesenti, who has been a fundamental guide for me, a Virgil over these years, and with whom I have shared so many important work moments.

Thank you for teaching me to believe in myself: Guerrino Citton and Patrizia Povolo.

For their teachings, advice, friendship, and unstinting esteem, thanks to: Maria Chiara Ferro, Monica Fin, Claudio Macagno, Giovanna Pagani Cesa, and Luisa Ruvoletto.

Without the dialogue and interaction with my colleagues and peers (from my field but also from fields other than my own), this book would not exist. Their advice has made me grow as a scholar and as a person. Thanks especially to Paolo Balboni and Geneviève Henrot for giving me a good example of how to do academic work. My thanks to the entire RiDRU (Research on the Teaching of Russian at the University) group, which I created in December 2022 and which from the very beginning turned out to be a valuable forum for dialogue with those involved in Russian teaching in Italy. In particular, I would like to say a big thank you (in addition to those already named) to colleagues Daniele Artoni, Valentina Benigni, Anna Paola Bonola, Alessandro Cifariello, Polina Gel'freykh, Natal'ya Guseva, Diana Lyadskaya, Marco Magnani,

Giovanna Moracci, Yuliya Nikolayeva, Svetlana Nistratova, Valentina Nosedà, Laila Paracchini, Monica Perotto, Giorgia Pomarolli, and Giorgia Rimondi, with whom I have had the opportunity to exchange ideas and visions on the didactics of Russian language and culture during all this time.

Many thanks to the University of Verona (Daniele Artoni, Giorgia Pomarolli, and Tania Triberio), Vilnius University (Anastasija Belovodskaja, Tomas Čenys, Natalja Kapočė, Ingrida Kisieliūtė, and Julija Snezhko), and Masaryk University (Anastasija Sokolova), as well as to Diana Lyadskaya, Anatoliy Berdichevskiy, and Pierpaolo Pregnotato for the wonderful work we did together.

Separate thanks go to my friend and Herzen State Pedagogical University's colleague Viktoriya Gorbanëva and the Department of Foreign Language Teaching Methods headed by Ol'ga Trubitsina for their repeated collaboration and wonderful hospitality in St. Petersburg.

I am also very grateful for having been able to meet on my way and interact with such extraordinary people as (but the list is not complete) Agnese Accattoli, Valeriy Aitov, Noemi Albanese, Iliana Aletto, Yulia Amlinskaya, Kseniya Balakina, Ol'ga Bondareva, Marina Bottacin, Maria Cristina Bragone, Alessandra Carbone, Paola Celentin, Stefania Cochetti, Duccio Colombo, Paola Cotta Ramusino, Donatella Di Leo, Andrea Franco, Lyubov' Glebova, Mayya Golovanova, Barbara Gori, Andrea Gullotta, Gabriella Imposti, Iliana Krapova, Natal'ya Kulibina, Giuseppina Larocca, Marcella Maria Mariotti, Natal'ya Novikova, Dmitry Novokhatskiy, Gina Pigozzo Bernardi, Erica Pinelli, Larisa Prokof'yeva, Massimo Raveri, Iliana Remonato, Laura Rossi, Oleg Rumyantsev, Tanya Sëmke, Krassimir Stantchev, Bianca Sulpasso, Zhanetta Vardzelashvili, Dar'ya Vasil'yeva, Daniele Vecchiato, Tat'yana Veselovskaya, and Elena Vilinbakhova.

Special thanks to the AIR (Association of Italian Russicists) chaired by Maria Chiara Pesenti, the LinE (Language in Education) research center coordinated by Fabiana Rosi, the Lend (Language and New Didactics) association led by Silvia Minardi, and the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit (in the persons of the inspectors Gisella Langé and Diana Saccardo), which, together with RiDRU, constitute for me important places of reflection on the teaching of culture, as well as other issues in the field of Russian teaching in Italy.

Last but not least, a thought of love and gratitude to Giovanni and my family, who patiently supported and endured me during this effort. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone.  
To all of you: thank you.

The Author



## **Note on Transliteration and Translation**

To transliterate Cyrillic, the BGN/PCGN romanization system, developed by the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN) in the USA and the UK, was used because it is of greater readability for Anglophone readers than other systems but still remains respectful of the spelling of graphemes.

All translations (from languages other than English) are by the Author.

## Abbreviations

AR	Action Research
CA	Content Analysis
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CO	Classroom Observation
FL	Foreign Language
FLE	Foreign Language Education
IC	Intercultural Communication
ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence
IE	Intercultural Education
ILE	Intercultural Language Education
RFL	Russian as a Foreign Language

# List of Illustrations

## Figures

- Figure 1 Russian and Russophone Cultures as Target Cultures in RFL Teaching
- Figure 2 Multilateral Interaction Between Multiple Learner's Cultures and Russian Speaker's Multiple Russian and/or Russophone and/or Other Cultures (Inside and Outside the RFL Classroom)
- Figure 3 Aspects of RFL Intercultural Activities
- Figure 4 Discursive Dynamics in the RFL Field
- Figure 5 Question No. 4 From the Teacher Survey
- Figure 6 Question No. 5 From the Teacher Survey
- Figure 7 Question No. 2 From the Teacher Survey
- Figure 8 Methodological Principles for RFL Intercultural Teaching

## Tables

- Table 1 Research Sample
- Table 2 RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 1
- Table 3 RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 2
- Table 4 RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 3
- Table 5 RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 4





# Introduction

## Introducing the Book: Focus and Aims

This book is devoted to the topic of teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) from an intercultural perspective with special attention to the university context and Italian-speaking students.

It is underpinned by three main aims. The first is to provide the reader with a theoretical-operational framework on intercultural RFL teaching, giving him/her the methodological tools to study this area and/or to apply it to his/her own teaching. The second is to promote a critical awareness among readers of the dominant ideologies and discourses underlying both academic research on the subject and the teaching materials themselves, so as to enable them to take note of the problems of RFL intercultural teaching (compared to the issues of foreign language education – FLE of other languages) and attempt to overcome them, with a view to enhancing teacher learning/development. The third—more general—aim seeks to help the reader look at the RFL area as if through a lens that shows different angles and shades, thus leading to greater understanding of the complexity of teaching and learning processes as a whole.

\*\*\*

## Previous Literature and Innovative Aspects

It is commonly known that the pedagogic orientation defined as “intercultural education” (IE) has been established in the policies of the Council of Europe (CoE) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with the

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Beacco (2013); Byram (2003, 2006, 2009); Byram et al. (2009); Byram, Gribkova &

2000s, the tenets of intercultural theories and practices elaborated previously have been the center of several treatments and developments that have shaped the contemporary conception of IE.<sup>2</sup>

As for the RFL field, the topic of IE has been addressed since the early 2000s (Gudkov 2000; Ter-Minasova 2000). Since 2007, when IE officially entered the Russian-language academic debate (see Moskovkin & Shchukin 2013: 313), RFL scholars (e.g., Azimov & Shchukin 2009, 2021; Berdichevskiy 2007; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020; Lebedinskiy & Gerbik 2011; Passov & Kuzovleva 2010; Shchukin 2019; Shibko 2011) have mainly engaged in theories and practices connected to “intercultural communication” (IC) and the development of “intercultural communicative competence” (ICC).<sup>3</sup>

The main innovative aspect of this book lies in the application of critical and non-essentialist approaches, recommended by the most advanced research on IE and intercultural language education (ILE), to the study of the intercultural dimension in RFL.

Critical and self-reflective perspectives arose in the IE field from deconstructive sensitivities related to the influence of postcolonial studies.<sup>4</sup> While not espousing the deconstructionist tendencies peculiar to the critical orientation towards culture shown in IE modern studies (see, e.g., Abdallah-Preteille 1996, 2006; Aman 2017; Ferri 2022; Simpson & Dervin 2019), we adopt here the terminology “critical and non-essentialist approaches” in two senses: the first is the understanding of “culture” as a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted term, emphasizing the extreme fluidity of identity definitions and the difficulty of classifying interpersonal relationships and dialogue with the Other. Like the aforementioned scholars, our epistemological position also leads us to recognize some issues and to problematize the very idea of culture and related concepts (interculturality, etc.), nevertheless for the reason already mentioned we do not go so far as to demolish them.<sup>5</sup>

Starkey (2002); Byram & Zarate (1995); Byram, Zarate & Neuner (1997); CoE (2001, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2020); Coste, Moore & Zarate (2009); Deardorff (2020); Recommendation CM/Rec (2022)[1]; UNESCO (2006, 2010, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Abrams (2020); Baldwin et al. (2014); J. Bennett (2015); M. Bennett (2013); Byram (2020); Cante (2012); Deardorff (2009); Holliday (2011, 2013); Holliday, Hyde & Kullman (2004); Jackson (2020); Landis & Bhawuk (2020); Lustig, Koester & Halualani (2017).

<sup>3</sup> For the definitions of IC and ICC and a comprehensive discussion on these concepts, see Sections 1.1.1, 1.3.1, and 2.2.1.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, refer to Section 1.1.1.

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the notion of culture and its treatment in this book, see

As a consequence of such understandings, our approach is necessarily critical of an essentialist view of culture, which assumes the coincidence of nation, territory, culture, and identity, according to the “large culture” paradigm (Holliday 1999). The non-essentialist attitude we embrace, which we derive from a specific strand of ILE (e.g., Borghetti 2016; Holliday 2011, 2013; Kramsch 1993, 1998a), allows us to look at culture as a fluid and multidimensional ideological and sociological construct, most often not simplistically identifiable with a single language and country, and therefore not cageable in predefined ethnic-national categories.<sup>6</sup>

Cultivating a reflective, self-reflective, and decolonialist attitude toward educational research (Matias 2021; Young & Diem 2023) makes it possible, in our opinion, to better address the challenges of the complexities which the RFL teacher has to face at the present day.

Within the framework of the critical and non-essentialist perspective outlined so far, using the methodological tools of critical discourse analysis, the teaching of the Russian language is conceived as a system whose actors (scholars, teachers, students, institutions, etc.) generally share the two dominant discourses<sup>7</sup> in which RFL is implicitly anchored: “national” and “cultural essentialist” discourses (see Subchapter 2.1). Hence the need to uncover such discourses by examining both the theoretical and practical sides of RFL, embodied in the academic literature on the field (Chapter 2), in textbooks (Chapter 3), and in teaching practices (Chapter 4).

There is an ideological bias component here. In fact, the critique of national and cultural essentialist discourses does not start from a neutral position, but rather from the position of a researcher who is part of the Global North, referring to normative studies on IE of predominantly Anglo-American scholars (see above and Section 1.1.1) highly representative of the culture of the Global North, grounded in values of democracy, rule of law, and human rights.

The application to the RFL field of a critical and non-essentialist look at the Italian context under consideration is (for the most part) a new element for Russian studies. Nowadays, in fact, as stated by us in a recent work (Torresin 2024: 195), there is very little modern scholarship in the Italian RFL academia that adopts such a perspective, breaking away from more traditional, essentialist, and unproblematized views of culture and

#### Section 1.1.1.

<sup>6</sup> On the issue of “essentialism” and “non-essentialism” and the difference between these two approaches to culture in ILE studies, see Borghetti (2022, 2023) and footnote no. 22.

<sup>7</sup> For an explanation of this term and its use in the present study, refer to Subchapter 2.1.

intercultural dialogue<sup>8</sup> (see, e.g., Pomarolli 2023; Torresin 2023a, 2023b), which also remain typical of Russian treatment of such topics (see Torresin 2023a, 2023b).

An additional innovative aspect of this book, which differentiates it from the literature on ILE in RFL (e.g., Berdichevskiy 2016, 2021; Berdichevskiy et al. 2011; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020; Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015), is the dialogue with both general IE and specific ILE-based research of international scope, especially from the English-speaking area (e.g., Abrams 2020; J. Bennett 2015; Byram 1997; Dearthoff 2009; Liddicoat & Scarino 2013),<sup>9</sup> which is almost or completely absent in the aforementioned scholarly works (see Torresin 2023c).

Thanks to its approach, this study fosters a new understanding of Russia and the Russian-language cultural space, encouraging critical awareness of issues such as multiple identities, fuzzy cultural borders, power-related intercultural dynamics, and avoidance of stereotyped representations.

By virtue of its interdisciplinary theoretical framework (IE, RFL, FLE, and ILE) and research methods (critical discourse analysis, content analysis, action research, classroom observation, and survey research), the book brings forth new openings and challenges in the area under investigation.

\*\*\*

## Structure and Contents of the Book

The book is divided into five chapters.

*Chapter 1* discusses the theoretical foundations of the present work, which are rooted in the fields of IE, FLE, and methodology for RFL teaching.

An important clarification needs to be made here: we rely mainly on IE and, secondarily, FLE as theoretical tools to critically analyze RFL teaching from various aspects: theoretical (academic studies), theoretical-practical (textbooks), and practical (teaching practices). Through this critical analysis, which nevertheless preserves certain aspects of the methodology for RFL teaching (e.g., textbook theory), we will move on in Chapter 5 to operative proposals for teaching Russian with an intercultural approach.

<sup>8</sup> This concept is defined in Section 1.1.1.

<sup>9</sup> Refer also to footnotes no. 1 and 2.

In a nutshell, in this first chapter, we focus on the complexity of defining and dealing with the concept of “culture” and intercultural dynamics, situating the present study within a non-essentialist attitude to ILE. In addition, an intercultural theoretical model for RFL teaching based on these premises is presented, following a “pluricentric” approach that takes into account the complexity of the sociolinguistic reality of modern Russian, breaking away from an exclusively national view of linguistic and cultural belonging and conceiving “Russian” (national) and “Russo-phone” (transnational) cultures as the target cultures.

The second and third chapters concern the critical aspects of the teaching of Russian in a foreign language environment, connected with RFL intercultural academic theories (Chapter 2), as well as cultural representations offered by textbooks (Chapter 3). Both these parts provide a new elaboration of the results of previous works of ours (Torresin 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023e; Torrezin [Torresin] 2022c, 2022d, 2023d, 2023f).

In particular, *Chapter 2* addresses the treatment of intercultural aspects in Russian-language research through the method of critical discourse analysis, to show how the ideas of IC and ICC commonly shared by scholars fit into national and cultural essentialist discourses originating from linguo-country and linguocultural studies. As a consequence, a monolithic, essentialized, and stereotyped idea of culture is being promoted in the RFL academic sphere.

*Chapter 3*, instead, applies critical discourse analysis, together with content analysis, to RFL textbooks, with Italy as a case study. After introducing the concept of intercultural RFL textbooks and problematizing the idea of culture included therein, the chapter proves how not only in RFL studies (examined in Chapter 2), but even in teaching materials used in Italy national and essentialized representations of Russian reality and intercultural dialogue, sometimes even based on stereotypes (e.g., “Russian soul”<sup>10</sup>), are being advocated.

*Chapter 4* is devoted to investigating the intercultural teaching practices commonly implemented by RFL university teachers nowadays through action research, classroom observation, and survey research methods. The analysis highlights both negative and positive sides of IE-based RFL pedagogical approaches, focusing on the contexts of Italy and Lithuania, with an opening to the broader Euro-American sphere as well.

<sup>10</sup> A definition and brief genealogy of this myth is provided in Section 2.2.4.

The data collected are useful for a rethinking of ways of teaching culture in the modern RFL classroom.

Building upon this analysis, examples of activities for effective RFL intercultural teaching are offered in *Chapter 5* grounded in three methodological principles derived from the theoretical premises and findings of the previous sections with particular attention to the examination of teaching practices (Chapter 4), which include an appropriate space for culture teaching, the use of authentic materials,<sup>11</sup> and the employment of active learning techniques.<sup>12</sup> Finally, after summing up the book's contents, the chapter draws conclusions and sheds light on the future prospects of RFL teaching from an intercultural perspective in the university setting.

<sup>11</sup> For more on this concept, refer to Subchapter 4.2.

<sup>12</sup> See footnotes no. 166 and 168.

# 1. Theoretical Discussion

In this first chapter, we offer a theoretical discussion of the research fields covered by our book, which can be traced to three specific areas, namely “intercultural education” (IE) (Section 1.1), “foreign language education” (FLE) (Section 1.2), and “methodology for teaching Russian as a foreign language” (RFL) (Section 1.3).

In particular, the main theoretical landmarks of our research will be presented, and the ideas, concepts, and assumptions derived for each individual area and set at the basis of our work will be described and discussed, emphasizing their pros and cons.<sup>13</sup>

A final important thing to note is that, given the theoretical discussion nature of this chapter, several concepts will be revisited more than once and viewed from various perspectives, highlighting terminological-ideological differences, reinterpretations, or new angles and ways of considering those particular issues.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For example, Section 1.1.1 will discuss whether or not the concepts of “culture” and “interculturality” challenged by the modern critical IE strand of scholarship should be used, and will propose to continue using them but placing them within a very specific non-essentialist vision applied to the field of RFL. Similarly, Section 1.2.2 will reflect on the transition from “stereotype” to “sociotype” advocated by FLE, agreeing with it but stressing the need to foster it with a teaching approach that does not itself fall into the stereotype created by the adoption of teaching practices such as schematic and essentialist comparisons between cultures (“comparative method”). Another example is Section 1.3.1, in which the centrality of culture in the RFL area also endorsed by the present study is emphasized, but at the same time we distance ourselves from RFL scholars for their unproblematic and essentialist approach to cultural issues, in line with the understanding of RFL intercultural teaching expressed earlier, in Section 1.1.1.

<sup>14</sup> It will be observed, for example, that the concepts—fundamental to this investigation—of “intercultural communication” and “intercultural communicative competence” will be first defined in Section 1.1.1 according to the perspective of IE scholars and then taken up again in Section 1.3.1, where the definitions (not shared by us) of IE scholars in the RFL field will be presented, which will be the subject of more detailed analysis in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.



Alongside the theoretical perspectives coming from the fields of IE, FLE, and RFL, for greater completeness and coherence we will also use the contributions of other areas close to our topic and/or functional to our argumentation, namely “intercultural language education” (ILE), pedagogy, sociology, psychology, etc. Special attention will be paid to Italian studies on language learning and teaching (mainly in Section 1.2) and to the Italian context of RFL teaching, which will be the object of the empirical part of our research (see Chapters 3 and 4).

### **1.1 Intercultural Education (IE)**

With the expression “intercultural education” (IE) we will refer here to a teaching perspective “designed to allow learners to react thoughtfully when they come into contact with the various forms that otherness can take” (Beacco 2013: 3). More precisely, we can qualify IE as an area of research focused on raising awareness of different cultures, their differences and similarities, and fostering respect, understanding, solidarity, and cooperation among individuals and cultural groups through an intercultural approach. At the center of the intercultural approach are placed the sensitivity to the values, beliefs, and attitudes of people from different cultures and the ability to decentralize oneself and to reach out to the Other. These ideas are expressed by means of IE key concepts such as “(critical) cultural awareness” (Byram 1997) and “intercultural sensitivity” (M. Bennet 1986a, 1986b), which we will meet and discuss in this subchapter.

We will make a distinction here between the “intercultural” and the so-called “cross-cultural” approach. While, in the latter, two or more cultures are compared, whose similarities and differences are identified in a static and schematic way, functional for more effective communication between members of these same cultural groups (Oetzel 2009), the “intercultural” approach is based on an operational and dynamic approach to the culture(s) of the Other, which learners are called upon to relate to their own, in a constant reflection about themselves and others, about their own cultures and those of others, in order to become “intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complexity and multiple identities and to avoid the stereotyping which accompanies perceiving someone through a single identity” (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey 2002:

9).<sup>15</sup> In other words, whereas the “cross-cultural” approach deals with the comparison of different cultures, entailing the analysis of cultural differences and similarities but without calling for mutual understanding and learning from each other’s cultures, the “intercultural” approach focuses on productive interactions between these cultures and ultimately leads to a deeper understanding and respect for all cultures, bringing about individual changes as well as collective transformations.

In this sense, the “intercultural” approach also differs from the “multicultural” one, in view of the fact that it does not configure itself as a passive approach in the acceptance of other people’s cultures, but as an active approach which “values cultural diversity and pluralism,” “places a central emphasis on intercultural dialogue, interaction and exchange,” and “proposes that all citizens should be equipped with intercultural competence [see Section 1.1.1], primarily but not only through education” (Barrett 2013: 28). In short, on the one hand we have an approach which involves the presence and coexistence of multiple cultures but without necessarily implying interaction or exchange between these cultures (“multicultural” approach), while on the other there is a dynamic process of interaction and exchange between cultural groups, aiming to go beyond mere coexistence to create a space for building relationships, bridging differences, embracing cultural growth and change (“intercultural” approach).

Besides research on IE (intended as above), since our specific field of inquiry is Russian as a foreign language (RFL), in this first subchapter for theoretical definitions (of “culture,” “interculturality,” “intercultural communicative competence,” etc.) and the operative dynamics and processes of dialogue between cultures we will also rely on IE concerning the field of foreign language education (FLE),<sup>16</sup> that is, “intercultural language education” (ILE) (Lu & Corbett 2012), conceived, in the wake of Borghetti (2016: 24), as “the strand of language learning and teaching that deals with the intercultural educational purposes of language learning and teaching.”

The theoretical foundations owed to IE and ILE upon which this book is based can be traced to two main areas:

1. Culture and interculturality (Section 1.1.1); and

<sup>15</sup> The issue of identity in IE and the concept of “multiple identities” will be explored further in Section 1.1.1. For that which concerns stereotypes and their role in foreign language (FL) teaching/learning, refer to Section 1.2.2.

<sup>16</sup> On the concepts of that field in general important to our study see Subchapter 1.2.

## 2. Teaching culture and intercultural dialogue (Section 1.1.2).

It is necessary to point out that, in our theorizations and exemplifications, both in this first subchapter and in the following ones (as well as in the other chapters), we will be dealing with the Italian-speaking RFL learner and/or the Italian context (especially the university one). This choice is dictated by the fact that much of the experimental part of the study examines the Italian context.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.1.1 Culture and Interculturality

Especially from the late 1990s, in the field of IE studies both cultural and intercultural aspects have undergone a process of deconstruction related to the impact of postcolonial studies<sup>18</sup> and to the rise of critical and self-reflective perspectives, which has led to the demolition of designations, procedures, and means employed in the area.

In particular, researchers have questioned the appropriateness or usefulness of using the concept of “culture.”

Let us think, for example, of the studies by Abdallah-Pretceille (1996, 2006), which point out that the notion of culture is nowadays unsuitable for representing “cultural diversity,” since it is marked by descriptive, objectifying and categorizing approaches; hence the proposal to replace “culture” with “culturality,” which would better render the flexible and ever-changing nature of cultures.

The scholar thus defines the concept of “culturality,” which is offered to show the fluidity of cultures: “The notion of ‘culturality’ refers to the fact that cultures are increasingly changing, fluent, striped and alveolate. These are the fragments that one should learn to pinpoint and analyse” (Abdallah-Pretceille 2006: 479).

In other words, Abdallah-Pretceille proposes a shift from “knowledge of cultural differences,” typical of an “ethnographic approach” and entailing an objectifying view of culture, to “understanding of cultural vari-

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the analysis of RFL textbooks used in Italy in Chapter 3 and the action research carried out in Italy in Chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> “Postcolonial studies,” becoming part of the critical toolbox in the 1970s thanks specially to the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, present themselves as an interdisciplinary subject dealing with the cultural, political, and economic legacy of colonialism and imperialism. As is widely known, this field promotes debates about race, colonialism, gender, politics, and language (for the key topics and concepts of postcolonial studies, ranging from borderlands to transnational literatures, from neo-imperialism to neo-liberalism and ecofeminism, see Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2000).

ation,” which is characteristic for an “anthropological approach” problematizing the concept of culture (479). One may or may not agree with this extremizing approach, but the emphasis on the dynamism of culture is quite supportable and central to our work as well.

There seem to be two important points in Abdallah-Pretceille’s thought, which we make our own in this research: on the one hand, what is stressed here is the irreducibility of culture and its knowledge to pre-defined categories: “Cultural knowledge cannot be reduced to a combinatory analysis, however fine and complex, to a geometrization nor to a mechanics of cultural elements” (477).

On the other hand, the value of individuality emerges which, in addition to muddling these same categories and further confirming the impossibility of labeling and caging cultures,<sup>19</sup> also testifies to the variety and plurichromatism of the world. “Our time”, writes the scholar, “is no longer one for nomenclatures or monads, but on the contrary for multicoloured patterns, mixing, crossing over and contraventions, because every individual has the potential to express him/herself and act not only depending on their codes of membership, but also on freely chosen codes of reference” (478).

Alongside the concept of culture, even the term “interculturality” itself has been questioned by studies in recent times to ‘decolonize’ IE.

For example, Simpson and Dervin (2019), starting from an in-depth intertextual analysis of the Council of Europe (CoE)’s (2018a, 2018b, 2018c) *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, have shown how the very notion of “intercultural” can prove problematic, as it may conceal ideologies or “self-centered notions” of intercultural dialogue, fitting into Eurocentric discourses that stigmatize the Other. The same position is shared by Ferri (2022), who adopts a “critical interculturalism” (Ferri 2018) and explains how, in effect, universalistic discourses on diversity, equality, dialogue, and tolerance can be exploited to silence certain voices, interpreting them as “other” and further marginalizing them: that is, paradoxically, interculturality would end up marginalizing and excluding, and in dialogue with the Other this very Other would be isolated (precisely because ‘other’). Also Aman (2017) invokes the need to

<sup>19</sup> “Indeed, cultural training based on a knowledge of supposed cultural models can suffice as long as the representatives behave according to the identified norms and examples. The difficulties start as soon as somebody does not fit, for one reason or another, into the expected framework, because the trainee is not necessarily the prototype of his or her group” (477–478).

decolonize interculturality by decentering its colonial Eurocentric epistemic position, and even invites the field to open to an “inter-epistemic” rather than an “inter-cultural” approach.

In essence, the field of IE has long—and especially with the onset of modernity—realized that the concepts of culture and interculturality are nothing more than a compromise, or, at least, are concepts to be taken with caution, to be problematized, to be reevaluated from a critical position.

Let us admit that in this work, while being aware of the possible critical issues associated with the use of such terms, we will not abandon the concepts of culture and interculturality nor deconstruct them (like the abovementioned scholars) but will make use of them (as well as other concepts central to the area of IE) by placing them in a flexible and dynamic framework.

Indeed, in international research on IE and supranational guidelines (by CoE, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD, etc.)<sup>20</sup>, produced within a constructivist perspective (Georgescu 2018: 15–16) with inputs from the broader field of intercultural communication as well, culture—and, consequently, also interculturality—is commonly understood as a complex and multidimensional concept.

It should be pointed out immediately that defining culture is not easy (Abrams 2020: 9 calls it a “challenging endeavor”), because there are many possible definitions and views of culture, even depending on the various contexts of use and on the disciplines that propose them.

Research has generally emphasized that culture consists of beliefs, values, and thought patterns shared by a community (Byram 1997; Haslett 2017). Basically, it would be a “complex frame of reference” which connects in differentiated ways and at various degrees members of an identity group (Ting-Toomey & Takai 2006: 691) and serves to “making sense of the world” (Oetzel 2009: 6).

In this context we draw in particular on the definition of culture advanced by UNESCO (2001), according to which culture is the com-

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., J. Bennett (2015); M. Bennett (2013); Byram (2003, 2009, 2020); CoE (2018a, 2018b, 2018c); Deardorff (2009, 2020); Holliday (2011, 2013); OECD (2018); UNESCO (2006, 2010, 2013); World Bank (2010).

plex of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics of a society or social group.

Since these identity groups—no matter how much they share common traits—are not and can never be internally homogeneous, we are in essence dealing not with one but with various “multiple cultures.” According to UNESCO (2013: 10),

cultures are themselves multiple, so that to insiders, every group reveals itself not as homogeneous but rather a nested series of progressively smaller groups whose members are all too aware of distinctions between themselves.

UNESCO speaks out against the idea that culture and identity are fixed and monolithic, predetermined, for example, by the nationality of individuals or cultural groups, and reminds us how even our own personal perceptions show us that the reality is quite different:

everyone understands their own identity to be a more complex matter, with multiple identities relevant to different contexts: gender, class, age, ethnicity, region, history, nationality, occupation, each becoming relevant at different times in the same person’s day. Identities change over time: the child grows up and becomes a parent; the citizen of one country moves, becoming a citizen of another; the student graduates and becomes a teacher. Recognition of the multiplicity and fluidity of identity complicates our understanding of cultural pluralism (implying that people cannot accurately be categorized as only members of one group). At the same time, these facts simplify intercultural dialogue [for a definition of this concept, see *infra*]: since everyone has had the experience of moving between contrasting identities, it makes sense to recognize others as members of multiple groups as well. (10)

In other words, supranational publications as well as research on IE suggest that no one belongs to a single culture alone—“everyone has multiple identities, multiple cultural affiliations” (12), both “personal” and “social” (CoE 2018a: 29). Furthermore, each individual will usually use only some of the resources available in their cultural group(s) and occupy “a unique cultural positioning,” belonging to and participating in different cultures (30).

As observes CoE,

cultural affiliations are fluid and dynamic, with the subjective salience of social and cultural identities fluctuating as individuals move from one situation to another, with different affiliations – or different clusters of

intersecting affiliations – being highlighted depending on the particular social context encountered. Fluctuations in the salience of cultural affiliations and identities are also linked to shifts in people’s interests, needs, goals and expectations as they move across situations and through time. Furthermore, all groups and their cultures are dynamic and change over time as a result of political, economic and historical events and developments, and as a result of interactions with and influences from the cultures of other groups. They also change over time because of their members’ internal contestation of the meanings, norms, values and practices of the group. (30)

Also in the area of ILE, the perspective of the complexity, multidimensionality, and flexibility of culture in intercultural processes has long been embraced by research.

While initially scholars dealing with IE in the linguistic field (among others: Byram 1989, 1997; Zarate 1986, 1993) thought of culture from a national perspective, as the social norms, habits, beliefs, and language that united the members of a nation, beginning with a post-structuralist approach,<sup>21</sup> on the one hand, and thanks to the rise of multicultural societies, on the other, the concept of culture started breaking out of the national sphere and broadening to include a community of discourse united by a common social space, history, and imagery, which it itself created and recreated in a dynamic way (Kramersch 1998a: 10).

For the purposes of our study, the strand of ILE that treats culture within a non-essentialist approach<sup>22</sup> (e.g., Holliday 2011, 2013; Kramersch 1993) is of particular relevance.

<sup>21</sup> By “post-structuralist approach” we mean, in the wake of Block (2009: 216), “an approach to the study of social phenomena and human behaviours which moves beyond the search of stable social structures and universal explanatory laws to a concern with issues that are arguable unique to the times in which we live, embedded as they are in social contexts emergent in the runaway world of late modernity.” As summarized by Pennycook (2001: 107), “beyond the often obscure discussion of the sign, subjectivity, and discourse, poststructuralism becomes a way of thinking, a tendency to always question given categories (human nature, universalism, the individual, culture, language, knowledge) and to try to explore how these categories are not so much real qualities of the world but are the products of particular cultural and historical ways of thinking.”

<sup>22</sup> “Essentialism”, observes Holliday (2011: 4), “presents people’s individual behaviour as entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype [on this topic see Section 1.2.2] becomes the essence of who they are.” While “essentialism” treats cultural diversity in a ‘superficial’ way, taking for granted that people of different cultures are different and flattening the differences within the same culture (for example, through the univocal identification of a culture with a specific country and language [we will come back several times in Chapters 1 and 2 to the essentialist tendency to assume

According to this strand,

1. Culture should be interpreted as a complex, historicized, and flexible concept, whose extreme “variability” (Kramersch 1993) makes it dynamic, fluid, and subject to change.
2. Intercultural confrontation is not necessarily national, but can also be transnational, that is, occurring between speakers belonging to different languages/cultures that cannot be identified with a single nation or “large culture” (Holliday 1999).<sup>23</sup>
3. In intercultural confrontation, individuals are not simply representatives of a supposedly fixed and essentialized culture, but possess “multiple identities” (UNESCO 2013: 10).

As a result, according to the theoretical and operational framework we have outlined, it is no longer possible to sustain a fixed and one-dimensional view of culture and intercultural practices (such as that, as we will see, espoused by the methodology of RFL teaching; see Chapter 2). On the contrary, as we have seen also by examining the most extreme positions of IE scholars close to postcolonial approaches, more and more in modern society the concept of culture becomes a “flow” (Hannerz 1992), that is, something flexible and dynamic, constantly evolving and renegotiating itself, given the awareness that all cultures “are the product of ongoing negotiations with the outside world, negotiations through which a horizon is established, an identity that can only be defined as a continuous creation” (Schnapper 1986: 151).

In a nutshell, the main idea here (on which we build our work) is that culture is not a monolithic and static block, but rather a fluid, complex, multilayered, and constantly moving element.

that there is a perfect equivalence between territorial area, culture, and language, which is however denied by the complexity of reality, i.e., by sociolinguistic and sociocultural aspects of the world we live in]), “non-essentialism,” as highlighted by Holliday, conceives diversity as the product of an ideological construction and therefore implements greater caution in categorizing cultural groups and in describing them in terms of similarities and differences (see Holliday 2011: 5). For more on the difference between essentialist and non-essentialist approaches in ILE, refer to Borghetti (2022, 2023).

<sup>23</sup> Holliday’s (1999) non-essentialist cultural paradigm untethers the notion of culture from the individual’s ethnic and national affiliation, thereby contrasting the hegemonic ethno-national, fundamentally essentialist cultural model (“large culture”) with a new, non-essentialist cultural model (“small culture”), where members of individual social groups are brought together by cohesive factors that differ from the ethnic-national component. It goes without saying that, here, alongside Holliday (1999), we also refer to the transnational model of language and culture teaching proposed by Risager (2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2012).



This implies, on the one hand, that the “identity” of the individual group, conceived as “the subjective experience of the individual that defines his/her affiliation with the group with which (s)he shares the same traits” (Bettoni 2006: 38), can be seen as an ongoing process in which meanings and the boundaries between groups or communities are continuously renegotiated and redefined (Byram et al. 2009: 8).<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, it also means that the uniqueness and plurality of cultures and identities involved in intercultural processes is not diminished, but rather preserved and, as it were, strengthened in the dialogue between different cultures, where each culture presents within itself a multiplicity of angles and views that, of necessity, dialogues with the multiplicity of angles and views of other cultures.

As well summarized by Borghetti (2016: 53), culture is

a dynamic process on both a personal and social level: on the one hand, in fact, each individual participates in multiple cultures at the same time and with each one shares only some resources (material, social, and subjective) among those that characterize the group as a whole; on the other hand, cultures constantly change—even if not always in an immediately perceptible way—due to the dialogic interaction between the people who take part in them.

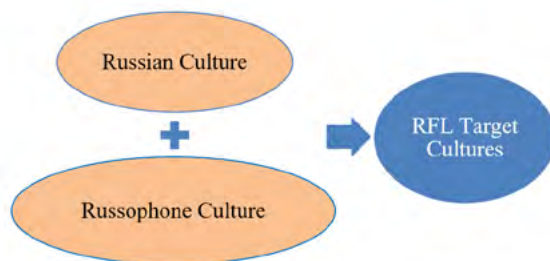
The concept of target culture in RFL teaching adopted here is also based on these premises and on a “pluricentric” approach to the Russian language (see more *infra*). In particular, in the wake of our previous studies (see, e.g., Torresin 2022a, 2023a), we will understand target culture as consisting not only of “Russian culture,” conceived as the culture of ethnic Russians (i.e., national), but also of “Russophone<sup>25</sup> culture,” namely, that culture that expresses itself in Russian but does not have Russian ethnicity (i.e., transnational) (see Fig. 1). For this latter, let us think, for example, of the literary sphere, which is a relevant aspect for RFL teaching,<sup>26</sup> where there are numerous world-renowned contemporary non-Russian but Russian-speaking writers, such as the Armenian Narine Abgaryan or the Kazakh Sergey Luk’yanenko.

<sup>24</sup> For a review and discussion of identity theories in ILE, see Borghetti (2019).

<sup>25</sup> We deliberately choose here to use the term “Russophone” (instead of “Russian-speaking” or equivalents), which was introduced into the Russian academic debate by Caffee (2013) in the context of literary studies pertaining to Russian-language non-ethnic literature in the Imperial, Soviet, post-Soviet and contemporary periods, to emphasize its transnational character.

<sup>26</sup> We will come back to this topic in Chapters 4 and 5.

Fig. 1



### Russian and Russophone Cultures as Target Cultures in RFL Teaching

Such a picture is related to the idea of the dynamism and non-essentiality of culture as already explained. In the case of the Russian language, we will therefore have ethnic Russian speakers, on the one hand, and Russophone people, on the other, who are participating in Russian and/or Russophone cultures (Russophone ethnic individuals or groups living in the Russian Federation,<sup>27</sup> but also Russian-speaking individuals or communities in former Soviet republics, emigration and diaspora situations, bilingual/multilingual or minority contexts, such as Russian-speaking people in the Baltic States, etc.), having complex and “multiple” identities. Let us consider, for instance, Aleksey, a 28-year-old Russian engineer born in Moscow, who will therefore bring with him, together with his other cultures and identities (e.g., male – adult – worker, and so on) Russian culture, rather than 30-year-old Taras, a Ukrainian national but raised in a Ukrainian-Russian bilingual family and context, who will therefore represent both Russophone (Ukrainian) and Russian cultures, or Vera, 45-year-old Russian-Lithuanian lawyer with her Polish husband residing in Vilnius (Lithuania), who brings together, in addition to multiple identities (e.g., woman – adult – worker – wife – mother, and so on) at least three cultures (Russian, Russophone, and Polish).

Moreover, this portrait of target cultures in RFL teaching corresponds to the image of the Russian language as a “pluricentric” space, presented by the current research (Mustajoki, Protassova & Yelenevskaya 2019),

<sup>27</sup> According to the 2021 census by the Federal State Statistics Service, in the Russian Federation, there are more than 190 different ethnic groups, which generally speak, besides Russian, other national/local languages, and have their own cultures and traditions (Rosstat 2021).

which emphasizes the role of Russian as a language of communication used not only in Moscow or in a national environment but also outside the borders of Russia, by not only ethnic Russians but also Russophone speakers (e.g., Ukrainians, Moldavians, Uzbeks, etc.), on the basis of what scholars suggest, for instance, for a context as emblematic of sociolinguistic complexity as that of the Baltic States already mentioned (see, e.g., Berdicevskis 2014; Sinochkina 2018).

Besides, the vision of Russian and Russophone cultures proposed here fits well with the focus on the identity dimension in ILE promoted by Borghetti (2016: 139–168), who, in light of the belief that identity is “a personal, contextual, and dynamic process of identification with one or more groups” (150), calls on researchers and educators to “provide learners with the tools to manage the multiple identities of their possible interlocutors” (159). We will try to take up such an invitation and challenge in the final chapter of this book (see Chapter 5). For the time being, however, we would like to note that this does not necessarily imply questioning the connection between language and culture,<sup>28</sup> but rather its critical rethinking in consonance with the theoretical assumptions outlined so far (e.g., definitions of culture and identity).

From what we have said therefore also follows a very specific idea of interculturality,<sup>29</sup> understood as a fluid and constant process or an active philosophy involving “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect” (UNESCO 2005: 5, Article 4.8), outside of any cultural fundamentalism or hierarchy of cultures (Georgescu 2018: 17).

Substantiating this idea is a dynamic and complex perception of “intercultural communication” and “intercultural communicative competence,” which we will now go on to describe, as they underlie our study.

In this work, by intercultural communication (IC) we mean

a dynamic interrelationship and interaction between (at least) two participants in (at least) two different cultures (not necessarily national but

<sup>28</sup> Such a connection, in our opinion, cannot be totally denied and, moreover, is one of our assumptions, although in a revisited guise (see Section 1.2.1 for more details).

<sup>29</sup> As will be evident from the definition adopted here (see *infra*), we employ the term “interculturality” as a synonym for “interculturalism,” according to the ways in which this last concept (beyond terminological niceties) is configured in IE research (see, e.g., the works by Abdallah-Preteille 2006; Besley & Peters 2012; Cantle 2012; Kastoryano 2018; Meer et al. 2016; Penas Ibáñez & López Sáenz 2006; Sarmento 2014; Verkuyten et al. 2020; Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri 2022).

also transnational), characterized by own specificities, individualities, and “multiple identities.” (UNESCO 2013: 10)

Picking up on the idea of culture already expressed above and illustrated in Fig. 1, we can then adapt this definition to the RFL field in this way:

IC is a dynamic interrelationship and interaction between (at least) one RFL learner participating in one or more cultures and (at least) one Russian speaker participating in one or more Russian and/or Russophone cultures, where both RFL learner and Russian speaker are characterized by their own specificities, individualities, and multiple identities.

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which is both the condition and goal of IC (conceived as above), has generally been explained as

the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientation to the world. (Spitzberg & Changnon 2009: 7)

Another useful definition of ICC is that of the CoE, which interprets ICC as

the ability to mobilize and deploy relevant psychological resources in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural situations.(CoE 2018a: 32)

Combining these definitions, we suggest considering ICC as

the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people belonging to and participating in multiple cultures (not necessarily national but also transnational), who are characterized by different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientation to the world, as well as by their own specificities, individualities, and multiple identities, and are able to mobilize and deploy relevant psychological resources in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities presented by intercultural situations.

It seems to us that such a definition has the merit of avoiding the risk of “the promotion of an essentialist perspective on culture” (UNESCO 2013: 7).

ICC (thus interpreted) advocates a “combination of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding” that enables an individual to “understand and respect” the cultural differences between themselves and others (CoE 2018a: 74) establishing an “intercultural dialogue,” which

arises when “an individual perceives another person (or group of people) as being culturally different from themselves” (31) and implements a range of strategies to address these cultural differences and their bearers, therefore improving his/her “intercultural sensitivity” (M. Bennet 1986a, 1986b).

Not surprisingly, in the field of ILE, the concept of ICC is linked to the “pragmatic competences” identified by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CoE 2001: 13, 123–126), which places “intercultural skills” among the “know-how”/“savoirfaire” skills, which imply the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one’s own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations (105).

In essence, ICC includes a critical component and a mediation component. For on the one hand, the learner is called upon to have “a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures” (Byram 2000), that is, a “critical cultural awareness” (Byram 1997), and on the other, to “mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures” (Beacco et al. 2016: 10).

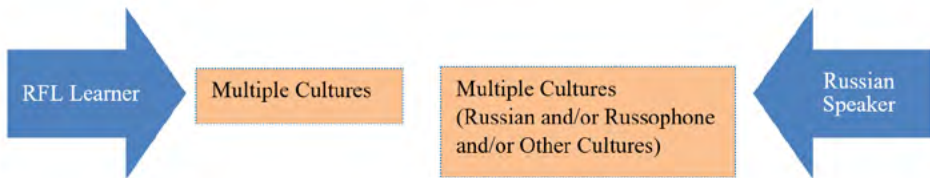
As concerns RFL teaching, returning to the previous definition of ICC already provided by us on a general level and taking into account also the remarks made above, we can now adapt this definition to our specific field of investigation and see ICC as

the appropriate and effective management of interaction between (at least) one RFL learner and (at least) one Russian speaker belonging to and participating in multiple cultures (for the Russian speaker, in one or more Russian and/or Russophone cultures), who are characterized by different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientation to the world, as well as by their own specificities, individualities, and multiple identities, and are able to 1) show a critical understanding of their own and other cultures, and 2) mediate between their own and Russian and Russophone cultures in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities presented by intercultural situations (inside and outside the RFL classroom).

When confronting the target cultures (Russian and Russophone), the RFL learner will therefore progress in the development of his/her own ICC according to the following scheme (see Fig. 2). The figure represents the multilateral, multidimensional, and dynamic interaction between the RFL learner’s multiple background cultures, on the one hand,

and the multiple Russian and/or Russophone cultures of the Russian speaker, on the other hand.

Fig. 2



Multilateral Interaction Between Multiple Learner's Cultures and Russian Speaker's Multiple Russian and/or Russophone and/or Other Cultures (Inside and Outside the RFL Classroom)

To give a practical example from the Italian university context (which will form the background of our analysis of RFL textbooks in Chapter 3): our RFL learner may be Matteo, a 20-year-old Italian student who has his own musical group (his multiple cultures and identities will be: male – young – son – brother – student – Italian – musician, etc.), or Tanya, a 21-year-old bilingual and bicultural student with an Italian dad and Spanish mom, whose boyfriend is Romanian (her multiple cultures and identities will include, alongside Italian and Spanish cultures, also the Romanian one, since she has a Romanian boyfriend, often visits him and his parents and has thus become familiar with a little Romanian culture as well, etc.).

Matteo or Tanya come into contact with a Russian speaker, who in turn will possess multiple cultures and identities, primarily Russian and/or Russophone: this could be the already named 28-year-old Russian engineer Aleksey (Russian culture), or 30-year-old Ukrainian Taras (Russian and Russophone cultures), or 15-year-old Kazakh scholar Dinara, who can speak, besides the Kazakh language, good Russian, and usually shares with foreign friends curiosities about her country's Soviet past (Russophone culture), or also Svetlana, a 43-year-old Russian teacher of Italian who has so internalized Italian culture that she prefers coffee to tea (the latter is traditionally more popular in Russia) and therefore is also representative in her own way of Italian (as well as Russian) culture, or at least of some international trends in Russian culture.

These examples seem to us to best convey the idea of the complexity and dynamism of intercultural exchanges and interaction between RFL

learners and Russian speakers. It is in this interaction that the foundations are laid for a “third place” (in Kramsch’s 1993 words), where the RFL learning process is continually redefined and reshaped by the relationships between all the cultures involved.

To summarize what has been said in this first section, the three main starting points, drawn from IE and ILE, on which our work is based, are as follows:

1. Culture and interculturality (with the related concepts of IC, ICC, intercultural dialogue, etc.) are two complex, fluid, and multifaceted concepts, to be understood in a non-essentialist sense.
2. The individual is never simply a representative of a given culture, as each of us has multiple identities, participating in multiple cultures simultaneously. As regards RFL and IC, by virtue of the pluricentric nature of the Russian language, we will therefore be dealing with two target cultures: Russian (ethnic, national) and Russophone (transnational), with which the learner comes into contact (along with the other multiple cultures and identities of their Russian-speaking interlocutors) during RFL classes and intercultural contacts with Russian speakers.
3. In the comparison between two different cultures multiplicities of cultures, identities, angles, and visions all confront one another, which makes the development of ICC—and, therefore, intercultural dialogue as a whole—an even more complex operation. In our case, the multiple cultures and identities of the RFL learner will dialogue with the multiple cultures and identities of the Russian speaker, in its dual macro aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures.

In the next section, we will see what IE and ILE scholars have suggested in order to implement intercultural dialogue in practice, that is, to teach culture, and we will bring these reflections into the RFL area as well.

### **1.1.2 Teaching Culture and Intercultural Dialogue**

Within the dynamic and multilayered conceptualizations of culture and interculturality that we have outlined in Section 1.1.1, IE is also interested in putting intercultural processes into practice in the class.

However, it must be said that it is not easy to teach foreign culture, especially in the specific area of ILE.

This is for a number of reasons. First, in fact, as Omaggio (1993: 358) admits, educators themselves do not always know the target cultures well or are able to incorporate cultural topics into already packed language curricula.<sup>30</sup> Second, because learners themselves often lack awareness about their own cultures (Abrams 2020: 213), without which no intercultural dialogue with other cultures is possible.

All this makes the development of ICC much more complicated.

Not to mention that the teaching of culture is a delicate and complex process, as it requires one “to understand another social group from an emic point of view (i.e., from the standpoint of members of that culture), rather than an etic or outsider perspective” (Abrams 2020: 213). Incidentally, it should not be forgotten that, theoretically, it may also be an endless process, since we do not and cannot know—and, therefore, teach and/or learn (taking the perspective of teachers or learners, respectively)—everything either about our own cultures or about the other ones.

However, teaching culture in areas like FLE is as necessary as ever. To this end, research and supranational documents on IE by CoE and other international institutions and organizations have produced various didactic strategies, actions, and activities that make it possible to respond to the macro-objective of intercultural teaching (also applied, in our case, to the field of FLE, which will be addressed in Subchapter 1.2), that is, the development of the learner’s ICC, of the learner’s ability to orient him/herself in a foreign culture and to respect its cultural values, which passes through the achievement of a good dose of cultural awareness.<sup>31</sup>

Specifically, as far as ILE is concerned, initially this field embraced the treatment of culture stemming from the communicative approach,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> We will come back to this issue in Chapter 4.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., CoE (2004); Huber & Reynolds (2014); ILPT (2018); Martinelli & Taylor (2000); Seelye (1996).

<sup>32</sup> Originating from the changes in British FLE dating back to the late 1960s, in response to grammar-translation method (see footnote no. 174) and audio-lingual method, the communicative approach in the 1970s became the dominant FLE approach. Such an approach, as is well known, emphasized the use of language for meaningful purposes in authentic situations (also thanks to the work on authentic materials and cultural aspects) and effective interaction in the target language with less focus on formal correctness. For more details on the history and characteristics of the communicative approach, see Richards & Rodgers (1986: 64–86).



which, although it had the merit of bringing cultural aspects into the FL curriculum, showed significant limitations in presenting these same aspects to the learner. In fact, within the communicative approach, a “comparative method” based on comparing target and source cultural practices was (and still *is*, for the majority of cases) in use. Culture was (and *is*) presented in a fragmentary and often stereotypical way (see, e.g., Beacco 1992; Byram 1989; Zarate 1993), through typical situations that would allow a schematic comparison between the learner’s culture and that of the country of the language being studied, both conceived in a univocal and static way (contrary to the dynamic view of culture we saw in Section 1.1.1). As Baker (2015: 138) showed for English as a lingua franca, such a method may be dangerous because it flattens complexities and ignores the presence of minorities. In other words, culture ends up with becoming (and being taught as such) simply a “body of knowledge” or “a set of the learnable rules that can be mastered by students,” therefore losing its role of “framework in which people live their lives, communicate and interpret shared meaning” (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013: 22).

In essence, although applied with the best of intentions, by virtue of its very characteristics the comparative method leads to a treatment of culture, in FL classes, oriented on essentialist approaches.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, in the present study we will not rely on such a method, which, although included among the methods recommended by intercultural pedagogy for teaching culture and stimulating intercultural dialogue, seems to us to carry more risks than benefits as far as the field of FLE is concerned. Moreover, from our perspective, the comparison of cultures—which such a method presupposes—is in itself the first stage of any intercultural interaction,<sup>34</sup> which, however, must then be directed toward a non-essentialist and non-static, but dynamic and flexible, dialogue with the culture(s) of the Other. However, such a dialogue must be conducted with different, more in-depth tools and procedures that allow it to go deeper, not to be limited to pure (static, essentialist) comparison but to foster interactions between all the cultures involved (see also *infra* and Chapter 5).

As will become clear from what has been said so far, for a field—such as FLE—in which the comparative method has produced stereotypical

<sup>33</sup> See Section 1.1.1 and footnote no. 22.

<sup>34</sup> For further discussion of this issue, see also Section 1.2.2.

and distorted images of culture,<sup>35</sup> using such a method will then prove counterproductive. We will see in a moment which methods (and related activities) may be more effective for teaching culture in place of the comparative method.

It should be observed that it was only with the development of intercultural sensitivity that, especially from the 1990s onwards, scholars<sup>36</sup> began to leverage the importance of appropriate treatment of cultural aspects in FLE. Teaching suggestions and practices that were more sensitive to the appropriate teaching of culture were thus developed and/or refined<sup>37</sup> with the important contribution of (among other things) pedagogy and intercultural pedagogy, adding to the comparative method. Among such approaches, the “narrative method,” the “decentralization method,” the “deconstruction method,” and the “action method” (for more details, see *infra*) play an important role in our discussion.

We will now illustrate these methods—which, for the reasons stated above, in RFL teaching would prove far more productive than the comparative method—using the theoretical systematization of intercultural teaching methods provided by the pedagogue Nanni (2003). It needs to be clarified that the methods described *infra* will be the starting points for the practical-operative part of this book (Chapter 5), where, also based on the overall methodological framework outlined in Chapter 1 and on the previously mentioned relevant literature on the practical implementations and applications of intercultural teaching by both IE and ILE, we will try to develop original strategies and materials for teaching RFL from an intercultural perspective.

We will combine each method, as its concrete implementation, with examples of teaching activities based on the theoretical assumptions set out in Section 1.1.1 and on the specific IE and ILE literature, aimed at:

1. Reflection on one’s own culture(s);
2. Reflection on others’ culture(s); and
3. Comparison and interaction of cultures (see Fig. 3).

<sup>35</sup> For the specific RFL field, refer to the discussion of concepts of culture, IC, and ICC offered in Chapter 2.

<sup>36</sup> E.g., Beacco (2000); Byram & Tost Planet (2000); Byram & Zarate (1994, 1995, 1997); Byram, Zarate & Neuner (1997); Guilherme (2000); Kramsch (1993, 1998a, 1998b); Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet (1999); Papademetre & Scarino (2000); Risager (1991); Zarate (1993).

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Byram, Gribkova & Starkey (2002); Corbett (2010); Gill & Čaňková (2002); Holiday et al. (2004); Mishan & Kiss (2024).

Fig. 3



Aspects of RFL Intercultural Activities

It should be noted that, in reality, the moments preconfigured here of “reflection on one’s own culture(s),” “reflection on others’ culture(s),” and “comparison and interaction of cultures” are never isolated and separate from one another, but in fact coexist and interact with one another continuously. Similarly, for this reason it will be difficult to devise activities purely devoted to one or the other aspect (in those proposed below, as will be seen, the three moments are generally connected). However, here, for greater practicality, we adopt the schematization provided above, which will serve us later (see Chapter 5) for the proposal of original intercultural activities aimed at teaching RFL. One final observation: the last aspect of these activities holds in its name the “comparison” between cultures typical of the comparative method (which we do not adopt here, for the reasons already mentioned), but integrates it with the concept of “interaction,” precisely to underline how (as has been said above) IC is not limited to mere passive comparison, but this only constitutes a means of passage towards active interaction between all the participating cultures.<sup>38</sup>

Having made these premises and clarifications, let us start our examination with the “narrative method,” which is perhaps the most easily applicable method for teaching culture (and, in our case, also foreign culture) and “the warmest, most welcoming, and democratic method of interculture” (Nanni 2003). Such a method is based on the exchange of experiences and the comparison of points of view through storytelling<sup>39</sup> in the form of self-telling/self-writing. Through the narrative method,

<sup>38</sup> Here we agree with Borghetti (2022: 14), when she notes how “language classes should not be seen as protected environments in which learners prepare for ‘real’ intercultural exchange (that which would presumably take place outside the classroom) ... but the very site of such encounters.”

<sup>39</sup> This useful teaching technique will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

learners can mutually exchange life experiences, get to know a little more closely the reality of the other, thereby implementing an exchange of cultural values.

The strength of this method lies in the stimulation of the ability to “listen to the Other,” who becomes a “lead actor” through the story of him/herself and his/her life (Nanni 2003). This dual direction of the narrative is very important, because it reflects and embodies the two-sided nature of intercultural dialogue, which is realized precisely in the story, as a profoundly human element, common to all.

We quote Nanni’s words here:

If interculturality is a “movement of reciprocity,” then it is not enough to talk to the Other, nor to talk about the Other, but it is necessary to listen to the Other. It is necessary that the Other also speaks to us, that (s)he manifests him/herself, that (s)he reveals him/herself, that (s)he communicates the story of his/her life.

Both a child and an adult have a life story to tell. This is why no one is excluded from the narrative. You can ask to narrate a fairy tale, a party, a journey, a game, a dream, an adventure, a typical dish, a diary, a movie, etc. Our belief is that narrative methodology is one of the most effective methodologies for intercultural education.

The direct narration of autobiographical experiences can be accompanied by listening to/reading other (auto)biographical narrative forms, such as “life stories of emigrants, biographies of witnesses, travel diaries, movies and documentaries by foreign authors, poems, and dramatizations” (Nanni 2003). In this way the narrative, according to Nanni, from a mere “object” of education becomes its “epistemic principle,” that is, it takes on educational value.

The narrative method can find possible applications in RFL classes in various modalities. Below we offer two examples:

1. The teacher may ask learners to record their own life stories starting from a specific topic (e.g., the story of their family). Subsequently the learners will have to listen to the story of a classmate (possibly with a different cultural background from theirs). This will also stimulate openness towards Russian speakers.
2. Instead, to aim more specifically at the development of the ICC towards the Russian speaker, as a replacement or in addition to the previous activity, the teacher may propose reading a choice of (auto)biographical literary passages that address that same specific topic and then stimulate a discussion among the learners.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> We will come back to the central role played by literature in intercultural teaching of

The second method we present here is the “decentralization method,” whose aim is, as Nanni writes, “to increase the ability to decentralize one own’s point of view, learning to consider one own’s way of thinking as being not the only possible or the only legitimate one but one among many.” Such a method consists of the narrative (oral or written) of characters, events, episodes, facts, and literature told from a different point of view, other than the usual one. Nanni brings, among various examples, the Crusades as seen by the Arabs, Colonialism in Africa as told by Africans, rather than the fairy tale of Little Red Riding Hood told from the wolf’s point of view.

Decentering ourselves and taking on the Other’s point of view “helps us to relativize our point of view and sometimes makes us more aware of how we are” (Nanni 2003). In this way, learners can interact with the Other by discovering that “for the Other I am the Other,” coming to a higher awareness of both the Other and themselves.

This method, in essence, makes it possible to develop learners’ intercultural sensitivity by getting them out of the comfort zone of egocentrism and ethnocentrism, but also by snatching them away from intolerance and racism. To quote Nanni:

The anthropological and educational value of decentralization lies entirely in the path to escape from egocentrism and ethnocentrism. Decentralization contains within itself an antidote to intolerance and racism. It is a democratic internship, a training to learn to accept the partiality of one’s own truth, never all-encompassing, never absolute, never definitive.

To decentralize oneself, one must accept one’s limits and mistakes, recognize that one needs others, and be available to listen and collaborate. All this requires availability and inner security that find their origin not on the level of knowledge but in a serene emotional maturation.

As can be understood from this brief description, if in the narrative method, a single version of a (self)biographical story was told/written and listened to/read, which nevertheless led to an exchange of experiences (through, precisely, the “listening to the Other”), the decentralization method allows for a greater relativization of the point of view, since it presupposes, in what in fact configures itself as role play,<sup>41</sup> the assumption of a different identity and a different point of view (often unusual,

RFL in Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion on the use of this technique in FL teaching, see Chapter 5.

unexpected, etc.) to tell (orally or in written form) another (even imaginative and creative) version of a traditional/‘canonical’ story.

In the RFL class, the decentralization method may have several implementations. We limit ourselves to pointing out two of them:

1. The teacher may ask learners to identify with a ‘controversial’ character from Russian history of their choice (e.g., Tsar Ivan the Terrible, Rasputin) and to expound (orally, e.g., via video recording, podcast, etc. or in written form) their own versions of history regarding a debated/problematic event (to pick up on the examples above, e.g., the death of Ivan the Terrible’s wives and the magical cures given to Tsarevich Aleksey Romanov).
2. As a replacement or in addition to the previous activity, the teacher may ask learners to identify with a literary character from Russian and/or Russophone literature of their choice, from the same or different works, from the same or different authors (e.g., Anna Karenina and Aleksey Karenin; Anna Karenina and Natasha Rostova; Anna Karenina and Sonya Marmeladova). The procedure of this activity will be the same as the previous one.

For the purpose of even deeper reflection on one’s own cultures, the “deconstruction method” shows particular utility. It is, in essence, a method by which the teacher helps learners to place themselves in a critical perspective toward their own cultures of belonging and to deconstruct “prejudices, stereotypes, clichés, deforming images, ethnocentric linguistic categories, etc.” (Nanni 2003) (see also Section 1.2.2).

Among the topics on which the critical deconstruction of the source cultures can be based, Nanni indicates, for example, the prejudices related to Islam on the part of public opinion, the concept of human races (non-existent in the plural) as well as the concept of intelligence (on the contrary, to be declined in the plural, given the presence of various types of intelligence).

According to Nanni, this cannot be an abstract operation, but a work that the teacher should conduct “by going down to the very concrete terrain of ordinary language, of everyday communication, of the normal tools we use in teaching... to verify the meaning of deconstruction precisely on them.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> It should be remembered that, in ILE, scholars underline the power of language in promoting or, conversely, inhibiting intercultural dialogue. For example, Kramsch (1998b: 31) argues that IE “must be accompanied by an increased sense of personal and individual responsibility in the use of words ... The privilege of the intercultural speaker is an em-

“Deconstruction,” as Nanni understands it, is a constructive and positive demolition, as it comes to be the first step toward decentralizing the individual (and the learner) and building a new collective memory:

To effect this change, it is necessary to “build by deconstructing.” That is, to build a new (planetary) memory by deconstructing the dominant memory, which is ethnocentric but passes itself off as planetary.

Deconstruction should therefore be understood as promoting the ability to question oneself, to revisit and revise one’s ideas. It is a process of revision, relativization, historicization, and decentralization of one’s conceptual categories.

The deconstruction carried out by the individual triggers a virtuous circle in which others are also encouraged to do the same, that is, to deconstruct their own cultures, thus also contributing to a better understanding between the cultures themselves, that is, to intercultural dialogue.

Coming now to the RFL field, the deconstruction method can be applied, for example, in the following ways:

1. The teacher may ask learners to deconstruct a certain concept (e.g., the concept of family or that of femininity/masculinity) in their source cultures, focusing in particular on the deconstruction of stereotypes related to this concept.
2. After or in parallel (for example, conceiving a cooperative activity in groups, followed by a plenary discussion), depending on the organizational aspects of the class, the teacher may ask learners to deconstruct that same concept in the target cultures, that are, Russian and Russophone cultures, also focusing here on the deconstruction of stereotypes related to this concept.

The last method we propose here is the “action method,” which, unlike the methods presented so far, does not focus on “knowledge” and “attitudes” of a mental nature that can generate openings to intercultural dialogue, but rather aims to enhance “the pragmatic path of education for active citizenship” through practical initiatives, such as inviting representatives of other cultures for a direct comparison, planning visits to

inently verbal privilege indeed.” And again, Borghetti (2016: 166) writes that “providing intercultural language education also means ... teaching students to take care of their own language, because it is also through careless and approximate linguistic use that stereotypes and discriminatory messages are perpetuated.” We will see more closely how this can happen in Chapter 2.

mosques, synagogues or Buddhist centers, organizing intercultural exhibitions or festivals (Nanni 2003).

There are many ways in which the action method can also contribute to RFL classes. For instance, the teacher may involve learners in organizing an exhibition dedicated to Russian and Russophone cultures. Similarly, guided visits may be planned to places of interest to the learners which are linked to the target cultures (museums, Russian language and culture institutions, etc.) or which demonstrate a link of the target cultures with the cultures of origin of the learners. For example, in the case of the Italian context, there are various cities and, within those cities, specific places connected to the stays of Russian/Russophone 19th-century writers, such as Florence for Fëdor Dostoyevskiy, Rome for Nikolay Gogol', etc. An even simpler initiative for the teacher to implement is an intercultural lunch/dinner with learners (e.g., after the end of classes) in a restaurant that offers Russian and/or Slavic (Polish, Ukrainian, etc.) cuisine.

The methods and activities suggested here are useful for all areas where an intercultural dialogue should be fostered, and especially for FLE, where it should be promoted an intercultural teaching capable of fully developing the learner's ICC integrating culture with language (see Section 1.2.1) and based on sociotypes rather than stereotypes (see Section 1.2.2). All this makes it possible to transform the teaching/learning of culture in something "dynamic" (Liddicoat 2002), in "a process in which learners engage rather than as a closed set of information that he/she will be required to recall" (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013: 23). That is, within the non-essentialist approach to culture and its teaching that we have embraced here (see Section 1.1.1), students have the opportunity "to confront all the dimensions of diversity (national, but also sexual orientation, gender, professional, religious, generational, etc.) that can make for an 'intercultural' encounter and, from each, draw opportunities for the development of their own intercultural competence" (Borghetti 2022: 18).

To draw sums from this section, we are indebted to IE and ILE for the following concepts:

1. Teaching culture is a difficult process for various reasons (lack of time during classes, potentially poor background knowledge regarding the target and one's own cultures on the part of students and teachers, etc.) and also potentially endless, yet it remains necessary in the FLE area (and thus, also RFL), given the connection between language and culture (see Section 1.2.1).



2. In order to teach culture in RFL classes, methods and activities specifically aimed at the development of learners' ICC on a non-essentialist basis must be used, that is, allowing for reflection on one's own cultures and on Russian and Russophone cultures, ultimately leading to dynamic comparison and interaction between all cultures involved.

After having discussed the contribution of the areas of IE and ILE to our work from a general theoretical (culture and interculturality) as well as methodological-practical side (teaching culture and intercultural dialogue), in the next subchapter we will delve into the elements and aspects derived more specifically from the FLE area.

## 1.2 Foreign Language Education (FLE)

The distinction between “second language” and “foreign language” education, which was first introduced in English teaching research in the 1950s (see Howatt 1984), is not always observed by scholars. Moreover, the two terms not infrequently have been used interchangeably or, even more often, the latter has been incorporated into the former (see, e.g., Ellis 1994: 6; Mitchell & Myles 2004: 5–6). However, in the wake of that part of language education research that believes this distinction is necessary (e.g., J. Hall & Verplaetse 2000; Van Deusen-Scholl & May 2017) for the reasons that will be explained below, here we will make explicit the difference between the two terms, which is functional to our investigation.

By “second language education” (which—let us make clear right away—falls outside the scope of this book) we mean a context where a non-native language that a person learns is commonly spoken and has an institutional role in his/her community of reference. This is the case of an Italian student learning Russian while living for a period in Russia (where Russian is the official language), or of a Russian student learning Italian while staying in Italy (where Italian plays an institutional role).

Instead, in this study we will address “foreign language education” (FLE), by which we refer to a context where a non-native language that a person learns is not commonly spoken and has no institutional role in his/her community of reference. To recall the Russian and Italian contexts already mentioned, a good example may be provided by the Russian language learned in Italy by an Italian student (here Italian, and not Russian, is the official language), or of the Italian language learned in Russia

by a Russian student (here Italian plays no institutional role, which is the province, instead, of Russian).<sup>43</sup>

Once the difference between second and foreign language education is clarified, it will also become obvious why such a distinction is important. Indeed, it implies a different degree of exposure outside the classroom to the language and culture studied, which may be greater (second language education) or lesser (FLE) and result in learning procedures that are more implicit, that is, unconscious and autonomous (second language education), or explicit, that is, conscious and guided (FLE). It follows that, in general, as far as FLE is concerned, both the commitment of the student and the role of the teacher will be more pronounced.<sup>44</sup>

The concepts peculiar to FLE (conceived as above) which we draw on for this study and which will be illustrated in the following pages are:

1. The connection between language and culture (Section 1.2.1); and
2. The transition from stereotype to sociotype (Section 1.2.2).

However, it should be specified that these concepts will not be fully embraced here but only partially, in line with the theoretical view of IE discussed earlier (see Subchapter 1.1).

In particular, with regard to Section 1.2.1, the connection between language and culture advocated by FLE will be conceived within a pluricentric sociolinguistic context, typical of RFL (see Section 1.1.1), where a single language (Russian language), albeit in its variants (diatopic, diastatic, diaphasic, etc.), corresponds to multiple cultures (Russian and Rusophone), and thus unrelated to the univocal one-language–one-culture correspondence proper to the traditional (academic and non-academic) conception.

Turning now to Section 1.2.2, while we share with FLE the need to overcome the stereotype for the sociotype in FL classes, we will distance

<sup>43</sup> See also Klein (1986: 19): “The term ‘foreign language’ is used to denote a language acquired in a milieu where it is normally not in use (i.e. usually through instruction) and which, when acquired, is not used by the learner in routine situations. Latin is a classic example and a living language which simply forms part of the schoolchild’s curriculum is another. A ‘second language’, on the other hand, is one that becomes another tool of communication alongside the first language; it is typically acquired in a social environment in which it is actually spoken. Examples are French among the German-speaking Swiss population, English among many Hindus, Russian among many Georgians in the Caucasus, etc.”

<sup>44</sup> As Liddicoat and Scarino (2013: 8) write, in a FL environment, “learners are often isolated from the communities they are studying and their experience of linguistic and cultural diversity as it relates to their language is necessarily mediated primarily through the classroom.”

ourselves here, on the one hand, from the vision of Russian speakers as a homogeneous and standardized identity group advocated by essentialist approaches to culture and IE widespread within the FLE area, according to the non-essentialist approach exposed in Section 1.1.1, and, on the other hand, from the adherence to the comparative method as a possible didactic proposition for the RFL field, as we believe that intercultural dialogue should not be based so much on the passive comparison of cultures (which constitutes only a natural and necessary first step of any intercultural interaction, as we saw in Section 1.1.2), but rather on their dynamic interaction, which is only possible after reflection on the culture(s) of the Other and on one own's culture(s), aimed at the development of ICC.

Finally, since the empirical part of this research focuses especially on the Italian context (see Chapters 3 and 4), we will give special attention, besides the international literature on the subject, to studies on language education from the Italian scholarly literature from the field of language learning and teaching, which is pivotal for our work.

### **1.2.1 The Connection Between Language and Culture**

FLE links the teaching of a FL to the teaching of the culture through which that language is expressed. Now, although we have already had occasion (in Section 1.1.1) to observe how this association cannot always be made unambiguously, especially when talking about multiple cultures expressed through a language-intermediary, as is the case with Russo-phone cultures for non-Russian ethnic Russian speakers, we cannot but agree with the assumption of FLE that language is not just an abstract tool made up of constructs and grammatical rules, but it is also connected to culture in some way, through a two-way link, not always monocentric (as we have seen for Russia).

Anyway, it is undeniable (and here we align ourselves with Risager 2007: 166) that, while studying a FL, one must also come to terms with the culture(s) which is/are conveyed through that language, and which thus establish(es) a vital link (non-monodimensional and exclusive, but still existing) with the language itself.

Now, in FLE, the connection (also non-linear, but still present) between language and culture has been highlighted many times.<sup>45</sup>

FLE refers in this to the anthropologist Franz Boas (2011: 25–26), who had shown how the words of a language adapted to the environment in

<sup>45</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the topic, see Borghetti (2016: 57–65).

which they were used. Although it is essentially a hoax, the example still cited today in language teaching of the numerous words to describe the color of snow among the Inuit, which entered popular culture following Edward Sapir (1921) and Benjamin Whorf's (1956) theory of linguistic relativity<sup>46</sup> (inspired by Boas himself),<sup>47</sup> is eloquent of the way in which—according to FLE—language reflects culture, which in turn influences language, in a continuous circle.

It was from the 1960s onward that the issue of the language-culture relationship became increasingly important to the field of FLE. To stay in the American context, the linguist Robert Politzer (1959: 100–101) at the *Fifth Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Teaching* asserts the importance of culture in language teaching, emphasizing the inseparable link between language and culture:

As language teachers we must be interested in the study of culture (in the social scientist's sense of the word) not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the other country but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning; for unless he is warned, unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols.

In essence, failure to teach culture, besides being senseless given the link between language and culture, would also lead to the creation of stereotypes (see Section 1.2.2).

Politzer actually expresses a generally shared sentiment in world linguistics circles of that period. For example, in the Italian sphere, in consonance with Politzer's words is the first issue of *Lingua e Civiltà* [Language and Civilization], a periodical of C.L.A.Di.L., Centro di Linguistica Applicata e Didattica delle Lingue [Center for Applied Linguistics and Language Didactics] of Brescia, in Italy, in which Giovanni Freddi (1968a), the founder of the Venetian school of language teaching research

<sup>46</sup> The "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," also known as the "linguistic relativity" hypothesis, emphasizes that the language one speaks influences the way one thinks about reality (see Lucy 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Boas (2011: 25–26) had pointed out, alongside other similar examples (such as the concept of water for the English, seen as a liquid, lake, river, rain, etc.) the wealth of Inuit words to indicate snow: "Here we find one word, *aput*, expressing SNOW ON THE GROUND; another one, *qana*, FALLING SNOW; a third one, *piqsirpoq*, DRIFTING SNOW; and a fourth one, *qimuqsuq*, A SNOWDRIFT."

and one of the founding fathers of Italian studies on language learning and teaching, states:

Thanks to the contribution of structuralism, linguistics can be considered ... the most advanced of the sciences of man. ... But language is also the voice and main vehicle of the “civilization” that expresses it. A linguist can limit himself to studying a language as a “sign system,” detached from its cultural and human background; a language teacher cannot.

There are two observations to be made on these lines by Freddi.

First, the C.L.A.Di.L. was critical of structuralism,<sup>48</sup> hitherto prevailing in theories of language education, pointing out the shortcomings of structuralist proposals for language learning, which were too focused on the set of rules and grammatical structures that constitute language (*langue*) than on the concrete reality of the individual linguistic act (*parole*). As Pavan (2020: 52) writes,

The aim expressed in the Center’s manifesto was the renewal of language teaching in Italy, using the indications provided by general and applied linguistics, the psychology of learning and language, sociology and anthropology; the purpose was to grasp what useful things could come from all disciplines in order to place them in a modern pedagogical and didactic framework so as to formulate the priority of a functional and practical language teaching. The purpose of C.L.A.Di.L. was thus to pursue an *integral*, that is, functional and formative, foreign language teaching, almost an anticipation of some of the themes present in today’s competency-based teaching.

Second, what we find very interesting is Freddi’s distinction between the “linguist” and the “language teacher.” This distinction introduces the

<sup>48</sup> Structuralism, whose founder was the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, can be defined as “an approach to linguistics which stresses the importance of language as a system and which investigates the place that linguistic units such as sounds, words, sentences have within this system” (Richards & Schmidt 2002: 519). Linguistic structuralism began with the posthumous publication of de Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics* in 1916, which gave birth to modern linguistics and semiotics. From a general perspective, structuralism builds on the analytical examination of the various components of language to study their interrelationships and place them within language as a system. In the field of FLE, the structuralist approach became established in the 1950s and was based on the behaviorist theory of language learning, which in turn drew on the American psychologist Burrhus Skinner’s (1938) neo-behavioristic learning theory, according to which the individual reacts to series of stimulus–response–reinforcement sequences (positive or negative), which ultimately creates in him/her unconscious mental attitudes, thus leading to human behavior conditioning.

variable of the didactic dimension, that is, of how language is taught/learned. Put in simpler terms, if a linguist has an abstract perspective on language, which for him/her is nothing more than a “system of signs,” the language teacher cannot fail to take into account the sociolinguistic dimension of the language (s)he teaches, and that is, (s)he must also teach culture along with language.<sup>49</sup>

Elsewhere Freddi (1968b: 87) remarks that language teaching should be combined with the teaching of “civilization” (preferred by him to the term “culture,” but basically analogous to it): that is, the teacher must present the “way of life” of the culture being taught/learned. In essence, for Freddi the vital and authentic sociolinguistic context in which communication takes place is no longer a framework for language teaching, but rather becomes one of the central focuses of language education as well as the very condition for language teaching/learning to take place.

In other words, as Pavan (2020: 53) well summarizes:

In the study of a foreign language, the comparison between two cultures is inevitable, so learning a language without learning the culture of reference means being confronted with a semantic system without meaning, a set of signals that have a formal syntax, therefore difficult to assimilate, and that have no pragmatics.

In short, in the perspective of FLE a binomial language-culture exists according to which there are strong relationships that regulate these two mutually influencing elements.

This idea accompanies even later educational theories. In *Thought and Language* (1992), Lev Vygotskiy, one of the founders of Soviet psychology and the main representative of the interactionist current, explores the relationship between words and consciousness and maintains that language generates thought. This is not the place to go into detail about the complex interaction between language and thought, which is described by Vygotsky [Vygotskiy] (2012: 231) himself as “not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought,” that is, as a process in the making, not so easy to define and analyze.<sup>50</sup> For the purposes of our investigation, suffice it to say that,

<sup>49</sup> On the practical aspects of culture teaching, see Section 1.1.2.

<sup>50</sup> Vygotsky [Vygotskiy] (2012: 231) observes how, “In that process, the relation of thought to word undergoes changes that themselves may be regarded as development in the functional sense. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relation between things. Every thought moves, grows and develops, fulfills a function, solves

according to Vygotskiy, the mind is a sociocultural product, since it is formed by culture and language.<sup>51</sup>

And again, from the pragmatic-cultural perspective of the psychologist Jerome Bruner's *Culture of Education* (1996), language learning also involves learning the cultural models connected to the target culture, since "learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources" (Bruner 1996: 4). What Bruner emphasizes is, basically, the parallelism between language acquisition and cultural transmission. Echoing Vygotskiy, the American scholar argues that the development of thinking is determined by the child's linguistic tools and sociocultural experience. In other words, for Bruner, mental processes have a social foundation and human cognition is influenced by culture, through its symbols, artifacts, and conventions.<sup>52</sup>

a problem. This flow of thought occurs as an inner movement through a series of planes. An analysis of the interaction of thought and word must begin with an investigation of the different phases and planes a thought traverses before it is embodied in words" (see also p. 233: "Thought and word are not cut from one pattern. In a sense, there are more differences than likenesses between them. The structure of speech does not simply mirror the structure of thought; that is why words cannot be put on by thought like a ready-made garment. Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form. The semantic and the phonetic developmental processes are essentially one, precisely because of their opposite directions"; p. 269: "No matter how they were interpreted, the relations between thought and word were always considered constant, established forever. Our investigation has shown that they are, on the contrary, delicate, changeable relations between processes, which arise during the development of verbal thought. We did not intend to, and could not, exhaust the subject of verbal thought. We tried only to give a general conception of the infinite complexity of this dynamic structure — a conception starting from experimentally documented facts"; p. 270: "The connection between thought and word ... is neither preformed nor constant. It emerges in the course of development, and itself evolves").

<sup>51</sup> As Vygotsky [Vygotskiy] (2012: 100) writes, "Thought development is determined by language, i.e., by the linguistic tools of thought and by the sociocultural experience of the child," or, in other words, "The child's intellectual growth is contingent on his mastering the social means of thought, that is, language."

<sup>52</sup> Bruner (1996: X–XII) maintains that "you cannot understand mental activity unless you take into account the cultural setting and its resources, the very things that give mind its shape and scope. Learning, remembering, talking, imagining: all of them are made possible by participating in a culture. ... Mental life is lived with others, is shaped to be communicated, and unfolds with the aid of cultural codes, traditions, and the like." From the perspective of the "culturalism" Bruner advocates, the mind cannot exist or be conceived without culture, since what makes man such is the construction and representation of reality through a symbolic system shared by the members of a cultural community and handed down to subsequent generations in order to maintain the identity and way of life

However, these discussions on the language-culture link in FLE must not lead us to forget the risk of ideological understanding of such a link, as we will see especially in Chapter 2. Instead, according to our preceding discussion on the complex notion of culture (Section 1.1.1), the relationship of culture with language also has to be problematized. This issue has been addressed especially by Karen Risager (2005), who takes anthropologist Michael Agar's (1994) concept of "languaculture" and interprets it as the cultural aspects of language (*Kultur in der Sprache*). According to Risager (2005: 191–192), each individual has his/her own languaculture that is "both structurally constrained and socially and personally variable" (191). It can be analyzed in three dimensions, which represent the various cultural perspectives on language: the "semantic-pragmatic" dimension (that of linguistic connotations, the object of study of linguistic anthropology, cross-cultural semantics, and intercultural pragmatics); the "poetic" dimension (the aesthetic uses of language, at which the literature area directs its attention); and the "identity" dimension (the sociocultural aspects of language, which form the field of sociolinguistics). For example, while each individual must partake in widely socioculturally shared semantic-pragmatic rules, e.g. "more or less obligatory distinctions between 'sister' and 'brother', between 'he' and 'she'" (191), at the same time "the meaning of such notions as 'work' and 'leisure' may be quite different even within the same professional group or the same family" (192). The same applies to the other dimensions. Concerning the aesthetic one, no literary study on the evolution of, e.g. poetic styles within a language area would be possible without the premise of a languaculture with both fixed and variable elements. Concerning the identity dimension, many sociolinguistic studies explicitly explore the issue of how "people project their own understanding of the world onto the interlocutors" (191).

proper to that culture: "mind could not exist save for culture. For the evolution of the hominid mind is linked to the development of a way of life where 'reality' is represented by a symbolism shared by members of a cultural community in which a technical-social way of life is both organized and construed in terms of that symbolism. This symbolic mode is not only shared by a community, but conserved, elaborated, and passed on to succeeding generations who, by virtue of this transmission, continue to maintain the culture's identity and way of life" (3). Although Bruner's view, with its emphasis on the transmissibility and heritability of culture, despite the recognition of its richness, complexity, and subjective variables (e.g., on p. 14, he admits that individuals are not "simply mirrors of their culture") comes across as somewhat static compared to the one proposed in this book (see Section 1.1.1), we credit the scholar's stress on cultural factors in education.



From what we have said so far, we can thus summarize the first two assumptions drawn from FLE that we make our own in the present study:

1. When teaching/learning a FL, one cannot disregard teaching/learning the corresponding foreign culture(s)<sup>53</sup> as well, which emerges as connected to language in multidimensional relationships;
2. With the focus only on language as a “sign system” and without the teaching/learning of culture, language education is to be seen as partial and incomplete, if not even a prelude to stereotypes.

It is necessary to devote more space to the latter issue, so we will elaborate on it in the next section.

### 1.2.2 The Transition From Stereotype to Sociotype

Partial knowledge of the target culture gives rise, in the representative of another culture and in the learner with another cultural background, to “stereotypes,” that is, quick judgments about other people based on a single characteristic they possess (Bodenhausen et al. 1994). In other words, these are irrational opinions not based on facts but on subjective and “prejudiced” judgments (Hepburn & Locksley 1983), very often fixed and difficult to change, which prevent objective evaluation.

To give a concrete example of stereotype, it will suffice to think about the blonde color of a woman’s hair, which in many cultures is associated with low intelligence (i.e., the “dumb blonde” stereotype, typical of American culture). Other eloquent examples could be some common classification of the French and the Russians, respectively, as ‘haughty’ and ‘cold.’

Basically, “with stereotyped thinking,” writes Abrams (2020: 293), “we ascribe specific characteristics – positive or negative – to an entire cultural group and essentialize its members to those characteristics.” In this sense, stereotypes can be seen as “generalized cognitive beliefs about cultural groups” (293).

From this standpoint, where the Other is viewed through glasses distorted by one’s preconceptions and vision of the world, it is clear that there can be no intercultural dialogue. According to the perspective of FLE, it is therefore important that the stereotype is overcome so that the encounter with the foreign culture can be said to be full and complete.

<sup>53</sup> The use of the plural here is related to the multilayered and pluricentric view of language and culture expressed in Section 1.1.1.

Before seeing what FLE suggests for the purpose of overcoming the stereotype, it is however necessary to reflect on the nature of the stereotype itself. In fact, despite being aware of the problem constituted by stereotypes, rather than limiting oneself to demonizing them as result of one's own vision and perception of the world, we should seek above all to understand their deepest logic by turning to demo-anthropological and psychological disciplines.

Actually, the stereotype fulfills a typically human task: that of simplifying the real in order to be able to deal with it. According to the cultural anthropologist Giacalone (1994), there are three cognitive mechanisms underlying the formation of stereotypes:

1. "Generalizing," that is, attributing to the individual the characteristics of the group without considering his/her uniqueness.
2. "Reducing," that is, providing an oversimplified representation of the Other, thus qualifying him/her by a single distinctive feature.
3. "Mixing," that is, bringing the unknown back to already known and encountered categories.

These mechanisms will not have an impact if they do not fit into a collective imagination, or beliefs shared by one's own community of reference. At the same time, what the stereotype represents is an attempt to establish the characteristics of the community one belongs to, differentiating it from what that community is not (the Other).

Basically, we can say that the stereotype also has a somewhat positive function, as it allows one to define one's identity. From the point of view of the social psychologists Tajfel and Forgas (1981), stereotyping is nothing more than a way to organize complex information and rearrange chaos. It is essentially a defense mechanism through which the individual constructs mental representations that allow him/her to somehow pigeonhole and, therefore, in some way, to control the Other.

This view of stereotype is included in a more general theorization of "social identity" implemented by Tajfel and Turner in two major works (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Turner 1985). From the perspective of the two scholars, in the definition of oneself and one's identity, belonging to groups (social class, family, football team, etc.)<sup>54</sup> plays a crucial role.

<sup>54</sup> According to Tajfel and Turner (1979: 40), a group is "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it."

These groups constitute an important source of pride and self-esteem, that is, a sense of belonging to the world or, in other words, the individual's social identity. Social identity implies involuntary and natural processes of "social categorization," through which individuals identify with an internal group, or "in-group" as opposed to external groups, or "out-groups" on which negative perceptions are projected ("social comparison"). This happens because, according to the social identity theory, the in-group will tend to discriminate against the out-groups to improve its self-image. Let us take an example of how this mechanism works: one group might think that Russia is the best country in the world. To boost its self-image, this group will not hesitate to discriminate and prejudice out-groups, for example by stating that Italy or Spain are bad countries to live in.

The example reported above makes us understand how, according to this logic, the world appears divided into two opposing worlds, into two irreconcilable poles—an 'us' and a 'them'—, on the basis of a process of social categorization. Stereotyping, that is, the placing of people into groups and categories, is based on a normal cognitive process: the tendency to group things together (Fiske 1998).

In making these groupings, due to the need to increase the image of one's own in-group, there is a tendency to exaggerate the differences between groups and the similarities in the same group.<sup>55</sup> In other words, we see the group to which we belong (the in-group) as different from the others (the out-groups), and the members of the same group as more similar than they are. At the same time, there is a tendency to discredit the out-groups, as different from oneself, in order to assert the identity of one's own in-group more forcefully.

In this framework, as has been suggested by Catellani (1987: 84), "stereotypes represent the sets of attributes which are associated with social categories and which allow the differentiation of one category from another." Going back to what was said at the beginning of this section, the stereotype is configured as a "process[es] of simplification of thought" to which the individual resorts "for reasons of mental economy," that is, to better organize information and—we can add—to better orient him/herself in the social sphere.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> This is what Tajfel (1969) calls "inter-categorical differences" and "intra-categorical similarities," respectively.

<sup>56</sup> We would like to report here Castiglioni's (2005: 45–46) experience and subsequent conclusions: "When I ask in a classroom of Italians to tell me which cultural group comes

In essence, the stereotype can be seen as a socio-cognitive and survival operation with which the individual manages to define him/herself (albeit in a contrastive way, by antithesis with respect to an out-group) and to relate to the world around him/her without being overwhelmed by it (even if, as we have seen, with discriminatory or sometimes even racist reactions towards the out-groups).<sup>57</sup>

Coming now to the field of education, however, it must be recognized that stereotyping, although extremely inherent in human thinking and not totally demonizable, cannot lead to full mastery of the target language and culture(s). This is because it carries with it cognitive schemata and sociocultural images of the Other that, insofar as they are essentialized and subjective, cannot create the basis for a dialogue with the Other.

And here the proposal of FLE is to help the learner who comes into contact with the foreign culture to make the leap from stereotype to sociotype (Mezzadri 2015: 308–310).

The term “sociotype” was first used in sociological research by Bogardus (1950) to indicate the effects produced by society on the individual in general, but without further study. Here we use it in its subsequent applications to language learning and teaching, which we owe to the Italian linguist Balboni (1999), who defines the sociotype as a characterization of a foreign culture derived from a rational generalization of an empirically verifiable stereotype. In other words, to use Wiest’s (2003: 137) simplification, sociotypes are “characteristics that tend to be true across a particular group of people” or, as the cross-cultural psychologist Triandis (1994: 107) points out, they are those stereotypes that are ‘realistic’ and ‘accurate,’ being based on some empirical evidence.

to mind when I ask ‘Who are those who drink a lot?’, I usually get a polyphonic chorus of people who very firmly answer ‘The English,’ ‘The Irish,’ ‘The Germans.’ The second question is ‘How do you know?’ Here the answers begin to be more vague and subdued, and punctually experiences of study trips to England, Ireland, or Germany, usually made by teenagers, for up to two weeks are reported. ... The instinctive response of students ... should not be demonized, but understood as a normal reaction of our psychological processes to the complexity of the reality of experience, until we bring to awareness a set of meta-level cultural dimensions that provide us with some more complex reasons.”

<sup>57</sup> In other words, the stereotype assumes the role of an instrument of self-preservation from a world that appears to the individual to be too complex to be dealt with as it is, and is therefore simplified, that is, made addressable by translating it into a false representation (stereotype). See Castiglioni (2005: 46): “Human beings do not respond directly to the reality that surrounds them, but to a representation of it that they themselves to a greater or lesser extent, construct. Reality is too complex to be reproduced in this sort of internally represented pseudo-environment; simplifying structures then become indispensable.”

To give a concrete example of a sociotype that concerns Russian culture, we may think about the low tendency of Russian people to smile at strangers, which is also shown in many movies.<sup>58</sup> If, on the one hand, the alleged ‘coldness’ of the Russians already mentioned is certainly a stereotype as it is based on subjective and irrational judgments of peoples who are almost always more expansive (Italians, Spaniards, etc.), on the other it is undeniable that Russians tend to smile much less often than, for example, Spaniards and Italians. Rather than a stereotype, this can be considered a sociotype, in the way it corresponds (in many cases) to a verifiable and generalizable fact. The rational explanation behind it is that the open smile is reserved for family and friends, while in official contexts it is instead interpreted as a sign of hypocrisy (see Dalla Libera 2017: 58–59; Prokhorov & Sternin 2011: 145–155): that is why Russians generally (excluding individual differences and peculiarities, which also need to be taken into account) are not so generous with smiles, and not because they are angry or sad all the time.

It is clear that generalizations with a good degree of verisimilitude cannot always be made, because, as we already know (see Section 1.1.1), in contact with the Other the individualities of individuals and the complexity of the multiple cultures of which these individuals are bearers come into play. However, the basic idea put forward by FLE, which invites us to move away from the stereotype and toward the sociotype, that is, cultural analysis that highlights the salient features of a foreign culture but at the same time avoids the flattening of variety and the homologation of culture, seems to us to be shareable.

In fact, generalizing, unlike what it may seem at first glance, does not mean falling back into the stereotype, but rather advancing cognitive hypotheses which, although based on imperfect albeit large-scale research, allow us to photograph the dominant orientations within a certain social group (Bollinger & Hofstede 1989; Hoopes 1981). As also observed by Castiglioni (2005: 47), “a generalization does not intend to follow the stereotype, but on the contrary explains the distribution of the majority of individuals of a certain group in relation to an indicator, while taking into account the internal diversity of a population.”

On the other hand, it should also be remembered that, if generalizations (i.e., sociotypes) were banned from the FL classroom, it would be

<sup>58</sup> On the cultural value of the smile (in general) as an expression of communication conveyed by body movements (“kinesics”), see also Balboni & Caon (2015: 56).

very difficult (or even impossible) to teach or even talk about culture and intercultural aspects.

Moreover, we must recognize that, if it is not always fundamental that the FL learner is aware of sociotypes, indeed there is no doubt that, on becoming familiar with them, (s)he could better organize the information on the foreign culture in his/her possession and therefore improve his/her ICC.

At the same time, the stereotype also reflects a different way of conceiving life and values by the learner who formulates it. For this reason, it is not enough for the learner to acknowledge the problem created by uncritical judgments about the target culture(s). Instead, the teacher needs to put him/her in a position to understand the reasons that lead a certain culture to express itself (on a general basis) in one way rather than another. The goal is not the complete assimilation of the foreign culture (which, logically, would be rather unrealistic in a FL environment), but learners' reflection, comparison, and understanding of it, which can only happen if the stereotype is transformed into a sociotype, that is, a stereotype verified by practice and experience.

To facilitate the learner's transition from stereotype to sociotype, the teacher will have to implement an intercultural teaching that makes learners focus on cultural differences in the form of a sociotype. This is possible through various active methods, which allow learners to compare the target culture(s) with their own cultures, thus debunking stereotypes and rather replacing them with sociotypes functional to their learning: comparisons, simulations, and clarification of misunderstandings through the media and newspapers.<sup>59</sup>

Thanks to these methods, the learner will be able to (see Balboni 1999):

1. Get to know the other culture(s) without relying on stereotypes;
2. Tolerate and respect cultural differences;
3. Accept a variety of possible cultural models, embracing what Freddi (1982) has called "cultural relativism."

Let us make a side remark here to clarify well what has been said so far and to respond to a possible criticism of the comparison of cultures promoted by FLE to move the student from stereotype to sociotype. We have already had occasion to observe in Section 1.1.2 how the comparative method, introduced into FL teaching by the communicative approach and based on schematic and often approximate comparisons between

<sup>59</sup> Some intercultural activities useful for this purpose have already been presented in Section 1.1.2. For more intercultural practices and teaching strategies, see also Chapter 5.

source and target cultures, is not only of little use for the development of the learner's ICC, but in fact can even be harmful, as it leads the learner to stereotyped and essentialized representations of the foreign culture(s) and the Other. However, it is undeniable that the first encounter with the target language and culture(s), as we have seen, requires conceptual schematization and systematization that can be functional in teaching practice for both student and teacher.

In other words, comparison between cultures advocated by FLE is, indeed, an inevitable process for the enhancement of ICC. At the same time, though, we are convinced that such comparisons should not stop at mere comparison between cultures (as in the comparative method) within an essentialist approach to culture and intercultural dialogue, but rather aim at dynamic interaction between cultures (as we suggested in Section 1.1.2), where comparison between cultures takes place within a non-essentialist, multidimensional, and flexible theoretical-operational framework (see Section 1.1.1).

Now let us recapitulate the main ideas seen so far, which rely on FLE with significant inputs from anthropological, sociological, and psychological studies:

1. When teaching/learning a FL, one necessarily faces cultural differences, that can lie at the origin of misunderstandings, when not leading to real stereotypes, understood as prioritized and irrational judgments about the Other capable of hindering if not inhibiting communication.
2. In FLE, stereotypes should not be demonized, since at their roots, after all, there is a need for identity definition for which the individual seeks his/her own identity at the cost of negativizing that of others. Instead, they should be transformed into sociotypes (i.e., stereotypes verified by practice and experience, functional to foreign culture teaching/learning).
3. To transform stereotypes into sociotypes, FL teachers should offer learners intercultural activities allowing for reflection, dynamic comparison, and understanding of cultures.

After the two key concepts of FLE covered in this second subchapter (connection between language and culture, and transition from stereotype to sociotype), we now turn to see, in the next subchapter, the elements constituting the theoretical basis of our investigation drawn from the methodology of RFL teaching.

### **1.3 Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL)**

By “methodology for teaching Russian as a foreign language” (RFL) we mean here all the theories, methods, strategies, and practices that have been elaborated by research on the RFL area throughout its history (see Moskovkin & Shchukin 2013).

Although the title of this subchapter focuses on teaching (since this, after all, is the focus or perspective of the present work), it is clear, however, that, besides teaching processes, learning processes—to which we will also refer, both here and later—should not be neglected.

The concepts derived from the methodology of RFL teaching (thus defined) and employed in our study are the following:

1. Cultural dimension as a cornerstone (Section 1.3.1); and
2. Textbook theory (Section 1.3.2).

Two clarifications become necessary here. As will be noted, the first concept recalls the centrality of the cultural topic promoted by the studies on IE, which we have already dealt with (see Subchapter 1.1), embracing the idea of the connection between language and culture typical of FLE (see Section 1.2.1), but seeing its more specific declinations in RFL. The second concept, on the other hand, has to do with RFL textbook studies, which have produced a number of significant theorizations that underlie the textbook analysis proposed in Chapter 3: that is why it is included in this section.

To go into even more detail, as far as Section 1.3.1 is concerned, the intellectual theoretical development related to the centrality of culture in RFL will be analyzed here, but it will already be seen that some assumptions related to a national and essentialist view of culture need to be rethought (see Chapter 2). Turning now to the RFL textbook theory discussed in Section 1.3.2, the history of the main textbook models built by RFL scholars will be traced, which testifies to an attitude to scientific analysis of the textbook also adopted by this work, but at the same time critical issues related once again to a simplified and essentialist conception of the (inter)cultural dimension will be highlighted.

#### **1.3.1 Cultural Dimension as a Cornerstone**

Intercultural theories and practices are conceived in the RFL field as being part of a specific historical moment, marking the evolution of a 40-year confrontation with the cultural element and its teaching and dis-



tinguishing the modern teaching of Russian language and culture in a foreign educational environment.

We will now try to retrace the steps of this history to see how we have come to the development of a didactic vision of intercultural RFL and what its characteristics are compared to the orientations that preceded it.

As is well known, the problem of culture and interaction with different cultures, which is the core of IE (see also Section 1.1.1), first arose in the context of the “sociocultural approach” to RFL—proposed, for general FL teaching/learning, by Viktoriya Safonova<sup>60</sup> (1991, 1992, 1996)—, which assumes a close connection between language and culture. Within such an approach, culture becomes the main content of education, mastered through a FL (Shchukin 2003: 105–108, 2017: 103–105, 2018a: 153–177). To use Azimov and Shchukin<sup>61</sup>’s (2021: 323) words, the sociocultural approach “is expressed in the orientation of teaching on the dialogue of cultures, strengthening of the cultural aspect in the teaching content, introduces to the culture of the country of the studied language.”<sup>62</sup>

In the methodological literature, the sociocultural approach and its treatment of cultural issues itself had further developments in the “poly-cultural education” devised by Pavel Sysoyev<sup>63</sup> (2003, 2008), which presupposed an approach to teaching FL and culture in which learners’ cultural, ethnic, and religious specificities were taken into account, developing their tolerance toward representatives of other linguocultural communities (see Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 235; Shchukin 2017a: 103–104).

On the practical side of teaching RFL (but also FLs in general), the sociocultural approach has resulted in two teaching trends: teaching culture from language (“from linguistic facts [*fakty yazyka*] to cultural facts [*fakty kul'tury*]”) and teaching language from culture (“from cultural facts to linguistic facts”): these two orientations were embodied, respec-

<sup>60</sup> For a brief biography and bibliography of Safonova, who has been a Full Professor at the Department of Linguistics, Translation, and Intercultural Communication at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University since 2013 and is specialized in the methodology of teaching English language and literature, see Shchukin, Moskovkin, & Yanchenko (2022: 387–388).

<sup>61</sup> For biographies and bibliographies of El’khan Azimov and Anatoliy Shchukin, Full Professors at Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 12–13, 503–504).

<sup>62</sup> On the dialogue of cultures, see Section 1.1.1.

<sup>63</sup> On Sysoyev, Full Professor at Tambov State University since 2005 and specialist in the field of FL teaching, see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 417–418).

tively, in “linguo-country studies” (*lingvostranovedeniye*) and “linguocultural studies” (*lingvokul'turologiya*) (Shchukin 2003: 105–106, 2017a: 104).

Let us now examine the first teaching trend.

Linguo-country studies, although born as early as the early 1970s after the publication of Evgeniy Vereshchagin and Vitaliy Kostomarov<sup>64</sup>'s (1973) book *Language and Culture: Linguo-Country Studies in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language*, became a methodological discipline only in the 1990s. This discipline regulated the practice of selection and presentation in the learning process of the cultural specificities expressed in the language as well as in its extralinguistic components (non-equivalent lexis, non-verbal means of communication, etc.), which—according to its supporters—would reflect the culture of the native speakers (see Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 152–153; Shchukin 2003: 105, 2017a: 104).

If linguo-country studies, on the one hand, put the accent on the language, which was supposed to represent the peculiarities of the culture and way of thinking of native speakers, and therefore saw the culture as a tool through which language expressed itself (i.e., “from linguistic facts to cultural facts”), on the other linguocultural studies (see *infra*), instead, promoted the idea that *language* was a tool for achieving the real goal: culture; that is, what was important was to teach/learn the foreign culture through the FL, and not the opposite (i.e., “from cultural facts to linguistic facts”).

Linguocultural studies, which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, gradually came, towards the end of the 1980s, to take shape as a scientific discipline that intends to provide a scientific basis for the practice of introducing and activating information about the foreign country and language<sup>65</sup> that linguo-country studies (as we have seen) are concerned with from an operational point of view.

Inspirer of this orientation was Yuriy Karaulov<sup>66</sup> (1987), with his theory of “linguistic personality” (*yazykovaya lichnost'*), understood as “any

<sup>64</sup> For biographies and bibliographies of Vereshchagin and Kostomarov, see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 100–101, 222–224). Both professors worked at Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, of which Kostomarov was the founder, first Rector, and President. Kostomarov was also a Full Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

<sup>65</sup> While linguocultural studies perceive themselves as a scientific discipline, in reality, as Pomarolli (2023) well demonstrates, they are a pseudoscientific discipline and a form of linguistic nationalism that aims to reconstruct the character of a people (in our case, the Russian people) from their language. We will return to this orientation and its issues in more detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> More on Karaulov, on the biography and bibliography of this Full Professor at the Peo-

native speaker of a language characterized on the basis of the analysis of texts produced by him/her from the point of view of use of the means of this language to reflect the surrounding reality (worldview [*kartina mira*]) ...<sup>67</sup> (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 401; see also Shchukin 2003: 105–106, 2017a: 104). Karaulov's ideas found fertile ground in linguocultural studies, which link their name first of all to Vladimir Vorob'ev<sup>68</sup>'s (1997) teorizations.

The object of linguocultural studies, as Azimov and Shchukin (2021: 152) write, is “the study of the relationship and interaction between culture and language in the process of their functioning,” whereas their subject is “material and spiritual culture in its existence and functioning, created by man, that is, everything that makes up the linguistic worldview [*yazykovaya kartina mira*].”

At the center of this discipline, which stands at the crossroads of sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguo-country studies, and culturology, is precisely, in the wake of Karaulov, man as a “linguistic personality,” in

ples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) and Full Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, can be found here: Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 199–200).

<sup>67</sup> In other words, the “linguistic personality” can be defined as “a subject of communication, a person who creates a linguistic text, comprehends it, uses it orally or in writing. It is a person who exerts a certain influence on other people through language: it is a person speaking, eloquent, writing, replying, namely, entering into the linguistic communication of his/her time. The abilities of a linguistic personality are manifested in: recognizing, understanding, and perceiving language, inventing the content of one's own speech utterances, predicting the effects of the structural elements of language in their totality, memorizing and reproducing speech utterances, being able to write and pronounce language works. In short, a linguistic personality is a conscious participant in the creation of linguistic forms of communication, it is a person working on language” (Bezrukova 2000). We observe here between the lines (but we will take up this discussion in more detail in Chapter 2) that Karaulov based his idea of linguistic personality on the national specificity of the speaker, seen as representative of a given language and culture (see also Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 200). On the national characterization of RFL teaching/learning (also alluded to by the concept, appropriated by linguocultural studies, of “worldview”/“linguistic worldview”, or *kartina mira/yazykovaya kartina mira*), see Chapter 2. Karaulov's conception of linguistic personality and, more generally, the theories formulated by his scientific school “Russian linguistic personality” had a practical application in the elaboration by Irina Khaleyeva (1982) of the so-called “second linguistic personality” (*vtorichnaya yazykovaya lichnost'*) studying a FL (see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 200; on Khaleyeva's scientific profile see pp. 458–459).

<sup>68</sup> See Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 113–114) for more information about the scientific activity of Vorob'ev, who is Full Professor and Head of the Russian Language Department of the Faculty of Law at RUDN University.

addition to language as an expression of cultural values and culture as the highest level of language (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 152). The areas of investigation of linguocultural studies also include, among other things, speech behavior (*rechevoye povedeniye*)<sup>69</sup> and speech etiquette (*rechevoy etiket*),<sup>70</sup> the interrelation between language and religion, and text conceived as a cultural unit (Gudkov<sup>71</sup> 2000; Maslova 1997).

If we make an overall assessment of the two aforementioned orientations—linguo-country and linguocultural studies—we cannot help but point out some of their critical issues, related to a national and essentialized view of Russian language and culture. In fact, native Russian speakers, as can easily be seen from what has been said above, are conceived as a homogeneous group of individuals of exclusively Russian nationality who fundamentally share the same vision of the world and the same value paradigms (understood as immutable and transmittable from generation to generation). Basically, what is propagated here is a static picture of Russian language and culture, understood only as national and therefore essentialized. The possibility of a Russian speaker to belong to multiple cultures and identities is not admitted, just as the Russian language is flattened to the role of vehicle of a national, monocentric culture, thus denying it any sociocultural complexity (see also Section 1.1.1).

This is not yet the time to discuss the critical sides of linguo-country and linguocultural studies, which will be dealt with in depth in Chapter 2, but we think it is only incumbent to mention them and then reserve the right to discuss them further (see Subchapter 2.2).

<sup>69</sup> The expression “speech behavior” stands for “a set of different speech acts performed by an individual or a group of individuals in a given communication situation” (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 287; see also Sternin 2000; Vinokur 1993). It should be noted that linguocultural studies connect speech behavior to national character (on this topic see Subchapter 2.2), as they believe that, alongside other aspects (from the nature of the communicative situation to the conditions of communication), the so-called “national-cultural specificity” (*natsional’no-kul’turnaya spetsifika*) of the interlocutors comes here into play (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 287–288).

<sup>70</sup> In linguocultural studies, “speech etiquette” means “socially defined and nationally specific rules of speech behavior [see footnote no. 69], realized in the system of idiomatic formulas and expressions, and accepted in situations of ‘polite’ contact with the interlocutor prescribed by society,” such as “addressing the interlocutor and attracting his/her attention, greeting, acquaintance, farewell, apology, gratitude,” and so on (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 292).

<sup>71</sup> Dmitriy Gudkov, who will be recalled even later as one of the initiators, in the RFL scientific discourse, of intercultural communication, is Professor of the Department of Russian for Foreign Students of Humanities (Faculty of Philology) at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University (see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 141–142).

On the other hand, it would be unfair not to mention that linguo-country studies and linguocultural studies have had, however, one merit, despite the critical issues mentioned above: that of raising, in the RFL area, a deep reflection on the role of culture in the teaching/learning of Russian. Even in their vices and flaws, these orientations (in particular, of course, linguocultural studies, thanks to their accent first on culture and then on language) have, on the one hand, paved the way for the theorizing, methodological elaborations, and sensibilities that would later lead to the birth of the intercultural approach (see *infra*).

Starting from linguo-country and linguocultural studies, the theme of culture was further developed in various general theoretical developments of RFL (see Dulebova & Moskovkin 2021: 222).

On the methodological level, the focus on culture adopted by linguocultural studies found systematic realization in the theory of “communicative foreign language education” (*kommunikativnoye inoyazychnoye obrazovaniye*) by Efim Passov<sup>72</sup> (2000a), who was in Russia the father of the communicative approach to the study of FLs, and thus, also of RFL (Shchukin 2003: 106, 2017a: 104).

Passov was absolutely convinced of the educational (not just instructional) value of FL learning, so he proposed replacing the term “foreign language teaching” (*obucheniye inostrannomu yazyku*) with the term “foreign language education” (*inoyazychnoye obrazovaniye*). According to Passov, in FLE students should learn both target language and culture, which were strongly connected,<sup>73</sup> at the point that the scholar conceived the well-known formula (Passov 2000b: 33) “culture through language, language through culture” (*kul'tura cherez yazyk, yazyk cherez kul'turu*).<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> More on Passov, who was one of the leading specialists in the field of FLE, founder of the Lipetsk Methodological School and still remains one of the fundamental names to have made RFL history, can be found here: Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 337–340).

<sup>73</sup> “Language and culture are inconceivable and meaningless without each other” (Passov & Kuzovleva 2010: 24; see also p. 29: “Language and culture are one and inseparable”). The relationship between language and culture for Passov is twofold: on the one hand, in fact, language is “part of spiritual culture,” while on the other it is “a product of culture itself and a means of expressing it” (28). In other words, language is here conceived as “an integral component of culture, its accumulator, carrier, and expressor” (68). On the link between language and culture in FL teaching, see also Section 1.2.1. Refer instead to Section 2.2.3 for a discussion of the essentialist discursive dynamics underlying the view of language and culture by RFL scholars.

<sup>74</sup> In essence, as Passov and Kuzovleva (2010: 29) explain, teaching/learning a FL presupposes the teaching/learning of a “linguoculture” (*yazykul'tura*) perceived as unitary.

However, in the language-culture pair, it was the latter that is given first place, as the actual “content of education” in FLE (Passov & Kuzovleva 2010: 45). Basically, in Passov’s view, the process of FLE could be regarded as the transmission of “foreign language culture” (*inoyazychnaya kul’tura*) and included four aspects (51):

1. “cognition” (*poznaniye*), that is, the appropriation of the cultural content of FL culture (cultural facts [*fakty kul’tury*]<sup>75</sup> but also language as part of culture<sup>76</sup>);
2. “development” (*razvitiye*), that is, the acquisition of the psychological content of FL culture (abilities, psychic functions, etc.);
3. “upbringing” (*vospitaniye*), that is, the assimilation of the pedagogical content of FL culture (morality, ethics, etc.); and
4. “study” (*ucheniyе*), that is, the appropriation of the social content of FL culture (speech skills, understood as a means of communication in society) (see Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 94–95).

Under the influence of linguo-country and linguocultural studies, as well as the thought of Passov and other scholars, the discourse on culture in the RFL area was carried on by IE, or *mezhkul’turnoye obrazovaniye*,<sup>77</sup> which was born in the 1980s, to enter the scholarly discourse starting in the 1990s (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 44) and, with even greater force, in the early 2000s, after the publication of the works of Gudkov (2000) and Svetlana Ter-Minasova<sup>78</sup> (2000) devoted to ICC and especially after the 11th Congress of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (MAPRYAL), held in Bulgaria in 2007 (see Berdichevskiy 2007; Moskovkin & Shchukin 2013: 313).

The relevance of such a scientific and methodological orientation towards culture is due to the fact that IE still dominates the conception of the modern teaching of Russian culture, thanks largely to the work of Anatoliy Berdichevskiy,<sup>79</sup> who actually introduced and integrated this

<sup>75</sup> With the expression “cultural facts,” Passov (2000b: 8–9) means the spiritual values belonging to the Russian people on a national basis. On the national view of RFL teaching and the problems it entails, resulting in an essentialist idea of Russian language and culture, refer to Chapter 2.

<sup>76</sup> See Passov & Kuzovleva (2010: 29): “Language (language facts) [*fakty yazyka*] should be seen as an integral part of culture (cultural facts).”

<sup>77</sup> For a definition of this concept and literature review in RFL, see more infra (in addition, see Subchapter 2.2).

<sup>78</sup> For the biography and bibliography of Ter-Minasova, who is Emeritus Professor and President of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 426–427).

<sup>79</sup> See Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 58) for more information about Berdi-

orientation into the overall RFL teaching system (Berdichevskiy et al. 2011; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020).

The two conceptual nodes of IE are given by the aforementioned IC and ICC, which we have already discussed in Section 1.1.1, but will now look at in the specific RFL context.

IC (*mezhkul'turnaya kommunikatsiya*) is generally understood by RFL scholars, in the wake of linguo-country studies, to be the “adequate mutual understanding of two participants of a communicative act who belong to different *national* cultures” (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov 1973: 43 [our italics]; see also Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 159–160).

The precondition for the occurrence of IC is ICC (*mezhkul'turnaya kommunikativnaya kompetentsiya*), which is commonly described as “the ability of the individual to exist in a polycultural society, to be successfully understood by representatives of other cultures and representatives of one’s own *culture*” (Azimov & Shchukin 2009: 134; 2021: 160; our italics).

Let us take a moment to acknowledge how the RFL definitions for both IC and ICC reported above<sup>80</sup> differ from those already seen in Section 1.1.1. Taking into account what has already been said earlier on and the definitions of IC and ICC proposed by us there in reference to IE (see Section 1.1.1), we simply note how much these definitions depart from the previous ones, being based on a national and essentialist idea of culture and identity. This is not by chance: in RFL, in fact, the intercultural topic is treated differently from the studies on IE just mentioned, with a focus on the national element and a non-problematized and even essentialized view of culture. For instance, the RFL definition of IC refers only to national (e.g., Russian) culture, thus neglecting the transnational (e.g., Russophone) culture of individuals speaking the Russian language without being ethnic/national bearers of it, as it happens, for example, in bilingual/multilingual or migration/diaspora contexts. On the other hand, as concerns ICC, the RFL definition, with its use of the singular form for “culture,” does not consider the multiple identities in which a single Russian speaker can partake, given the fact that no one has a single identity/culture. We will come back to such issues and discuss them in Chapter 2.

chevskiy, former Professor at the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (Austria) and since 2017 coordinating various European projects for the development of textbooks of RFL and for bilinguals.

<sup>80</sup> For an analysis of RFL definitions of the two concepts, see Torresin (2023a: 159–161) and Section 2.2.1.

If we were to identify the characteristic feature of IE as elaborated in the RFL area, we could name, in our opinion, the totalizing of the cultural dimension, which becomes (even more than in linguocultural studies) the constitutive element *par excellence* of the entire system of RFL teaching/learning.

The centrality of the cultural dimension manifests itself, in the intercultural approach outlined above, on two fronts: on the one hand, culture, as we have seen, is the real purpose of FL learning, and on the other hand, language learning in all its aspects passes through culture.

If the first point is, in essence, an evolution and reworking of linguocultural scholars' and Passov's positions and is related to the language-culture connection already discussed (see Section 1.2.1), the second point pushes the previous academic reflections even further, through the elaboration, in the RFL field, of an educational system that places culture at the center and subordinates to it the learning of grammar and vocabulary as well as the acquisition of the four foundational skills of language learning (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This system, highly indebted to Passov's research,<sup>81</sup> is constructed from the abovementioned works, of which Berdichevskiy is editor and one of the authors (Berdichevskiy et al. 2011; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020).

In those books, a number of practical methodologies and strategies are suggested for the development of ICC through the teaching of grammatical-lexical aspects of RFL. In other words, grammar and vocabulary are seen as representations and vehicles of culture, conceived in the national and essentialized ways already touched on (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2). Let us think, for example, of the idea of the abundance of impersonal constructions in Russian grammar, which would be explained by the fatalism and irrationality of Russians, as well as the extremely positive idea of the neighbor, reflected in Russian proverbs, which would be also typical of the national mentality<sup>82</sup> (Berdichevskiy et al. 2011: 22, 48–49; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020: 150, 177). Two other examples of how, according to Berdichevskiy, the national mentality is reflected in the language are, for grammar, the absence of articles, which would express the collectivist and non-individualistic nature of Russians, and for vocabulary, untranslatable words such as *volya* (will, freedom), *toska* (longing, yearning), *sud'ba* (fate, destiny), etc., which would indi-

<sup>81</sup> See, e.g., Passov & Kuzovleva (2010: 236–282, 516–558).

<sup>82</sup> For the concept of the “national mentality” and its essentialist implications in relation to the representation of culture in IE in the RFL field, see Subchapter 2.2.



cate the uniqueness of the “Russian soul”<sup>83</sup> (Berdichevskiy et al. 2011: 24; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020: 177–178).

Another book that contributes to the field of IE in RFL within this perspective of language as totally dependent from culture is Petrikova, Kuprina, and Gallo (2015: 143–220), which reiterates the idea that RFL grammar, vocabulary, and language skills should be taught/acquired through the teaching/acquisition of culture as expressed in them, according to the mechanism described above.

As is obvious, such a perception of culture as a totalizing phenomenon to which language is subordinated, when linked—as in this case—to an essentialist and nationalistic outlook (as we shall see more fully in Chapter 2), can only produce significant effects on the way both language and culture are taught in RFL. We will return to this later. For now, the important thing is to understand how the vision of IE within the RFL area involves the recognition of culture as an encompassing dimension of language. This certainly has the positive consequence of giving the cultural aspect an unprecedented role of primacy, although not without its criticalities due to cultural essentialism.<sup>84</sup>

Both of these points (culture as the real purpose of FL learning and language learning passing through culture), as we will see, are also taken up by RFL textbook theory, within the intercultural textbook model proposed by Berdichevskiy (see Section 1.3.2).

If we wanted to sum up what are the first three starting places that we owe to the methodology of RFL teaching, we could say the following:

1. As we have already noted for FLE (Subchapter 1.2), also in RFL teaching/learning, culture is not a secondary aspect but, indeed, the main aspect to consider, also given its connection to language (see Section 1.2.1).
2. Culture has been the subject of attention in RFL since the 1960s–70s, thanks to studies and research that arose within the sociocultural approach, resulting in two main directions of language and culture inclusion in RFL, one more focused on language (linguo-country studies) and one on culture (linguocultural studies).
3. Historically, modern RFL methodology is based on the idea of an all-embracing cultural dimension that is related to IE, which originated in the 1980s but has been established only since the early years of the third millennium.

<sup>83</sup> For the history and characteristics of the “Russian soul,” see Section 2.2.4.

<sup>84</sup> See Subchapter 2.2 for more details.

In the next section, we will see how the conceptions of culture and its teaching developed within IE have also influenced the field of textbook theory in RFL.

### 1.3.2 Textbook Theory

Following Azimov and Shchukin's (2021: 369) definition, we can understand the FL (and, therefore, RFL as well) "textbook" (*uchebnik*)<sup>85</sup> as "the main means of teaching [*sredstvo obucheniya*]," which serves as "a guide in the work of the teacher and the learners," offers "oral and written speech samples, language and country-study material," and implements "the concept of teaching method [*metod obucheniya*]."

However, according to RFL scholars, the textbook is not merely a study material but something more, and something that can profoundly influence RFL teaching/learning as a whole (as we will see in Chapter 3).

This view of the textbook is the basis of "textbook theory" (*teoriya uchebnika*), a term by which, broadly speaking, we mean a multidisciplinary research field that turns to the textbook as an object of inquiry. Textbook theory, also known in the English-language area as "textbook research," "textbook-oriented research," or "textbook studies" (Mikk 2000; Pingel 2010), was started in the USA, where initial, pioneering studies were conducted on textbooks already in the 1880s, although to speak of a real, systematic textbook research we will have to wait until the 1970s

<sup>85</sup> We will consider here mainly textbooks, and only in a second moment "educational complexes" (*uchebnyye komplekсы*) or (the term preferred here) "educational-methodological complexes" (*uchebno-metodicheskiye komplekсы*), understood as a set of teaching aids and accompanying/supplementary materials (teacher's book, audio-visual appendix, etc.) "designed for a specific profile or stage of language teaching and realizing the idea of differentiated management of educational activities of the teacher and students" (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 353). In fact, we can agree that an educational-methodological complex is a system of teaching materials that cannot exist without the textbook itself. In other words, along with the program and methodological recommendations for the teacher, the textbook is a mandatory element of an educational-methodological complex (Rybchenkova & Zinina 2004: 52). And not only that: since the textbook "presents the basics of knowledge in a certain field" (Zuyev 2017), it is rightly considered by experts as "the most important source of educational information" and "the main didactic tool" (Smirnov 2001). In the end, regardless of the different and sometimes divergent interpretations of the structure of the educational-methodological complex (see Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 353; Rybchenkova & Zinina 2004: 51), it is the textbook, as its main component (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 353, 369; Krayevskiy & Khutorskoy 2007: 214) and "the main and leading type of educational literature" (Ovchinnikova 2012), that is at the center of the educational process.

(Fuchs & Henne 2018: 27–28). In the same period textbook theory (first related to FL, and then to RFL teaching) was inaugurated in the Soviet Union and, later, in Russia, where—similarly to what was happening in the USA—textbooks began to be studied in all their aspects, from their creation to their optimal characteristics, from problems related to the content they offered to the design of methods and tools of investigation aimed at their in-depth analysis and evaluation.<sup>86</sup>

In the history and evolution of RFL textbook theory, we can distinguish three main textbook models. The first two were developed in the 1970s–90s (on these models, see also Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 6–10), while the last one, which is the most recent, dates back to the 2000s:

1. “communicative-individualized” (*kommunikativno-individualizirovannyi*) textbook model by Mark Vyatyutnev<sup>87</sup> (1984);
2. “communicative and action oriented” (*kommunikativno-deyatelnostnyy*) textbook model by Artëm Arutyunov<sup>88</sup> (1990); and
3. “intercultural” (*mezkul’turnyy*) textbook model by Berdichevskiy (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015).

Let us now examine these textbook models in detail.

The first one, the communicative-individualized model, was proposed by Vyatyutnev between the late 1970s and early 1980s, taking as the scientific and methodological basis for the theory of textbook development the “communicative-individualized approach” (*kommunikativno-individualizirovannyi podkhod*), a variant of the communicative approach<sup>89</sup> that accentuated the individual dimension of learning, where “communicative content and techniques of teaching it are determined by the communica-

<sup>86</sup> It is worth mentioning here the names of scholars who made fundamental contributions to Soviet and Russian FL and RFL textbook theory from its beginnings to the present time: Arutyunov (1987, 1990); Berdichevskiy & Golubeva (2015); Bim (1977); Dedova (1992); Granik et al. (2018); Krayevskiy (1978); Shaklein (2019); Shchukin (2018); Skalkin (1981); Trushina (1981); Tupal’skiy (1976); Vyatyutnev (1984); Zimnyaya (1989); Zuyev (1974, 1983).

<sup>87</sup> Vyatyutnev was an expert in FL and RFL teaching. From 1966 he worked at the Russian Language Scientific-Methodological Center at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, which later (1974) became the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute. Here Vyatyutnev directed the sector of Forms and Content of Teaching in Schools (for more details, see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 117–118).

<sup>88</sup> Arutyunov, who worked at Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, was specialized in the German language and methodology for RFL teaching (more on him can be found in Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 32).

<sup>89</sup> See footnote no. 32.

tive needs of learners and the methods and techniques they use to master the educational material” (Vyatyutnev 1982: 30).

In Vyatyutnev’s idea, the learner was to have some freedom and autonomy in using the textbook and would have to be able to choose the contents as well as the types of learning activities more suitable to him/her, in accordance with his/her own learning strategies and communicative needs. The scholar thus explained the dual communicative and individualized nature of the textbook model by him suggested:

Communicativeness [*kommunikativnost’*] is ensured by the fact that the goals and objectives of teaching and the selection of material is determined by the nature of communication and the communicative needs of learners. But individuality [*individual’nost’*] should be taken into account not only when introducing the communicative minimum—this is easy to do—but most importantly, it should be observed when establishing the relationship between the content, methods and ways of teaching, and each learner. (37–38)

That is, according to Vyatyutnev, an ‘ideal’ textbook would have to consider and target the individual characteristics of learners and support their communicative skills, by ensuring that learners:

1. Had samples of real communication;
2. Participated in and took initiative in communication; and
3. Performed meaningful activities that motivated them to achieve communicative goals.

This model found application in the RFL textbooks published under the direction of Vyatyutnev, such as *Horizon 1* (Vyatyutnev et al. 1977), *Russian Language 2* (Vyatyutnev et al. 1983), and others.

The second textbook model was the communicative and action oriented model, designed by Arutyunov between the late 1980s and early 1990s. This model, as its name suggests, was based on the “communicative and action oriented approach” (*kommunikativno-deyatel’nostnyy podkhod*), which constitutes the modern approach to RFL teaching, the foundations of which were laid by the studies of psychologists Sergey Rubinshteyn, Aleksey Leont’yev, Irina Zimnyaya,<sup>90</sup> and others.

<sup>90</sup> For the biography and bibliography of the three scholars here mentioned, see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 181–182, 256–257, 376–377). Rubinshteyn directed in 1942–1945 the Moscow Institute of Psychology (now called the Institute of Psychology of the Russian Academy of Education), the Department of Psychology at M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, and the sector of Psychology at the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences. As concerns Leont’yev, he was Professor and Head of the Psychology Department, then Dean of the Faculty of Psychology at M. V. Lomonosov

The communicative and action oriented approach places—in the wake of the communicative-individualized approach but even more—the learner “as the subject of educational activity” at the center. The educational system includes consideration of the individual-psychological, age and national peculiarities of the learner’s personality, collective training activities, concrete tasks and problem solving, as well as collaboration between teacher and student. Since the teaching/learning object, from the position of such approach, should be “speech activity” (*rechevaya deyatel’nost’*),<sup>91</sup> classes are geared toward teaching communication, trying to recreate meaningful “communicative situations” (*situatsii obshcheniya*) for students in order to develop their “speech skills” (*rechevyye umeniya*)<sup>92</sup> (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 121; Zimnyaya 1989).

The communicative and action oriented textbook promoted by Arutyunov was “communicative in purpose and action oriented in content,” as it consisted, on the one hand, of “grammatical sentences” (*language facts*, or *fakty yazyka*), “speech statements” (*speech facts*, or *fakty rechi*), and “verbal messages” (*communication facts*, or *fakty kommunikatsii*), and, on the other, it was combined with teaching activities that formed in learners linguistic, speech, and communicative competences.

Arutyunov distinguished a submodel of textbook design and a submodel of textbook expertise. While the first submodel has been used by several collective authors of the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute of Moscow in the creation of textbooks, the second submodel was applied to textbook reviews.

Moscow State University; he was also Vice-President of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. His psychological thinking exerted considerable influence on the formation of Russian linguodidactics. Finally, Zimnyaya, who occupies a central place in the psychology of FL learning and was the founder of the “personal-activity approach” (*lichnostno-deyatel’nostnyy podkhod*), was a Professor and Department Head of Psychology at the M. Thorez Moscow State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, now known as Moscow State Linguistic University, before becoming in 1990 Chief Researcher of the Research Center for Problems of Quality of Specialist Training.

<sup>91</sup> With the expression “speech activity” we generally mean “a general notion to denote phenomena related to the generation of speech and its perception, to the processes of speaking and listening, to the result of activity expressed in the form of an utterance, discourse, text,” or a “process of realization of thought in words” (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 284).

<sup>92</sup> The expression “speech skill” indicates “the ability of a person to carry out a particular speech act [*rechevoye deystviye*] in the conditions of solving communicative tasks and on the basis of developed skills ... and acquired knowledge” (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 288).

For lack of space we will not go into the single details of Arutyunov's model here. Suffice it to say that Arutyunov further refines Vyatyutnev's model, from which he takes two central cores: the importance of communication in the RFL class, on the one hand, and on the other, the centrality of the learner's individuality.

In other words, two of the main features of the RFL textbook, as elaborated by Arutyunov, are as follows:

1. The textbook aims to make learners communicate by developing their communicative, linguistic, and speech minima through the texts in it contained; and
2. The textbook is individualized, that is, the material is differentiated by learners' channels of perception, types of memory, and mindsets.

On these principles—certainly inspired by Vyatyutnev's model, communicative and action oriented approach and the times when they appeared, but also extremely topical—Arutyunov built his textbook model, which is traceable in RFL textbooks at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s.

While Vyatyutnev and Arutyunov's models, as we have observed, shared an emphasis on the communicative nature of the RFL textbook, with the third, intercultural model proposed by Berdichevskiy in the first fifteen years of the 2000s, the focus shifts to the cultural dimension. Since this model concerns the modern RFL textbook (i.e., also the textbooks analyzed in Chapter 3), we will dwell longer on it.

The two main assumptions at the foundation of the modern (i.e., intercultural, given the role of IE in modern RFL teaching, as already seen in Section 1.3.1) textbook according to Berdichevskiy are as follows:

1. The content of the textbook is given by the target culture (within the framework of RFL IE, as was explained in Section 1.3.1); and
2. The target culture is closely related (and indeed inseparable) from the target language (see also Section 1.2.1).

Let us now look in greater detail at one point at a time.

The first point indicates, in essence, that the modern (intercultural) textbook should present to the learner "the cultural facts of the country of the language studied in comparison with the native culture" (Berdichevskiy 2016: 17). As can be seen from this definition, culture is put at the center of the RFL teaching/learning process within an IE process whose aim is to develop learners' ICC.

While this is largely agreeable and is in line with developments in RFL methodology in general (see Section 1.3.1), less agreeable is the static

and essentialized idea that transpires from this quotation (the objectification and nationalization of cultural content through the use of the concept of “cultural facts” as interpreted by Passov,<sup>93</sup> the territorial and unambiguous link between a country and a language, the idea that the learner belongs to only one culture, etc.), also in conformity with RFL research itself, which denotes the influence of a certain uncritical and simplified view of culture and identity (we will come back to this issue in Chapter 2).

Regarding the second point, which refers to an idea peculiar to FL learning in general already discussed in Section 1.2.1, Berdichevskiy not surprisingly once again builds upon Passov, who, as we know (see Section 1.3.1), also argued for the indivisibility of language and culture through the formula “culture through language, language through culture,”<sup>94</sup> recalling the famous example of the Cologne Cathedral and the matrëshka doll: “Language facts are the same cultural facts (Perfekt is the same fact of German culture as the Cologne Cathedral; the perfective aspect of the verb is the same fact of Russian culture as the matrëshka doll” (qtd. in Berdichevskiy 2016: 14).

We have already analyzed the language-culture connection (Section 1.2.1) and noted the risk of falling back into cultural essentialism—which in fact happens here, as in the other Russian-language theorizations of RFL IE even outside of textbook theory (see Chapter 2). However, what interests us for now, given the topic and scope of this subchapter, is the idea that the cultural and intercultural content of the RFL textbook does not remain isolated but constitutes both the heart of the textbook and the glue of its individual parts.

If we go back to Passov’s idea of cultural facts considered above and specify more precisely how these are understood within Berdichevskiy’s model of the RFL textbook, we realize how culture informs (and forms) the textbook in the third model.

Among the cultural facts of the target culture, which the learner is asked to compare with his/her own, in the wake of M. Schneider (1997: 164), are included:

1. the “linguistic” aspect (vocabulary, grammar, etc., conceived as a reflection of cultural values);
2. the “pragmatic” aspect (rules needed to orient oneself in the foreign country);

<sup>93</sup> See footnote no. 75.

<sup>94</sup> See also footnotes no. 73 and 74.

3. the “historical” aspect (attitudes toward the past and differences between the native and foreign countries);
4. the “aesthetic” aspect (differences in lifestyle, way of dressing, etc.);
5. the “ethical” aspect (differences in norms of behavior);
6. the “stereotypical” aspect (established stereotypes toward one’s own and foreign cultures); and
7. the “reflexive” aspect (personality changes as a result of IE) (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 68).

As can be seen from this list, according to Berdichevskiy it is culture (and not language) that drives RFL teaching/learning through the modern textbook, on the one hand, and on the other hand, this same culture, by virtue of the interrelation between language and culture, is inevitably reflected in the language.

Berdichevskiy even goes so far as to hypothesize that, in line with the theories regarding IE (see Section 1.3.1), in the intercultural RFL textbook, the teaching/learning of grammar and vocabulary necessarily passes through culture. In Berdichevskiy and Golubeva (2015), two entire chapters are devoted to grammar and vocabulary (79–112), the teaching/learning of which is envisaged from the cultural values that would be represented in them. We can find, for example, among other recurrences, the reproposal of Berdichevskiy et al. (2011: 22, 48–49) and Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin, and Tareva’s (2020: 150, 177) examples, for broader IE, of Russian impersonal constructions as symbol of Russian fatalism and irrationality, along with the positive image of the neighbor in the eyes of the Russian people (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 80, 93).

Leaving aside for the moment the discussion on the consequences, for an intercultural approach to RFL teaching, of a similar vision of culture,<sup>95</sup> we note how the textbook model developed by Berdichevskiy has the merit to place culture at the center of scholars’ attention.

To summarize the contribution that RFL textbook theory gives to this study, we can observe how:

1. As already said both for FLE (Subchapter 1.2) and RFL methodology (Section 1.3.1), culture is the main aspect that comes into play in an RFL textbook.
2. While the first two textbook models proposed by Vyatyutnev and Arutyunov focus, in particular, on the communicative quality of the RFL textbook, it is with the third intercultural model by Ber-

<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 2 for an in-depth examination of this topic.



dichevskiy that the attention shifts to the cultural side of the RFL textbook and culture becomes the preferred means for teaching/learning the language within the intercultural perspective outlined in Section 1.3.1.

In the next chapter, we will examine closely the ways of understanding culture and its link with language in the RFL academic field, which presents some critical issues only touched upon so far.

## 1.4 Conclusion

In this first chapter, we have discussed the theoretical foundations of the present investigation, derived mainly from the fields of IE, FLE, and RFL methodology.

Regarding IE, we have seen that culture and interculturality (with the related concepts of IC, ICC, intercultural dialogue, etc.) are two complex concepts, to be understood in a non-essentialist sense. The individual has multiple identities, participating in multiple cultures simultaneously. In intercultural encounters, multiplicities of cultures are interacting one with another, which makes the development of ICC and intercultural dialogue as a whole a fairly complex operation.

Therefore, to teach culture—which is a difficult and potentially endless, yet necessary process—, methods and activities must be based on a non-essentialist perspective and allow reflection on one's own cultures as well as dynamic comparison and interaction between all cultures involved.

Coming now to FLE, we have admitted that there is an undeniable link between target language and target culture, which, however, is not always linear (i.e., one language may correspond to multiple cultures).

Furthermore, we have recognized that, when teaching/learning a FL, one necessarily faces cultural differences, which inevitably lead to the application of some form of stereotypes. The point is to not totally demonize them but transform them into sociotypes, in the sense of heuristic tools that may help navigate through other cultures, while maintaining the non-essentialist and dynamic baseline approach as cited above, and avoiding static comparisons.

Finally, turning to RFL methodology, we have said that, while RFL adopts a concept of culture that has been deemed problematic, it nonetheless has the merit of putting the aspect of culture as central in the

teaching/learning of language. This has led to a theorization of a model for an intercultural textbook which is still worth exploiting.

Overall, the theoretical discussion has revealed some critical issues in RFL teaching that will be examined in more detail in the following chapters, with reference to intercultural theories of RFL (Chapter 2), the treatment of culture and intercultural dialogue in RFL textbooks (Chapter 3), and RFL teaching practices from an intercultural perspective (Chapter 4). At the same time, however, the basis has been laid for the proposal of concrete teaching alternatives for the improvement of IE in RFL (Chapters 4 and 5).



## 2. Critical Issues in RFL Intercultural Theories

This second chapter is devoted to the topic of theoretical positions toward the intercultural teaching of Russian within RFL-area Russian studies concerning IE.

Specifically, the method of critical discourse analysis (Subchapter 2.1) is employed, which is applied to the examination of relevant scholarly texts on IE produced in Russian language between 2007 and 2023 (Subchapter 2.2). The aim is to show how a monolithic, essentialized, and stereotyped idea of culture linked to national affiliation still predominates in the RFL academic discourse on intercultural aspects.

### 2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The research method used here for the analysis of RFL literature on IE (see Subchapter 2.2) is the so-called “critical discourse analysis” (CDA) developed during the 1980s–90s and the early 2000s (Fairclough 1989, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Jäger 1993; van Dijk 1993, 2001, 2008a, 2008b; Wodak & Meyer 2001). CDA studies “discourse” (Foucault 1980), understood as a dynamic set of explicit and implicit utterances constructed through intertextual and intratextual modalities that create a certain “regime of truth” (S. Hall & Gieben 1992: 295), which in turn influences social relations, especially in power relations.

The purpose of CDA, as Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 61) write, is “to shed light on the linguistic discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change in late modernity.” In essence, this method focuses on the sociocultural aspects of discourse itself, showing how discourse changes through connections and interactions between texts (“intertextuality”), as well as the combinations and contamination of discourses with each other (“interdiscursiveness”). These processes lead to possible changes within a single discourse, as well as to more general sociocultural changes (7, 60–95).

In practice, CDA aims to identify the ideology concealed in the subtexts of discourse, relating it to the sociohistorical context in which it is produced (Chalaby 1996; Parker 1992; Phillips & Hardy 2002), with a particular emphasis on “the discursive reproduction of social power,” “the critical study of political discourse,” and “the study of fundamental social problems, such as racism” (van Dijk 2008b: 8). As Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271–280) stress, CDA addresses as its main topics social problems and discursive power relations.

Fairclough (1995: 131) argues that discourse is both “socially shaped” and “socially shaping, or *constitutive*,” in that on the one hand it “reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations,” while on the other it is “shaped by other social practices and structures” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 65). Consequently, the scholar defines CDA as a research method that explores the implicit relationship between discourse and society, behind which lie relations of power:

By ‘critical’ discourse analysis I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony ... (Fairclough 1995: 132–133)

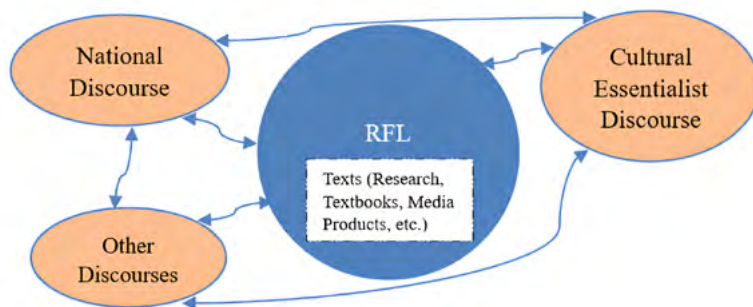
In sum, as is clear from the above passage and as mentioned above, ‘critical’ discourse analysis—even more than discourse analysis—has to do with power. This is also emphasized by van Dijk (2001: 352, 2008a: 85) in pointing out that “critical discourse analysis ... is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.”

Basically, within certain “contexts”—understood as “mental models” consisting of “conventional categories” shared by a discursive community (van Dijk 2008b: 16–17)—certain discourses impose themselves as preferential and/or dominant on both personal and social levels. A discourse or discourses that is/are imposed as dominant within a certain group actually exert(s) a form of “control” (van Dijk 2001: 354–358, 2008a: 88–93) over the minds and actions of members of the group or other less influential groups, establishing dynamics of domination and thus coming to shape reality according to the ideology inherent in it/them.

Based on the CDA as understood by Fairclough and the other above-mentioned scholars, according to what we said, in the wake of Torresin (2023b: 34–36), we can consider the RFL area (see Subchapter 1.3) as a “system-society” formed by all those who have more or less direct and close ties with the RFL field: from scholars to teachers, from students to institutions, etc. In this system-society thus conceived, individual discourses, but more often their combinations and contaminations, can lead to changes in the conception of theories and practices of teaching Russian language and culture. Undoubtedly, as well explained by van Dijk, the predominance of certain discourses in contexts relevant to RFL teaching/learning will imply the creation of power relations in the academic, educational, and sociopolitical spheres.

Simplifying in a way useful to our investigation (see Fig. 4), in view of our previous critical studies on RFL intercultural teaching (e.g., Torresin 2023a, 2023b),<sup>96</sup> as we will also observe through the examination of the Russian-language literature on RFL intercultural teaching from the period 2007–2023 (see Subchapter 2.2), we can identify two dominant discourses in the RFL field that prevail over the others, fitting into the logics of power described above: the “national discourse” and the “cultural essentialist discourse.”

Fig. 4



Discursive Dynamics in the RFL Field (Adapted from Torresin 2023b: 35)

<sup>96</sup> It should be noted that in the argumentation provided below, reference will be made mainly to the following research: Torresin (2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023e); Torrezin [Torresin] (2022c, 2023d, 2023f). To the best of our knowledge, at present these are the only systematic studies related to RFL intercultural teaching that, placing themselves within a non-essentialist approach to culture and intercultural dialogue, attempt to deconstruct the dominant ideologies of RFL in order to pave the way for new perspectives on teaching Russian. In view of this, it is evident that such publications form the basis of our investigation.

We will now try to briefly characterize these two discourses in a general perspective, while in Subchapter 2.2 we will explore them in more detail, as we will see them substantiate the scholarly literature on IE in the RFL area.

Regarding the national discourse, our recent studies (Torresin 2022b, 2023a; Torrezin [Torresin] 2022c) show that, in the teaching of Russian language and culture in the RFL context, emphasis is generally placed on the Russian, that is, national, dimension, seen as the main one, while the Russophone, that is, transnational, dimension consisting of non-Russian (non-ethnic) Russian speakers<sup>97</sup> is often blatantly omitted. This means that, in fact, a national view of Russian language and culture is being fostered in the teaching of Russian: in other words, a national discourse is in place that is commonly shared by all those (scholars, teachers, students, institutions, etc.) who deal with the RFL system-society from academic, educational, and sociopolitical perspectives.

The national discourse interacts in RFL with a second discourse: the cultural essentialist discourse. Some research (e.g., Azimova & Johnston 2012; Shardakova & Pavlenko 2004; Torresin 2023e; Torrezin [Torresin] 2023d) has shown that Russian culture, as it is conceived and represented in RFL textbooks, appears static and homogenized, that is, unchanging over time and necessarily the same for all Russian speakers, without any individual differentiation. We will come back to this issue in Chapter 3, where we will analyze an Italian case study of RFL textbooks, to unveil cultural essentialism (with a special focus on the myth of the “Russian soul”<sup>98</sup>). Anyway, it will be seen shortly that this same cultural essentialist discourse is also found, together with the national discourse discussed above, in the RFL scientific literature on IE (see Subchapter 2.2).

In sum, the national discourse and the cultural essentialist discourse, which are combined and intertwined in the modern conception of RFL teaching (see Torresin 2022b, 2023a, 2023e), are now generally accepted and shared in the academic, educational, and sociopolitical spheres, constituting the dominant and hegemonic conception of teaching Russian language and culture to foreign students.

As a result, a partial, not to say stereotyped, idea of Russian culture is conveyed to the learner; an idea, by the way, that seems to be subscribed to by various segments of society directly or indirectly linked to

<sup>97</sup> See also Section 1.1.1 for the definitions of Russian and Russophone cultures, here conceived as target cultures in RFL teaching.

<sup>98</sup> See Section 2.2.4.

and exerting considerable influence on our RFL system. A quick example is the initial cancellation in February 2022 of Paolo Nori's course on Dostoyevskiy at Milan's Bicocca University, dictated by political considerations. This, as well as the other episodes of ostracism that occurred in Italy toward Russian culture after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, was based on the fusion of Russian culture—perceived as unitary and homogenized—with Putin's politics, and its consequent unambiguous and irrational condemnation on sociopolitical grounds (see Torrezin [Torresin] 2023f).

In keeping with the CDA theories set forth above and as can be seen in Fig. 4, national discourse and cultural essentialist discourse also pass through texts. Specifically, in this chapter we will analyze one type of text: RFL studies, while later on we will deal with textbooks (Chapter 3). These kinds of texts, as we will be able to notice, act in a similar way, since through the aforementioned discourses they construct their own versions of Russian linguistic and cultural identity, and, as a result, also recreate in the RFL system-society (within the already illustrated discursive mechanisms of power) the reality of intercultural teaching of Russian in explicit or implicit forms, academic or otherwise.

## 2.2 RFL Literature on IE (2007–2023): A Critical Overview

In this subchapter, we will provide a critical overview of Russian-language studies dedicated to ICC<sup>99</sup> for university learners of RFL from an IE perspective. The study is based on the theoretical framework already outlined on a general IE (see Section 1.1.1) and RFL-specific level (see Section 1.3.1) and is built upon the CDA research method illustrated in the previous subchapter. This analysis involves an in-depth examination and evaluation of qualitative data collected from a specific sample (see below for more details) to generate new insights into RFL research.

The specific research goals of the critical overview offered here are as follows:

1. To critically examine the extent and characteristics of ICC-related scholarship within the RFL area produced between 2007 and 2023, with a particular emphasis on the university context, in order to gain a comprehensive picture of how intercultural RFL teaching is conceptualized at a theoretical level; and

<sup>99</sup> For the definition of this concept, see Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3.1.



2. To identify the pedagogical implications of such theoretical contributions for an intercultural model of RFL teaching.

We will consider the period 2007–2023 because IC<sup>100</sup>—which has been in the Russian-speaking scientific discourse since the 11th MAPRYAL Congress in 2007<sup>101</sup>—has become an indispensable concept in RFL since that year. The sample of studies considered is a purposive sample selected on a non-probability basis by identifying keywords/search terms in Russian and English related to the research topic (e.g., IC and ICC as well as synonyms and related concepts, such as “interculturalism,” “intercultural,” “intercultural dimension,” “intercultural dialogue,” and “intercultural education”). In other words, the sample represents a judgmental or authoritative sample that includes all the most relevant contributions that have shaped the concept of ICC in RFL.

The sample contains prestigious publications, including monographs and teaching textbooks printed by major Russian and Russian-language scientific publishers, articles from important Russian scientific journals, and significant conference/congress proceedings in the RFL field or related to the RFL field with references to the intercultural dimension.

Publications by well-known RFL publishers include monographs and teaching textbooks edited, for example, by Flinta, Russian Language. Courses, Zlatoust, RUDN University, Belarusian State University, and Belarus State Economic University (among others, Berdichevskiy 2022; Lebedinskiy & Gerbik 2011; Passov & Kuzovleva 2010; Pugachëv 2011; Shchukin 2019; Shibko 2011). In collective monographs/teaching textbooks, single chapters with specific relevance to our investigation were also considered (e.g., Berdichevskiy 2020).

The RFL publications from scientific journals consist of articles dealing with ICC issued in renowned Russian scholarly journals, both specialized in issues related to RFL and FL teaching (*RUDN Journal of Language Education and Translingual Practices*, *Russian Language Abroad*, *Russian Language Studies*, and *The World of Russian Word Journal*), also with an educational-pedagogical orientation (e.g., *Modern Pedagogical Education*), and general humanities topics (e.g., *Izvestia: Herzen University Journal of Humanities & Sciences* and *RSUH Bulletin*) (e.g., Berdichevskiy 2007, 2021; Nistratova 2023; Senatorova 2020; Shamsutdinova 2008; Vasilyuk 2010; Zaytseva & Lapshina 2020).

<sup>100</sup> This concept—besides ICC—has been already defined in Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3.1.

<sup>101</sup> For further information, see Section 1.3.1.

Contributions in the congress proceedings of MAPRYAL, along with materials from relevant conferences, were also analyzed due to their importance in (re)defining and/or legitimizing RFL theories and methods (e.g., Kharitonov 2013; Masyuk & Suvorova 2013; Varichenko 2015).

Moreover, it should be noted that leading experts in the RFL area were also examined, for instance Passov,<sup>102</sup> Berdichevskiy,<sup>103</sup> Shchukin, Azimov,<sup>104</sup> Natal'ya Shibko, Lyudmila Kryuchkova,<sup>105</sup> Natal'ya Moshchinskaya, and Natal'ya Kulibina.<sup>106</sup> As most of these scholars are also authors of RFL textbooks (both for RFL teachers and learners), the sample includes research that has a concrete impact not only on RFL theories but also on RFL practices, that is, on RFL teaching as a whole.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned authors and important scholarly research, further sources were considered, including studies of lesser impact (appearing in less renowned venues and/or written by minor scholars), based on the recurrence and treatment of the keywords/search terms employed in the present investigation.

Starting from the definitions of IC and ICC (Section 2.2.1), it will be seen that, in addition to an ambiguous use of the term IC as a result of the influence of linguo-country and linguocultural studies,<sup>108</sup> the concept of culture at the base of these studies is poorly problematized, static, and linked to national and essentialist dynamics (Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). In RFL, all this translates into a vision of ICC (and therefore of IC) that is stereotyped, uncritical, and nationalistic, based on "tolerance" (*tolerantnost'*) rather than on a real intercultural interaction (Section 2.2.4).

The proposed review of studies and related considerations will finally lead us to question what issues affect RFL intercultural teaching today (Section 2.2.5), so as to identify possible areas for improvement on which the operative part of the book (Chapter 5) will focus.

<sup>102</sup> See Section 1.3.1 and footnote no. 72.

<sup>103</sup> See Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, and footnote no. 79.

<sup>104</sup> See footnote no. 61.

<sup>105</sup> The biography and bibliography of this RFL scholar can be found in Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 231–232).

<sup>106</sup> See Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 238–239) for more information about Kulibina.

<sup>107</sup> Further, the influence of the views of such studies on RFL teaching can be seen not only in the Russian RFL textbooks but also in RFL textbooks written outside Russia. In Chapter 3, we will present the case study of the Italian ones (see Chapter 3 for more details).

<sup>108</sup> For more on these RFL academic orientations, see Section 1.3.1.

### 2.2.1 Definitions of Intercultural Communication (IC) and Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Modern studies on the development of ICC in RFL remain linked to the definition of IC proposed in the 1970s by the founders of linguo-country studies, Vereshchagin and Kostomarov<sup>109</sup> (1973: 43), who understood IC as “an adequate mutual understanding [*vzaimoponimaniye*] of two participants in a communicative act who belong to different national cultures” (see also Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 159–160).<sup>110</sup>

Since Vereshchagin and Kostomarov, Ter-Minasova<sup>111</sup> (2000: 24) has noted how:

Every foreign language lesson is a crossroads of cultures [*perekrëstok kul'tur*], is a practice of intercultural communication, because every foreign word reflects a foreign world and a foreign culture: behind every word there is an idea of the world conditioned by national consciousness.

More recently, Shibko proposes a view of IC as “the capacity for interaction [*vzaimodeystviye*] between participants in the communicative act who belong to different national cultures” (Shibko 2011: 15, 90; see also Shibko 2014: 36, 197).

Similarly, Shchukin (2018a: 153) defines IC as follows: “interaction [*vzaimodeystviye*] between communication participants who belong to different national communities, in order to establish mutual understanding [*vzaimoponimaniye*] and interaction [*vzaimodeystviye*] in various situations of verbal activity.”

First, we can observe how the idea of IC, in the definitions we have examined, is built around two keywords: *vzaimoponimaniye* (mutual understanding) and *vzaimodeystviye* (interaction). The concept of culture links them together (see more *infra*) because, as Ter-Minasova notes, it is in the exchange between cultures—the “crossroads of cultures” (*perekrëstok kul'tur*)—that IC takes place.

It is no coincidence that since Shchukin’s (2003: 125, 135–136) systematization (see also Shchukin 2019: 193, 206 ff.), the designation IC is

<sup>109</sup> See Section 1.3.1 and footnote no. 64.

<sup>110</sup> It will be remembered that we have already set out this definition of IC in Section 1.3.1, where, in light of the non-essentialist view of culture and identity proposed in Section 1.1.1.1, we stressed its attachment to a national idea of culture and identity. In this second chapter we will explain in more detail the mechanisms underlying RFL national and cultural essentialist discourses (as illustrated in Subchapter 2.1).

<sup>111</sup> See Section 1.3.1 and footnote no. 78.

generally used in RFL to denote the “object of acquisition,” or *ob’yekt usvoyeniya* (Shibko 2011: 14, 90; 2014: 34, 196) in reference to culture (which is, in turn, the “object of teaching,” or *ob’yekt obucheniya*; see also Moskovkin & Shchukin 2012: 91, 93). Consequently, IC is identified with the “ability to communicate with the bearers of another culture” (Lebedinskiy & Gerbik 2011: 62).

Creating the possibilities for an IC is the ICC of the interlocutors, which can be seen as a set of “practical skills and abilities” that fosters “the development of the individual’s ethnocultural sensitivity” (Pugachëv 2011: 34) in relation to other people and cultures.

According to scholars, ICC is directly related to the purposes of RFL teaching, which presupposes not only the acquisition of grammar, but also “knowledge of the culture of the country of the studied language” (Basova 2014: 49).

Since IC is a process of verbal and nonverbal communication between bearers of different languages and cultures (Kryuchkova & Moshchinskaya 2011: 54), ICC can be defined as “the ability of the individual to exist in a polycultural society, to be successfully understood by representatives of other cultures and representatives of one’s own culture” (Azimov & Shchukin 2009: 134, 2021: 160).<sup>112</sup>

For Berdichevskiy (2020: 9, 2021: 4), this implies “the ability to understand the limitations of one’s own culture and language and the ability to switch when encountering another culture to other not only linguistic but also non-linguistic norms of behavior.” Thus, ICC is the *conditio sine qua non* for IC, as understanding the target culture allows participants in a linguistic act to accurately understand each other, and its ultimate outcome, since it fulfills the purpose of language learning (Pugachëv 2011: 28).

According to Kryuchkova and Moshchinskaya (2011: 40), ICC may be described as “the ability to act as an intermediary between the representatives of one’s own culture and those of the foreign culture and effectively eliminate misunderstandings and conflict situations generated by intercultural differences.”

<sup>112</sup> As with the definition of IC (see footnote no. 110), we had already made an initial reflection on this definition of ICC in Section 1.3.1, again pointing out that it does not take into account the dynamism of culture and the multiple identities of its representatives (see Section 1.1.1). Later in this chapter, we will see more in depth the problems (both theoretical and educational) related to the static view of culture and identity promoted by RFL scholars.

After looking at the definitions of IC and ICC, in the next section we will discuss how the treatment of culture is actually developed in RFL literature on IE (2007–2023), in which we will trace the national and cultural essentialist discourses (see Subchapter 2.1) derived from linguo-country and linguocultural studies.

### 2.2.2 Culture, Nationalism, and Essentialism

Generally speaking, Russian-language studies on ICC in the RFL field from 2007 to 2023 explicitly or implicitly refer to both linguo-country (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, and Yuriy Prokhorov<sup>113</sup>) and linguocultural studies (Vladimir Vorob'ev, Viktor Shaklein, Yuriy Stepanov, Veronika Teliya, Viktoriya Krasnykh,<sup>114</sup> Valentina Maslova, and Nina Arutyunova), which continue to dominate the treatment of IC in modern-day RFL (Shchukin 2019: 459 ff.). To recall the main characteristics of these academic tendencies, already discussed in Section 1.3.1, the former discipline is based on the idea of IC seen above and “dialogue between cultures” (*dialog kul'tur*), or, more generally, on the idea that the study of language should be accompanied by the study of the country in which that language is spoken. The latter is linked to the conception of the individual as “linguistic personality” (*yazykovaya lichnost*), to the representation of language as the embodiment of cultural values and culture as the highest level of language, and to the idea of “linguistic worldview” (*yazykovaya kartina mira*) (Azimov & Shchukin 2009: 127–128, 2021: 152–153).<sup>115</sup>

Although ICC is clearly not neglected in today's RFL studies, an ambiguous and potentially equivocal use of the term “culture” is generally observed.<sup>116</sup>

This is evident in the definitions of ICC during the period 2007–2023 considered here, which, in addition to relying on ‘classical’ cultural models (e.g., Edward Tylor, Alfred Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Geert Hofstede), welcome influences and suggestions from linguo-country and

<sup>113</sup> For the biography of this RFL scholar, refer to Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 358–359).

<sup>114</sup> See Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 113–114, 227–228, 411–412, 422–423, 482–483) for biographical and bibliographical details on the scholars named so far.

<sup>115</sup> See also Section 1.3.1 and footnote no. 67.

<sup>116</sup> It must be said, however, that the concept of culture, due to its various contexts of use and varied shades of meaning that change from discipline to discipline, nevertheless remains one of the most complex and debated concepts in modern studies on IC (see Section 1.1.1, Elizarova 2005: 11–23, and Sadokhin 2014: 18–19).

linguocultural studies. At first glance, in the studies influenced by these disciplines, we note that the concept of culture is often not even defined. Where defined, broadly speaking it is mostly simplistically identified, in the wake of Passov (2007: 23), with a “part of the general culture of humanity” (Berdichevskiy 2007: 63), or—with specific reference to FL area—with “a set of the experience of people whose language has become the object of study” (Moskovkin & Shchukin 2012: 93) and also with “a system of values [*sistema tsennostey*] used as the content of education” (Passov & Kuzovleva 2010: 18).

On closer examination, these studies seem to be based on a static idea of culture, which within the field of RFL could be a legacy of linguocultural studies. For example, the primary theorist of linguocultural studies, Vorob'ev (1997: 15), describes the “fixity” (*ustoychivost'*) and “stability” (*stabil'nost'*) of culture, which would be guaranteed by its national character (see more infra). According to Lebedinskiy and Gerbik (2011: 62), the action of individuals within the same culture is “systematic.”<sup>117</sup> According to other scholars (e.g., Moskovkin & Shchukin 2012: 93), culture (including, e.g., values and traditions) would be transmitted unchanged from generation to generation.<sup>118</sup> In essence, culture appears as a set of unchanged and unchangeable, timeless, and essentialized traditions. Another example: in his pioneering article dedicated to the “why,” “how,” and “what” of IE, laying the foundations of the IE model in the RFL area, Berdichevskiy (2007) does not address the complexity and versatility of the concept of culture, which in the end is presented as something static and changeless to be acquired by RFL learners. Even in Azimov and Shchukin's (2009: 117–118, 2021: 142) lengthy definition of culture, with its recognition of its various declinations, there is no trace of the intrinsic complexity and dynamism of this concept.

This leads us to a third observation. Ultimately, culture seems to be limited to the ethno-national context.<sup>119</sup> “Every culture is national [*nat-*

<sup>117</sup> See also Passov & Kuzovleva (2010: 64).

<sup>118</sup> This view of culture is in line with the theoretical model—peculiar to cultural anthropology since Tylor—whereby culture would represent the highest outcomes of human activity, that is, civilization or at any rate a ‘second nature’ opposed to nature. For example, for the North American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn, authors of *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952), culture comes to be identified with the social heritage of a historically determined society, consisting of knowledge, beliefs, symbols, and values that shape its behavior (see Grushevitskaya, Popkov & Sadokhin 2003).

<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, Russian is also spoken in the former Soviet republics and in various

*sional'na*] in content,” write Passov and Kuzovleva (2010: 27). It is important to recall that the prominence given to the national element in IC was already present in the definition used by Vereshchagin and Kostomarov (1973: 43) and was maintained by Ter-Minasova (2000: 24) with reference to “national consciousness” (*natsional'noye soznaniye*) (see Section 2.2.1).

This view of IC is also found in more recent definitions that echo Vereshchagin and Kostomarov, which we have already mentioned. Shibko (2011: 15, 90; 2014: 36, 197), for example, repropose an idea of IC constructed from “national cultures” (*natsional'nyye kul'tury*). Shchukin (2018a: 153) considers IC an “interaction between communication participants who belong to different national communities.”

Similarly, for Berdichevskiy (2022: 35) and Fedotova (2016: 134–145), as well as for Zaytseva and Lapshina (2020: 155), RFL teaching is closely linked to national culture (*natsional'naya kul'tura*). According to Chzhan [Zhang] (2015: 1102), “the national self-consciousness [*natsional'noye samosoznaniye*], mentality, character, lifestyle, traditions, customs, morals, value system, and worldview of a people” is reflected in the FL. That is to say that, in language, “national cultural values [*natsional'nyye kul'turnyye tsennosti*] are preserved.” Additionally, Tsertsvadze (2011: 175) maintains that language reflects “the social self-awareness of the people, their mentality [*mentalitet*], and national character [*natsional'nyy kharakter*].”<sup>120</sup>

It is worth mentioning a few more significant examples. In the first research focused on the teaching of Russian in a FL learning environment, Bykova<sup>121</sup> (2011: 15), among the “internal factors” affecting RFL teaching/learning, mentions the “national mentality” (*natsional'nyy mentalitet*), which has been defined as the “genetic memory of reason inherent in language” (Kharitonov 2013: 877). Pugachëv<sup>122</sup> devotes an entire section of his monograph to a fixed “national character” (*natsional'nyy kharakter*), understood as that “part of the mentality” he interprets as “a specific combination of the stable character traits of the representatives of a con-

diaspora and emigration contexts, and thus becomes a conduit not only of the proper national (Russian) culture but also acquires a transnational character as it becomes an entry to other (Russophone) cultures (see Section 1.1.1).

<sup>120</sup> The role attributed to the Russian language in creating and reinforcing an essentialist sense of national identity will be investigated in Section 2.2.3, to which readers may refer for further discussion.

<sup>121</sup> Information on the academic profile of Ol'ga Bykova can be found in Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 90–91).

<sup>122</sup> For more information about Ivan Pugachëv, refer to Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko (2022: 359–360).

crete ethnic group,” or as “dominant values and orientations in a given society” (Pugachëv 2011: 46–49). Vasil’yeva (2016: 88) emphasizes the importance for IC of *natsional’nyy mentalitet* and *natsional’nyy kharakter*. Nistratova (2023: 45) writes that “intercultural communication is impossible without taking into account the specificity of the national linguistic worldview (*natsional’naya yazykovaya kartina mira*) of the representatives of the contacting cultures, which in many respects is determined by a special attitude to this world embodied in language, that is, language mentality [*yazykovaya mental’nost’*].” Also for Senatorova (2020: 323), it is the “Russian national mentality” (*russskiy natsional’nyy mentalitet*) that should be reflected in an RFL textbook. For their part, Kryuchkova and Moshchinskaya (2011: 55) argue that for the foreign learner to develop effective IC with natives, the learner must approach the native’s “national values” (*natsional’nyye tsennosti*), “national character” (*natsional’nyy kharakter*), and “national culture” (*natsional’naya kul’tura*) as a “system of concepts that is transmitted from generation to generation.”

This insistence on a “national culture” (*natsional’naya kul’tura*) made up of a fixed and immutable combination of “character” (*kharakter*), “mentality” (*mentalitet/mental’nost’*), “values” (*tsennosti*), “consciousness/self-consciousness” (*soznaniye/samosoznaniye*), and “worldview” (*mirovozzreniye/kartina mira*) clearly shows the legacy of linguo-country and linguocultural studies.

In fact, concerning linguo-country studies, in the 1990s, Prokhorov (1995) was the first to interpret them as a methodological discipline in which the national culture of learners plays a key role in the development of communicative competence. Similarly, according to Kryuchkova and Moshchinskaya (2011: 62), linguo-country studies investigate “national-cultural specificity” (*natsional’no-kul’turnaya spetsifika*) and view language as a means of learning about national culture.

Turning to linguocultural studies, its founders were fervent supporters of national discourse. For example, Vorob’ëv (1999: 125) believed that this new scientific orientation should analyze the “national mentality” (*natsional’nyy mentalitet*) and identified the triad “language [*yazyk*] – nation (national personality) [*natsiya (natsional’naya lichnost’)*] – culture [*kul’tura*]” as the core of linguocultural studies (Vorob’ëv 1997: 13). Similarly, from Teliya’s point of view, the main aim of linguocultural studies is “the study of the means by which the material culture and mentality of an ethnic group are embodied in the living national language [*natsional’nyy yazyk*]” (Teliya 1996: 216). The influence of linguocultural studies and



their foundational idea of *natsional'nyy kharakter*<sup>123</sup> can be found also in non-RFL-specific IC literature, where the latter is defined as “a set of specific physical and spiritual qualities, norms of behavior and activities typical of representatives of one or another nation” (Grushevitskaya et al. 2003).

This static, essentialized idea of culture (so different from that provided in Section 1.1.1) and its correlation with the national dimension seem to suggest an uncritical, unproblematized resumption of the theoretical framework of both linguo-country and linguocultural studies (see Section 1.3.1), which is taken for granted and implicitly or explicitly shared by the research examined so far. Such a view, which is well integrated into Russian and Russian-speaking academic thought,<sup>124</sup> may also be found in the writing of Azimov and Shchukin, who reiterate the shared static nature of the concept of national culture, which they interpret as “the historical worldview by a people, which is realized in traditions, national relics and reflected in language” (Azimov & Shchukin 2009: 158, 2021: 188).

It should be clear by now that we can find a common approach to culture in RFL studies dating from 2007 to 2023, and that is quite different from the approach delineated in Section 1.1.1. Instead of a dynamic, complex, and problematic concept of culture in which individuals partake on many levels in different social groups of various dimensions, the idea of culture that emerges from Russian-language studies of ICC in the RFL field is, by contrast, quite static, reductive, and ‘ideologized.’ As we have observed so far, in such research, culture is understood (in the wake of linguo-country and linguocultural studies) as an immutable factor, not subject to change, but hinged on stable traditions and firmly anchored to the national context.<sup>125</sup> The possibility that culture—as well as identity—can be ‘multiple,’ that it can change, renegotiate, and redefine its

<sup>123</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the topic, see Pomarolli (2019, 2023). As clarified by Pomarolli (2019: 386), in defining national character as “the stable set of values, inclinations, and behavioral norms proper to a given culture” (Evsyukova & Butenko 2014: 466), the linguocultural studies actually give it an “ontological determination.”

<sup>124</sup> Suffice it to say that, since the 1990s, Mitrofanova and Kostomarov (1990: 126) have indicated precisely in the “national culture” (*natsional'naya kul'tura*) “the indispensable condition for an adequate, full acquisition of the foreign (Russian) language” (for information about Mitrofanova, see her biography and bibliography in Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 295–296). For his part, also the psycholinguist Tarasov (1996: 8) attributed the misunderstandings, within IC, to the different “national consciences” (*natsional'nyye soznaniya*) of the interlocutors.

<sup>125</sup> This emphasis on the national aspect lends itself to any criticism directed at “methodological nationalism” (see, e.g., Chernilo 2011).

meanings and boundaries is not admitted. In fact, if we agree that it is people (and not cultures) who meet or clash (Ghilardi 2012: 29), it will be recognized without difficulty that the very accentuation of the national (as well as supranational or universal) aspect of culture in RFL works precisely to the detriment of the recognition of the variations and differentiations within the culture itself, whether of a geographical, sexual, social, or religious nature (see Section 1.1.1).

In other words, the representations of IC and ICC offered by RFL scholars carry with them major limitations. It is worth mentioning that Khaleyeva (2000: 29) argued that, for the purpose of IE, a “linguoecological” (*lingvoekologicheskiy*) approach should be developed, that is, one that respects the ethnic identity of all the peoples of the Russian Federation. However, current research does not take into account the different ethnic components and cultural minorities on the ground, as well as the complexity of Russian speakers’ identities and of the Russophone world.

Thus, it will be agreed that the ICC promoted in RFL during the period 2007–2023 is based on a *de facto* stereotyped conception—uncritical, granitic, and inflexible—of culture (see also Torresin 2022b, 2023a, 2023b). For this reason, it would not seem rash to state that the ICC advocated in these more recent studies is partial and highly nationalized, continuing to rely on an image of ‘Russianness,’ which is at the very least naïve, if not overtly nationalistic.<sup>126</sup> In fact, with very few exceptions,<sup>127</sup> we are faced not with the welcoming of diversity, but with the leveling of difference. Presently, it is instead the dynamic articulation of cultural difference that

<sup>126</sup> We share Plamenatz’s (1973: 23) opinion on “nationalism,” defined as “the desire to preserve or enhance a people’s national or cultural identity.”

<sup>127</sup> A marginal position is occupied by Passov and Kuzovleva (2010), who, in identifying culture with “spiritual values [*dukhovnyye tsennosti*] acquired individually (personally)” (17), claim the role of the individual as a “subject” in relation to “cultural facts” (*fakty kul’tury*) [see footnote no. 75], with which (s)he establishes a dialogic interaction (25). For his part, also Berdichevskiy (2014: 229), drawing attention to the potential danger of applying the country and linguocountry studies to IC (as they “present the typical element of a general phenomenon (culture)”), indicates the value of individuality—as opposed to typecasting—arguing that IC “accentuates the individuality of the Other and does not confine him/her only to the function of a representative of his/her own culture” (see Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 49). Similarly, Basova (2014: 21–22) points out that “in contact with the ‘stranger’ precisely an individual—and not stereotyped—idea of a given people, country, language, and culture emerges;” not surprisingly, IC tends precisely to the “exchange of personal experience between communicants in the presence of distinct cultural backgrounds.”

creates “cultural hybridity”—where IC can take place and ICC is realized—as argued by Bhabha (1994: 2).<sup>128</sup>

On the contrary, in the Russian-language studies on ICC that we have analyzed, cultural difference is not exalted but completely annulled, thus removing the very possibility of creating a “third space” or a “third place” (in Bhabha’s and Kramsch’s terminology, resp.) capable of overcoming the self-other dichotomy.

In the following section, we will see further examples of national and cultural essentialist discourses rooted in RFL studies on IE by examining research on the teaching of literature to foreign students.

### 2.2.3 Literature and Language

The national and cultural essentialist discourses that permeate the RFL studies on IE examined so far emerge strongly also from a consideration of the topic of teaching literature (in RFL area).

We have decided to dwell on this topic separately because, on the one hand, it reinforces the argument made in this chapter and, on the other hand, it touches on a subject—the use of literature in RFL classes—to which we will come back (but with theoretical assumptions quite different from those of the RFL literature analyzed here) in Chapters 4 and 5.

Our analysis showed that RFL research dealing with literature as a vehicle of ICC between 2007 and 2023 (just as those discussed in Section 2.2.2), on the back of linguo-country and linguocultural studies, seems inevitably to be tied to national and cultural essentialist dynamics. After all, the use of literature in RFL would be functional “to illustrate the traditions [*traditsii*], customs, and lifestyle of the people [*obraz zhizni naroda*] of the country of the target language” (Passov & Kuzovleva 2010: 68). For Podruchnaya (2013: 39), for the purpose of effective IC (and, with it, ICC), the “inclusion of elements of the Russian national linguistic and values worldview [*natsional’naya yazykovaya i tsennostnaya kartina mira*]” is necessary. By approaching literature, the foreign student would get “an idea of the culture of the Russian people [*kul’tura russkogo naroda*], of its deep traits and values [*tsennosti*], which to this day constitute the peculiarity of the Russian mentality [*russkiy mentalitet*]” (40–41).

<sup>128</sup> The idea—central to postcolonial studies (see footnote no. 18)—that all cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous can also be found in the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Edward Said, and Peter Burke (e.g., according to Burke 2009: 102, “no culture is an island”).

But Podruchnaya is not alone in this belief. Antipina (2018: 172) proposes, when conducting exercises and activities during the reading of a literary text, to “turn foreign students’ attention to the behavior of the characters from the point of view of the conditioning of national culture and mentality [*natsional’naya kul’tura i mentalitet*],” to “help them identify the value orientations of Russians [*tsennostnyye ustanovki russkikh lyudey*].” Not much different is the idea of Sokolova (2015: 945), for whom the literary work constitutes “the means of knowledge of culture, its national and universal values [*natsional’nyye i obshchechelovecheskiye tsennosti*].” In this sense, for example, work on Aleksandr Pushkin in the RFL classroom “initiates students into national culture” according to Yanova and Mirzoyeva (2011: 234). For Grintsevich (2014: 345), literature from the perspective of IC rises to “the interpreter of national culture,” as it “helps the foreigner understand, recognize and feel ... the specificity of the people’s poetic thought, the richness and originality of its spiritual and aesthetic life,” or, in short, “the soul of the people” (*dusha naroda*). An interpretation of literature in the national essentialist key, linguoculturally derived, as a repository of the national character/mentality and worldview of Russians, is also offered by Volkov and Gladilina’s (2014) handbook.

Bliznyuk-Biskup (2012: 152) argues that the literary text “brings one closer to understanding the Russian mentality, helps to penetrate the secrets of Russian character.” Equally explicit are Vashchekina (2016: 516) and Solomonova (2018: 257), who call it a “phenomenon of national culture.” Similarly, others see literature as “the pivot of Russian national culture [*russkaya natsional’naya kul’tura*]” (Makarova 2011: 127). Finally, the foremost expert on the topic of teaching literature from an intercultural perspective within RFL, Kulibina (2015: 46), speaks of the literary text as a “unity of Russian national discourse [*russkiy natsional’nyy diskurs*]” and states that, after all, as a “thrice cultural object” (in content, language, and its very artistic nature), it reflects “the life of the people” (i.e., their “linguistic worldview”) and represents national culture “by definition” (Kulibina 2015: 60, 2018: 52).

According to most scholars, in short, Russian literature would bring foreign learners “into the unrepeatable world of national culture” (Chibisova 2009: 319), with all the problems that—as we have seen—the use of the term “national culture” (*natsional’naya kul’tura*) and related terms (“mentality,” “values,” etc.) entails for ICC in the RFL field (see Section 2.2.2).

The very role of the RFL teacher does not shy away from the national interpretation of Russian literature, since his/her task should be (similarly to what was envisioned in the studies analyzed in Section 2.2.2) to “help the foreign learner become acquainted with the mentality, moral stance, and aesthetic ideas characteristic of Russian culture” (Antipina 2018: 173), thus becoming “a transmitter of Russian culture and morality” (Arzamastseva 2020). In this, the national character of the language<sup>129</sup> also plays its part, because the teacher will have to “form in students an idea of language as a reflection of sociocultural, national, and universal reality” (Ardzenadze 2015: 66), or, put otherwise, as a “source of information about the national culture of the people [*natsional'naya kul'tura naroda*]” (Gorodetskaya 2015: 48).

Language and literature would thus turn out to be interdependent, if we consider the former (like the scholars mentioned so far) “part of national culture” (Kulibina 2015: 56, 2018: 48) and the latter a “model of the reflection in language of Russian linguistic consciousness [*ruskoye yazykovoye soznaniye*]” (Bliznyuk-Biskup 2012: 152). “Literature and language,” Chizhova (2007) noted precisely, “are different products of a single national spirit [*natsional'nyy dukh*]: the spirit of the nation [*dukh natsii*].” It is not difficult to discern, even behind the most recent theorizing on the topic of literature teaching and ICC we have examined, the adherence to the conception, proper to German Romanticism (Aysman [Eismann] 2018: 15), of the substantial unity between language and national belonging,<sup>130</sup> typical of an essentialist approach to culture.<sup>131</sup>

That is, all the studies we have considered here—without exception—share the idea that “every language is first and foremost a means of national communication” (Moraru 2011: 238) and, therefore, in the words

<sup>129</sup> For example, Passov and Kuzovleva (2010: 27) argue that “the national psychology, the soul of the people, their character are revealed and cognized in and through language.” Also most recent studies maintain that “language as a key instrument of existence, preservation, and transmission of the cultural code from one generation of native speakers to another is a powerful means of cognition and familiarization with the national mentality [*natsional'naya mental'nost'*], search for the foundations of national identity mentality [*natsional'naya identichnost'*]” (Men [Meng], Kur'yanovich & Tsao [Cao] 2023: 407).

<sup>130</sup> The view of language as an expression of the national character of a people, typical of linguocultural studies (see Sadokhin 2014: 96) is mainly due to the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose name is very recurrent in the RFL research we have dealt with.

<sup>131</sup> See also Section 1.1.1 and footnote no. 22.

of Podosinnikova (2011: 261), “the Russian language is to be studied as a phenomenon of national culture.”<sup>132</sup>

Teaching literature in RFL would then amount to proposing, through the use of literary texts, a “model of national culture” (*model’ natsional’noy kul’tury*) (Miksyuk 2019a: 62, 2019b: 120), where the national discourse *de facto* rises to a constitutive myth of Russian identity (Ionin 2000: 168–172). All this is made possible by the traditional literature-centric conception, peculiar to Russian culture, in which literature, being “at the crossroads of art and ideology” (Kondakov 2008), is elevated to an expression of the ‘worldview’ of a sociocultural community, which passes mainly through language—the “social instrument” of cohesion and domination *par excellence* (Živov [Zhivov] 2012).

The fact that literature has recourse to a national language, and through it to national traditions of aesthetic worldview ... and through them to an original interpretation of natural and social realia, the course of historical processes, people’s psychology, mythological-religious and political-ideological representations ... makes literature the expression of a people’s national self-consciousness, the most important exercise of self-analysis of national culture and national mentality. (Kondakov 2008)

In short, national discourse, which also carries with it a cultural essentialist discourse, seems to be an integral part of the very cultural self-representation of the Russian world. Literature thus becomes, for RFL scholars, “an effective means of knowledge of culture through the prism of language and knowledge of language through the prism of culture” (Bliznyuk-Biskup 2012: 145): all within the national perspective of linguo-country and linguocultural studies<sup>133</sup> that we have outlined so far. But—we might ask ourselves at this point—can literature be only and/or primarily “the main source of reliable information about the nation’s culture [*kul’tura natsii*],” as Czwalińska (2009: 472) defines it?

One can certainly detect, in the idea and/or definition (explicit as well as implicit) of “Russian literature” within today’s RFL, a flaw in form: that is, what is missing is a more complex vision of Russian literature

<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Passov and Kuzovleva (2010: 28) define it as a “portrait” of national culture.

<sup>133</sup> Let us consider, for example, the concept of “linguocultureme” (*lingvokul’turema*), understood as a “dialectical unity of linguistic and extralinguistic [i.e., cultural] content” (Vorob’ev 1997: 44–45), which would be effectively expressed in literary works in which, according to Vorob’ev, “Russian national personality [*russkaya natsional’naya lichnost’*] found artistic expression” (56). For more information about this RFL scholar, see Section 1.3.1 and footnote no. 68.

(and literature teaching), which also includes the non-national element, or that is at any rate capable of grasping and incorporating the facets and chiaroscuro of a label that is not sufficiently functional with respect to current cultural situation of “hybridism” (*gibridizatsiya*) and “creolization” (*kreolizatsiya*) peculiar to the Russian Federation (Tlostanova 2004: 29–30).<sup>134</sup>

In essence, it is a matter—with regard especially to contemporary Russian literature—of moving away from the model of “national literature” (*natsional'naya literatura*) and adopting a different model, of “trans-(post)national literature” (*trans-(post)natsional'naya literatura*), according to Tlostanova’s terminology (100–105). Such a model would make it possible, thanks in part to the contribution of postcolonial studies, to overcome the traditional, codified representation of a literature linked to a sense of “nation-ness” (Anderson 1983), paving the way for the formation of a more hybrid, ‘liquid’ (and thus not crystallized within a binary national vision) image of post-Soviet literary phenomena.

It goes without saying that the change of perspective on literature would go deep into the very idea of identity, which, in line with the theorizing of postcolonial studies, “rather than being a reflection of belonging to a given social or national group, ... is continually reshaped by contact with different realities and cultures” (Puleri 2016: 17), thus becoming a “process” rather than a “substance” (Ghilardi 2012: 59).<sup>135</sup>

Unfortunately, RFL scholars, who remain attached to a national view of literature that has its roots in the past,<sup>136</sup> still seem far removed from such orientations. As a result, there is no problematized view of concepts such as culture, identity, and ICC (and, before that, IC) in the Russian-speaking academic landscape. Moreover, the latter is interpreted, along with IC, within a framework of ideal (and, again, nationalistic) ‘Russianness’ that fails to account for the complexity of sociocultural reality. Actually, we have seen how this is the result of the still very strong influence on RFL research of linguo-country and linguocultural studies.

<sup>134</sup> See the discussion on identity and Russian + Russophone target in RFL (Section 1.1.1).

<sup>135</sup> On this topic, see also Section 1.1.1.

<sup>136</sup> In fact, Moskovkin (see Shchukin, Moskovkin & Yanchenko 2022: 308–310) and Shchukin (2013: 45) argue that the reason for the inclusion (for the first time) of literary texts in the RFL textbooks of the second half of the 18th century by German authors is to be found in the “tendency to shift from common European values to national ones, generated by the processes of formation of European nations.” In essence, as has already been mentioned, RFL’s own national vision of Russian literature owes much to Romantic aesthetics.

As a consequence, similarly to Russian-language studies on ICC in the RFL field previously analyzed, RFL works on the topic of literature teaching and ICC, with very few exceptions,<sup>137</sup> only perpetuate the national myth and a model of teaching/learning based on “tolerance,” a concept that we will develop in the next section.

#### 2.2.4 Tolerance

In these studies, more than ICC, it is the “tolerant and spiritually sensitive Russian culture” (Ikonnikova & Bol’shakov 2008: 248) that dominates the scene. The use of the adjective “tolerant” (*tolerantnaya*; masc. *tolerantnyy*) does not seem coincidental in the context of these strongly nationally oriented studies. It is one of the most recurring terms, more than “intercultural interaction” (and similar terms), and, as has been argued (Mansouri & Arber 2017: 26), it is already ambiguous and questionable in itself, as it presupposes the passive acceptance of a minority’s cultural diversity by the dominant group.<sup>138</sup>

It seems that the ultimate goal is, for the foreign learner, “the refinement... of tolerance [*tolerantnost*]” (Fomina 2018: 58). This, for D’yakova (2015: 335), is also “the main task of the Russian teacher,” which enables “preparing the foreign student for studying and living in Russia.” After all, according to Akimova and Adol’f (2016: 50), it would be precisely the teacher’s job to “initiate ... into the Russian traditions of national culture [*ruskiye natsional’no-kul’turnyye traditsii*]”—that is, to “realize the functions of intercultural tolerance [*mezhekul’turnaya tolerantnost*]” (Bykova 2011: 36), conceived as a “pedagogical problem” (Shamsutdinova 2008).

The principle of “tolerance” (*tolerantnost*)—from Latin *tolerantia* meaning ‘forbearance,’ which for Miloslavskaya (2001: 20–21) constituted the first step of IC—today remains the basis of ICC for Azimov and Shchukin (2009: 134), who describe it as “an understanding and respect toward another culture, towards the differences of the representatives of another culture—ethnic, national, racial, religious, and linguistic” (317; see also Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 354).

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Salkhanova (2013), who proposes reading Kazakh literary experiences in light of the concept of “marginality” (*marginal’nost*), that is, peripherality typical of any multi-ethnic cultural space, in which “the individual cannot with absolute certainty identify with a concrete culture” (802).

<sup>138</sup> In the context of culturology, Sadokhin (2014: 248) defines tolerance as “an attitude of condescending indulgence toward the opinions, beliefs, behavior, customs, culture, feelings, and ideas of others.”



In the research examined so far, tolerance, which is interpreted as a core component of ICC (Zhukova et al. 2013: 178–179), is simultaneously considered a principle to be observed and a competence to be achieved. This happens because, as a “communicative category” (Shamsutdinova 2020), tolerance is ultimately identified, on the one hand, with IC and, on the other hand, with ICC, also linking itself to the traditional myth of the “Russian soul,” which is very present in linguocultural studies (Pomarolli 2019: 388). Indeed, according to Afanas’yeva (2018: 204), one of the factors that paves the way for ICC is “the understanding and perception of the values and norms of Russian society, founded on the ideals of goodness, justice, honesty, and tolerance.”

Let us briefly explain what the expression “Russian soul” stands for. The myth of the “Russian soul” (*russskaya dusha*) has its roots in the stereotyped and essentialized notion of ‘Russianness’ that originated in Western history, literature, and philosophy in the second half of the 19th century. Having formed as a hetero-definition, this concept was later adopted by Russian thinkers and turned into a self-definition, since it arguably answered an unrealized need for identity in the Russian-speaking world. In the development of the myth of “Russian soul” and its transition into a self-referential concept, a fundamental role was played by philosophy, which used this expression to denote Russians’ special “national character,” conceived as a set of essential and original characteristics of the Russian person, distinguishing him/her from others, such as, for instance, tendency to extremes, emotionality, openness, sincerity, hospitality, generosity, and capacity for self-sacrifice.<sup>139</sup>

This continuous re-proposition of the category of tolerance in the examined RFL studies is informed by a recovery of the idea of the “Russian soul” illustrated above.<sup>140</sup> This fact, in addition to reinforcing further an adherence to a stereotypical and nationalistic (self-) representation also delineates a paradoxical situation in which IC between two or more nations should be based on a principal characteristic of only one of these nations.

<sup>139</sup> For a brief genealogy of the “Russian soul” and its influence on RFL practices, see Torrezin [Torresin] (2022d).

<sup>140</sup> On the consequences of the stereotypical idea of the “Russian soul” for the teaching of RFL through textbooks, refer to Chapter 3.

### 2.2.5 Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

In the research conducted in Russian from 2007–2023, ICC is based on highly ideologized, nationalistically conditioned, and monolithic self-representations and self-perceptions; on uncritical, unproblematized, partial, and homologated conceptions of culture; and on a general attitude of tolerance rather than interaction with diversity.

There is no critical rethinking of concepts, such as culture and identity, which are taken for granted and used uncritically within the conceptual systems of linguo-country and linguocultural studies.

Moreover, all the elements highlighted up to this point (i.e., the static idea of culture and denial of cultural hybridity, the references to national culture, and the appeal to the principle of tolerance) seem to indicate that the RFL literature written in Russian on ICC from 2007–2023 is firmly anchored in culturally hegemonic types of discourse, represented by national and cultural essentialist discourses (see Subchapter 2.1). Such types of discourse, which constitute the dominant paradigm drawn from linguo-country and linguocultural studies, produce significant knowledge that influences RFL's "regime of truth": that is, the types of discourse generally accepted and made to function as 'true.'

It follows that even the conception of interculturalism, from which these works claim to take their cue, should rather be identified with a "multicultural" approach in which ICC is achieved through the promotion of pluralism (*plyuralizm*) and linguistic variety (*lingvisticheskoye mnogoobraziye*) (Azimov & Shchukin 2009: 134, 2021: 160). Not surprisingly, the "decrease of interethnic tension," as much as "education for tolerance in relations between representatives of different cultures" (Azimov & Shchukin 2009: 149, 2021: 179), is included in the goals of so-called "multicultural education." Where multiculturalism tends to "consider different cultures as uniform data and not as products of cultural interactions and variables" and to "simply recognize a plurality of monocultures, as if these were isolated universes, autonomous and closed structures," an intercultural perspective "starts instead from the awareness that cultural identities are always the result of processes of exchanges, intertwining, comparisons, and contaminations between different cultures" (Pasqualotto 2012: 5–6). In short, what would be prefigured here is the peaceful coexistence of different cultures (typical of a multicultural approach) and

not a dynamic and flexible interaction between cultures (typical of an intercultural approach).<sup>141</sup>

In essence, even though the goals set for the development of ICC by Russian-speaking RFL scholars are embraceable, they are paradoxically ‘betrayed’ by conceptions of culture that are still too anchored in nationalist and essentialist paradigms.

The prevailing conception of ICC found in the reviewed Russian-language research has significant pedagogical implications.

First, the RFL teaching model advocated in these studies reflects an ambiguous and limited understanding of culture and ICC, which is closely tied to the national context. For example, Vasilyuk (2010: 25) argues that RFL students should be exposed to “the typical phenomena of Russia’s socio-economic, cultural, and scientific life, as well as to the values associated with the lifestyle of the Russian people.”

This approach to IE in RFL contradicts IE international literature, as well as the supranational guidelines and reference frameworks put forth by the CoE and UNESCO, which—as we know—advocate for consideration of culture and identity as multifaceted and complex phenomena (see Section 1.1.1).

Second, teaching Russian within an unproblematized, fixed, and essentialized view of culture and identity results in students’ identities being reduced to their national affiliation, excluding their active and subjective engagement with multiple cultures and identities. This approach hinders the development of critical thinking in response to representations of other cultures.

In other words, this appears not to be a student-centered model, in which the student is an active protagonist of his/her own learning and is “getting involved with the information presented, really thinking about it” (King 1993: 31) instead of just passively receiving it, but rather a teacher-centered model,<sup>142</sup> in which the whole process of learning revolves around the teacher—“the one who has the knowledge” and transmits it to the students (30); the student, instead, is simply seen as an empty vessel to be filled with Russian national (timeless and essentialized) culture. To quote Masyuk and Suvorova (2013: 177, 179), an RFL teacher is the one who initiates foreign learners into “Russian national-cultural traditions,” bringing them into “the study of the world of native speakers, their cul-

<sup>141</sup> For the difference between the two approaches, see Subchapter 1.1.

<sup>142</sup> For the distinction between student-centered and teacher-centered models (i.e., models implying, respectively, an active or passive involvement of learners), see Markina & Garcia Mollá (2022).

ture, lifestyle, character, and national mentality.” The role of student is, therefore, configured as a passive one, since (s)he “immerses him/herself in the new linguistic environment and begins to acquire a new worldview” (Varichenko 2015: 201). In essence, teaching/learning RFL turns into a passive process of transmitting/receiving linguistic-cultural content. As Passov and Kuzovleva (2010: 21) write, “education as a process is a transmission [*peredacha*] on the part of the teacher and an appropriation of culture [*prisvoyeniye kul'tury*] on the part of the learner.”

As a result, in this context, alternative ways of talking, thinking, or representing ICC in RFL are indeed necessary but equally difficult to propose.

### 2.3 Conclusion

In this second chapter, we have reviewed the RFL literature on IE, highlighting how the conceptions of IC and ICC fit into national and cultural essentialist discourses originating from linguo-country and linguocultural studies. All this results in a view of the Russian language as a reflection of the national character and mentality of the Russian people conceived idealistically and romantically as homogeneous and unitary (e.g., the myth of the “Russian soul”), that is, denying, on the one hand, individual variations and differentiations and, on the other hand, the Rusophone (non-ethnic, transnational) dimension.

Therefore, what is being fostered by RFL scholars is a monolithic, essentialized, and poorly problematized idea of culture linked to national affiliation, as well as an uncritical and even stereotyped understanding of intercultural dialogue, based on tolerance and learners’ passivity rather than on a real, dynamic intercultural interaction. Such a theoretical perspective actually prevents the implementation of an effective intercultural approach in the RFL field.

In the next chapter, we will prove that the national and cultural essentialist discourses that dominate the treatment of IE in academic RFL are in fact also prevalent in RFL textbooks.

Later we will see that, in addition to the criticalities regarding the academic treatment of IE in the RFL area, RFL presents—along with the identifiable strengths—some criticalities also in teaching practice itself (Chapter 4). Possible solutions to improve the teaching of RFL from an intercultural perspective by breaking out of such ideological, monolithic, and unproblematized logics will be suggested in Chapter 5.



### 3. Critical Issues in RFL Textbooks

Having analyzed the critical aspects of RFL literature on IE (Chapter 2), in the third chapter, we will examine a second type of critical issues in RFL intercultural teaching: those related to the treatment of cultural and intercultural dimensions in RFL textbooks.

In particular, the concept of intercultural RFL textbooks will be introduced (Subchapter 3.1) and the notion of culture problematized in such textbooks (Subchapter 3.2) with references to previously discussed topics (see Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3.2, and Subchapter 2.2). We will see how a national and essentialized representation of Russian reality and intercultural dialogue, sometimes even based on stereotypes (e.g., “Russian soul”) is favored (again) in RFL textbooks. This will be made possible thanks to the combination of CDA and content analysis methods (Subchapter 3.3) to consider a specific case study, consisting of RFL textbooks used in Italy (Subchapter 3.4).

#### 3.1 The RFL Textbook and Its Intercultural Aspects

As we already know from Section 1.3.2, we define an RFL textbook, after all the methodological literature, as “the main means of teaching,” which serves as “a guide in the work of the teacher and the learners” and which implements “the concept of teaching method” (Azimov & Shchukin 2021: 369) in the field of RFL. Given that the language textbook presents goals, content, methods, and means of teaching, researchers have suggested that it should be considered an “adapter-adaptive system”, or *adaptivno-adaptiruyushchaya sistema* (Bim 1977: 267) consisting of interconnected elements and reflecting the state of learning theory and practice in a particular historical period (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 20). In this respect, the modern RFL textbook, based on Berdichevskiy’s model (see Section 1.3.2), is generally defined as an “intercultural”

textbook (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 14). It is built on the principle of IE, which aims to form learners' ICC.<sup>143</sup> In other words, a modern RFL intercultural textbook should seek to give learners opportunities for intercultural dialogue.<sup>144</sup>

The main component of a modern RFL intercultural textbook is the integration of the culture of the country of the studied language into the theory and practice of RFL teaching, as in Passov's (2000b: 33) formula of "culture through language, language through culture."<sup>145</sup> In this regard, there is a generally accepted opinion, due to essentialist views of culture prevalent in the RFL sphere (see Chapter 2), that an intercultural textbook is the embodiment of the cultural features of 'the Russian people' and its image in the world (Miloslavskaya 2008). In other words, what is required of today's RFL textbook is that it should allow learners "to get to know the mentality of the people of a given country" or that it should become "a representative and retranslator of that particular culture" (Berdichevskiy & Golubeva 2015: 51).

Summarizing the above, it can be argued that because the essence of IE in RFL classes is to teach how to master ICC and to foster the intercultural dialogue with Russian-speaking people, and because familiarization with a FL and culture comes mainly through a textbook (as we have seen above), according to the methodological literature, the RFL textbook is supposedly not only a means of knowledge but also a 'mirror' of Russian culture. However, it is worth asking ourselves the question: What type of Russian culture does it mirror?

The issue posed by culture in the field of RFL, previously addressed in Chapters 1 and 2 with regard to research and socially shared discourses, will be explored further in the next section with special attention to its reflection on didactic theories as well as concrete teaching materials, that is, textbooks.

### **3.2 The Cultural Issue in RFL: From Theories to Textbooks**

Without cultures (native and foreign) and dialogues among them, IE in RFL cannot exist. Berdichevskiy and Golubeva (2015: 48) distinguished

<sup>143</sup> For the definition of ICC and the discussion on this concept within the RFL area, see Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3.1, and Chapter 2.

<sup>144</sup> On this concept, see Section 1.1.1.

<sup>145</sup> For more on this formula, already discussed in Chapter 1, refer to 1.3.1 and footnotes no. 73 and 74.

two main stages of mastering ICC: “awareness of the system of orientation characteristic of native culture (self-awareness)” and “awareness of the importance of cultural factors in the process of communicative interaction (cross-cultural awareness)” with knowledge of the various components of culture, including “linguistic,” “pragmatic,” “historical,” “aesthetic,” “ethical,” “stereotypical,” and “reflexive” (68).<sup>146</sup>

However, despite the never-ending interest of RFL experts in intercultural aspects, as evidenced by publications in the last decade (see, among others, Berdichevskiy et al. 2011; Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin & Tareva 2020; Petrikova, Kuprina & Gallo 2015), the common view of culture in RFL—and, therefore, of intercultural dialogue and IE—is rather limited. We have seen in Chapter 2 that, as for the concept of culture itself, most RFL scholars define it, according to essentialist and static approaches, as a set of unchanging traditions passed down from one generation to another (see esp. Section 2.2.2).

The main consequence of such an attitude towards cultural topics is a certain fixed and monolithic idea of culture in the RFL area. For RFL experts, as will be recalled from Subchapter 2.2, culture is primarily a form of “national culture.” It is difficult to imagine a more unfortunate definition. In fact, when using the term “national,” scholars exclude all other cultures that express themselves through the Russian language but are not Russian, as is the case in the former Soviet republics, in diaspora and emigration contexts, or in bilingualism/multilingualism contexts, such as the Russian language spoken in Belarus or Lithuania, which we have previously discussed.

In the RFL field, we have overcome such a narrow conception of culture now established by learning/teaching RFL, by which we have meant learning/teaching (besides the Russian language) Russian, as well as Rusophone cultures (see Section 1.1.1).

It is worth briefly recapitulating here the non-essentialist definition of culture that we rely on in the present study, which is fundamental to understanding the textbook analysis covered in this chapter. As the reader may recall from Section 1.1.1, we describe the concept of culture in accordance with the guidelines and policies of UNESCO and CoE, that is, we refer to culture as a set of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics of a society or social group (UNESCO 2001) from a non-essentialist and constructivist perspective.

<sup>146</sup> See also the intercultural textbook model by Berdichevskiy discussed in Section 1.3.2, which was based on these same components.



In our understanding, cultures (Russian and Russophone) change in time and space, they develop and transform themselves, and may meet and/or collide due to their dynamic nature. Cultures themselves are not internally homogeneous but “multiple” (UNESCO 2013: 10), along with the individuals who partake in them.

It follows, then, that the dynamicity, complexity, and multiplicity of cultural notions play an important role in the achievement of ICC in the RFL area, and conversely, there is no (or rather, should not be) room for cultural essentialist categories.

In the light of the above, we have proposed (see Section 1.1.1) to qualify ICC as

the appropriate and effective management of interaction between (at least) one RFL learner and (at least) one Russian speaker belonging to and participating in multiple cultures (for the Russian speaker, in one or more Russian and/or Russophone cultures), who are characterized by different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientation to the world, as well as by their own specificities, individualities, and multiple identities, and are able to 1) show a critical understanding of their own and other cultures, and 2) mediate between their own and Russian and Russophone cultures in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities presented by intercultural situations (inside and outside the RFL classroom).

Let us now add some further considerations on how ICC can be developed in practice and, consequently, on what principles modern RFL textbooks should be based (see *infra*) in order to effectively foster students' ICC.

ICC can be achieved “through education and life experiences” (UNESCO 2013: 38). The implication, then, is that formative opportunities in the RFL class must be ensured to make the learner develop his/her ICC within the vision of culture that we have outlined. The tools for developing ICC, which enable the foundation for intercultural dialogue, are knowledge of others' cultures (which it is natural to link to the objectives of an RFL lesson) and knowledge of one's own culture(s) (see also Section 1.1.2). This “self-reflection” (26) is central and hints at the “knowledge and critical understanding of one's own cultural affiliations” (CoE 2018a: 52) as well as “knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one's perspective on the world” (53).

In essence, ICC is developed and intercultural dialogue takes place in the presence of a “knowledge and critical understanding of culture and cultures,” which includes:

1. Knowledge and understanding of how people’s cultural affiliations shape their world views, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs, values, behaviours and interactions with others.
2. Knowledge and understanding that all cultural groups are internally variable and heterogeneous, do not have fixed inherent characteristics, contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional cultural meanings, and are constantly evolving and changing. (55)

The strengthening of learners’ knowledge and awareness of other’s and one’s own cultures, involving the understanding of cultures’ variability and heterogeneity, requires a new conception of the RFL intercultural textbook, different from the RFL textbook theory established by existing literature (see Section 1.3.2), which should be based on the following principles:

- Principle 1. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should give cultural topics the space they deserve, either reserving specific sections/parts for them within the textbook, or treating them within the units of the textbook (e.g., in texts, exercises, and activities).
- Principle 2. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should preferably provide explicit treatment of cultural aspects: that is, cultural information should not be expressed as a subtext, implicit and undisclosed (without specific materials and activities), but should be addressed overtly, with specific intercultural exercises and activities, which can come in the form of “paper-and-pencil assignment[s]” on cultural topics or entail more dynamic techniques, such as “group discussion” (Landis, J. Bennett & M. Bennett 2004: 64), “shared experiences, conversations, and storytelling<sup>147</sup>” (UNESCO 2013: 17) fostering intercultural dialogue (see also Section 1.1.2 and Chapters 4 and 5).
- Principle 3. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should represent in equal ways both Russian and Russophone cultures. For example, this could be done by providing literary texts written not only by Russian national writers but also by Russophone transnational ones (see Torresin 2022a: 280–281).

<sup>147</sup> On this teaching technique, see also Section 1.1.2 and Chapter 5.

- Principle 4. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should offer various cultural topics of the Russian and Russophone sphere, for instance, from literature to art, history to science, geography to sports, without forgetting the contemporary Russian-speaking world (281–283).
- Principle 5. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should make learners understand that Russian and Russophone cultures, as well as learners' own cultures, are a historically and socially determined, internally complex, multiple, and fluid "human construction" (UNESCO 2013: 26). Therefore, from the perspective of FL education, no essentialist views of culture, such as the myth of the "Russian soul,"<sup>148</sup> are acceptable.
- Principle 6. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should provide learners opportunities to learn about Russian and Russophone cultures (target cultures) as well as about their own cultures, drawing from the above non-essentialist and constructivist theoretical foundations of the idea of culture.
- Principle 7. A modern RFL intercultural textbook should enable learners who have achieved knowledge and awareness of Russian and Russophone cultures and their own cultures, to put into practice the intercultural dialogue, whose precondition is the meeting and exchange of all the cultures involved through dynamic comparison and sharing of cultures within specific intercultural exercises and activities.

To sum up, what an intercultural RFL textbook should do today is first to bring the attention of learners to the dynamism, complexity, and multiplicity of the concept of culture (Russian and Russophone), to help them to know better Russian and Russophone cultures as well as their own cultures, to make them compare their own cultures with Russian and Russophone cultures, and to pave the way for intercultural dialogue between these cultures. This can be done through intercultural exercises and activities. Such work on ICC should be conducted from the above non-essentialist and constructivist theoretical foundations of the idea of culture (see also Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2).

Building on these new principles for the RFL intercultural textbook theory, grounded in the dynamic, complex, and non-essentialist concept of culture and IE described above, in the next section, we will try to analyze, interpret, and evaluate some modern intercultural RFL textbooks

<sup>148</sup> See Section 2.2.4.

used in Italy, where the theoretical problem of culture highlighted is encountered in practical terms.

### 3.3 Content Analysis (CA)

For the analysis of a sample of RFL textbooks from the perspective of IE (see Subchapter 3.4), the CDA method already employed in the analysis of RFL literature on IE in Chapter 2 was integrated with the “content analysis” (CA) method (Berelson 1952; Holsti 1969; Krippendorff 2004; Neuendorf 2002; Riffe et al. 2019), which has been adopted in a wide range of scientific fields, from communication to journalism, from sociology to psychology and business. CA, as Riffe et al. (2019: 23) clarify, involves a “systematic and replicable” analysis of messages. In other words, this is a “technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti 1969: 14).

The close connection between messages (or texts) and the context in which they are produced is a central point of this method, which Krippendorff (2004: 18) defines as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.”

Although initially CA was labeled as “the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson 1952: 18), it has gradually broadened its scope of inquiry to embrace even the interpretation of less explicit textual data, qualitative contents, and underlying meanings. Stated another way, today CA takes the form of qualitative-quantitative analysis of the content of texts in order to identify or measure the various facts and trends reflected in them, taking into account the historical and social context in which they appeared (see Riffe et al. 2019: 22–23; Stone et al. 1966: 5; Weber 1990: 9).

For the purposes of our research, CA was applied from a comparative perspective (see Rössler 2012) that “attempts to reach conclusions beyond single cases and explains differences and similarities between objects of analysis and relations between objects against the backdrop of their contextual conditions” (Esser & Vliegenthart 2017: 2). In essence, the addition of a comparative component allows us to compare the textbooks under investigation, highlighting similarities and differences, and thus to generalize the CA method.

In what follows, the CDA and CA methods will be combined in the critical analysis of the chosen sample of RFL textbooks. In particular, the

RFL textbook, in the wake of CDA theories (see Subchapter 2.1), will be regarded as a text capable of acting as a mouthpiece for the dominant discourses in the RFL system: the national and the cultural essentialist discourses. On the other hand, the comparative CA method set forth above will grant a more detailed exploration of the contents of the textbooks as well as confirm the theoretical premises of the CDA previously conducted on RFL academic studies (see Chapter 2).

### **3.4 RFL Textbooks: A Critical Analysis (An Italian Case Study)**

This subchapter will offer a critical analysis of the representation of culture and intercultural dialogue in RFL textbooks, with Italy as a case study. The study builds on IE theoretical framework (see Section 1.1.1) and textbook theory (see Section 1.3.2) and is based on the CDA and CA research methods previously described (see Subchapters 2.1 and 3.3). Through CDA and CA both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Data were garnered from a specific sample (see below for more details), analyzed, and interpreted with the combined use of manual coding and special software for qualitative data analysis, QDA Miner Lite.

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How is Russian culture represented in the RFL textbooks under consideration?
2. What are the educational/pedagogical consequences of such representation?

To answer these research questions, we examined how Russian culture is represented in popular RFL textbooks commonly used by first-year students in Italian universities. This allowed us to unveil possible ideologies and biases in textbook creation, as well as to reflect on the problem of developing a theory of intercultural textbooks, with Italy as a case study.

The RFL textbooks for analysis were chosen through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique based on the judgment of the researcher, wherein “the sample is specifically selected intentionally to gather the data necessary for the study” (Willes 2017: 1545). The sample consisted of six RFL textbooks, which—judging by the 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023, and 2023/2024 syllabi published on university websites—are currently the most common language textbooks for first-year students in Italian universities, assigned for practical RFL

classes (listed here in order of publication date, from oldest to newest): *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, *Poyekhali*, *Molodets*, *Mir tesen*, *Davayte*, and *Raz, dva, tri*.<sup>149</sup> *Poyekhali* is a widely adopted textbook, being generally used (to give some examples) in the Russian-1 course at the University of Bologna, at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, at G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, and at the University of Naples L'Orientale (RU-1 CS–Bologna 2022/2023; RU-1 CS–Chieti-Pescara 2022/2023; RU-1 CS–Naples 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Venice 2022/2023). Even higher popularity is enjoyed by *Davayte*, which is employed, among others, at the University of Milan, the University of Turin, the University of Padua, the University of Florence, the University of Siena, the University of Perugia, the University of Salento, and the University of Palermo (RU-1 CS–Florence 2022/2023; RU-1 CS–Milan 2022/2023, 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Padua 2021/2022, 2022/2023; RU-1 CS–Palermo 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Perugia 2019/2020; RU-1 CS–Salento 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Siena 2022/2023a; RU-1 CS–Turin 2021/2022). *Mir tesen* is assigned to language students, for example, at the University of Siena as well as at the G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, at the University of Macerata, and at the University of Bologna (RU-1 CS–Bologna 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Chieti-Pescara 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Macerata 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Siena 2020/2021, 2022/2023a). *Raz, dva, tri* is presently used by RFL students at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, the University of Macerata, the University of Genoa, and the University of Parma (RU-1 CS–Genoa 2020/2021, 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Macerata 2019/2020; RU-1 CS–Milan/Catholic 2019/2020, 2021/2022, 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Modena-Reggio Emilia 2022/2023, 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Parma 2023/2024). *Molodets* has been frequently adopted by the University of Bari Aldo Moro, the University of Parma, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, and the University of Genoa (RU-1 CS–Bari 2019/2020, 2021/2022, 2022/2023, 2023/2024; RU-1 CS–Genoa 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Milan/Catholic 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Parma 2023/2024). Finally, *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh* has traditionally been employed by the University of Siena and the University of Genoa (RU-1 CS–Genoa 2020/2021, 2021/2022; RU-1 CS–Siena 2019/2020, 2021/2022, 2022/2023b,

<sup>149</sup> For the sake of fairness in identifying primary sources, which often have double titles (Russian and Italian), it has been decided here to indicate the textbooks by their transliterated Russian title only. Refer to Tab. 1 and to the Bibliography for complete titles and their English translations.

2023/2024), but also—like the previous textbooks—by various schools of translation and interpretation offering degree programs throughout Italy.

The data above indicate that these textbooks are used by many Italian universities in first-year RFL courses, which is why they were included in our sample.

The details of the analyzed textbooks are reported in Tab. 1.

Tab. 1

<b>Analyzed RFL Textbooks</b>		
<p><b>1. <i>Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh</i></b> [A1–A2] Ovsienko, Ju. G. (2002). <i>Il russo. Corso base</i> [Russian: A Basic Course]. Rome: Il Punto Editoriale (Italian version of Yu. G. Ovsienko, <i>Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh</i>. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy 1995).</p>	<p><b>2. <i>Poyekhali</i>, vols. 1; 1.1, 1.2</b> [A1–A2] Old edition: Chernyshov, S. I. (2009). <i>Poyekhali!</i> [Let’s Go!]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust. Vol. 1. New edition: Chernyshov, S. &amp; Chernyshova, A. (2019). <i>Poyekhali!</i> [Let’s Go!]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust. Vols. 1.1, 1.2.</p>	<p><b>3. <i>Molodets</i>, vol. 1</b> [A1] Langran, J., Vešnieva, N. &amp; Magnati, D. (2011). <i>Molodec! Parliamo russo</i> [Well Done! Let’s Speak Russian]. Milan: Hoepli. Vol. 1 (Italian version of J. Langran &amp; N. Veshnyeva, <i>Ruslan Russian</i>. Birmingham: Ruslan Limited 2008. Vol. 1).</p>
<p><b>4. <i>Mir tesen</i></b> [A1–B1(+)] Old edition: Bonciani, D., Romagnoli, R. &amp; Smykunova, N. V. (2016). <i>Mir tesen. Fondamenti di cultura russa</i> [It’s a Small World: Basics of Russian Culture]. Milan: Hoepli. New edition: Bonciani, D. &amp; Romagnoli, R. (2023). <i>Mir tesen. Fondamenti di cultura, storia e letteratura russa</i> [It’s a Small World: Basics of Russian Culture, History, and Literature] (2nd ed.). Milan: Hoepli.</p>	<p><b>5. <i>Davayte</i>, vols. 1, 2</b> [A1–A2] Magnati, D. &amp; Legittimo, F. (2017). <i>Davajte! Comunicare in russo</i> [Let’s Communicate in Russian]. Milan: Hoepli. Vols. 1, 2.</p>	<p><b>6. <i>Raz, dva, tri</i>, vol. 1</b> [A1–A2] Shibarova, A. &amp; Yarin, A. (2019). <i>Raz, dva, tri! Corso di lingua russa</i> [One, Two, Three! A Russian Language Course]. Milan: Hoepli. Vol. 1 (Italian version of A. Shibarova &amp; A. Yarin, <i>Davay pogovorim. Russisch für Anfänger und Fortgeschrittene</i>. Stuttgart: Schmetterling 2018).</p>

Notably, the textbooks were written by Russian/Russophone and non-Russian/Russophone authors. In particular, for the original textbooks that are oriented toward Italian-speaking learners, the authors are generally mixed—Italian and Russian/Russophone (*Mir tesen*, old edition)—, or only Italian (*Mir tesen*, new edition; *Davayte*).<sup>150</sup> In the remaining cases, less often are the authors mixed (*Molodets*) and more frequently native Russian speakers (*Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, *Poyekhali*, and *Raz, dva, tri*).

Additionally, it should be borne in mind that three textbooks are adapted versions of corresponding RFL textbooks, translated into Italian (*Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, *Molodets*, and *Raz, dva, tri*).

Furthermore, almost all the textbooks are built on a communicative approach.<sup>151</sup> The only exception is the oldest one, *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, which is grounded on the conscious-comparative method.<sup>152</sup>

A special note should be made on target audience of the textbooks. First, *Davayte* is a textbook originally meant for a school setting, but is now generally used also in the university. The reference to a dual target audience (school and university) together is also typical of *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh* and of the new edition of *Mir tesen* as well, whereas the other textbooks are intended for a general audience of young adults or expressly for university students (*Poyekhali*).

As for *Mir tesen*, this textbook is designed for Italian-speaking learners from the A1 to B1 level (old edition) and from the A1 to B1+ level (new edition). We will focus especially on the A1–A2 levels, but also on some parts of the B1(B1+) level, which are important for understanding *Mir tesen*'s cultural orientation.

Finally, in cases when the old editions of textbooks were no longer adopted by teachers because they were replaced by new editions (as in the case of *Poyekhali*; see Chernyshov 2009), or when brand new editions were adopted even before publishing (contextually with the compilation

<sup>150</sup> To be more precise, we must note that, in the following volumes of *Davayte* (not analyzed here), the collective of authors is mixed (Italian and Russian/Russophone).

<sup>151</sup> See footnote no. 32.

<sup>152</sup> The “conscious-comparative method” (*soznatel’no-sopostavitel’nyy metod*) is a pro-to-communicative method that originated in RFL during the 1930s–50s based on the work of Lev Shcherba and Sergey Bernshteyn. The main methodological requirements of this method consisted in the conscious assimilation of linguistic phenomena by learners in the process of communication, as well as in the comparative study of target and native languages (for more details, refer to Shchukin 2017b: 67–76).



of syllabi) but *de facto* had not yet entered massively into the course syllabi (as in the case of *Mir tesen*; see Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023), these were also analyzed along with the other ones to ensure completeness of the information.

For the comparative CA and CDA of the selected sample of RFL textbooks, the parameter “cultural content of the textbook” was used. The evaluation of each textbook was guided by seven questions, drawing from the dynamic, complex, and non-essentialist concept of culture illustrated in Section 1.1.1 and from the principles for a modern intercultural textbook explained in Subchapter 3.2:

1. Where is culture represented in the textbook (in a separate section and/or texts, exercises, activities, and/or others)? (Principle 1)
2. How is culture presented in the textbook, explicitly (in an overt manner and with specific materials, exercises, and activities) or implicitly (cultural information is expressed as a subtext, implicit and undisclosed, without specific materials, exercises, and activities)? (Principle 2)
3. What culture(s) is/are represented in the textbook—Russian and/or Russophone (according to the definitions and theoretical framework we provided in Section 1.1.1 and recalled in Subchapter 3.2)? (Principle 3)
4. What aspects/themes of culture(s) are presented in the textbook? (Principle 4)
5. What concept of culture underlies the cultural representations offered by the textbook? To what extent does the textbook recognize the complexity of the concept of culture (which changes over time and internally diversifies [according to the non-essentialist viewpoint discussed in Section 1.1.1]), outside essentialist views of culture, such as the myth of the “Russian soul”? (Principle 5)
6. To what extent does the textbook enable learners to learn about the culture(s) of the target language, as well as about their own cultures (e.g., through suggested readings and activities)? (Principle 6)
7. To what extent does the textbook provide an opportunity for a dialogue between cultures? (Principle 7)

The above questions were answered based on the theoretical framework outlined in Section 1.1.1 and Subchapter 3.2, with particular attention to the concepts of culture, Russian culture, and Russophone culture, as well as to the principles established for a modern RFL intercultural

textbook. In other words, on the one hand we aimed to see the extent to which cultural representations in the RFL textbooks examined were complex, dynamic, and realistic and not essentialized, static, and stereotyped. On the other hand, we intended to understand the extent to which these textbooks allowed space for a dialogue between cultures which takes complexity into account (i.e., they give the place for cultures to confront one another in an environment of exchange and sharing, and are not the resonance forum of closed and isolated cultures that leave no room for intercultural dialogue).

Data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted with the combined use of manual coding and qualitative data analysis software, QDA Miner Lite, which allowed for greater control over the data management itself and a faster research process.

The results of the textbook analysis, which will be discussed in the remainder of the chapter, revealed that, with regard to the principles for a modern RFL intercultural textbook outlined in Subchapter 3.2, the degree of cultural representation of these textbooks is generally poor, inadequate, and/or improvable in many respects. In particular, not all the textbooks reserve special sections to cultural topics and treat them explicitly (Section 3.4.1). Additionally, many of them offer a traditional, antiquated, and essentialist viewpoint on the culture of Russia (Section 3.4.2). Finally, none of them guarantee the possibility of intercultural dialogue between Russian and Russophone cultures, on the one hand, and the background cultures of Italian-speaking students, on the other (Section 3.4.3).

All this will direct us to a more general reflection on the (positive/negative) role played by textbooks in shaping RFL teaching/learning processes (Section 3.4.4). The picture thus drawn will be the starting point for some operational suggestions to improve RFL intercultural teaching (Chapters 4 and 5).

### **3.4.1 Spaces and Modalities of Cultural Representations**

In this section, we present the results of the CDA and CA of the selected sample of RFL textbooks with reference to questions 1–2 for textbook analysis.

- 1. Where is culture represented in the textbook (in a separate section and/or texts, exercises, activities, and/or others)? (Principle 1)**

- *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*  
The textbook does not contain sections devoted to culture. However, some cultural facts can be learned from the readings offered (for further information see the answer to Question 2).
- *Poyekhali*  
The textbook does not contain sections devoted to culture, nor is culture represented in other parts of the textbook.
- *Molodets*  
*Molodets* does not offer a special section on culture. However, cultural topics can be found in the “Information” (after the dialogues of each lesson) and “Texts, Songs, and Poems” sections. Translations or short explanations of cultural concepts are also provided in some dialogues and exercises (see, e.g., the box with the Italian translation of the word *banya* in Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 169, exercise 10).
- *Mir tesen*  
In the textbook, culture is presented both in the texts and in the corresponding exercises. All lessons are built around specific cultural themes (e.g., education in Russia; music, theater, and ballet; and Russian holidays), which are also the objects of specific exercises.

As the authors themselves announced in the Preface of the old edition, *Mir tesen* is designed for the learning of Russian culture and the development of learners’ ICC (Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: VII). This is also allowed by the special section “We Are Different, but We Are Similar” at the end of each lesson, thus fostering intercultural dialogue. *Mir tesen* even has a specific section about curiosities of Russian culture called “This Is Interesting.”

Moreover, to conform more closely to the RFL curriculum for Italian schools, three new sections are specifically devoted to history, literature, and civic education, respectively, in the new edition. Most of the pre-textual (the “Getting Ready to Work” section) and post-textual (the “Check Yourself” section) activities aim to develop learners’ ICC. Furthermore, *Mir tesen* offers additional work with cultural texts and topics in the section “If You Want to Know More.” Further cultural information is provided by the section “Remember!” The textbook also contains appendices devoted, for

example, to Russian dishes and (in the new edition) to Russian/Russophone literature.

- *Davayte*  
Culture is presented in the special section “Our Culture,” as well as in texts and mock tests for the TEU (A1) and TBU (A2) certification exams. However, there are no specific cultural assignments.
  - *Raz, dva, tri*  
*Raz, dva, tri* does not contain any special cultural sections. Nevertheless, partial cultural elements can be found in the story of the protagonist Russian family more generally. Indeed, as Bonola and Calusio (2019) write in the Foreword to the Italian edition analyzed here, “the protagonists of the textbook are the members of a present-day Russian family, whose habits and sociocultural characteristics they reproduce. Thus, from one lesson to the next, news about contemporary Russian life is also conveyed ...”
2. **How is culture presented in the textbook, explicitly (in an overt manner and with specific materials, exercises, and activities) or implicitly (cultural information is expressed as a subtext, implicit and undisclosed, without specific materials, exercises, and activities)? (Principle 2)**
- *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*  
Culture is partly explicitly and partly implicitly represented in the textbook. In fact, *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh* contains annotations on the history, geography, and other cultural aspects of Russia related to the input texts and dialogues that open each unit, as well as to the readings (accompanied by proverbs, idioms, excerpts from poems and songs) that constitute the supplementary material for self-study at the close of these same units. Nevertheless, these are mostly explanations of an informative nature, with no further elaboration (see, e.g., the note on patronymics and that on the Russian evaluation system in Ovsienko 2002: 45, 261). Only in some cases is the initial information inferable from the notes enriched by readings on the same topic, presented, however, unsystematically and at quite a distance from the first inputs (see, e.g., the biographical notes on Pushkin and Anton Chekhov on p. 114 and respective insights on pp. 257–259 and 332–334). Moreover, the images in the textbook (see, e.g., the photo of the Pushkinskiy Cinema on p. 86) are mainly ornamental and not so many intercultural activities are offered.

- *Poyekhali*  
Culture is implicitly presented in the textbook. As the author himself admits in the Preface to the old edition, “The grammar exercises contain ‘hints’ to various historical events, cultural peculiarities, situations of daily life, etc.” (Chernyshov 2009: 6). The old version of the textbook does not offer any *realia*<sup>153</sup> or authentic pictures.<sup>154</sup> In this respect, the new edition has been greatly improved by the introduction of authentic pictures and images.
- *Molodets*  
Culture is sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly, presented in the textbook. In particular, the “Exercises” section introduces numerous *realia* in the form of authentic photos (see, e.g., Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 157, exercise 6: *Russian passport* and *vodka*), but it does not provide any cultural explanations, inputs, or activities to establish intercultural comparisons. Even in the aforementioned section called “Texts, Songs, and Poems,” the suggested supplementary materials (adapted and original texts, songs, and poems) are not used to work on ICC.
- *Mir tesen*  
Culture is explicitly presented in the textbook. Notably, according to the communicative approach, the development of learners’ communicative skills and abilities is closely related to the cultural content of the lessons within each lesson’s index. Thus, cultural topics are completely integrated into the learning process. In general, all suggested readings aim to stimulate students’ motivation and help them develop ICC. *Mir tesen* also contains exercises specifically designed to acquire textual competence, especially related to translation (e.g., exercise 25 in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 92, corresponding to exercise 31 in Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 64), but in the end, these activities also benefit students’ ICC. Furthermore, the section on the curiosities of Russian culture called “This Is Interesting” and the section “If You

<sup>153</sup> The term “*realia*,” derived from medieval Latin with the meaning ‘the real things’ and introduced into the Russian language in the 1950s in the form *realiya*, denotes objects, concepts, or phenomena characteristic of the culture of a given civilization (Nelyubin 2016; Rossel’s 1971; Rozental’ & Telenkova 1985; Vlakhov & Florin 1980), which often constitute a challenge for translators (on this topic, see also Chapter 4). Here, in light of our theoretical premises (see Chapter 1), by *realia* we mean the words, expressions, and conceptual representations of specific elements of Russian and Russophone cultural space.

<sup>154</sup> We will return to the concept of “authentic material” in Chapter 4, Subchapter 4.2.

Want to Know More” also provide implicit cultural content for students’ additional work (see, e.g., the anthem of the Russian Federation in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 38).

- *Davayte*  
Culture is explicitly presented in the textbook. Notably, the organization of the lessons in *Davayte* involves the integration of cultural topics with communicative knowledge and skills. Furthermore, explicit cultural information is provided by the special section “Our Culture,” by texts and mock tests for the TEU and TBU certification exams, as well as by boxes with explanations in the grammar section (see, e.g., the explanation of *marshrutka* in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 176). In addition, there is an implicit representation of culture made possible through the use of authentic/semi-authentic images and materials in texts and exercises without explicit explanations (e.g., the conference program in exercise 20 on p. 140 or pictures of timetables in exercise 8 on p. 146).
- *Raz, dva, tri*  
Culture is implicitly presented in the textbook. There are a variety of cultural elements that are only mentioned and not explained, or of which just a translation into Italian or accompanying drawing is offered at most (e.g., *samovar*, *borshch* and *shchi* soups, *Baba-yaga*, *Anna Karenina*, and Russian cheeses in Shibarova & Yarin 2019: 32, 33, 49, 71, 211). Moreover, the rhymes and poems contained in the “Just Like That” section at the end of each lesson are not contextualized, nor are specific materials or exercises offered for their analysis from a cultural perspective.

### 3.4.2 Types and Concepts of Culture

This section is devoted to presenting the results of the textbook analysis with regards to questions 3–5.

#### 3. What culture(s) is/are represented in the textbook—Russian and/or Russophone? (Principle 3)

- *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, *Poyekhali*, *Molodets*, *Mir tesen*, *Davayte*, and *Raz, dva, tri*  
Both Russian and Russophone cultures are represented in all textbooks. However, only in two of them (*Davayte* and *Mir tesen*) has proper space been given to Russophone culture. It is enough to think, for example, of the attention paid in *Davayte* to the variet-

ies of appearances among Russophone people or to the treatment of the topic of the different nationalities of Russia in *Mir tesen* (see Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 234–235; Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 129–130). Whereas, the other textbooks mainly present Russian culture. For example, in *Poyekhali*, along with international celebrities, only Russian celebrities are named, while in *Molodets*, the classical Russian writer Pushkin is the only literary input provided (see Lesson 38 and Lesson 39, exercise 6 in Chernyshov & Chernyshova 2019, vol. 1.2: 52–53, 57; Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 60). Also in *Raz, dva, tri* it is the Russian component—along with references to general and international culture—that dominates, starting for example with the textbook’s main characters, such as children Vasya and Masha and their cat Murka, who have very popular Russian names. As for *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, not counting a few sporadic references to the Russophone world in the readings (see, e.g., the texts devoted to the languages of the peoples of Northern Russia and to Siberia, as well as the reading from the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aytmatov in Ovsienko 2002: 286–287, 348–349, 386–387), here, too, the Russian dimension comes out on top. For instance, as in *Raz, dva, tri*, the textbook’s protagonist family is a typical Russian family whose members have traditional Russian names: Oleg, Tanya, Ivan, and Nina.

Coming back to *Davayte* and *Mir tesen*, which—as we have seen—are the only textbooks to stress the Russophone dimension as well, distinctions must be made, however. In fact, it should be noted that only in *Davayte* has Russophone culture been emphasized in line with a dynamic, complex, and non-essentialist idea of culture, since this textbook recognizes the varieties and great diversity of Russia and its citizens while dispelling myths and stereotypes (see for more details the answer to Question 5). What concerns *Mir tesen*, although the textbook promotes the intercultural dialogue between Russian/Russophone and Italian cultures through constant comparison of these cultures (see for more details the answers to Questions 4 and 7), this intercultural dialogue is ultimately undermined by adherence to a stereotypical view of Russian and Russophone cultures, since it builds on the myth of the “Russian soul” (see for more details the answer to Question 5).

#### 4. What aspects/themes of culture(s) are presented in the textbook? (Principle 4)

- *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*

Among the main cultural aspects addressed in the textbook are the following: history; geography; tourism and landmarks; famous writers, composers, and historical personalities of the Russian Federation; cinema and theater; school education; festivities; sports and free time.

However, the abovementioned aspects are generally only found in the readings: some are explained through notes, while others remain implicit (as we have seen). These annotations, if any, are purely didactic-informative in nature (see, e.g., the explanations about the Volga River or the actor Fëdor Volkov in Ovsienko 2002: 162) and are not intended for cultural deepening or work on the learner's ICC.

The cultural themes basically serve only as material for grammar exercises aimed at written or oral production. For example, in exercise 3 on p. 85, after reading and understanding two Russian proverbs on the topic of family, the student is asked to translate Italian proverbs about family into Russian. Or again, in exercise 2 on p. 94, the learner must tell what Russian movies (s)he has seen. Cultural activities (see, e.g., exercises 3 and 1–2 in Ovsienko 2002: 170, 192) are few, somewhat static, and unsystematic. Also, the potential (inter)cultural information conveyed by the accompany pictures is not didactically exploited.

- *Poyekhali*

The main cultural aspects presented in the textbook are geography, tourism, history, Russian names, weather, famous writers and composers, historical personalities (in the new edition, also various cultural celebrities and politicians), theater and music (drama, ballet, opera, and musical instruments), military affairs (Kalashnikov), sports, television, food, holidays, superstitions, and cultural stereotypes.

Despite the author's declaration of his attempts to depict "contemporary Russian life" (Chernyshov 2009: 7), in the old edition of the textbook, contemporary cultural themes are quite absent. They are present only in the new edition (e.g., progress, immigration/emigration, and investments).



Given that an implicit representation of culture is maintained from the old to the new edition (see the answer to Question 2), most often, these aspects are just “hints” (by the aforementioned author’s own admission) that are only mentioned and/or used for grammar/conversation activities. For example, the personal data of Pushkin (Chernyshov & Chernyshova 2019, vol. 1.1: 52, exercise 5) are used to reinforce the grammar topic of possessive pronouns, without any mention of the biography and works of the poet. In another example, the weather theme (Chernyshov 2009: 59, exercise 70) is only an excuse for conversation, without any mention of the eleven time zones of Russia. Sometimes, the textbook also contains cultural images that are not explicitly explained as well (e.g., drawbridges in St. Petersburg, whose pictures are shown on pp. 75 and 186, are not mentioned in the corresponding texts about the city).

- *Molodets*

The main cultural aspects touched upon in the textbook include the following: history, tourism and geography (especially cities and landmarks), city life (television, cinema, theater, and ballet), Soviet-era cars, speech etiquette, the system of names, celebrities (especially cultural and literary figures and politicians), military affairs (Kalashnikov), sports, national holidays, food, telephone numbers, famous graveyards, Russian time zones, houses, and musical instruments (including, among others, *balalayka* and *bayan*).

Similar to *Poyekhali*, in *Molodets*, the abovementioned aspects are generally not the object of (inter)cultural activities but are only mentioned in the textbook and/or used for grammar exercises. For example, let us take the topic of Russian literature. The reading exercise 14z (Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 138) builds around Lev Tolstoy’s novel *Anna Karenina*, but not a single word mentions the structure and themes of the novel itself within the entire textbook.

Furthermore, the authentic black and white pictures and photos featured in *Molodets* are only ornamental and do not convey any cultural information (as is the case with *Poyekhali*’s images, which we discussed earlier). Nevertheless, the textbook should be recognized for the great attention it has paid to geographical

descriptions of the Russian Federation, as well as the strong connection to modernity (e.g., p. 228 mentions the Chechen War).

- *Mir tesen*

The main cultural aspects presented in the old edition of the textbook are as follows: the history and evolution of the Russian language; geography; education; great Russians and Italians; superstitions; sports and leisure; music, theater, and ballet; media; holidays; food; literature; painting; history; society; economics; cinema; Russian national character; and greetings, wishes and toasts.

In the new edition, cultural themes are further expanded, with the deepening of old topics (e.g., mass media and social network) and the addition of new ones (e.g., science, technology, and ecology), as well as with three specific sections devoted to history, literature, and civic education, in line with the Italian RFL school syllabus.

*Mir tesen* contains many cultural texts and culturally oriented exercises designed to develop students' ICC (see, e.g., exercises 7 and 12 in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 5, 143; Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 32, 93). Additional cultural content and information are offered in the sections "If You Want to Know More" and "Remember!"

Finally, the textbook focuses on a comparison of the Russian/Russophone and Italian worlds. Therefore, in its pages, learners can find cultural topics of both cultures, from antiquity to the present. For example, as far as Russian and Russophone cultures are concerned, the Russian printer Ivan Fëdorov is presented, along with the modern program *Let's Get Married!* As for Italian culture, students learn about Italian architects working in Russia in the 15th–18th centuries, as well as the popularity of the San Remo Festival in Russia (Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 16–17, 32–34, 105, 109–110; Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 12–14, 39, 76, 80–81).

- *Davayte*

Among the main cultural aspects addressed in the textbook are the following: Russian and Slavic languages; history and society; names (also in diminutive forms), patronymics, and surnames; leisure and free time; Siberia, Moscow, and St. Petersburg; Moscow Metro; the great people of the Russian Federation; Russian

cuisine; Russian art and literature; appearance of the people of the Russian Federation; school; sports; *banya*; ballet; holidays; and the Russian-speaking world.

In addition to the presentation of these topics in the special “Our Culture” section and in the texts, there are also brief cultural explanations (in special boxes) that illustrate the images presented (see, e.g., the explanation of Red Square in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 19, or the explanation of Soviet propaganda posters in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 2: 110).

- *Raz, dva, tri*

The main cultural aspects touched upon in the textbook include the following: geography, tourism, everyday life, city and country life, food, and leisure and free time.

However, similar to *Poyekhali* and *Molodets*, given the implicit representation of culture contained in *Raz, dva, tri*, cultural themes are only mentioned and/or used for vocabulary and grammar consolidation (and not for working on ICC). For example, in exercise 4.3 from Lesson 4 (Shibarova & Yarin 2019: 125–126) the learner has to construct dialogues related to directions to well-known Moscow places (Red Square, the Okhotnyy Ryad Metro, etc.), but no additional information is provided about these places other than a map in Russian. Or again, in Lesson 3, country life contrasted with city life is the subject of grammar and vocabulary exercises (see esp. pp. 89–90, 96–97, 100, 102, 109–110), from which, however, no cue is drawn for a discussion of a cultural nature.

5. **What concept of culture underlies the cultural representations offered by the textbook? To what extent does the textbook recognize the complexity of the concept of culture, outside essentialist views of culture, such as the myth of the “Russian soul”? (Principle 5)**

- *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*

It would be incorrect to say that the textbook fully fails to recognize the complexity of the concept of culture, as evidenced by the texts on the languages of the peoples of Northern Russia and on Siberia, as well as by the reading from Aytmatov previously mentioned (see the answer to Question 3). Nevertheless, because of the scant space given to Russophone culture, the cultural representation included here is certainly incomplete and partial.

Furthermore, *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh* succumbs to the myth of the “Russian soul,” traceable in the mention of Gogol’s words about Pushkin as the embodiment, precisely, of the “Russian soul” (see Ovsienko 2002: 257–258), as well as in the emphatic-nationalist tones of the readings on Russian writers, and the monolithic identification between individual and people (*narod*) (see, e.g., the exercise 2b on p. 276). In light of this, the view of culture proposed to the student by the textbook, despite the above elements of complexity, is, in fact, essentialized and stereotyped.

- *Poyekhali*  
*Poyekhali* does not allow students to encounter the complexity of the concept of culture. On the contrary, the textbook often presents cultural stereotypes in grammar exercises intended as “provocations” (Chernyshov & Chernyshova 2019, vol. 1.1: 169, vol. 1.2: 166) to encourage learners to actively engage in conversation (see, e.g., Chernyshov & Chernyshova 2019, vol. 1.2: 41, exercise 5, sentences *Men like to watch soccer* and *Women don’t like to hear compliments*, to name a few). However, such provocations end up presenting stereotypical images of cultural traits as essential and unchangeable (see, e.g., p. 138, exercise 5, questions *What clothes do the rich people wear, and what clothes do the poor people wear?* and *What do women wear, and what do men wear? Why?*).
- *Molodets*  
*Molodets* does not allow students to confront the complexity of the concept of culture. Only at one point do we encounter a Ukrainian accent (Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 163, exercise 19), but the textbook does not explain why Vasiliy Vasil’yevich from Kiev pronounces the Russian letter *g* this way and, in general, what the relationship is between the Ukrainian and Russian languages and cultures.
- *Mir tesen*  
The old edition of *Mir tesen* does not allow students to confront the complexity of the concept of culture. Only Lesson 9, which is devoted to the diversity of the landscape of the Russian Federation, suggests that there is something beyond traditional stereotypes about Russia (see, e.g., information about the Buryats in the section “This Is Interesting” in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 161).

On the contrary, the old *Mir tesen* is based on a stereotypical view of Russian and Russophone cultures. This is especially clear when considering Lesson 15, which, from its very title (“Features of the Russian National Character”), is linked to the concept of the “Russian soul” (285). All suggested readings and respective exercises—from Fëdor Tyutchev’s poem about the “mysteriousness and unpredictability of Russia” (287–288) to the statements of Nikolay Berdyayev and Nikolay Losskiy about the positive and negative properties of the Russian character (288–290) and kitchen conversations (292–293)—create an impression of the immutability and superiority of Russian culture over the rest, thereby feeding into the stereotypical view of Russian culture and identity.<sup>155</sup>

From this perspective, the new edition has been greatly improved with the introduction of elements of complexity. However, given the preservation, in Lesson 15, of the topic of the Russian national character—understood as fixed and homogeneous—and of the myth of the “Russian soul” (see, e.g., on pp. 276–280, the reading and subsequent discussion of the Russians’ sense of collectivism, which follows Hofstede’s model,<sup>156</sup> as well as the text relating to Russian national character as expressed by folk tales), there is no doubt that static and stereotypical ideas about Russians remain.

- *Davayte*

The “Our Culture” section offers learners a comprehensive look at Russian-language culture, including both classical and modern cultures, from geography to history, from literature to painting, from football to cooking, etc. (see, e.g., the “Our Culture” section with a cultural test about Russia in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol., 1: 13–14).

The textbook also presents a complex picture of the country, including its diversity and contradictions, without lapsing into an essentialist or idealist discourse. For example, Vol. 1, Lesson 4 (57–58) talks about the great diversity of geography, economics,

<sup>155</sup> For a detailed analysis of the myth of the “Russian soul” in *Mir tesen*, see Torrezin [Torresin] (2022d: 457–458).

<sup>156</sup> Hofstede’s “cultural dimensions” theory (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede & Minkov 2010) is a model for understanding the culture of a country and the differences across countries based on cultural values (i.e., on a national and essentialist level). Hofstede’s model consists of six key dimensions: “power distance,” “uncertainty avoidance,” “individualism/collectivism,” “masculinity/femininity,” “long/short term orientation,” and “indulgence/restraint.”

ethnic composition, time zones, traditions, and so on of the Russian Federation. In another example, Lesson 5 (77–78) discusses how Russians relax in their free time and supports the idea that “of course, people in Russia, like everywhere else, are different” (77). Moreover, “people from Italy, Germany, UK, France, and Japan have the same leisure time” as Russians. After all, “we all live almost identically; this is the result of globalization” (78). In another example, in Lesson 6 (95–96), the learner is provided with an authentic picture of Siberia, which also dispels stereotypes about this territory (i.e., “it is not always cold”) and its people (95). In conclusion, Lesson 8 (129–130) dispels another myth: that all Russians/Russophones are tall, blond, and blue-eyed, further explaining that Russia is home to “different nationalities and different appearances” (129).

- *Raz, dva, tri*  
Although *Raz, dva, tri* does not adhere to the myth of the “Russian soul” and indeed calls it a “cliché” (see Shibarova & Yarin 2019, Lesson 5: 168, exercise 7.3), it does not offer a complex idea of the target cultures. The only part of the textbook where elements of complexity are conveyed to the student is, in Lesson 4, the text “Russia” on the geography and different time zones of the Russian Federation, where Aleksey, a Yakut studying in Petersburg and calling his Muscovite friend Dmitriy who lives in Yakutia, tells us how he found him already asleep (136). However, this is not enough to say that *Raz, dva, tri* provides learners with an elaborate and multifaceted idea of culture.

### 3.4.3 Cultural Awareness and Intercultural Dialogue

In this section, the results of the textbook analysis for questions 6–7 are discussed.

6. **To what extent does the textbook enable learners to learn about the culture(s) of the target language, as well as about their own cultures (e.g., through suggested readings and activities)? (Principle 6)**
  - *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*  
Through the readings contained in the textbook, the student gets to learn various notions about Russian culture (but far less about Russophone culture). However, the proposed cultural activities are sporadic and unstructured (see, e.g., the post-reading exercis-

es 1–3 on Moscow on p. 150, as well as the exercises on the writers Sergey Esenin and Dostoyevskiy on pp. 192, 294 in Ovsienko 2002).

Additionally, even if among the characters in *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh* there is the Italian student Mario, this fact is not exploited to give the learner opportunities to reflect on Italian culture as well (as will be remembered, the textbook is addressed to Italian-speaking learners). Furthermore, cultural activities on the learners' own cultures are also very few and discontinuous. These, like the former activities on Russian culture, are generally aimed at oral/written production, whereas (inter)cultural reflection takes a back seat. For example, the student is asked to tell about the famous people who lived in his/her city (170, exercise 2) and what cultural monuments can be found in his/her country (339, exercise 2).

- *Poyekhali*

The textbook does not provide an opportunity for students to learn about Russian and Russophone cultures. At best, the proposed activities allow only a general and superficial comprehension of the Russian-speaking world. As we have seen, the so-called “provocations” intended for oral practice are based on cultural stereotypes.

Moreover, while it has the merit of bringing the Russian language closer to learners, the extensive use of international vocabulary due—in the author's words—to the need to overcome “the psychological barrier associated with the reputation of Russian as ‘exotic,’ ‘oriental,’ and therefore ‘difficult’” (Chernyshov 2009: 6) also flattens Russian language and culture, taking away its specificities. After all, this corresponds to the stated intentions of the textbook, which is not intended to give students detailed cultural information about Russia, but mainly to activate and develop their communicative skills.

Nor does *Poyekhali* provide learners with insights into their own cultures. Even if the textbook has a definite target audience—although a broad one—given by students of the “European cultural-linguistic world” (6), it does not offer room for students to rethink their cultures.

In comparison, in the new edition, some exercises allow learners to learn/reflect about their own cultures (Chernyshov & Cher-

nysnova 2019, vol. 1.1: 105, questions to the text “Two Cities, Two Capitals!”: *Do you have a cultural capital in your country? Where is the financial center? and When is your most romantic season?*; see also vol. 1.2: 11, exercise 8, question *Do people smile a lot in your country?*), but these are the minority and are always aimed at communication rather than ICC development.

- *Molodets*

While the textbook brings learners into the Russian-speaking world, it does not introduce them to all aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures. By studying using *Molodets*, students can be oriented to the center of Moscow and easily recognize all the notable things the textbook talks about. However, they may not be equipped to navigate, for example, the literary or sociological issues of the modern Russian Federation.

This textbook likewise only partially enables learners to learn about their own cultures through moments of comparison between Russian and Italian languages and cultures (see, e.g., Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 1–2, 21, 23, 150–151).

- *Mir tesen*

Thanks to *Mir tesen*, students will become familiar with Russian and Russophone cultures. In the textbook, much attention is given to the little-known and/or curious aspects of the Russian-speaking world. For example, the section “This Is Interesting” presents the origins of the names of the Russian months as well as the 1980 Summer Olympics (Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 10–11, 77; Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 36, 52). Further cultural information is provided by the section “Remember!”

*Mir tesen* also contains ludic cultural activities (see, e.g., the crossword puzzle on Russian cities in exercise 5 in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 22; Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 3). However, as we have seen, the textbook adheres to a static, standardized view of Russian and Russophone cultures, which is reflected by the proposal to read texts on a “typical Russophone person” (Lesson 15) and, in general, by its attachment to the myth of the “Russian soul.”

*Mir tesen* allows learners to find out about their own cultures as well. For example, the textbook (see Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 31; Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 9) presents Iosif Brodskiy’s poem *Lagoon*, which reveals the Russian poet’s



relationship to Venice, thus giving Italian students a new perspective on the city. Other examples include students being asked to explain how the Italian school and university educational system works and to recall the ingredients of the Italian Easter cake *colomba pasquale* (see, e.g., exercises 5, 11, and 12 in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 43, 47, 125 and exercises 5, 14, and 17 in Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 18, 21, 117).

In summary, in using the textbook, students are constantly rethinking their own cultures, thanks to the textbook's interest in intercultural aspects and the intercultural activities it offers (see, e.g., exercise 17 in Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: 131 and corresponding exercise 22 in Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 122, questions: *What Italian holiday is similar to the Russian holiday of June 12?* and *What Italian holiday is similar to the Russian holiday of May 9?*), which are even intensified in the new edition.

- *Davayte*

Through the story of Nastya Gromova's Russian family, *Davayte* introduces the student to Russian-speaking culture. The "Our Culture" special section also provides interesting details about Russian and Russophone cultures. For example, this section of Lesson 2 (Vol. 1) describes diminutive and affectionate forms of Russian names (Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 27) and illustrates the family of Slavic languages, focusing on the diatopic varieties of the Russian language (28). The "Our Culture" section also helps learners fight stereotypes, enabling them to form a multidimensional picture of Russia and its inhabitants (e.g., pp. 95–96 on Siberia; text "What Do Russophone People Look Like" on pp. 129–130; text on Moscow as a "city of contrasts" on pp. 193–194; and text "Where the Russian Language Is Spoken" on pp. 269–270).

Notably, cultural work is not always done in the texts or authentic materials<sup>157</sup> on cultural topics presented by the textbook. Some are intended only for grammar work (see, e.g., text 1 about St. Petersburg on p. 36 and rules of conduct in the library on p. 163). As for the exercises and activities, aside from grammar activities with a cultural background, which are mainly intended for specific work on grammar (e.g., exercise 22 on p. 312 about the most popular sports in Russia and exercise 24 in Magnati & Legittimo

<sup>157</sup> On this concept, see Subchapter 4.2.

2017, vol. 2: 114 about the rules of conduct in the *banya*), *Davayte* features activities that allow students to decentralize from their own cultures and put themselves in the place of the Russians/Russophones (see, e.g., exercise 8 in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 40, where learners are invited to choose a fictional Russian identity for themselves). However, it must be said that the limited number of authentic intercultural activities is focused solely on literature (see, e.g., exercise 1 on p. 41 and exercise 10 on p. 126). While *Davayte* enables learners to learn about Russian and Russophone cultures, unfortunately, it does not give students insights into their own cultures. The textbook does not create opportunities for reflection on the students' source cultures even though it is actually addressed to Italian-speaking learners (it has, among its characters, the Italian Federico) and contains some references to Italian culture and Italian cultural-based activities (see, e.g., dialogues and exercise 34 in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 2: 35–36, 51).

- *Raz, dva, tri*

Through the readings and exercises students are offered some information about Russian culture (much less about Russophone culture), albeit in a mainly implicit form. However, the textbook does not provide opportunities for them to reflect on the target cultures. The only exceptions are exercises 1.1 and 2.4 in Lesson 5 (Shibarova & Yarin 2019: 150, 154), where the learner is asked to say whether (s)he has ever been to Russia before and, if so, in which cities (partial data on the geography of Russia were illustrated in the previous lesson, within the text “Russia” already named), and what movies among those presented (s)he saw (the Russian-language ones are two).

As for students' own cultures, outside of two exercises, where the learner must find the Italian equivalent for the Soviet puppet Buratino and reflect on breakfast and general food habits in their country (exercises 3.1, 2.1, and 3.4 in Shibarova & Yarin 2019: 185, 214–215), given the implicit treatment of culture offered in *Raz, dva, tri*, there are no other times when students can dust off their cultural knowledge about background cultures and enrich it with new information.

7. **To what extent does the textbook provide an opportunity for a dialogue between cultures? (Principle 7)**

- *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*  
The textbook presents, among its characters, two students, the Italian Mario and his Russian friend Oleg, however within its pages there is no complete dialogue between these two cultures. In fact, the proposed activities only allow a partial development of the learner's ICC through the comparisons between Russia and Italy (e.g., on theaters and famous women in Ovsienko 2002: 138, 273), and other cultures as well (e.g., on New Year celebrations in exercise 4 on p. 360), since they share an implicit essentialist vision of culture, founded on the myth of the "Russian soul." Overall, though, in *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh* there are not enough materials and activities to promote a dialogue between target cultures and students' own cultures.
- *Poyekhali*  
In the old edition, there are no texts or exercises/activities for developing a dialogue between cultures. As we have seen, all the texts and exercises offered are designed only for work on grammar or speaking. In general, it could be argued that the old *Poyekhali* is not interested in promoting ICC and misses all opportunities to work on it (which could be provided, for example, by the textbook's characters, such as the Russian family, the Swedish friend Sven, and the Martian, among others). Furthermore, intercultural dialogue is not the main focus of the new edition of the textbook. Nevertheless, we can find activities that allow teachers to work on it (e.g., in Chernyshov & Chernyshova 2019, vol. 1.1: 39, exercise 11: *Search the Internet for portraits of people from your country or from Russia (an actor, writer, politician, musician, athlete...) and ask the group: Do you know him/her?*). However, these activities are always connected with conversations, and explicit cultural information is never provided.
- *Molodets*  
In this textbook, no texts or exercises/activities are provided to promote a dialogue between cultures. Instead, learners are offered only some pre- and post-text activities that allow implicit comparisons between Italian and Russian/Russophone cultures (e.g., Langran, Vešnieva & Magnati 2011: 36, exercise 5; see also p. 43) or between different world cultures (67, exercise 4). However, the dialogue between Italian and Russian/Russophone cultures

may be partially fostered through role plays concluding each lesson, enabling learners to decentrate by putting themselves in someone else's shoes. Moreover, the use of authentic images and photos in the "Exercises" section probably helps students familiarize themselves with the target cultures and implicitly rethink their own cultures.

- *Mir tesen*

*Mir tesen* promotes a dialogue between cultures because its goal—according to the authors—is to help students “perceive Russia as ‘different,’ not ‘alien,’ and to understand that events, facts, and phenomena from one country can become the object of a dialogue between cultures” (Bonciani, Romagnoli & Smykunova 2016: VII). While working on the textbook, students are given plenty of opportunities to encounter Russian and Russophone cultures, as well as to reflect on and discuss their own cultural history. For example, in exercise 1 on p. 2 (see also Bonciani & Romagnoli 2023: 30), learners are invited to search the genealogical tree of the Indo-European languages for their native language as well as the languages they are studying.

For the intercultural dialogue between the Italian and Russian/Russophone worlds (*Mir tesen* is designed for Italian-speaking students), the special section “We Are Different, but We Are Similar” is devoted to comparisons between the two worlds (see, e.g., the comparison of *maslenitsa* and the Italian Carnival, respectively, in Lessons 7 and 8 of the old and new editions). A section called “This Is Interesting” also presents information about the curiosities of Russian culture, through which students can learn, as we have seen, about the origin of the names of the months in the Russian, native, and other languages, among other examples. In this sense, we agree with Lasorsa Siedina (2016: XII) that “the strength of this textbook on Russian culture is the comparison aspect of the two cultures and peoples, Russian and Italian.” Unfortunately, as we have already discussed, because the textbook—like *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*—is based on the stereotype of the “Russian soul,” the intercultural dialogue is here, in the end, entirely incomplete.

- *Davayte*

Although the textbook encourages continuous comparisons between Russian and Italian cultures (see, e.g., the “Our Culture”

section in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 151–152, which deals with the Russian school system and comparisons between Russian and Italian grades), no texts or exercises/activities are provided to foster dialogue between cultures. Furthermore, all the proposed activities are designed to develop oral speech (see, e.g., the activity about stereotypes associated with different peoples in exercise 7 on p. 76, or the activity focused on comparisons of different objects, places, and situations in exercise 17 in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 2: 65).

In summary, despite the complex and non-essentialist image of Russia offered by the textbook, *Davayte* does not give students adequate opportunities for intercultural comparisons. On the contrary, in some places, the textbook reiterates stereotypical views of culture (see, e.g., exercise 22 in Magnati & Legittimo 2017, vol. 1: 162: *Who is better at cooking, working on a computer, swimming, waiting, loving, speaking English, writing poetry, choosing food, playing football, hockey, or tennis? Men or women? Italians or Russians?*).

- *Raz, dva, tri*

The textbook does not contain texts or exercises/activities that promote dialogue between the target cultures and other ones (primarily the Italian one), apart from a few rare exceptions (see, e.g., the already mentioned comparison between Buratino and Pinocchio in exercise 3.1 in Shibarova & Yarin 2019: 185, as well as the discussion on the topic of breakfast in Russia and other countries in the exercises 2.1 and 3.4 on pp. 214–215). Generally, the exercises/activities focus rather on grammar and, even if interesting opportunities for intercultural comparison may emerge (e.g., in Shibarova & Yarin 2019: 121, exercise 2.7 on the coats of arms of various countries), they are limited to grammar work. Not even the Italian character of Michele, a student from Naples who meets the Russian student Ivan in Lesson 4 (116), is used as a starting point to stimulate intercultural reflection and dialogue.

### 3.4.4 Summary and Data Interpretation

The analysis of the selected RFL textbooks showed that the degree of cultural representation of these textbooks, with reference to the principles for a modern RFL intercultural textbook outlined in Subchapter 3.2, is, in some ways, poor, inadequate, and/or improvable in many respects.

This is especially obvious in *Poyekhali* and *Raz, dva, tri*, which have no special section on culture and where culture remains implicit (i.e., Principle 1 on the space reserved for culture and Principle 2 on the need for explicit cultural input are not met). Indeed, in *Poyekhali* and *Raz, dva, tri*, all we can find are hints about cultural themes that are only mentioned and/or used for grammar activities. Even in those cases in which culture is also presented explicitly (*Molodets*), the didactic materials are not used to work on ICC. Moreover, contemporary cultural topics are generally absent (*Poyekhali*, new edition) and intercultural activities are often scarce with regard to the student's needs (*Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*).

The exceptions seem to be the textbooks *Davayte* and *Mir tesen*. As we have seen, *Davayte* has a special section called "Our Culture," which is structured according to the integration of cultural topics with communicative knowledge and skills. However, despite the inclusion of this special section, the textbook does not offer specific cultural and intercultural activities (again, Principle 2 on the explicit treatment of cultural aspects through specific intercultural exercises and activities is not observed). Regarding *Mir tesen*, which is entirely built around cultural themes, this textbook has a rich and heterogeneous repertoire of topics, as well as specific sections devoted to culture (according to Principles 1 and 4, focused, respectively, on cultural space and variety of cultural topics). Nonetheless, because of its essentialist idea of culture based on the stereotype of the "Russian soul" (contrary to Principle 5, dealing with the complexity of the concept of culture), even such a textbook provides a somewhat incomplete intercultural dialogue (i.e., Principle 7 on opportunities for a dialogue between cultures is not respected).

In summary, all these textbooks claim to be 'mirrors' of Russian culture. However, at the same time, the idea of Russian culture promoted by such textbooks seldom includes the notion of this (and any) culture's complexity and multifacetedness, without which—as we have already established (see Subchapter 3.2 and Principle 5)—we cannot even talk about IE.

One important point in recognizing the complexity of culture is the inclusion of both Russian and Russophone cultures in an RFL textbook (see Principle 3). Although all the analyzed textbooks look at both Russian and Russophone cultures, only two of them (*Davayte* and *Mir tesen*) pay proper attention to Russophone culture, and not just to purely Russian culture. Specifically, of the two, only *Davayte* acknowledges the

multifaceted nature of Russophone culture. In fact, *Mir tesen* is rich in cultural topics and contains various exercises aimed at developing students' ICC through constant comparison of Russian/Russophone and Italian cultures. However, the appeal to a stereotypical representation of the "Russian soul" thwarts this textbook's intercultural potentiality (i.e., as we have seen, Principle 7 is not fulfilled).

Through the remaining textbooks, RFL students can perceive the same stereotyped representations of Russia. *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*—like *Mir tesen*—relies on the myth of the "Russian soul" (contrary to Principle 5), thus drawing a romantic and essentialized picture of Russia's cultural space. For its part, *Poyekhali* even uses cultural stereotypes to develop communicative skills, thereby neglecting the development of learners' ICC.

In a nutshell, four of the analyzed textbooks (*Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*, *Poyekhali*, *Molodets*, and *Raz, dva, tri*) allow learners only a general, superficial comprehension of Russian culture and the Russian-speaking world and, on the other hand, no (*Poyekhali*, old edition) or only a partial (*Poyekhali*, new edition; *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*; *Molodets*; and *Raz, dva, tri*) rethinking of their own cultures.

The texts and activities in these textbooks are generally designed for work on grammar and are not intended to promote a dialogue between cultures (contrary to Principle 2). In comparison, the other textbooks (*Davayte* and *Mir tesen*) introduce students to Russia's culture in all its manifestations. Both textbooks also provide curious details about Russian and Russophone cultures.

In particular, *Davayte* does not hesitate to present the complexity of the Russian-speaking world, its diversity, and its contradictions (according to Principle 5). However, such a textbook, unlike *Mir tesen*, does not encourage students to think about their own cultures (contrary to Principle 6) or feature effective intercultural activities (contrary to Principle 2). In other words, although this textbook stimulates continuous comparisons between Russian/Russophone and Italian cultures, in the end, it does not facilitate intercultural dialogue (i.e., Principle 7 is not met).

As for *Mir tesen*, on the contrary, this textbook presents materials and activities specifically designed for work on ICC, focused on comparing the Russian/Russophone and Italian worlds (according to Principles 2, 6, and 7). Nevertheless, such work cannot ultimately be carried out, as the proposed idea of Russian culture (contrary to Principle 5) is based on an essentialist notion of culture, grounded in the myth of the "Russian soul."

Finally, none of the six textbooks guarantees the possibility of intercultural dialogue between the culture of Russia and the background cultures of Italian-speaking students. The results suggest that, apart from *Davayte*, an explicit, complex, and problematized treatment of Russian and Russophone cultures has not been found, and even where it is present (in *Davayte*), it is not put to good use with activities that stimulate the development of learners' ICC.

To conclude, our textbook analysis demonstrated once again that the textbook is not a secondary but a fundamental element of FL teaching, since—to quote scholars—it “plays an important role in determining the nature of the cultural information presented in the classroom” (Byram, Esarte-Sarries & Taylor 1991: 302). In other words, as argued by Mikk (2000: 309–331), textbooks may influence (positively or negatively) the formation of students' values and beliefs, in drawing a more or less realistic picture of the target contents.

Also, as for RFL teaching, the cultural representations provided by textbooks employed in the Italian university context, characterized by essentialist and static or even stereotypical views of Russia, may contribute in shaping classroom processes in a direction that, given the results of our analysis and in line with previous research on stereotypes and various issues of Russian-language textbooks (see, e.g., Artyukova, Saykina & Solov'eva 2021; Azimova & Johnston 2012; Rifkin 1998; Sharadakova & Pavlenko 2004; Veselovskaya 2020), unfortunately, often does not bode well for an IE-based RFL teaching/learning. This means that RFL textbooks, from case to case, could be good/bad, realistic/unrealistic, effective/ineffective vehicles of Russian and Russophone cultures, and the risks associated with essentialist, reductionist, and/or stereotypical views of the culture of Russia itself are always around the corner.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In Section 1.3.2, we have illustrated how the modern textbook, which is intercultural by definition, plays a central role in the development of the student's ICC and, therefore, in IE processes as a whole, since it conveys to learners a certain image of Russia and Russian language.

In this third chapter, we have considered the case study of RFL textbooks commonly used in Italian universities to prove how national and essentialized cultural representations are promoted in RFL teaching materials. Basically, the degree of cultural representation of these textbooks



is generally poor. Not all the textbooks have special sections devoted to cultural topics nor do they treat them explicitly. Moreover, many of them provide learners with a somewhat traditional-antiquated and romantic idea of Russia, sometimes even grounded on stereotypes, by neglecting contemporary culture and leaning on the myth of the “Russian soul.”

Consequently, through the examined textbooks no intercultural dialogue between Russian and Russophone cultures, on the one hand, and students’ own cultures, on the other, becomes possible, since there are no opportunities for reflection and self-reflection on the target and source cultures, nor moments for dynamic comparison and interaction among the cultures involved. In this, the textbook analysis confirms the results of our critical overview of the RFL scientific literature on IE (Chapter 2), finding again in action here those same discursive structures and related intercultural perspective previously discussed, which hinder a successful intercultural approach to RFL teaching.

As the next chapter will show, besides textbooks, in daily teaching practice there are also other factors that may determine the success or, conversely, the failure of intercultural RFL classes in the university context. Reflection on these additional factors will enable us to identify, in current IE-based teaching, strengths and weaknesses, which we will later take into account to offer some practical insights and operative suggestions to the RFL teacher (Chapter 5).

## **4. RFL Intercultural Teaching in Current Practices**

The fourth chapter is devoted to RFL modern intercultural teaching practices.

Specifically, different research and data collection methods (Subchapter 4.1) will be used to examine current RFL pedagogical approaches towards culture (Subchapter 4.2), focusing attention on both their positive and negative aspects. This will lead us to some thoughts and considerations that will come in handy for the practical-operational part of the book (Chapter 5).

### **4.1 Methodology and Data Collection**

For the examination of RFL interculturality-based teaching practices, we made use of three research methods, which will be described below: action research, classroom observation, and survey research.

“Action research” (AR) is a participatory process highly useful in higher education, involving a constructivist approach that combines theory and practice (Burns 2010; W. Carr & Kemmis 1986; Elliot 1991; Hopkins 2014; A. Johnson 2012; Kember 2000; McNiff 1988; McNiff & Whitehead 2011; Mertler 2019; Rowell et al. 2017). The essential characteristic of AR is that the object of research is the teacher him/herself. This research method is grounded in action, evaluation, and critical analysis of practices based on collected data to identify potential improvements and “new forms of understanding” (Reason & Bradbury 2008: 4). Typically, in AR teachers-researchers research others’ and/or their own practice of teaching, with the participants often being co-researchers or partners in change and engaging together in cycles of action and critical reflection. AR consists of the following self-reflective cycles (Lewin 1946: 34–36): “planning” to initiate change, implementing the change (“acting”), “observing” the process of implementation and its consequences, “reflecting”

on the changes and “replanning,” “acting” and “observing,” and “reflecting.”

Here, the collection of primary empirical data involved first-person AR (Reason & Bradbury 2008: 6), a process through which educators reflect on their own teaching in order to improve its quality. What is curious but still indicative of the great potential of first-person AR, is that this type of AR has been applied—in addition to teaching—also to research, exploring its connections with life (Marshall 2016).

Meanwhile, “classroom observation” (CO) is a purposeful examination of teaching by an external observer through systematic data collection and analysis processes (Allwright 1988; Bailey 2001; Boehm & Weinberg 2017; Croll 1986; Montgomery 1999; O’Leary 2020; Stubbs & Delamont 1976; Wajnryb 1992; Walker & Adelman 1975; Zepeda 2013), which entails different typologies (popular classifications are presented by Gosling 2002 and Wragg 1999). Unlike first-person AR, CO is a collaborative, joint, and mutually enriching operation. Observation of the teacher by an observer, who records what happens in the classroom, encourages critical reflection on teaching practice (Brookfield 1995) and “serves the dual purpose of promoting the development of both observer and observed” (O’Leary 2020).

Accordingly, AR and CO complement each other, allowing teachers to self-reflect on their own work (first-person AR) while providing an outside look by one teacher at another (CO).

Besides AR and CO, we also conducted survey research, which can be defined as “the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions” (Check & Schutt 2012: 160). In particular, we employed the online surveys method (Regmi et al. 2016) in the creation of a teacher survey. Surveys, or questionnaires are “an instrument to collect data that describe one or more characteristics of a specific population” (Gay, Mills & Airasian 2012: 184). They are very common in social and psychological scholarly areas (Singleton & Straits 2009), since they help to collect data about population groups to “learn about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences” (Leedy & Ormrod 2005: 183). Surveys may be beneficial also to gather information about educative processes and to improve educational research (Ebel 1980). Moreover, survey research well integrates with other methods and offers a multiperspective overview of a situation/problem. Given our attention to qualitative investigation (Braun et al. 2020), re-

search strategies such as open-ended questions and the Likert scale were utilized for this purpose.

In the next section, the AR, CO, and survey research methods will be used to critically analyze intercultural strategies currently employed by RFL university teachers. The collected data will provide in-depth knowledge about positive as well as negative aspects connected to RFL intercultural teaching today, which will form the first step for proposing a new idea of IE in RFL within the university context (see Chapter 5).

## 4.2 An Examination of RFL Modern IE-Based Teaching Practices

In this subchapter, we will illustrate the results of the examination of RFL modern IE-based teaching practices conducted through the AR, CO, and survey research methods described above.

The aim of the analysis was to inquire about the teaching of culture in RFL classes, exploring how Russian and Russophone cultures (target cultures in RFL teaching) *were taught* and *should be taught*, taking Italy (Stage 1) and Lithuania (Stage 2) as case studies, with a focus on teaching materials and strategies.

During Stage 1, first-person AR was carried out in Italy at the University of Padua in the academic years 2019/2020, 2020/2021, and 2021/2022. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from a total of 339 teaching hours (7 courses of 42 hours each and one of 45 hours, including 3 BA-level RFL courses and 5 Russian–Italian translation courses, including 1 BA course and 4 MA courses delivered in person or online).

The purpose of the AR was to investigate the effectiveness of teaching materials in the development of RFL learners' ICC,<sup>158</sup> paying special attention to authentic materials (see below for a definition of this term).

Two fundamental reasons underpin the focus of the AR on authentic materials: first, the pragmatic need to center self-reflective inquiry on a single aspect for greater intervention effectiveness, manageability, and less wasted energy; second, the scientific relevance of such inputs for RFL intercultural teaching.

As is well known, authentic materials are useful in RFL teaching (as well as for teaching other FLs) from an intercultural perspective because they provide real-life examples of language used in everyday situations

<sup>158</sup> See Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3.1, and Chapter 2.

and bring the FL culture into the classroom. Consequently, authentic materials are an important input source for RFL learners, which convey cultural information and thus help to enhance learners' ICC. In addition, they are also highly motivational for students.

Let us take a moment to define this concept and discuss its function in our research.

The use of authentic materials plays a major role in modern FL and RFL teaching (see, e.g., Mishan 2004; Nosonovich & Mil'rud 1999). Thornbury (2006: 21) qualifies as "authentic" texts "originally written for a non-classroom audience." Similarly, for Harmer (1983: 146), they are materials "designed not for language students, but for the speakers of the language in question." Although the question of authenticity and the notion of authentic material have been the subject of heated debates between the 1970s and the 1990s (see, e.g., Breen 1985; Nostrand 1989; Widdowson 1976, 1990) and they "remain[s] ambiguous in most teachers' minds" (Gilmore 2007: 98), here for convenience we rely on the definition suggested by Galloway (1998: 133), who considers authentic materials as those "written and oral communications produced by members of a language and culture group for members of the same language and culture group" that "... invite observation of a culture talking to itself, not to outsiders."<sup>159</sup> Examples of authentic materials that can be employed for teaching RFL include paper and online resources (e.g., books, newspapers, blogs, websites, and educational games) as well as audio, video, and audio-visual resources (e.g., songs and music programs, information programs, podcasts, radio, video clips, and movies).

This kind of input perfectly meets the IE-based philosophy for RFL teaching we set forth in Chapter 1. Indeed, in the first place, by virtue of their aforementioned characteristics, when used properly and accompanied by appropriate intercultural activities (as we will see in the following pages, unfortunately, this does not always happen and very often results in a missed opportunity for intercultural dialogue<sup>160</sup>), authentic materials allow immediate contact with Russian and Russophone cultures and provide a well-rounded picture of the reality of the Russian-speaking world. Thanks to them, the learner can go beyond appearances and build up a fluid, dynamic, and non-essentialist idea of Russian and Russophone

<sup>159</sup> However, let us keep in mind that (as we already know from Chapter 1), speaking the same language does not necessarily identify with belonging to a single culture, given the simultaneous coexistence in each of us of multiple cultures and identities.

<sup>160</sup> For the definition of this term, see Section 1.1.1.1.

cultures, in line with the theoretical framework offered in Subchapter 1.1, beginning, for example, to perceive the sociocultural complexity of the Russian language and its pluricentric nature, as well as the multiplicities of identities of Russian speakers. This critical awareness and sensitivity enables students to achieve ICC, that is, according to the definition of ICC proposed in Subchapter 1.1.1, to be able to “1) show a critical understanding of their own and other cultures, and 2) mediate between their own and Russian and Russophone cultures in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities presented by intercultural situations (inside and outside the RFL classroom).” In the second place, again if employed properly, authentic materials make it possible to overcome the critical issues related to the use of textbooks, which frequently—as we know—suggest a partial and/or stereotypical idea of the culture of Russia and of the Russian-speaking dimension (see Chapter 3). At the same time, if included in the textbooks themselves and associated with intercultural activities such as those we will see in Subchapter 5.3, authentic materials may promote a comprehensive and complex presentation of culture as that discussed above, taking into account the seven principles of the modern RFL intercultural textbook we identified in Subchapter 3.2.

During the AR, to analyze the advantages of teaching culture with authentic materials, various approaches<sup>161</sup> for introducing cultural content through authentic texts were utilized, including playful teaching,<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Following Anthony (1963: 63–64), by “approach” we will mean, within the FLE field, “a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning.” That is, we can say, in Richards and Rodgers’ (1986: 16) reformulation, that this term includes “theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching.”

<sup>162</sup> In FLE, “playful (language) teaching”—also known as “playful (language) learning”—(Cook 2000; Lee 1979; Rixon 1981) is a methodology that translates the fundamental principles of the affective-humanistic and the communicative approach (see footnote no. 32) into educational trajectories built on game mechanisms (Caon & Rutka 2004: 10 ff.). Game-based didactics can encompass a wide range and variants of game activities, processes, and scenarios, which imply, for example, cooperative learning (see footnote no. 170), design-based learning, problem-based learning, and creative pedagogy (see, e.g., Forbes 2021; Higuera-Rodríguez, Medina-García & Molina-Ruiz 2020; Nørgård, Toft-Nielsen & Whitton 2017; Patte 2012).

task-based teaching,<sup>163</sup> and text-based teaching.<sup>164</sup> Several variables (e.g., planned vs. improvised activities and long vs. short activities) were tried with the same class. Teaching sessions using authentic texts were interspersed with sessions without the use of authentic texts to observe differences.

Data collection was carried out with a longitudinal scheme through field notes taken after each single lesson of each taught course to document needed contextual information straightforwardly and quickly, and a teaching diary to register calmly and thoughtfully the didactic actions implemented, the teaching process, and student response, along with reflections and considerations. Further data were provided by a satisfaction questionnaire administered to learners anonymously at the end of each course. A data retrieval chart was used to organize and analyze the data.

In Stage 2, data collected from the AR were compared with data obtained from COs conducted at Vilnius University in Lithuania in the second semester of the academic year 2022/2023 (February to May 2023). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from observations of 70,5 hours (total) of RFL classes taught by three different teachers (24 hours each were observed for two teachers, and 22,5 hours for the third) at the BA level (general language and Russian–English translation courses).

COs were targeted at further validating the results of the AR. Data were gathered through a special observation grid compiled after each lesson, according to a longitudinal scheme. This observation grid consisted of a first section dedicated to the description of the context (type of course, linguistic level of the students, etc.) and a second section which, with guiding questions, investigated the types of materials used (authentic/non-authentic), the frequency with which they were used, the teach-

<sup>163</sup> “Task-based (language) teaching”—also known as “task-based (language) learning”—(Long 1985; Nunan 2004; Prabhu 1987) is an FLE approach grounded in activist pedagogy, which involves performing “tasks,” conceived as goal-oriented activities that lead to an outcome or result (Willis 1996), or as work plans that can be assessed for their communicative function (Ellis 2003). The hallmark of task-based teaching is work on the pragmatic use of language, in which the learner is asked to use all the linguistic resources at his/her disposal to complete the assigned task, with a greater focus therefore on meaning rather than form.

<sup>164</sup> “Text-based (language) teaching”—also known as “text-based (language) learning”—(Feez 1998; Mickan 2011) is an FLE methodology, based on Halliday’s (1978) theory of language as “social semiotic,” aimed at teaching explicitly about the structures and grammatical features of spoken and written texts. In practice, teachers using this approach design units of work which focus on linking texts to the social and cultural contexts of their use.

ing methods<sup>165</sup> employed, and so on. The analysis and interpretation of the collected data were performed manually.

Additional data were obtained through a survey administered to university teachers of RFL (both native and non-native speakers) that was created on Google Forms and, after pilot testing, delivered to potential participants through social networks (Facebook and LinkedIn) and personal e-mails. The survey was filled out by 33 teachers, active outside Russia, and particularly in Europe (Estonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, and Austria) and America, between February and June 2024.

After a personal information-gathering section, 10 mixed-choice, multiple-choice, four-point Likert scale (from “strongly disagree” to “disagree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree”) or open-ended questions followed, looking more closely at the role of culture and related teaching issues in RFL classes, as well as the more or less effective specific strategies (approaches, methods, and techniques<sup>166</sup>) deployed by teachers to cope with them.

The data collected from the AR, COs, and the teacher survey are presented below.

#### **4.2.1 Positive Aspects of RFL Intercultural Teaching**

This section discusses the positive aspects of IE-based contemporary RFL practices, which emerged from the AR, COs, and the teacher survey.

The AR has shown, in general, that the use of authentic materials enables a considerable and high-quality intercultural teaching/learning process, fostering practices of exposure to cultural differences, decentralization, and critical analysis of cultural dynamics. The cultural areas covered during the AR ranged from Russian and Russophone literature to music, from movies to cartoons and everyday life, and were an opportunity for learners to reflect on their own and on the target cultures, exercising cultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity,<sup>167</sup> according to the IE theoretical framework we rely on (see Chapter 1) and to the principles for the presentation of cultural contents in RFL textbooks (see Subchapter

<sup>165</sup> As Larsen-Freeman (2000: IX) writes, “Methods serve as a foil for reflection that can aid teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies their actions.” In other words, they “link thoughts and actions” (1), thus constituting a bridge between teaching principles and practices.

<sup>166</sup> “Techniques” are, according to Larsen-Freeman (2000: XI), the implementation of methods (see footnote no. 165) in teaching practice, that is to say, teacher’s “actions” (1).

<sup>167</sup> For the definitions of these concepts, see Subchapter 1.1.



3.2), which are actually also applicable to intercultural teaching practices outside or alongside the use of textbooks.

In essence, it turned out that authentic materials in the RFL lesson help the teacher

1. to work on the two target cultures (Russian and Russophone) in a non-essentialist and dynamic sense;
2. to make students understand, through “knowledge and critical understanding of cultures and cultures” and “self-reflection” (see Subchapter 3.2), that culture and interculturality are complex, fluid, and multifaceted constructs;
3. to develop intercultural dialogue between the multiple cultures and identities of the RFL learner and the Russian speaker.

Moreover, the AR revealed that, in addition to being extremely effective for the building of students’ ICC, authentic materials are enormously popular with students because they make the lesson less burdensome and more appealing (and sometimes fun, as well), as testified by learners’ appreciation of intercultural lessons and activities based on authentic materials. During the AR, intercultural lessons that used authentic materials, including literary texts and audiovisual inputs (videos, movies, media clips, presentations, animations, etc.), were generally more enjoyable for students than those that did not. This was because the use of these resources, done correctly, motivated learners and made them protagonists of their own learning. For example, the presentation to beginners of six lessons consisting of poems by Anna Akhmatova recited by actress Alisa Freyndlikh and accompanied by the original Russian text and an Italian translation was highly appreciated. Listening to the texts being recited instead of just reading them made the activity almost a theater moment and very engaging for the students. Students were then guided to discover Akhmatova’s poems through contextualizing the texts within the “Silver Age” period of Russian poetry, with some reference to Akhmatova’s own poetics. It was precisely the work on the authentic texts (and not, for example, adapted ones) that enabled the learners to perceive all the thematic-stylistic nuances (with the help of the teacher) but also to relate the theme of love treated by Akhmatova both to their own experiences and to the literary and cultural contexts best known to them (Italian- and English-language literatures), thus activating the intercultural dialogue between Russian culture (in this specific case) and their background cultures (i.e., Principles 5, 6, and 7 for the treatment of cultural aspects in the RFL intercultural textbook, dealing with complex, historicized, and

non-essentialist understanding of the target culture(s), reflection on both target and source cultures, and intercultural dialogue, conceived as meeting and exchange of cultures, were met). The many classes in which music videos and movie clips were utilized also aroused students' interest, much more so than purely didactic (non-authentic) materials. In particular, with both basic and advanced learners, teaching RFL through Disney cartoons in the Russian version (e.g., *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Anastasia*) and world-famous Russian cartoons such as *Masha and the Bear* and *Hedgehog in the Fog* proved successful, as students were familiar with most of them and enjoyed working on those inputs. Due to the variety of themes covered in these cartoons (i.e., Principle 4 of the various Russian and Russophone cultural topics to be included in an RFL textbook) and their simple, immediate, and engaging way of conveying cultural content, coupled with the sentimental value they had for many of the learners, it was possible to initiate intercultural reflection in the classrooms and increase the participants' ICC on topics such as, e.g., friendship, dream, reality vs. appearances, and diversity, within which students developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of intercultural similarities and differences between Russian and Russophone cultures and their own cultures.

Secondly, it transpired that, in order to make the best of them, authentic materials alone are not enough: it is necessary to present such inputs through appropriate teaching strategies that are able to engage students and meet their needs. It emerged that, especially when combined with active learning<sup>168</sup> methodologies, such as playful teaching and task-based teaching, authentic materials conveyed cultural information and created the conditions for intercultural reflection in an effective way that motivated students. In Section 2.2.5, we have already discussed the lack of didactic productiveness of teacher-centered RFL models. Our AR further corroborated those considerations, since the use of student-centered teaching methodologies really turned out to be the secret to good teaching. In fact—as is well known—the student learns best if (s)he is at the center of his/her own learning, and this also applies to IE. For

<sup>168</sup> “Active learning” (Bonwell & Eison 1991; Settles 2012) is any student-centered approach to instruction (on the difference between student-centered and teacher-centered models, see footnote no. 142) in which all learners are actively or experientially involved in the learning process. Typical active learning methods require practicing skills, discussing, solving problems, and making decisions. These kinds of strategies, as research shows (see, e.g., R. Carr, Palmer & Hagel 2015; Freeman et al. 2014; Prince 2004; Theobald et al. 2020), significantly enhance students' performance.

instance, groups of different students at different language levels were offered lessons based on the playful teaching approach, in which learners were asked to compare (in Russian) two pictures depicting New Year celebrations in Russia with each other, identifying the differences between them, which consisted mainly in a traditional vs. more modern attitude towards New Year, visible from food, decorations, costumes, etc. Subsequently, there was a classroom discussion to reflect together on the ways in which New Year's Eve is celebrated, instead, in Italy. The students liked this type of activity so much that they asked to repeat it with another subject (Carnival, or *maslenitsa*). Such activities, allowing cultural topics to be approached in a fun way, introduced learners to two holidays of which they had only minimal basic notions. These activities are examples of how to conjoin the effectiveness of authentic materials (in this case, images) with that of active learning (playful teaching approach), providing an opportunity for intercultural dialogue that shows the internal diversity of New Year's Eve in Russia compared to Italy, insisting on the richness and complexity of both background and target cultures, due to individual and sociohistorical variations, to foster the development of students' ICC. Another example of an activity that worked very well, carried out in several groups of A2-level students and grounded in task-based teaching, involved the students, divided into small teams, choosing a place in the Russian Federation or in a Russian-speaking country they had never been to. With the help of some brochures and advertising materials on the Internet, learners had to use known vocabulary to invent short advertisements to convince Italian tourists to visit that place by appealing to their monuments, museums, and cultural heritage in general. This activity excited the students, who were able to explore many cultural aspects unfamiliar to them. It also encouraged the participants to make non-simple comparisons (stimulated by the visual aids) between the cultural riches of the chosen Russia/Russian-speaking country and Italy, but also (for learners from different backgrounds and/or with broader cultural knowledge) with other countries, learning to look at the subject of tourism from different points of view and training their critical cultural awareness (e.g., on the issues of ecotourism vs. mass tourism and art conservation and restoration), that is, achieving the final goal of the meeting and exchange of students' cultures, on the one hand, and Russian and Russophone cultures, on the other (i.e., Principle 7 of the RFL intercultural textbook focusing on the intercultural dialogue between the cultures involved from a non-essentialist and constructivist perspective). Again,

the combination of authentic materials (this time, tourist brochures and advertisements) and active learning methodologies (task-based teaching) allowed students to do satisfactory intercultural work.

Thirdly, the AR also facilitated a reflection on didactic planning. Overall, authentic texts and inputs presented during classes were carefully selected by the teacher to be connected to intercultural objectives and accompanied by intercultural activities. The teacher kept a lesson plan in which the materials, steps, timing, and working methods for each lesson were indicated. It was precisely this careful planning that enabled the success of classes thus taught (as observed by the teacher and testified by the satisfaction questionnaires). Returning to the example of the New Year's Eve lesson seen above, this lesson, which stimulated students' ICC development and was so successful that it was repeated, was not improvised on the spot but planned in advance with a special lesson plan, which was meticulously followed. The latter outlined the materials used (authentic images), the steps to be taken (grammar study outside the activity, required by the syllabus + activity: comparison between images and discussion), timing (10 minutes for grammar study + 30 minutes for comparison between images + 10 minutes for discussion) and the working methods (plenary work, i.e., classroom work of the teacher with students + group work + plenary work). Similarly, an accurate planning effort was applied to the activity with the authentic tourism promotional materials described above, and with equal effectiveness from an intercultural viewpoint and positive feedback from learners. However, improvised activities were also offered, and in those cases it was noted that the authentic materials employed without preliminary didactic planning lost all their intercultural potential, since the teacher failed to make full use of them for intercultural dialogue (see Section 4.2.2 for more details).

One main finding derived from COs in RFL classes: Authentic materials (especially literary readings and audiovisual inputs, which were most frequently used by the observed teachers) may be extremely useful for developing cultural and intercultural dimensions in an RFL class. The themes that were covered in the observed lessons—albeit, unfortunately, not usually accompanied by specific intercultural activities (as we will discuss in Section 4.2.2), contrary to Principle 2 on the explicit treatment of cultural aspects applied to textbooks in Subchapter 3.2, but also valid for teaching practices—concerned virtually all aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures, from geography to history, from literature to society, from climate to art, from nature to architecture and politics (i.e.,

Principles 3 and 4 on the inclusion of both Russian and Russophone cultures and variety of cultural topics covered), surely giving learners many insights and suggestions for future studies, as well as stimulating them to look at target cultures from different perspectives. For example, in her second lesson with an A2-level group, a teacher projected a PowerPoint with Pushkin's portrait and other authentic images (paintings, statues, etc.) to tell about the life of this poet, providing students with details previously unknown to them (e.g., his death in a duel and the Pushkin Museum in Vilnius, which has now become the Markučiai Manor Museum). Particular and curious themes emerged (e.g., St. Petersburg's "white nights," artificial intelligence, and birds' names), as well. Good opportunities also appeared, both proposed by the teachers themselves and through questions and requests for further study that came from the learners, for comparisons between target cultures and students' own cultures (American, Chinese, Italian, French, Lithuanian, etc.) especially on historical, geographical, social, culinary, and literary levels. For example, a number of important and even sensitive issues were addressed from authentic target cultures' inputs, such as nationality vs. citizenship ("Russian" vs. "citizen of the Russian Federation" + "Russophone"), collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian and Russophone vs. world food, and Moscow's and St. Petersburg's museums and monuments. These topics, although generally unaccompanied by appropriate intercultural activities, again contrary to the abovementioned Principle 2—which detracted from their intercultural effectiveness (see Section 4.2.2)—, did, however, open up discussions on Russian and Russophone cultures related (for these topics) to the students' source cultures (e.g., on similarities/differences), which allowed them to reflect on various cultures and to increase (though unfortunately only partially, as we will see later) their ICC.

In addition, COs have demonstrated that—similarly to the results of the AR previously illustrated—, authentic materials are extremely powerful intercultural tools only when selected correctly together with specific didactic planning and intercultural strategies. From this point of view, for instance, we found an RFL communication course on the subject of stress organized by one of the examined teachers to be extremely effective. The topic was covered with student presentations, supplemented by discussions and further study in class with a multiplicity of cultural connections and stimuli based on authentic materials (e.g., blogs, videos, and pictures) accurately chosen and introduced (both by the students and the teacher), ranging from psychology to literature, medicine to art, sports to artificial

intelligence. The provided input allowed learners many opportunities for dialogue between the Russian-language world and their own background cultures. For example, a presentation by a student on stress in literature opened a discussion that led up to very varied and interesting in-depth analyses, including connections to various literatures and curiosities about target cultures (e.g., Pushkin's stress during exile in the village of Boldino, or *Boldinskaya osen*). Or again, following another presentation on the topic of stress for athletes, students and teacher started sharing about one another's personal experiences of swimming and other sports, trying to find similarities and differences between countries and people, but also wondering about the many-sided levels of complexity enclosed in cultural comparisons (which may produce stereotypes). In these cases, discussion proved effective because it increased the students' intercultural sensitivity by enabling them to explicate their reflections on Russian and Russophone cultures with respect to their source cultures (mainly Lithuanian, Lithuanian-Russian bilingual, and Italian), but—as we have seen—going beyond static and essentialist comparisons. An equally effective use of authentic materials, combined with accurate didactic planning and the employment of apposite culture-teaching strategies, was that of another teacher, who habitually explained terms new to students by bringing in Russian-language movie plots as examples. Although the focus of these explanations was primarily grammatical in nature—as, for that matter, were all the uses we recorded of authentic materials during COs (see Section 4.2.2)—, the teacher often made cultural comments such that she could activate in learners the desire to explore those topics further and engage with Russian and Russophone cultures. In other words, when planned and used properly, authentic materials managed to stimulate reflection on both target and source cultures and dynamic comparison and interaction between all cultures involved, in consonance with the overall goal of RFL intercultural teaching (see Chapter 1). It must be said, however, that these were exceptions, since for most of the classes observed we noticed a disorganized use of authentic materials, which undermined their cultural and intercultural effectiveness (for further details, refer to Section 4.2.2).

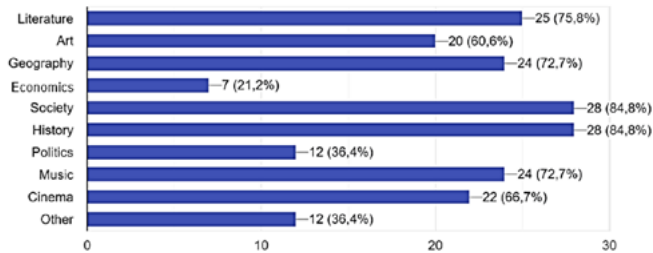
The teacher survey added further strengths in the addressing of Russian/Russophone cultural aspects during classes: first of all, the broad range of topics covered, from literature to pop culture. Among the top places, as illustrated by Fig. 5, we can find history and society (both with 84,8%), followed by literature (75,8%), and then geography and music

(both with 72,7%), cinema (66,7%) and art (60,6%). As for the political and economic spheres, which also appear to be covered but actually present some critical issues, we will not dwell on them here but in Section 4.2.2. One teacher even reported addressing philosophical themes.

Fig. 5

4. What topics/aspects of Russian culture do you usually teach/address during your classes? Check all that apply:

33 risposte



Question No. 4 From the Teacher Survey

Secondly, teachers stated they employ a large variety of materials and strategies to teach culture.

Among teaching materials, teachers stressed the importance of using authentic materials of various kinds: from literary readings to audiovisual inputs (especially movies, bloggers' videos, cartoons, and music clips), from articles and Internet posts to maps and pictures.

In particular, literature (as already seen during AR and COs) turned out to be a successful resource. For example, one teacher recalled proposing students a successful activity connected with quotes from Russian classical literature.

The proposal of unusual teaching materials, such as artwork, is also very successful. For instance, one teacher made students discover Russian art works from the 19th and 20th centuries. Among the non-authentic materials that can, however, serve and alternate with authentic ones, students' PowerPoint presentations may also become good learning materials in peer-learning activities.

The most common approaches being used by teachers are communicative approach,<sup>169</sup> playful teaching, task-based teaching, and cooperative learning,<sup>170</sup> implemented from a general active learning perspective.

Specific methods and techniques generally employed include: readings, language analysis or translation, project works<sup>171</sup> and verbalization techniques,<sup>172</sup> narrative strategies (i.e., the sharing of teachers' own experience as native speakers), quizzes, discussions, debates, and tasks. The need to condense, systematize, and schematize cultural information through the use of cultural fact sheets was also recognized.

Individual and mini-group work was the teaching modality that revealed itself to be the most successful for teaching culture during RFL classes. Among the most effective didactic tools is project work. One teacher recounted the success of a project work done by her students on Russia's Carnival *maslenitsa*, which engaged learners emotionally and developed their ability to work independently. Another teacher wrote that, by conducting group projects involving the preparation by student groups of presentations on various topics concerning Russian culture together with their presentation in class and subsequent plenary discussion, it regularly happens that students become so passionate that they manage to intrigue and involve their classmates in discovering certain aspects of Russian culture. Not only that, but some of them go on to explore the topics independently and even do their BA/MA thesis on them.

Original activities are also very popular. One teacher proposed to her students a micro-interview with a Buryat teacher who told them about the multiculturalism of the Russophone space and the peculiar-

<sup>169</sup> For more details, see footnote no. 32.

<sup>170</sup> "Cooperative learning" is an FLE approach based on theories of constructivism and critical pedagogy, implying "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning" (D. Johnson & R. Johnson 1999: 5). Cooperation, which can be defined as "a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups" (Panitz 1999: 3), involves "the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving" (Roschelle & Teasley 1995: 70).

<sup>171</sup> A "project work" is a work involving multiskill activities, which focuses on completing a task (see footnote no. 163) linked to a detailed study of a subject that is interesting and relevant for students.

<sup>172</sup> The so-called "verbalization" techniques are usually used in FLE to prompt learners' reflection on the cognitive mechanisms underlying language learning (see Balboni 2008: 169).



ities of Buryat culture. Another teacher organized a seminar on the comparative political language of Russian leaders, which generated a series of independent research done by students, resulting in some cases in excellent theses. A third teacher offered her students real-life experiences, taking them to visit a Russian center and organizing a tea break with a real *samovar*. A fourth teacher successfully involved native speakers in her activities and organized trips to St. Petersburg. Another teacher commented on independent media news with students. There are teachers who habitually emphasize, in their lessons, direct experience (listening to music, watching movies, etc.). Another teacher asked his students to subtitle a short video and reported that learners learned a lot from this activity.

Activities that compare Russian/Russophone and students' own cultures (especially with the use of videos), giving students opportunities to learn both about target and source cultures (as per Principle 6 for textbook cultural contents), enjoy participants' approval as well. For example, one teacher counted among the most successful intercultural activities the watching of a short movie accompanied by a discussion of its cultural aspects, combined with playful activities focused on the theme of Russian Christmas traditions. Another teacher prepared an activity on school organization, based on comparisons between Russian and Italian systems. A teacher commented: "I usually use comparisons between our culture and the cultures of my students' countries. It's very effective." Another teacher habitually uses grammar exercises to comment on all the cultural issues and differences that arise. Lastly, one teacher watched with her students some videos from the Russian children's comedy TV show *Eralash* and noticed that learners liked them "because they have humor and reflect actual and sociocultural stereotypes and problems," but also because they gave them the opportunity to "compare what they see with what they have in their own country." Now, the reader will recall that in Chapter 1 we criticized the comparative method, which bases the teaching of culture in FL classes precisely on the schematic comparison of cultures. However, we also pointed out how, in reality, just as stereotype formation is a natural fact, being a mechanism of identity defense (see Section 1.2.2), comparison also cannot (and *must not*) be prevented and is indeed a first step by which learners come into contact with the target culture(s), as also confirmed by the statements of RFL teachers. However, we need to remark again how, in order to talk about intercultural dialogue in the RFL lesson,

this comparison of background and target cultures a) should not be static but dynamic and b) should not be the ultimate goal of the lesson but only a step, precisely, and should still be followed by a critical and non-essentialist reflection within the multidimensional and flexible theoretical-operational framework illustrated in Section 1.1.1 (the ways in which this can be done in IE activities for the RFL university classroom will be discussed in Chapter 5).

Besides comparative activities (possibly—we would add—dynamic and non-essentialist, as said above), teachers recorded the high salience of cultural work enabled by translation. One teacher wrote: “The work of translation and, in particular, the translation of *realia*<sup>173</sup> constitutes a privileged moment of cultural deepening with regard to the language/culture studied, but also to one’s own language/culture.”

In addition to the wide variety of cultural topics touched upon, as well as of employed teaching materials and strategies for teaching culture in RFL university classes, the survey also permitted us to outline a third strength. This is given, on the one hand, by teachers’ cultural preparation and teaching skills and experience, and, on the other, by students’ motivation, which both allow—to borrow one teacher’s words—an “immersion in the context.”

On a general level, the survey showed (once again) that culture plays a major role in RFL teaching. But not only that: the teacher-respondents admitted that for them teaching cultural aspects is an interesting part of their job. Many of them resulted as really engaged in this matter, even providing students with specific culture-related activities during Russian classes.

Some teachers have also proven to carry out their educational actions with a certain degree of awareness of the issues and risks involved, since they remarked the importance of teaching culture critically and “of teaching our students how to spot stereotypes about culture.” Other teachers also wrote that, in their opinion, “it is crucial to propose a vision of the Russian language that is not monolithic, but that accounts for the diversity that characterizes the Russian-speaking universe.” In this sense, they try to promote “a pluralist and dynamic view of Russian and Russophone cultures,” as well as “of the Russian language and its varieties.” A teacher commented that “the concept of Russian culture is too vague, since it refers to a very large country with many different cultural realities and languages within it.” Although teachers have not

<sup>173</sup> For a definition of this concept, see footnote no. 153.

made explicit the teaching strategies employed in these cases, from the survey we can guess that they vary (while remaining, for this specific topic, on the level of traditional teaching approaches) from language analysis and reading activities to discussions. Nevertheless, it should be noted that such a critical and non-essentialist view of culture and its teaching, which corresponds to our theoretical principles set out in Subchapter 1.1, is peculiar to a minority and is not always successful, as many students remain attached to the myth of the “Russian soul” (as we will see in Section 4.2.2).

To conclude, teachers observed that teaching culture has multiple advantages, including:

1. It allows for increased stimulus for language study.
2. It broadens sensitivity to particularities of language that at first glance are difficult.
3. It acts positively on the formation of a more mature spatial-temporal consciousness on the part of students.

After analyzing the positive aspects of today’s intercultural teaching practices in the RFL classroom through the AR, COs, and the teacher survey, in the following section, we will also discuss their negative aspects.

#### **4.2.2 Negative Aspects of RFL Intercultural Teaching**

In this section, the negative aspects of modern RFL practices for intercultural teaching are presented, as showed by the AR, COs, and the teacher survey.

The AR verified that classes without the use of authentic materials, even if practice-oriented teaching approaches and methods congenial to students were employed (e.g., task-based teaching approach) instead of more traditional ones (e.g., grammar-translation method<sup>174</sup>), were not so successful as those which implied learners being offered authen-

<sup>174</sup> The “grammar-translation method,” which was first employed in the teaching of classical languages (Latin and Greek) since the 17th century (Chastain 1976: 103) and hence also known as “classical method,” in the late 18th century became the main methodology to be used in FLs teaching. The grammar-translation method implied learning any FLs by translating literary passages from the target language into the students’ native language. As the final aim was to teach students how to read and write, oral communication was not practiced. Grammar was taught explicitly and deductively, and learners were usually required to memorize and apply grammatical rules that were isolated from a more global context (see Khan, Mansoor & Manzoor 2015; Kong 2011; Larsen-Freeman 2000: 11–22).

tic inputs. For instance, during three RFL lessons, intermediate-level students were asked to perform a task comparing two non-authentic (educational) texts about the differences between Italy and Russia. The same task was then repeated utilizing authentic excerpts from Italian and Russian writers and video clips, with much more satisfactory outcomes. Another example involved, with A1–A2 learners, the use of purpose-created (non-authentic) audios and videos taken from RFL textbooks or found online, which did not stimulate students' motivation in the same way as authentic audios and videos. It should be noted, among other things, that although not proficient in Russian, learners generally enjoyed and completed more effectively those activities that required listening to/viewing authentic materials, despite their being more difficult because the language was not always controlled and the pace was faster, as is natural.

Additionally, improvised treatment of (inter)cultural topics was not always the best option. Some classes were offered in which the cultural content had not been previously selected based on the objectives of the lesson, nor had any preparatory work of any kind been done (including the preparation of specific intercultural activities). In such cases, it was observed that, while the activities in general were still successful and students liked them, in most cases the authentic materials thus used (mainly advertisements, movie clips, music videos, and literary texts) were not exploited by the teacher in all their cultural and intercultural potentialities, precisely because proper planning had not been carried out. Moreover, during some classes, from students' questions themes emerged that were not foreseen in the content of the classes themselves, pointing to Russian-language *realia* (e.g., country cottage *dacha*, traditional fermented beverage *kvas*, and cabbage soup *shchi*), which nevertheless had to be briefly explained to satisfy learners' curiosity. Although the students expressed interest about the explanations they received, reacting with further questions, the lack of illustrative materials (e.g., photos) or narratives of experiences or comments from target language speakers meant that the explanation was in its own way incomplete and, as it was not backed up by appropriate materials and activities, there was no chance to create opportunities for intercultural dialogue. Clearly, it is not always possible for educators to anticipate (and thus, prepare for) the cultural topics that may arise from classroom interaction with learners. It must be said, though, that episodes like this one show the need for the teacher a) to reserve (to the extent possible)

a greater and separate space for culture (in addition to language teaching), in compliance with Principle 1 on the importance to be given to cultural topics in RFL textbooks (see Subchapter 3.2), and b) to plan (to the extent possible) cultural and intercultural contents in advance, taking into account the specific objectives of the lesson.

Finally, based on our observations and satisfaction questionnaires administered to students at the end of the courses, longer intercultural activities (e.g., activities that lasted from more than 30 minutes to a whole lesson, the usual duration of which is two hours) were less appreciated by students. This indicates that, in order to keep their motivation and concentration on the focus of the lesson high, it is preferable for the teacher to design shorter activities (mini-activities).

From COs, the following emerged: Systematic and organized use of authentic materials was rarely met. Instead, in most cases, authentic materials were employed without adequate planning, and thus their full potential was not realized. For example, a common feature of observed classes was the absence of structured work on the literary text: there was usually no motivation phase, but rather they began immediately with reading by students (in plenary mode where learners read aloud one sentence/part each or individually, in silence) or by the teacher (aloud), interspersed with or followed by grammar and translation exercises (without any synthesis or reflection activities). Another critical issue noted concerns the use of cartoons without the development of specific activities for their viewing (i.e., Principle 2 on explicit treatment and work on culture was not met). Both the lack of a solid methodological framework for the presentation of texts and audiovisual inputs and the non-use of targeted IE activities in our opinion are likely to negatively affect the value of intercultural RFL teaching.

Furthermore, all three teachers employed authentic texts or inputs in their classes, but their use (probably for a number of reasons due to—among other things—course objectives and time available) was limited to grammar or translation exercises and did not create opportunities for learners for “reflection on one’s own culture(s),” “reflection on others’ culture(s),” and “comparison and interaction of cultures,” which we have seen to be the three pillars on which IE stands and on which the teaching of culture in FL and RFL classes should be based (refer to Section 1.1.2). For instance, one teacher asked students to find short adjectives in the verses of famous Russian poets, without providing them with any biographical explanation or historical/literary

contextualization. The lack of explication of the cultural content of the poems, coupled with the lack of reflection and dynamic comparison with the learners' background cultures (i.e., Principles 1, 2, 6, and 7 of the RFL intercultural textbook were not followed) will certainly have enabled them to increase their grammatical knowledge, but not their ICC. Another teacher watched with learners the Soviet animated series *Three From Prostokvashino* just to enhance their lexical competence and retelling skill. Again, the fact that the cultural elements present in this *realia*-rich series were not discussed or otherwise given attention during the lessons made them virtually 'invisible': as a result, numerous opportunities for cultural and intercultural reflection were missed. A third teacher during an entire course worked with students from Korea, Lithuania, and France on Samuil Marshak's poem *Baggage*, focusing primarily on grammar and Russian-English translation (a partial contextualization of the poem, with some background on the author and literary-historical context, was offered to learners only in isolated moments and discontinuously, starting from Lesson 3, perhaps due to the "Hawthorne effect"<sup>175</sup>). Even in the face of the text's linguistic simplicity, the inability for students to come to grips with the context in which the poem was born, but also with its readings and possible interpretations (including alternative and non-academic ones, such as the one circulating on the Internet that sees the lady who boards her little dog along with her luggage before setting off on a long train journey as a metaphor for Russia and its history), as well as the failure to focus at least on the explicit cultural aspects (the train ride in its dual guise as human experience and literary theme, and geography through the named stations), prevented possible cultural associations, comparisons, and reflections, for instance, with other literatures or with the learners' own experience and different cultural contexts, thus nipping in the bud any opportunity for ICC development. In a nutshell, in this kind of classroom work the cultural elements were only supportive of linguistic

<sup>175</sup> The "Hawthorne effect," first identified by organizational researchers in the 1920s, occurs when people behave differently (changing or improving their behavior) because they know they are being watched. Given that by the end of the first lesson with that class we had shared with the teacher in question the objectives of our COs, it can be assumed that probably these rare and discontinuous moments of commentary (not linguistic or related to translation, but cultural) that followed were due to the impact on him of our observation—whose purpose and content he was then well informed of—and that hypothetically they might not have happened in the absence of observation and the associated psychological-behavioral situation described above.

practice. Thus, we can say that, in the three cases brought as examples, the intercultural potential of authentic materials (specifically, literature and cartoons) was not fully exploited.

These COs not only further validated the findings of the AR (the importance of authentic materials including literary texts and audiovisual inputs for the formation of learners' ICC, the need for accurate and precise didactic planning for effective intercultural teaching, and students' preference for short activities) but also revealed critical aspects of RFL IE-based teaching in general:

1. The use of authentic materials should be increased, as they enhance learners' motivation and provide them with cultural information that has immediate relevance and interest.
2. The use of such materials for only grammar or translation (without proper cultural insights) is limiting, as their potential for intercultural work is neglected.
3. Cultural content should be introduced with proper preparation and instructional planning (not improvised) and in mini-activities (longer activities are less functional for intercultural aims).

The teacher survey attested—as will be remembered from Section 4.2.1—that all teachers acknowledged the central role played by culture (on a par with language) in RFL classes. However, at the same time, the respondents lamented:

1. the scarcity of time to devote to cultural themes (since the courses are generally heavily focused on the teaching of grammatical-lexical structures);
2. the fact that cultural aspects emerge in the margins of lessons;
3. the need to occasionally improvise explanations of cultural elements not included in the lesson; and
4. the absence of appropriate teaching materials which are able a) to highlight cultural aspects and b) to put forward a non-stereotypical view of the Russian-language world.

In general, culture is of necessity given less space than language. As one teacher rightly observes, “The cultural element, then, enters, but sometimes indirectly: through the choice of materials that offer cues to present culture, but in fact are used to work on the purely linguistic level.”

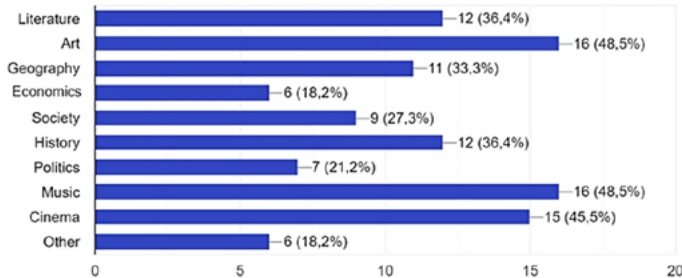
Besides, teachers expressed their wish to address many aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures in more depth, including, for example,

art and music (both with 48,5%), cinema (45,5%), literature and history (both with 36,4%), geography (33,3%), and society (27,3%) (see Fig. 6).

Fig. 6

5. Which topics or aspects of Russian culture would you like to teach about or address more? Check all that apply:

33 risposte



Question No. 5 From the Teacher Survey

The fact that many of these also appear among the topics actually covered (see Section 4.2.1) suggests to us that there is evidently not enough space in class (at least in the teachers' perception) to address them.

A separate discussion should be made for politics and economics, which are among the least interesting topics for respondents (with only 21,2% and 18,2% of teachers, respectively, wishing to integrate them more into their lessons), just as they were among those least considered in RFL classes (see Fig. 5). These are actually very controversial cultural issues—along with some social topics—, which for some teachers “are of interest to students,” while according to others they do not enjoy much popularity among learners, so much so that these teachers maintain that the activities involving these areas (e.g., readings of texts describing Russia's political and economic system) are approached by students without enthusiasm.

Other topics that do not always seem to interest or appeal to learners, in the respondents' perspective, although they are in fact widely covered and teachers recognize their importance, as Figs. 5 and 6 show, are geography and history. As one teacher rightly comments, “It is difficult to choose areas of culture to explore that appeal to them, that interest everyone. There are always students who get bored.”



As regards history, in particular, an intriguing finding is that respondents working with Italian-speaking students pointed out some culturally sensitive issues, such as the Second World War. Strangely enough, even certain teaching choices within commonly popular topics (e.g., in the music area, Russian rock music, or some cinema themes) seem not necessarily to coincide always with learners' cultural tastes and subjective preferences. Besides, one teacher noticed how students generally do not understand nor like Russian jokes. This, in our opinion, confirms the great sensitivity that the teacher should bring to bear in teaching culture and also (and especially) in dealing with learners, aimed at capturing their predilections. At the same time, though, it must be kept in mind that, if the objectives of the lessons require them, certain topics or subtopics should not be avoided just because they seem/are 'insidious' and/or disliked by students, otherwise we would fall back on censorious intentions that are not functional for the careful teaching of Russian and Russophone cultures in RFL.

Along with a reflection on the treatment of cultural topics in RFL classes, the teacher survey also allows for reasoning on the type of activities least suitable for teaching culture (in the respondents' view). As resulted from the gathered data, traditional frontal instruction is generally not appreciated by learners, especially when the proposed topics are significantly detached from learners' interests. For instance, one teacher who decided to talk about themes and writers of 19th-century Russian-language literature, was unsuccessful in teaching, since "for a lot of our students the works seem to speak another language, too far from their lives and emotions." Not surprisingly (regarding the need to carefully plan the intercultural activities we discussed above), poorly planned and unbalanced activities, which, for instance, conveyed "an excessive quantity of information," were also usually not well accepted.

One of the greatest difficulties for teaching Russian and Russophone cultures is the learners' frequently insufficient background knowledge and/or reflective skills. One teacher asked his students to analyze a text full of prejudices and stereotypes, but was almost shocked to see that they hardly spotted them. Another teacher, who had assigned a translation from Russian into Italian, realized—not without some puzzlement—that all the cultural aspects were either ignored or not perceived by half of the class.

It should also be taken into consideration that a large part in this is played by the lack of opportunity to visit Russia/Russophone countries

and/or limited contacts with Russian speakers due to the war. In this regard, one teacher rightly noted that “a pure narrative, even if accompanied by audiovisual materials, fails to make up for the direct experience of frequenting Russia, which is unfortunately very low in percentage.” This is actually also reflected in the student’s knowledge of the Russian-language world and sometimes results in the difficulty of approaching certain cultural aspects unknown to him/her. For example, one teacher mentioned the great struggle her students had in understanding, within the culinary sphere, what *kasha* is and the reason for its popularity in Russia. According to the respondents, *realia* (e.g., *zastol’ye*) are generally difficult to explain, unless there has already been direct experience and/or closer contact with Russian speakers. In the words of one teacher: “It was much easier to explain Russian *realia* to students who had at least a short period of mobility in Russia. I am afraid that lack of such possibility can demotivate even the most interested students.”

Moreover, many learners appeared to be fascinated by the myth of the “Russian soul,”<sup>176</sup> thus making the goal of taking them from stereotype to sociotype (Section 1.2.2) and offering them a historicized, contextualized, complex, and multivarious idea of Russian and Russophone cultures (i.e., Principle 5 for the RFL intercultural textbook) very complicated or at least difficult to achieve. During a lesson one teacher presented to MA students some linguocultural studies<sup>177</sup> devoted to the identification of typical national character traits from language data, which were concerned with the “Russian soul” and referred to the influence of large spaces on the Russian character, the generosity of Russians, their intolerance of rules, etc. The materials were described neutrally, although the intent of the lesson was to stimulate learners to think critically about the static nature and generalization of the cultural model proposed by linguocultural studies (which we discussed in Chapter 2). However, students were greatly attracted by the contents of the linguocultural discourse and the idea of Russian national character. At the end of the lesson, while some critical points of the narration offered by those studies were revealed to them, they showed some perplexity in accepting such an explanation, being firmly convinced, on the contrary, that there are indeed typical traits that characterize the Russian type (such as generosity, poor practical sense, etc.).

<sup>176</sup> See Section 2.2.4.

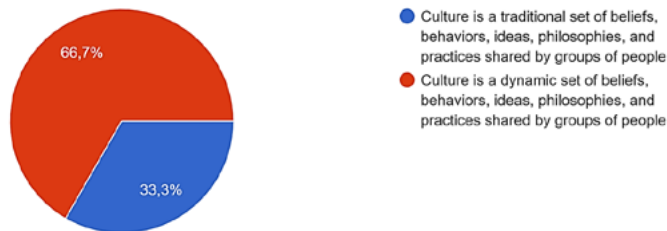
<sup>177</sup> See Section 1.3.1 and Chapter 2.

Anyway, the teacher may also have his/her faults, which are given by the lack of a common cultural background with students, by a shortage of references to contemporary aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures, and/or by the accent put on Russian culture (Russophone culture is sometimes forgotten), as well as by the poor knowledge of some aspects of Russian/Russophone cultures (e.g., some teachers admitted having an imperfect knowledge of political and economic issues related to Russia).

Traces of an essentialist view of culture (contrary to our starting theoretical framework and repeatedly abovementioned principles for the presentation of cultural contents) were also evident, as can be seen from Fig. 7. Many of the respondents (11, namely, 33,3%) declared themselves in favor of a static approach to the concept of culture, by agreeing on the fact that “culture is a *traditional* set of beliefs, behaviors, ideas, philosophies, and practices shared by groups of people” (22 respondents, namely, 66,7%, instead considered it as “a *dynamic* set of beliefs, behaviors, ideas, philosophies, and practices shared by groups of people”). Some of the teachers (10, namely, 30,3%) even went so far as to support the myth of the “Russian soul,” which they believed was worth teaching to RFL students as learning content.

Fig. 7

2. In your opinion, which option best describes culture?  
33 risposte



Question No. 2 From the Teacher Survey

#### 4.2.3 Conclusions and Final Considerations

The examination of modern IE-based teaching practices revealed strengths and weaknesses of the RFL didactic system on the basis of Italian and Lithuanian case studies (AR and COs) and a more general Euro-American context (teacher survey). This leads us to some general

considerations of what an intercultural RFL teaching *should* or *should not* look like.

In sum, the analysis identified a common strength, consisting of the variety of cultural topics covered in RFL classes and the strategies (approaches, methods, and techniques) deployed to teach culture. In particular, the teacher survey indicated the usefulness of task-based teaching, playful teaching, and other practice-oriented approaches and methods grounded in active learning, student-centered models, and educational philosophy of “learning by doing” (Dewey 1938), which was in line with the research on the subject (see, e.g., Bonwell & Eison 1991; Fowler & Yamaguchi 2020; Havis 2020; McKiernan, Leahy & Brereton 2013). Hence, for instance, the effectiveness of techniques that allow active experimentation with the content learned during a course (such as project work) or involve direct contact with the target cultures (e.g., techniques entailing experiential, comparative, and translation practices). In contrast, more traditional, frontal ways of approaching culture, based on teacher-centered models that implied students’ passivity, were found by teachers to be less effective.

Other positive aspects were recognized in the teacher’s preparation and skills, as well as learners’ motivation, which certainly account for a large part of the success of an intercultural RFL lesson (and *any* lesson in general). On the other hand, however, it has emerged that both teachers and students often somehow fail to give/get the best out of dialoguing with Russian and Russophone cultures in the classroom. This is because, as far as the teachers are concerned, in many cases they have a different cultural background than their learners (Moloney & Saltmarsh 2016), do not know some aspects of the target cultures (Atay 2005; Omaggio 1993: 358) and/or do not refer to them in their classes (this applies especially to contemporary culture), and/or emphasize Russian culture more than Russophone culture. It should also be kept in mind that, if it is true that educators overall attribute a fundamental role to culture and admit the importance of avoiding stereotypes in their teaching, in fact few are those who implement the critical teaching of culture, since—as evidenced by the teacher survey—essentialist visions of culture and sympathies for the idea of the “Russian soul” still persist. Coming instead to students, they frequently lack prior knowledge and/or a capacity for reflection/self-reflection and critical analysis, also due to the impossibility of visiting Russia/Russophone countries and having experiences and contacts with Russian-language speakers. This explains why, as shown by the sur-

vey, they may get easily captivated (at the same level as teachers) by the myth of the “Russian soul.”

Another weakness noted regards the deficiency of adequate time and space for culture, which—as is well known—is a problem not only in the RFL area, but in *any* language learning experience (Gonen & Saglam 2012: 28; Lafayette 1988; Tanner, Shvidko & Rasmussen 2009). In particular, as far as RFL is concerned, since lessons are normally dedicated to the teaching of grammar and vocabulary (also with a focus on translation), consequently the cultural elements—which are not the subject of learning—come up (when they do) only at the margins and occasionally.<sup>178</sup>

But now let us turn to teaching materials, which deserve a separate discussion.

The AR, COs, and the teacher survey confirmed that the use of authentic materials (Galloway 1985; Omaggio 1993) is central to the development of RFL learners’ ICC, since they offer a well-rounded picture of Russia and Russian-speaking contexts. In providing learners with cultural information relevant to them, this kind of material incomparably fosters their motivation, which was one of the major strengths of current RFL intercultural teaching that became evident from the research. In fact, although audiovisual inputs and literary texts (i.e., the types of authentic materials most used by teachers) may be difficult for students, they are at the same time extremely challenging, stimulating them, on the one hand, to push their own limits of linguistic skill, and on the other, to venture out on a journey to discover different aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures. For this reason, in general they prove more effective for intercultural work than non-authentic materials (see also Gilmore 2011; Guariento & Morley 2001; Mishan 2004; Peacock 1997).

Given these premises, relying on authentic materials only for working on grammar or translation (as was observed during the COs) was found to be limiting. Indeed, literature, newspapers, blogs, movies, cartoons, and other inputs can (or rather, *should*) be used for intercultural work in RFL classrooms as well, because they are culturally rich textual materials that can prompt and/or encourage intercultural reflection.

Another weakness that resulted from the examination was the use of authentic materials in an often improvised manner without adequate in-

<sup>178</sup> It should be noted that the findings in this research are parallel to those in Gonen and Saglam’s (2012) and Sercu’s (2005) studies, who found that teachers of English as a foreign language and more general FLE educators introduce culture and practice culture-teaching activities in their classrooms not on a daily basis, but from time to time.

structional planning. To be fair, it must be said that a) sourcing such materials is not easy and b) not all materials are didactically usable/valid (in the survey, teachers complained about the lack of adequate materials for teaching culture), and these difficulties may naturally affect teachers' actions and the whole educational process. Nevertheless, in order to make the most of the benefits of this type of resource, solid pre-lesson preparation is essential, which includes choosing the materials, deciding on the manner of their presentation, and choosing/creating accompanying intercultural activities (in addition to other organizational aspects such as, e.g., calculating the timing of the various phases of the lesson and deciding on the modalities of work: individual, pair, group/cooperative, plenary). Where this preparatory work was done, as testified mainly by the AR and rare examples of COs, the quality of intercultural teaching was perceived to be higher.

As concerns intercultural activities, the AR showed how the students' preference is for short intercultural activities, up to 30 minutes long (maximum). Therefore, teachers should be aware of this limit when choosing/preparing such activities, so as to ensure that learners' motivation and concentration do not get lost. Among other things, designing mini-activities also makes up for the lack of time (see above) by guaranteeing even minimal but assured space for culture in RFL classes.

In a nutshell, making full use of the intercultural potential of authentic materials requires that RFL teachers carefully plan classes with (inter)cultural content and arrange appropriate strategies and activities for working on ICC.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this fourth chapter, we analyzed the current practices employed by RFL teachers in the Italian, Lithuanian, and Euro-American contexts more generally to teach culture and to encourage intercultural dialogue between Russian and Russophone cultures and those of learners, in order to ascertain, on the one hand, the teaching materials used (with a special accent on authentic materials), and, on the other hand, the most frequently adopted and most effective teaching strategies. The purpose was to understand how culture was commonly taught in RFL university classes and how such teaching could be improved.

The examination revealed several strengths of modern RFL teaching from an intercultural perspective, such as the variety of cultural topics

covered and of the strategies employed, the effectiveness of authentic materials and practice-oriented approaches/methods, teacher's professionalism, and learners' motivation.

However, weaknesses were also identified. Besides criticalities outside the scope of the teacher's possible intervention (e.g., lack of time and poor prior knowledge of the learners), negative aspects that can definitely be changed and that will need more implementation were also highlighted, such as poor or absent instructional planning in the choice and utilization of authentic materials and their use only for grammar or translation work, as well as the excessive length of intercultural activities. Moreover, essentialist ideas of culture, not conducive to IE (Chapter 2), were often detected in both teachers and students.

In the next and last chapter, we will see how such critical issues can be overcome in practice, based on some new operating principles and intercultural activities for the RFL classroom.

## **5. How to Teach RFL in an Intercultural Perspective Today**

Having examined RFL intercultural teaching practices, noting both their positives and negatives, and drawing some general insights into the teaching of culture (Chapter 4), in this fifth and last chapter, we will descend into concrete practice and attempt to offer some examples of intercultural activities, accompanied by detailed comments (Subchapter 5.3) and preceded by a description of their general ideas (Subchapter 5.2) and of the main methodological principles that, in our opinion, must underlie RFL classes with an intercultural approach (Subchapter 5.1).

### **5.1 Methodological Principles for RFL Intercultural Teaching**

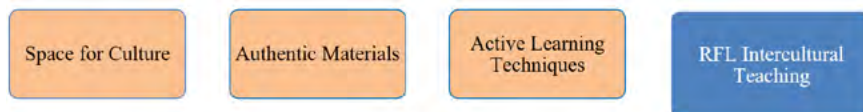
In light of the theoretical background offered in Section 1.1.2 and of what has been said so far, here we will provide some methodological principles for teaching culture in the RFL classroom on which later we will build our proposal for intercultural activities (see Subchapters 5.2 and 5.3).

These operative principles, illustrated in Fig. 8 and explained in the following pages, are:

- Principle 1: appropriate space for culture teaching;
- Principle 2: use of authentic materials; and
- Principle 3: employment of active learning techniques.



Fig. 8



#### Methodological Principles for RFL Intercultural Teaching

The first principle includes an appropriate space for culture teaching.

This principle, which may seem trivial at first glance, is not trivial at all. In fact, we know from the literature that the way culture is taught deserves special attention (Schulz & Ganz 2010; see also Section 1.1.2) and that the time factor (see also Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3) is among the greatest obstacles to the integration of culture in the FL classroom, which for many scholars (e.g., Bada 2000; Byram 1989; Byram, Esarte-Sarries & Taylor 1991; Byram & Kramersch 2008; Hymes 1964; Liddicoat & Scarino 2013; Stockwell 2018) is the goal educators must strive towards in order to foster their students' ICC.

While we do not wish to suggest here that we should go as far as the drastic solution of separating the teaching of culture from the teaching of language and devoting extra space to the former, we would like to claim for Russian and Russophone cultures a space of their own—also in accordance with our Principle 1 for the RFL intercultural textbook on space reserved for cultural topics (see Subchapter 3.2), now applied to the RFL lesson—, which can be either inside or outside the RFL lesson, depending on the characteristics of the program/syllabus and the specific teaching needs.

Even in the case where program conformation and lack of time oblige the teacher to concentrate on grammatical-lexical content (as, moreover, had also emerged from our analysis of intercultural practices in the previous chapter), we believe that nevertheless it may be not entirely infeasible to try to carve out (even a little) time (e.g., at the end of lessons or in the middle of a lesson, as a break from grammar teaching) to deal with culture without (or with *less*) insistence on purely linguistic aspects.

The second principle concerns the use of authentic materials.<sup>179</sup>

Through the investigation of teaching practices conducted in Chapter 4, we had already observed in this case the usefulness of employing authentic materials such as literary texts and audiovisual inputs for IE-

<sup>179</sup> For a definition of this concept, see Subchapter 4.2.

based teaching of RFL. Here it is worth doing a little more in-depth reflection on both of these types of authentic materials, which in the next subchapters will form the basis for our teaching ideas and suggestions.

Among authentic materials, literary texts<sup>180</sup> occupy a prominent role in intercultural RFL teaching.

Literature has long been recognized as one of the pillars of FLE (e.g., Babae & Yahya 2014; Brumfit & Carter 1986; Duff & Maley 1990; G. Hall 2005; Lazar 1993). In the RFL field specifically, the use of literature in classrooms has been the object of several studies since the 1970s, which have examined literary texts and teaching from different perspectives, considering linguodidactic, pedagogical, and psychological aspects (e.g., Akishina & Kagan 2002; Klychnikova 1973; Kulibina 2001, 2015, 2018; Zhuravlëva & Zinov'yeva 1984).

Literary texts can be integrated into RFL classes in two main ways: as the focus of the lesson (e.g., lessons built entirely around literary texts) and as supplementary materials (e.g., in-depth cultural insights on authors and/or texts encountered in class or new ones).

As will be remembered, the examination of current RFL teaching practices revealed that the exploitation of literature for only grammar or translation purposes is rather limiting (see Subchapter 4.2 and esp. Section 4.2.2). Indeed, Russian and Russophone literatures can be used for intercultural work in RFL classrooms, as well. The role of literature in shaping the ICC<sup>181</sup> of RFL learners is well argued by Kulibina<sup>182</sup> (2015: 26–30), who views a literary text as a “communicative unit” or a “means of communication,” through which learners develop their ICC (along with linguistic skills and communicative abilities).<sup>183</sup> In other words, literature

<sup>180</sup> It is clear that a literary text can also be presented in other textual forms than the paper/book form (e.g., as an audiobook or set to music poetry, or even clips with readings of literary excerpts), however, for convenience here we distinguish it from audiovisual inputs (see below) by understanding it in its fundamentally ‘traditional’ written (i.e., only visual) form, whether in print or digital format, but without integration with other channels (as we had done—it will be remembered—also in Chapter 4). After all, it is our own practice as a learner first, and as a teacher later, as well as the general structure of RFL courses and their commonly set goals, that teach us that generally this is the primary use of literature (as a visual resource in paper/digital version).

<sup>181</sup> See Sections 1.1.1 and 1.3.1, and Chapter 2.

<sup>182</sup> See footnote no. 106.

<sup>183</sup> However, we have seen that Kulibina’s intercultural perspective, as well as the general point of view of most RFL scholars, is embedded in national and essentialist dynamics (see Chapter 2), to which we have so far offered a theoretical alternative. In this chapter we will also add our practical-operational proposal for modern non-essentialist RFL intercul-

“can help the students enhance their perception of other cultures and societies” (Babae & Yahya 2014: 84); in doing so, it provides added value to RFL classes, offering an opportunity to work with authentic texts that reflect the verbal heritage of the Russian and Russophone worlds and give insights into the cultural universe of Russian-language speakers.

Relying on what we have said, it follows that RFL should not be taught without the inclusion of literary texts, which, despite potential difficulties in organizing classroom work for lower levels—where “the small amount of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, lack of understanding of the stylistic structure of the ... Russian language, poor reading skills” require the teacher to choose simpler texts and/or adapt the most complex ones (Grintsevich 2021: 28)—, are one of the most useful and interesting text types for intercultural activities.

Of course, alongside literary texts, RFL intercultural teaching can also benefit from other text-based resources commonly used by teachers to work on ICC, as witnessed by the teacher survey (see Subchapter 4.2), such as newspapers, which are equally as stimulating and useful for (inter)cultural reflection.

Audiovisual inputs are also extraordinarily functional in enhancing the student’s ICC.

These multimedia resources, which combine audio and visual elements (sound, images, and sometimes text) to convey information, cover a variety of media such as videos, movies, presentations, animations, audio and video recordings, and other interactive content, and have been increasingly studied in applied linguistics (see, e.g., Montero Perez 2022). On the positive effects of audiovisual materials on FL learning, the research has no doubt (see, e.g., Kono 2022). They are very familiar and welcome to the student, belonging to the digital and engaging multimedia world that is his/her own.

The integration of information and communication technologies like mobile phones, computers, tablets, messaging apps, and social networks into FL teaching had an enormous impact on the teaching of language, but also on the development of learners’ ICC (see, e.g., Chun 2011; Levy 2007; Müller-Hartmann 2000; J. Schneider & von der Emde 2006; Stockwell 2015; Ware & Kramsch 2005). For example, students may use the Internet to search for cultural information on Russia and/or Russophone countries or chat through social networks with peers from Russian and/or Russophone cultural backgrounds during IE-based activities. Movies,

tural teaching (see Subchapters 5.2 and 5.3).

cartoons, documentaries, news programs, TV series and shows, song clips, YouTubers' and TikTokers' videos, advertisements, games, and other inputs, are extremely powerful learning tools and meet the preferred interaction modes of young people, whose lifestyle is deeply influenced by technologies. With regard to the specific RFL field, research emphasizes the pedagogical value of Internet resources for the study of language as well as culture (e.g., Azimov 2012; Chechik 2019; Rusetskaya, Rublëva & Khekhtel 2019; Shchukin 1981).

Like literary texts (but probably even more), audiovisual inputs also boast great flexibility of use: in fact, they can be employed in RFL lessons as the core of the entire lesson, or as ancillary or supplementary materials to be presented at a later moment or intended for personal study even outside the classroom.

According to the results of our analysis of RFL practices (see Chapter 4), making full use of the intercultural potential of authentic materials (and literature and audiovisual inputs in particular) requires that teachers carefully plan lessons with (inter)cultural content and arrange appropriate strategies for working on ICC.

Our third and last principle for RFL intercultural teaching has to do precisely with teaching strategies aimed at taking advantage of the intercultural use of authentic materials and involves the employment of active learning<sup>184</sup> techniques<sup>185</sup> especially derived from communicative, playful teaching, task-based teaching, and cooperative learning approaches<sup>186</sup> (whose effectiveness was demonstrated in Chapter 4), or also a combination of these.

As will be recalled from Subchapter 4.2, active learning, that is, student-centered teaching approaches where learners are actively involved in the learning process (e.g., they are asked to discuss, practice skills, make decisions, and solve problems), are particularly effective for both language and culture teaching.<sup>187</sup>

For our intercultural activities (Subchapters 5.2 and 5.3) we will look especially at four active learning techniques that we think enable us to develop students' ICC by fostering their critical cultural awareness<sup>188</sup> while motivating them and putting them at the center of their learning: role

<sup>184</sup> See footnote no. 168.

<sup>185</sup> For a definition of this term, refer to footnote no. 166.

<sup>186</sup> See footnotes no. 32, 162, 163, and 170.

<sup>187</sup> An in-depth discussion on training methods and tools for IE can be found in Fowler & Yamaguchi (2020).

<sup>188</sup> For more on this concept, refer to Section 1.1.1.

play, storytelling, case studies, and group activities (specifically, games). These techniques were favored over others for three reasons: first, they are among the most widespread tools for IE training (see Deardorff 2020; Fowler & Yamaguchi 2020). Secondly, in our view, they are the ones most suitable for intercultural reflection in the university setting as part of Russian RFL classes. Finally, they lend themselves well to use in mini-activities.<sup>189</sup>

Role play and storytelling are teaching techniques that ideally would require classroom modes of work in pairs, small groups, or plenary (i.e., where the whole class works with the teacher), depending on the lesson objectives, on the work style preferred by the specific class, and on the teacher's own preferences. Both techniques also call for preparatory (role play) or core (storytelling) individual work.

In particular, during role play, "Students are asked to pretend temporarily that they are someone else and to perform in the target language as if they were that person" (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 84). According to some scholars (e.g., Scarcella & Oxford 1992; Tompkins 1998), role play differs from simulations because in the latter learners play natural roles that they sometimes play in real life (e.g., shopping or booking a hotel), whereas in role play participants play more imaginative and unlikely/fictional parts (e.g., famous actor or singer). However, literature agrees that, both in role play and simulations, students have considerable autonomy over their own learning, while the teacher, after designing the general structure of the role play (Cummings & Genzel 1990) and giving instructions, does not participate actively but rather (s)he "becomes the Controller, and controls the event in the same way as a traffic controller, helping the flow of traffic and avoiding bottlenecks, but not telling individuals which way to go" (Jones 1982: 32).

This technique, which is very popular in the FLE area (Ladousse 1987; Livingstone 1983), is widely used in RFL and addressed by related research (e.g., Balakina 2020; Drużyłowska 2023; Potapova 2002; Senchenkova 2020), in addition to also having many other applications (Milroy 1982).

Role play presents a high number of pros, since it encourages genuine communication and active involvement, stimulates students to use their imagination, fosters their motivation in FL learning, and promotes effec-

<sup>189</sup> This is why, for example, other techniques such as project work, also found to be among the most effective by the teacher survey (see Subchapter 4.2 and esp. Section 4.2.1), were of necessity discarded, as they usually require a much longer working time.

tive interpersonal relations and the development of social skills. “In order for a simulation to occur,” notes Jones (1982: 113), “the participants must accept the duties and responsibilities of their roles and functions, and do the best they can in the situation in which they find themselves.” Moreover, for Deardorff (2020: 8), role play “Involves experiential learning, allows participants to practice IC [intercultural] skills in a safe setting, provides a mechanism for generating feedback on communication/behavior.”

But let us focus on ICC. Role play is extremely important for teaching learners decentration and critical thinking in IE processes, because participants—as we said earlier—are required to imagine themselves “in different social contexts and in different social roles” (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 134). Thus, such a technique becomes an excellent way to raise students’ cultural awareness (see, e.g., Di Pardo Léon-Henri & Jain 2017; Tomalin & Stempleski 1993; Xu 2011).

Storytelling, instead, implies telling (or listening to) stories or narratives orally or in written form (text on paper/in electronic version) “to value, share, and capitalize on the knowledge of individuals” (Serrat 2017: 839). Storytelling may be applied to FL teaching in the following forms (Bagretsova 2020: 31):

1. orally: stories/narratives to be read/told to the teacher or to other students; in the form of an audio or video recording;
2. in writing: paper text/electronic format;
3. in the form of visual content as storytelling aids: illustrations, situational images, comics, presentation slides, animations, infographics, and so on;
4. in a combination of forms (hybrid format): orally based on visual/audio/audiovisual aids; in writing based on visual/audio/audiovisual aids; orally based on text, video/animation.

This technique enjoys great popularity in RFL field as well (see, e.g., Fesenko, Suvorova & Novikova 2023; Saydakhmetova 2020; Sheremet & Ozdemir [Özdemir] 2021; Tszin [Jing] & Nizkoshapkina 2023).

Stories and narratives are a valuable source for language learning (Bagretsova 2020; Blaine & Seely 1997; Mixon & Temu 2006). The main advantage of storytelling is that the sharing of perspectives, ideas, and beliefs through what is being read/told/listened to may “evoke powerful emotions and insights” (Serrat 2017: 839), and at the same time “educate, illustrate, enlighten, and inspire” (Arunraj 2017: 30), thus strengthening educative experiences. Active learning is made possible by the fact that

“Students are invited to discuss the listened story, express their opinion, and predict scenarios” (Nazarova 2022: 427).

Besides providing the opportunities for students to express themselves spontaneously and creatively in the FL, telling (and listening to) stories, as showed by Baldasaro, Maldonado, and Baltes (2014), Dunn and Cherup (2023), Hendrickson (1992), and Sell (2017), also contribute to significantly raising the level of learners’ intercultural sensitivity.<sup>190</sup> That is, such a technique, similarly to role play, allows participants both to reflect on culture and intercultural interactions and to put themselves in the others’ shoes, and is therefore equally instrumental in enhancing ICC. “Through the sharing of life experiences situated within specific cultural contexts,” Deardorff (2020: 15) rightly observes, “participants come to learn more about themselves, as well as their fellow humans, and through this process, participants further develop key elements of intercultural competencies, including greater self-awareness, openness, respect, reflexivity skills, empathy, increased awareness of others, and, in the end, greater cultural humility.”

In addition to role play and storytelling, we will consider also case studies and an example of group activities (games). Case studies, like role play and storytelling, may entail different modes of classroom work, which range from individual to pair work, from work in groups to plenary work. Group activities, instead, as suggested by their name, are collaborative and cooperative activities specially planned for work in (small or larger) groups. Here we will look specifically into the didactic use of games.

Let us examine their characteristics and intercultural potential value.

Case studies are very productive for RFL teaching, and that is why this technique never ceases to attract the attention of contemporary scholars (see, e.g., Chernobrovkina 2022; Suyarova & Veliyeva 2021; Yusupova 2021).

As Yusupova (2021: 75) summarizes, the concept of case study implies a teaching strategy encompassing an “active analysis of a problem situation, based on learning by solving specific situational problems.”

Through case studies learners are offered scenarios to reflect on their understanding and solutions to problems in real-world situations. Carefully designed case studies challenge critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Brooke 2006; Levine 1994; McKeachie 1999: 177) in an open, interactive, and engaging learning environment.

<sup>190</sup> For a definition of this term, refer to Subchapter 1.1.

According to Nodari (1995: 176), this technique has the advantage of making students apply practical skills creatively instead of calling for a mechanical reproduction of already acquired knowledge. Furthermore, it contributes to increasing classroom motivation and participation (Herreid 1994).

If employed with a group mode work, it involves five stages (Matyushenko 2010), which generally govern the work done by FL learners:

1. analysis of the materials and formulation of the problem;
2. search for additional information (if necessary);
3. discussion on how to solve the problem;
4. selection of the best solution (after comparison of all proposed solutions);
5. presentation and defense of that solution.

Since it “Provides concrete examples for discussion, engages participants through exploration of solution(s),” case study is also included by Deardorff (2020: 7–8) among intercultural training tools.

In view of the above-described peculiarities, as evidenced by the literature on the subject (e.g., Brander 1998; Haydari & Holmes 2015; McKay-Semmler 2022; Shokhidova 2023; Witchalls 2015), case studies can help strengthen learners’ ICC by stimulating their critical cultural awareness, encouraging renegotiation of meanings and reconceptualization of diversity.

Also group activities are valuable resources towards the achievement of ICC, since they “Can focus on particular aspects of ICC [intercultural competencies], engage[s] in face-to-face interaction, allow[s] for guidance and feedback from trained facilitator” (Deardorff 2020: 8). In particular, we have decided to concentrate here on games, which provide excellent opportunities for reflecting on cultural differences.

According to the psychologist and educator El’konin (1978: 20), a game can be considered as “such an activity in which social relations between people are recreated outside the conditions of directly utilitarian activity.” In the specific field of FLE, Shchukin (2008: 111) defines it as “a form of activity in conditional situations, aimed at recreating and assimilating social experience.”

In general, games are becoming increasingly popular as a means to motivate learners and engage them in the intercultural learning process. Extensive research supports the association between game-based practices and increased motivation and students’ performance, as games are stimulating and fun for FL teaching and learning. Today, gamification,



understood as the employment of play features in non-gaming contexts (Bista et al. 2012), is now established as a way to encourage and promote active learner participation (Tóth, P. Lógó & E. Lógó 2019) and critical thinking (Mao et al. 2022).

Among the many benefits of using games in the classroom, we can mention that they function as a break from standard lesson contents and routine, they are exciting and challenging, and they can be employed with learners of all ages. That is why also in the RFL field the use of games in lessons is the subject of numerous studies and methodological developments (e.g., Akishina 2011; Birova 2016; Nuss & Kogan 2023).

Games, whether more traditional or digital, nonetheless enhance the ICC of players (see, e.g., Bender & Erle 2023; Mihăilă 2011; Raybourn 2009; Shliakhovchuk & Muñoz García 2020), and RFL learners are no exceptions (see, e.g., Cherneva 2019; Chilikina, Son & Khorokhorina 2021). In short, to recall Seelow's (2022) book, along with the other teaching techniques discussed here, games can be seen as "transformative experiences" which are capable of developing students' cultural awareness and deep learning.

Bearing in mind the methodological principles for IE-based RFL teaching described so far, in the next subchapter we are going to give details of the general design behind the structure and rationale of the examples of intercultural activities which will be offered in Subchapter 5.3.

## 5.2 RFL Intercultural Activities: A General Description

In this subchapter, we provide an overview of the structure, contents, and purposes of our intercultural activities (Subchapter 5.3), which take stock of what has been said so far, our theoretical assumptions (Chapter 1) and the critical issues reported with reference to the RFL academic sphere and textbooks (Chapters 2 and 3), as well as the results of the examination of intercultural teaching practices (Chapter 4).

These proposals arise from our many years of teaching experience in the Italian university context and are therefore intended primarily for RFL learners in Italy. However, by virtue of their structure, they are suitable for use not only with Italian-speaking students but with *any* RFL target learners and learning environments. Moreover, they may offer an operative framework for devising appropriate and effective intercultural activities to be carried out in RFL classes with modern students (also adapted to specific teaching situations).

IE and ILE areas have seen no shortage of attention towards concrete cues for intercultural didactics, bridging the gap from the theory to the practice of language and culture teaching (see, e.g., CoE 2015; Corbett 2010; Deardorff & Berardo 2012; Seelye 1996; Stringer & Cassiday 2009).

For the specific RFL field, examples of intercultural activities have been designed especially by Berdichevskiy et al. (2011), Berdichevskiy, Giniatullin, and Tareva (2020), and Petrikova, Kuprina, and Gallo (2015). However, these activities a) normally suffer from the essentialist view of the Russian language and its cultural space, typical of traditional RFL academic thought, which we have already had a chance to discuss in Subchapter 1.3 and in Chapter 2, and b) according—again—to RFL conventions in IE, they are mainly oriented towards the teaching of culture through the acquisition of grammar, vocabulary, and language skills (see Section 1.3.1), as well as generally employing passive (and not *active*) learning strategies that do not always satisfy the real needs of students, as configured by the AR, COs, and the teacher survey (see Chapter 4).

The original RFL intercultural activities we offer here try to fill this gap. The main idea behind them is that an RFL IE-based activity should not merely present basic facts about the target cultures (as commonly happens in those included in the books named above), but rather engage students in the process of deeper understanding of the target as well their own cultures, in order to give rise to intercultural dialogue.<sup>191</sup>

Let us make an important point. Whereas traditional RFL activities, as we have seen, claim to teach culture but rather teach *language in culture*, and thus the cultural dimension is actually subordinated to the linguistic one, our activities are directed, instead, at practicing *culture* (which is the core of an intercultural RFL lesson) *through language* (which is the vehicle of it). Therefore, we actually conceive of them as independent/parallel or supplementary to language work (e.g., on grammar). It should also be said that what is proposed here is “culture teaching,” which differs from mere “talking about culture” or simple generic discussions about culture in its “intentionality” and “focus” (Tanner, Shvidko & Rasmussen 2009). Such “culture teaching” is placed within an intercultural perspective that allows—as will be remembered from Section 1.1.1 and Fig. 2—the two target cultures (Russian and Russophone) and multiple identities of Russian speakers to be incorporated into RFL teaching on a daily basis and to initiate intercultural dialogue between them and the learners’ background cultures and multiple identities.

<sup>191</sup> See Section 1.1.1.

To do this, the activities originate, on a theoretical level, from the fundamentals for teaching culture in RFL according to a non-essentialist, critical, and reflective intercultural approach as expressed in Chapter 1, that are (let us briefly recapitulate):

- Russian and Russophone cultures as target cultures in RFL;
- intercultural dialogue as dynamic interaction between the multiple cultures and identities of the RFL learner and the Russian speaker;
- culture and interculturality as complex, fluid, and multifaceted social constructs.

Besides these assumptions, we also looked at the seven principles for dealing with cultural topics contained in the textbooks covered in Subchapter 3.2, and namely:

- greater space for cultural topics (Principle 1);
- explicit treatment of cultural aspects through intercultural exercises and activities (Principle 2);
- equal representation of both Russian and Russophone cultures (Principle 3);
- covering of various aspects of the Russian and Russophone sphere (Principle 4);
- view of Russian and Russophone cultures as historically and socially determined constructs outside the myth of the “Russian soul”<sup>192</sup> (Principle 5);
- opportunities to learn about target cultures as well as about one’s own cultures (Principle 6);
- promotion of intercultural dialogue (i.e., meeting and exchange between all the cultures involved) within a non-essentialist, dynamic, constructivist, and fluid perspective (Principle 7).

On a methodological level, our activities are based on the specific activity-targeted principles for intercultural teaching set out in Subchapter 5.1, which are the following:

- Principle 1: appropriate space for culture (analogous to the above-mentioned Principle 1 for textbooks);
- Principle 2: use of authentic materials; and
- Principle 3: employment of active learning techniques.

In consonance with the RFL methodological Principle 1, our activities allow the teacher to allocate a specific amount of space for culture (even if small, but still guaranteed) within his/her RFL lessons: their structure,

<sup>192</sup> On this concept, see Section 2.2.4.

in fact, is that of mini-activities designed for implementation in a very short time frame (in line with students' preferences for short intercultural activities that emerged from the analysis of teaching practices discussed in Chapter 4), ranging from 20 to 30 minutes, specifically for a university context.

These activities address both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of FL learning (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013: 66) and aim at further strengthening ICC through the fostering of intercultural sensitivity. In fact, they revolve around cardinal elements of ICC development, including self- and other awareness, listening, sharing, respect, empathy, and relationship building. It should be noted that, in constructing the activities, we took into consideration the classification of methods for culture teaching proposed by Nanni (2003) (see Section 1.1.2), by designing educational paths that especially brought together the "narrative," "decentralization," and "deconstruction" sides, as it seems to us that these best enable the learners to reflect on their own cultures and those of others (Russian and Russophone) in order to improve their ICC.

Intercultural comparison is conceived here, in line with what was stated in Chapter 1, as an inevitable but, all in all, natural and even somewhat useful preliminary stage of transition for the learner in the process of transforming stereotype into sociotype (Section 1.2.2). However, this is not the actual focus of the activities, which, consistent with our theoretical framework recalled above, are directed rather towards the dynamic and non-essentialist interaction (preceded by an equally dynamic and non-essentialist comparison) between the cultures involved in the intercultural dialogue (RFL learners' cultures, Russian and Russophone cultures).

Consequently, the activities put the accent on critical reflection. As Deardorff (2020: 21) writes, "Learning and transformation (positive change toward increased intercultural competencies) occur as participants pause and reflect on what they have heard, why that new learning is important, and what they will do now as a result of the learning about themselves and others." Specifically, critical reflection may be promoted by debriefing processes including questions, such as, "What did I learn from this? What worked well, and what could be improved (in me)? What voices/perspectives are being represented? Whose voices are missing? What else would [it] be helpful to know? What will I do with the knowledge/insights gained from this?" (9).

This is why we have added a debriefing/follow-up discussion moment to each activity, which consists of nine questions all of which should either be asked for a better outcome or selected depending on the teacher's time, preferences, and goals. Questions are divided into three sections addressing the three basic stages of intercultural dialogue in RFL lessons, which are the "reflection on one's own (students' background) cultures" (three questions), the "reflection on others' (Russian and Russophone) cultures" (three questions), and the "comparison [understood as above] and interaction of cultures (students' background + Russian and Russophone cultures)" (three questions). Debriefing can be carried out in the classroom immediately after the activity (preferable option) or (in case of lack of time or for other reasons of lesson organization) afterwards, also using technological tools (e.g., through surveys or other feedback tools), and varies in length, starting from 5–10 minutes (depending, precisely, on how many and what questions are addressed, and modes of doing this). In case teachers intend to conduct the debriefing in the classroom immediately after the activities, to save time—rather than leading a traditional classroom discussion—it might be a good idea to hold it in an interactive online form (a mode much appreciated by the learners) by collecting students' answers and reactions in real time not in discursive (longer) form but in the form of short answers and keywords using tools such as Wooclap and Mentimeter, and meanwhile briefly commenting on them with the class. Furthermore, we suggest, in lower-level RFL classes, to conduct the debriefing in the vehicular language (English, Italian, German, etc.) in place of Russian, so that students do not have the obstacle of having to express themselves in the FL while initiating processes of critical reflection and intercultural dialogue. For more advanced levels, instead, the debriefing may be held in Russian, although this is not always advisable because it distracts students from the contents being discussed: in fact, it should be kept in mind that the focus should not be on language production but on cultural and intercultural contents.

Due to their flexibility, our activities can be used both with small and large classes, and easily adapted to many different settings and contexts.

We recommend that the teacher who wants to make use of them take care of the preparatory work, which—as has been mentioned several times (see Chapter 4 and Subchapter 5.1)—is crucial to the success of the activities. Equally important will be, at the beginning of the ac-

tivities, to make the students aware of the learning aims, objectives, and outcomes, that is, of the activities' rationale, so as to involve them in their own learning and facilitate work on ICC.

It is clear that these activities alone are not sufficient for the complete development of ICC, although they strongly contribute to it. Moreover, they may be difficult to apply by teachers with more traditional approaches. However, it is always possible, if necessary, to opt for simpler activities (not provided here), for instance discussions and *realia*<sup>193</sup> translation exercises, hopefully sticking with the principles for creating RFL intercultural activities outlined here, with particular attention to the debriefing phase.

Also highly desirable (when feasible) is the combination of activities with the "action method" or experiential method for culture teaching (see Section 1.1.2), for example through the active involvement of learners in exhibitions, guided visits, and intercultural lunches/dinners to make them put in practice intercultural dialogue with Russian and Russophone cultures even outside the classroom.

Our advice is to alternate activities with different materials, techniques, and working modalities in order to offer "differentiated" teaching (Algozzine & Anderson 2007; Tomlinson 1995; Tomlinson & Allan 2000) capable of appropriately meeting the different intelligences, cognitive and learning styles, individualities, and needs of students.

Having described our activities for intercultural RFL teaching from an overall point of view, stressing the underlying theoretical-methodological principles, in the next subchapter we will illustrate the specific examples in detail.

### 5.3 RFL Intercultural Activities: Some Examples

In this subchapter, we will present examples of four original activities that enable the implementation of non-essentialist and critical intercultural RFL teaching, according to the theoretical-methodological perspective outlined in the previous subchapter. The activities use authentic materials (literary texts and audiovisual inputs) and different active learning techniques, from role play (Section 5.3.1) and storytelling (Section 5.3.2) to case studies (Section 5.3.3) and games (Section 5.3.4).

<sup>193</sup> See footnote no. 153.

### 5.3.1 Intercultural Activity No. 1: *In Anna Karenina's Shoes*

The first RFL intercultural activity proposed here is a role play based on literary texts (see Tab. 2).

This activity aims to teach students to decentralize from themselves by putting themselves in someone else's (in this case, literary characters') shoes and producing argumentations in support of their values (which may differ from their own ones), thus leading them to deconstruct the concept of a single, fixed, and monolithic identity and culture, and to embrace a more complex and non-essentialist IE perspective on Russian and Russophone cultures (as well as on their own cultures) also applicable outside the RFL lesson. That is, learners will be able to see how much one's values can be different from others' (cultural relativism) and how these same values can be shaped by and further vary due to a number of factors (individuals, society, contexts, etc.).

The procedure of the activity is given below:

1. Learners are divided into pairs.
2. The teacher hands each pair a short quote from Russian/Russophone literature describing the personality, statements, and/or behavior (e.g., a character description, his/her thoughts and judgments, a fact or situation which saw him/her involved) of two specific characters marked by obvious differences, embodying different perspectives and values on a specific topic, which may be the same or different for the other pairs (e.g., love, family, money, personal choices vs. sacrifices, men's and women's roles in society and gender issues, etc.). The characters may be from the same or different works, from the same or different authors (e.g., Anna Karenina vs. her husband Aleksey Karenin from Tolstoy's novel, or Zuleikha vs. her husband Murtaza from the contemporary novel *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes* by the writer of Tatar origins Guzel' Yakhina for the topic of love and family relationships; Anna Karenina vs. Sonya Marmeladova, resp., from Tolstoy's novel and Dostoyevskiy's *Crime and Punishment*, as different feminine types; Anatoliya/Vasilyi from *Three Apples Fell From Heaven* by the Armenian contemporary author Narine Abgaryan vs. Ivan Goncharov's Oblomov for the theme of life's pleasures and sacrifices, and so on). They may have been already discussed during classes (this option is preferable with beginner levels, as well as if the teacher is unable to devote too much time to this activity and/or is concerned that his/her class

will not be able to complete it in time) or totally new to learners (in this second case, it should be kept in mind that students will have to spend more time reading the quotes and deducing the characters' values. Therefore, we suggest the teacher to provide very short quotes and/or accompanied by numerous aids such as translations and/or comments/explanations, or even—in extreme cases—a minimal adaptation of some parts for lower levels, as well as to allot learners more time for this activity). According to Principle 3 expressed in Subchapter 3.2 for the cultural contents of an RFL textbook (equal representation of Russian and Russophone cultures), the inclusion—alongside Russian literature—of contemporary Russophone literature and/or other Russophone cultural aspects is particularly encouraged (if not essential to the success of the activity). Ideally, both classical (e.g., Tolstoy and Chekhov), modern (e.g., Mikhail Bulgakov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn), and contemporary (e.g., Abgaryan and Vladimir Sorokin) Russian and Russophone writers should be involved (i.e., textbooks' Principle 4 of cultural variety), so that students can be given a taste of the sociohistorical dynamics underlying literary processes (i.e., following Principle 5).

3. Each pair should divide the roles, invent and act a short dialogue between the two characters so that each one supports the point of view of his/her character.
4. After the dialogues have been played in pairs, it is very important to spend some time debriefing the activity. Below are nine leading questions to help this begin, which are placed in sequential order and linked together. Our suggestion for the teacher is to ask learners *at least* the three questions marked in italics (no. 3, 5, and 8), touching on the main core of the theme addressed in each section, that is, “reflection on one’s own (students’ background) cultures,” “reflection on others’ (Russian and Russophone) cultures,” and “comparison and interaction of cultures (students’ background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures),” and potentially addressable separately, plus other questions to choose from, according to the specific preferences, available time, and desired results. It goes without saying that for a complete critical reflection students should be asked all the questions.



## DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

**Section 1: Reflection on one's own (students' background) cultures**

- 1) How did you feel about the literary characters you played? Did you like them? Why/Why not?
- 2) Do you agree with any of their values? If so, with which one(s)?
- 3) *What did you learn about yourself, your values and cultures through this activity?*

Rationale: a) Make learners understand that values differ from culture to culture and from individual to individual; b) raise awareness of the idea of culture as a complex and dynamic human construct; and c) introduce students to the concept of multiple cultures and identities, by showing them how values may also vary during the individual's life, due to changes in beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, as well as to personal experiences.

**Section 2: Reflection on others' (Russian and Russophone) cultures**

- 4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the literary work(s) you dealt with: do(es) it/they entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?
- 5) *How are the values expressed by your literary characters influenced by those a) of the Russian and/or Russophone world, and b) of the author(s), his/her/their individual sensitivity and artistic view; and c) by the broader sociohistorical, literary, and cultural contexts?*
- 6) What do you want to explore further after becoming acquainted/getting closer to these literary characters? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Through the stark differences of the played literary characters, make learners see for themselves that, exactly like their own cultures, the cultures of others (in this case, Russian and Russophone) are multiple; b) bring them closer to the idea that Russian and Russophone literatures (as well as their respective cultures) are fluid and complex sociohistorical constructs; and c) offer them a contextualized and non-essentialist perspective on Russian and Russophone cultures.

### Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures)

- 7) How would you relate the values embodied by your literary characters to your own values? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are values shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
- 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*
- 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Enable learners to make dynamic connections and comparisons between Russian and Russophone cultures and their own cultures; b) help them to bring these cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures) into dialogue with each other; c) broaden their view of relations between cultures; and d) sow the seeds of intercultural sensitivity.

5. After the activity, the dialogues may be posted by students on Padlet or other virtual pinboards so that they are visible to everyone and can be commented on by classmates, creating further opportunities for intercultural reflection.
6. At a later stage, students can be asked to delve independently into the works from which the characters analyzed come, including deeper sociohistorical and literary contextualization.
7. Possible variations of this activity include the use, in place of literary quotes, of particularly interesting and divisive news (e.g., dealing with hot topics like immigration, LGBTQ+ communities, or nuclear proliferation) or blog items (e.g., on topics like artificial intelligence, ecotourism, or healthy diet).<sup>194</sup> The procedure, *mutatis mutandis*, will be the same as that described above.

<sup>194</sup> It is worth remembering that, from an IE-based RFL teaching perspective, there are no 'taboo' topics that it is not possible (and not *useful*) to deal with, however sensitive they may be. In consonance with what has been said so far and as stated also by Corbett (2010: 5), "Intercultural language education treats all cultural values as open to debate, and subject to critical examination and negotiation. ... The intercultural classroom, at best, can become a safe space for engagement with differences in belief and ideology, not so that

Tab. 2

<b>Intercultural Activity #1: <i>In Anna Karenina's Shoes</i></b>	
<b>1. Types of authentic materials used</b>	Literary texts (short quotes)
<b>2. Active learning technique employed</b>	Role play
<b>3. Language level</b>	Any (depending on the level of difficulty of chosen texts)
<b>4. Type of activity</b>	Oral activity (with a reading and writing part)
<b>5. Working methods</b>	Work in pairs + plenary work (for debriefing)
<b>6. Steps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have learners divided into pairs.</li> <li>2. Hand each pair a short quote from Russian/Russophone literature describing the personality, statements, and/or behavior of two specific characters marked by obvious differences, representing different perspectives and values on a specific topic.</li> <li>3. Each pair should divide the roles, invent and act a short dialogue between the two characters so that each one supports the point of view of his/her character.</li> <li>4. Debriefing to be held after the activity or afterwards also through visualization tools (e.g., word cloud generators), surveys, or other feedback tools (ask the students <i>at least the questions marked in italics</i>; for a complete critical reflection students should be asked all the questions):           <p><b>Section 1: Reflection on one's own (students' background) cultures</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How did you feel about the literary characters you played? Did you like them? Why/Why not?</li> <li>2) Do you agree with any of their values? If so, with which one(s)?</li> <li>3) <i>What did you learn about yourself, your values and cultures through this activity?</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>

some false consensus can be imposed, but in order to promote genuine understanding and respect.”

**Section 2: Reflection on others'****(Russian and Russophone) cultures**

- 4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the literary work(s) you dealt with: do(es) it/they entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?
- 5) *How are the values expressed by your literary characters influenced by those a) of the Russian and/or Russophone world, and b) of the author(s), his/her/their individual sensitivity and artistic view; and c) by the broader sociohistorical, literary, and cultural contexts?*
- 6) What do you want to explore further after becoming acquainted/getting closer to these literary characters? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

**Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures****(students' background cultures +****Russian and Russophone cultures)**

- 7) How would you relate the values embodied by your literary characters to your own values? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are values shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
  - 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*
  - 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?
5. After the activity, have the students post the dialogues on Padlet or other virtual pinboards, and encourage them to read and comment on their classmates' works.
  6. At a later stage, you can ask students to delve independently into the works from which the characters analyzed come, including deeper sociohistorical and literary contextualization.

<b>7. Variations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variation 1: You may want to use particularly interesting and divisive news items in place of literary quotes (e.g., dealing with hot topics like immigration, LGBTQ+ communities, or nuclear proliferation). The procedure, <i>mutatis mutandis</i>, will be the same as that described above.</li> <li>• Variation 2: Another possibility is to choose, in place of literary quotes or news items, particularly interesting and divisive blog items (e.g., on topics like artificial intelligence, ecotourism, or healthy diet). The procedure, <i>mutatis mutandis</i>, will be the same as that described above.</li> </ul>
----------------------	--

RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 1

### 5.3.2 Intercultural Activity No. 2: *The End of the Story, or A New Story*

Our second RFL intercultural activity is a storytelling activity with audiovisual inputs (see Tab. 3).

This activity works towards teaching students the ability to listen and empathize with the Other (in our case, representatives of Russian and Russophone cultures), while also accepting that our values may differ from those of other people. Just as in the first activity we asked students to put themselves in the shoes of others (literary characters), with this second activity we equally require them to suspend confidence in their own values in order to assume even temporarily points of view different from their own, without preconceptions. In particular, here learners should be able to understand the reasons behind others' thoughts and actions during an intercultural incident so as to tell the end of a story or (in variations of this second activity) a different story or the same story from a different point of view. In other words, as can be seen, the focus of this activity is the shift in point of view and the ability to develop attitudes of curiosity and openness to diversity demanded by IE-based RFL teaching. Thanks to this activity, students will learn that cultural aspects can be looked at from different sides and that intercultural misunderstandings are natural accidents.

The procedure of the activity is given below:

1. Learners work individually.
2. The teacher shows students two-three short (max 1–2 minutes in total) interviews held with Russian and Russophone immigrants

in our days, where the interviewees talk about their lives, experiences, and feelings in their new countries. Alternatively, a longer interview can be used. The important thing is that the interview(s) contain(s) at least one (or more) significant episode(s) of contact of the interviewee(s) with his/her/their new reality and cultures with which (s)he/they came into dialogue, leading to intercultural misunderstandings or even (in more serious cases) incidents. To save time, interviews can also be assigned to learners to view at home before the activity.

3. Each student should write a short story, imagining how the situation(s) told about could have had a different ending depending on the behaviors of its protagonists. In case of the use of multiple interviews, the teacher may want the learners to concentrate on a single interviewee, story, and/or episode (according to his/her convenience). A little variation of the activity sees the writing not of the end of the story, but of a different story (focusing preferably on a single episode, due to the limited time at disposal for the activity) or of the same story but from a different point of view (students with a migration background may want to write about episodes from their own stories/autobiographies). Drafting a few lines, given the paucity of time for such a time-consuming process as writing, will be more than sufficient. It will be crucial to remind students not to fossilize on language errors but to try to channel their message by focusing on conveying the content. In the event that learners are struggling or are at low levels of RFL learning and/or have little autonomy in class work, we recommend conducting the activity in pairs or small groups.
4. The short stories are made available to all students on a shared Google Drive file (or similar), so that everyone can read them. Everyone should read a story at his/her choice and write a question under it, marking it with a color and signing it with his/her first name. Questions could be answered briefly after the conclusion of the activity.
5. After students have written their own stories and read one story written by classmates, we suggest the teacher hold a debriefing discussion on the model of the previous activity. Debriefing consists of nine questions in total. Learners should be asked *at least* the three questions marked in italics (no. 3, 5, and 8), which focus on “reflection on one’s own (students’ background) cultures,”

“reflection on others’ (Russian and Russophone) cultures,” and “comparison and interaction of cultures (students’ background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures),” plus other questions at their discretion, whose choice will depend on the teacher’s didactic planning and organization.

### DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

#### **Section 1: Reflection on one’s own (students’ background) cultures**

- 1) How did you feel about the short story you wrote? And about the short story you read? Did you like the process? Why/Why not?
- 2) Do you agree with any of the reasons/actions of the interviewee(s) and of the writer of the short story during the intercultural misunderstandings/incidents that happened to them? If so, with which one(s)?
- 3) *What did you learn about yourself, your values and cultures through this activity?*

Rationale: a) Make learners understand that values differ from culture to culture and from individual to individual; b) raise awareness of the idea of culture as a complex and dynamic human construct; and c) introduce students to the concept of multiple cultures and identities, by showing them how values may also vary during the individual’s life, due to changes in beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, as well as to personal experiences.

#### **Section 2: Reflection on others’ (Russian and Russophone) cultures**

- 4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the stories you dealt with: do they entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?
- 5) *How are the values expressed by the interviewee(s) and by the writer of the short story, who experienced intercultural misunderstandings/incidents because of these same values, influenced by those a) of the Russian and/or Russophone world, and b) of the individual’s own sensitivity and view of life; and c) by the broader sociohistorical and cultural contexts?*

- 6) What do you want to explore further after working with these short stories? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Make learners see for themselves that, exactly like their own cultures, the cultures of others (Russian and Russophone) are multiple; b) bring them closer to the idea that Russian and Russophone cultures are fluid and complex sociohistorical constructs; and c) offer them a contextualized and non-essentialist perspective on Russian and Russophone cultures.

### **Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures)**

- 7) How would you relate the values expressed by the interviewee(s) and by the writer of the short story with reference to their intercultural misunderstandings/incidents to your own values? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are values shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
- 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*
- 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Enable learners to make dynamic connections and comparisons between Russian and Russophone cultures and their own cultures; b) help them to bring these cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures) into dialogue with each other; c) broaden their view of relations between cultures; and d) sow the seeds of intercultural sensitivity.

6. Interviews with attached intercultural incidents may be used for giving students further optional cultural insights into Russian and Russophone cultures, and for more related intercultural activities.
7. Possible variations of this activity include, in lieu of interviews, the use of movie clips (even trailers) or music clips that portray intercultural misunderstandings or incidents and/or present par-



ticularly interesting (even essentialist and/or extremist) viewpoints on Russian and/or Russophone identities (e.g., the songs by contemporary Russian pop singer Shaman, which have played a significant role in Russian state propaganda during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war), where such misunderstandings/incidents could potentially be the outcome. The procedure, *mutatis mutandis*, will be the same as that described above. As an alternative to watching + listening to and writing stories, it is possible to configure the second part of the activity, instead of story writing, as visual and/or oral storytelling, for example through learners' creation of photos on Instagram, *Stories* on Facebook, videos on TikTok, or similar. In this case, questions from peers can be asked directly on social media and can also be accompanied by visual feedback (likes, emojis, emoticons, etc.).

Tab. 3

<b>Intercultural Activity #2: <i>The End of the Story, or A New Story</i></b>	
<b>1. Types of authentic materials used</b>	Audiovisual inputs (interviews)
<b>2. Active learning technique employed</b>	Storytelling
<b>3. Language level</b>	Any (depending on the level of difficulty of the interviews)
<b>4. Type of activity</b>	Written activity (with a listening and reading part)
<b>5. Working methods</b>	Individual work + plenary work (for debriefing)

<p><b>6. Steps</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have learners work individually.</li> <li>2. Show students two-three short (max 1–2 minutes in total) interviews held with Russian and Russophone immigrants in our days, where the interviewees talk about their lives, experiences, and feelings in their new countries, focusing on one (or more) significant episode(s) of contact with their new reality and cultures, leading to intercultural misunderstandings or even incidents.</li> <li>3. Each student should write a short story, imagining how the situation(s) told about could have had a different ending depending on the behaviors of its protagonists.</li> <li>4. After the writing phase, have students upload their stories onto a shared Google Drive file (or similar) and ask them to write a question under a story told by a classmate of theirs, marking it with a color and signing it with his/her first name. Questions could be answered briefly after the conclusion of the activity.</li> <li>5. Debriefing to be held after the activity or afterwards also through visualization tools (e.g., word cloud generators), surveys, or other feedback tools (ask the students <i>at least the questions marked in italics</i>; for a complete critical reflection students should be asked all the questions):</li> </ol> <p><b>Section 1: Reflection on one's own (students' background) cultures</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How did you feel about the short story you wrote? And about the short story you read? Did you like the process? Why/Why not?</li> <li>2) Do you agree with any of the reasons/actions of the interviewee(s) and of the writer of the short story during the intercultural misunderstandings/incidents that happened to them? If so, with which one(s)?</li> <li>3) <i>What did you learn about yourself, your values and cultures through this activity?</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Section 2: Reflection on others' (Russian and Russophone) cultures</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the stories you dealt with: do they entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?</li> </ol>
------------------------	--

- 5) *How are the values expressed by the interviewee(s) and by the writer of the short story, who experienced intercultural misunderstandings/incidents because of these same values, influenced by those a) of the Russian and/or Russophone world, and b) of the individual's own sensitivity and view of life; and c) by the broader socio-historical and cultural contexts?*
- 6) What do you want to explore further after working with these short stories? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

**Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures  
(students' background cultures +  
Russian and Russophone cultures)**

- 7) How would you relate the values expressed by the interviewee(s) and by the writer of the short story with reference to their intercultural misunderstandings/incidents to your own values? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are values shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
  - 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*
  - 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?
6. At a later stage, you may use interviews with attached intercultural incidents for giving students further optional cultural insights into Russian and Russophone cultures, and for more related intercultural activities.

<p>7. <b>Variations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variation 1: You may want to use movie clips (even trailers) or music clips that portray intercultural misunderstandings or incidents and/or present particularly interesting (even essentialist and/or extremist) viewpoints on Russian and/or Russophone identities. The procedure, <i>mutatis mutandis</i>, will be the same as that described above.</li> <li>• Variation 2: Another possibility is to configure the second part of the activity, instead of story writing, as visual and/or oral storytelling, having students create photos on Instagram, <i>Stories</i> on Facebook, videos on TikTok, or similar. In this case, have their classmates ask questions directly on social media, also using likes, emojis, emoticons, and other visual feedback tools.</li> </ul>
---------------------------------	---

RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 2

### 5.3.3 Intercultural Activity No. 3: *Looking for the “Russian Soul”*

The third RFL intercultural activity offered here is a case study utilizing both audiovisual inputs and literary texts (see Tab. 4). This is a preparatory activity to be carried out prior to the teacher’s exposition of the problematic issue of mythologizing culture, as in the case of the “Russian soul.”

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to the deconstruction of the implicits and the cultural misrepresentations of the Russian world, linked to ethnocentric and nationalist perspectives we have already seen characteristic of RFL discourse in academia (Chapter 2), as well as in textbooks (Chapter 3) and in teaching practices themselves (Chapter 4), by transforming the stereotype of the “Russian soul” into a tool for analyzing culture and an opportunity for intercultural training. Specifically, learners, imagining themselves in the shoes of researchers, must come up with a convincing answer to the question about the existence of the “Russian soul” and a related “national character” (that, as we know from Chapter 2, would distinguish Russians from others making them unique), argue their solution, and then arrive at a common solution. While in the first two activities the work focused equally on Russian and Russophone cultures, in this activity we concentrate especially on Russian culture in order to dispel the myths and essentialisms—hindering the development of ICC—derived from hetero-representations of Russians, which later turned into self-representations also shared by Russians

themselves, as precisely happened with the myth of the “Russian soul” (see Section 2.2.4). It goes without saying, however, that this kind of work is as useful as it is necessary also for a more comprehensive and complex understanding of the cultural context of the RFL area as a whole and, therefore, of Russophone culture as well, and ultimately leads to critical cultural awareness and intercultural dialogue.

The procedure of the activity is given below:

1. Learners work in small groups (4 people/group).
2. Students within each small group are divided into the following roles: reader, lead researcher, writer, and ambassador. The responsibilities for each role include:
  - Reader: (S)he will read aloud the case study and related task to his/her group and proofread the answer.
  - Lead researcher: (S)he will be the lead investigator who will choose which sources to analyze first and make sure everyone is researching in a timely manner.
  - Writer: (S)he will write the written text and check it, making sure that the task has been answered properly.
  - Ambassador: (S)he will be presenting the group answer to the classroom. If his/her group has a question, (s)he will ask the teacher.
3. The teacher provides learners with one-two links to short audio-visual inputs (e.g., movie clips/trailers, cartoons, advertisements, music videos, YouTube contents, and social media influencers’ videos) and one-two excerpts from literary texts (preferably, short poems like Tyutchev’s *You Cannot Grasp Russia With Your Mind* and other short texts) which depict the myth of the “Russian soul” from different (positive vs. negative, critical vs. uncritical, etc.) points of view. To save time, materials can be given to learners to read at home before the activity. Together with materials, the teacher also supplies the following instructions, either written on a paper or digitally projected in the classroom (in vehicular languages other than Russian for lower levels, in Russian for higher levels):

*You are a researcher interested in investigating the topic of the “Russian soul” in your next paper, which will appear in a prestigious international journal. A) Analyze the topic on the basis of the materials given by focusing on the interpretation of the “Russian soul” as the expression of the “national character” of Russians and B) answer the following question: Are you*

*going to argue for or against the existence of the “Russian soul”? Motivate your reasons for such a choice.*

4. Within each group, the reader reads aloud the case study and related task to his/her group. Then the lead researcher directs the work of reading and analyzing the given resources, which can be done by group members all together or by dividing the materials (the decision is up to the lead researcher). Once the materials have been examined, the group discusses the content of the case and decides on a shared answer to the task. The answer is written and checked by the writer and proofread by the reader. Finally, the ambassadors from each group present the answers to the class, a comparison of these answers and general discussion of the solutions obtained are made. In case there is insufficient time, groups can be asked to deliver answers to the teacher in written form through their ambassadors and/or uploading them onto a shared Google Drive file (or similar), and have the plenary discussion follow at another time. It should be kept in mind that the case study as such should not provide a single solution. Given the purpose of the activity, however, it will have to be made clear to the learners that certainly the researcher can argue both for and against the existence of the “Russian soul” by citing his/her own reasons, as the materials analyzed push in either direction. Attention must be paid when addressing the argument in favor and pointing to its problematic consequences. Students must not feel belittled for having made a mistake. The teacher can take such a situation to show the fascination of the mythicized and essentialized self-perception peculiar to the Russian world (expressed in the “Russian soul”) and how easy is to fall into romantic and essentialist views. Moreover, it is an excellent occasion to address the significance of a more critical intercultural approach. In the final class reflection, it will be important to lead students to see the mythical-stereotypical nature of the concept of the “Russian soul,” emphasizing that this term stands for a 19th-century Western hetero-representation of ‘Russianness’ then made its own in the Russian historical, philosophical, and literary context but also by the national and cultural essentialist discourses of the RFL area.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>195</sup> For more details, refer to Section 2.2.4.

5. After the classroom plenary discussion, for complete IE work, we suggest that the teacher find some time for a debriefing process on the model of the previous activities. Debriefing consists of nine questions in total. As usual, learners should be asked *at least* the three questions marked in italics (no. 3, 5, and 8), which deal with “reflection on one’s own (students’ background) cultures,” “reflection on others’ (Russian and Russophone) cultures,” and “comparison and interaction of cultures (students’ background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures),” plus other questions at their choice (according to preferences).

### DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

#### **Section 1: Reflection on one’s own (students’ background) cultures**

- 1) How did you feel about the activity? Did you like it? Why/Why not?
- 2) Do you agree with any of the reasons for/against the existence of the “Russian soul” supported by the other groups? If so, with which one(s)?
- 3) *What did you learn about yourself, your attitudes and cultures through this activity?*

Rationale: a) Make learners understand that there are various ways in which cultures conceive and represent themselves; b) raise awareness that these representations are often not unbiased but rather subject to processes of mythmaking that can generate stereotypes and happen both in others’ and one own’s cultures (e.g., the “Russian soul” and “dolce vita” lifestyle); and c) introduce students to the concept of sociotype, by showing them that stereotypes like the “Russian soul” should be rather replaced by generalizations about cultures and ethnic groups functional to learning, allowing for dynamic comparison of cultures.

#### **Section 2: Reflection on others’ (Russian and Russophone) cultures**

- 4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the case study you dealt with: does it entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?
- 5) *How does the idea of the “Russian soul” influence and is influenced by a) the Russian and/or Russophone world; b) the individual’s*

*own sensitivity and view of life; and c) the broader sociohistorical and cultural contexts?*

- 6) What do you want to explore further after working with this case study? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Make learners see for themselves that, exactly like their own cultures, the cultures of others (Russian and Russophone) are more complex than they appear to the superficial eye or than they themselves would have us believe (i.e., through national-essentialist discourses); b) bring them closer to the idea that Russian and Russophone cultures are dynamic and fluid sociohistorical constructs; and c) offer them a contextualized and non-essentialist perspective on Russian and Russophone cultures.

### **Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures)**

- 7) How would you relate the cultural representations inherent to the myth of the "Russian soul" to your own conceptions of cultures? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are representations of cultures shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
- 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*
- 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Enable learners to make dynamic connections and comparisons between Russian and Russophone cultures and their own cultures; b) help them to bring these cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures) into dialogue with each other; c) broaden their view of relations between cultures; and d) sow the seeds of intercultural sensitivity.

6. Possible variations of this activity include the consideration of alternative scenarios (and related instructions) involving, instead of the researcher who has to write a paper, the reporter who has to make a scoop or the publicist who has to make an advertisement



to entice the Russian public to buy a particular product (whether or not leveraging the unique and original traits of its ‘Russianness’). It is also possible to opt for a more everyday scenario, where students will have to explain to a friend what Russians are like by deciding whether or not to use the concept of the “Russian soul.” The procedure, *mutatis mutandis*, will be the same as that described above. For intermediate and advanced levels and/or even with lower-level learners who are particularly good and quick at reading, and/or motivated, we point out the possibility of assigning more materials concerning the “Russian soul” and/or materials that require more cognitive effort (suitable for the specific students’ language level), such as excerpts from historical-philosophical works (e.g., Losskiy and Berdyayev).

Tab. 4

<b>Intercultural Activity #3: <i>Looking for the “Russian Soul”</i></b>	
<b>1. Types of authentic materials used</b>	Audiovisual inputs + literary texts
<b>2. Active learning technique employed</b>	Case study
<b>3. Language level</b>	Any (depending on the level of difficulty of the materials)
<b>4. Type of activity</b>	Oral and written activity (with a reading and listening part)
<b>5. Working methods</b>	Small group work + plenary work (for debriefing)

<b>6. Steps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have learners work in small groups (4 people/group).</li><li>2. Within each small group, have students divided into the following roles: reader, lead researcher, writer, and ambassador.</li><li>3. Provide learners with one-two links to short audiovisual inputs (e.g., movie clips/trailers, cartoons, advertisements, music videos, YouTube contents, and social media influencers' videos) and one-two excerpts from literary texts (preferably, short poems and other short texts) which depict the myth of the "Russian soul" from different (positive vs. negative, critical vs. uncritical, etc.) points of view. Also supply students with the following (on paper/digitally projected) instructions:<p style="text-align: center;"><i>You are a researcher interested in investigating the topic of the "Russian soul" in your next paper, which will appear in a prestigious international journal. A) Analyze the topic on the basis of the materials given by focusing on the interpretation of the "Russian soul" as the expression of the "national character" of Russians and B) answer the following question: Are you going to argue for or against the existence of the "Russian soul"? Motivate your reasons for such a choice.</i></p></li><li>4. Within each group, readers should read aloud the case study and related task to their group, while lead researchers will be responsible for directing the work of reading and analyzing the given resources. Once the materials have been examined, each group should discuss the content of the case and decide on a shared answer to the task. This answer should be written and checked by the writer and proofread by the reader. Finally, the ambassadors from each group should present the answers to the class, a comparison of these answers and a general discussion of the solutions obtained should be made.</li><li>5. Debriefing to be held after the activity or afterwards also through visualization tools (e.g., word cloud generators), surveys, or other feedback tools (ask the students <i>at least the questions marked in italics</i>; for a complete critical reflection students should be asked all the questions):</li></ol>
-----------------	---

**Section 1: Reflection on one's own  
(students' background) cultures**

- 1) How did you feel about the activity? Did you like it? Why/Why not?
- 2) Do you agree with any of the reasons for/against the existence of the "Russian soul" supported by the other groups? If so, with which one(s)?
- 3) *What did you learn about yourself, your attitudes and cultures through this activity?*

**Section 2: Reflection on others'  
(Russian and Russophone) cultures**

- 4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the case study you dealt with: does it entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?
- 5) *How does the idea of the "Russian soul" influence and is influenced by a) the Russian and/or Russophone world; b) the individual's own sensitivity and view of life; and c) the broader sociohistorical and cultural contexts?*
- 6) What do you want to explore further after working with this case study? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

**Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures  
(students' background cultures +  
Russian and Russophone cultures)**

- 7) How would you relate the cultural representations inherent to the myth of the "Russian soul" to your own conceptions of cultures? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are representations of cultures shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
- 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*
- 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

<p>7. <b>Variations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variation 1: You may want to consider alternative scenarios involving, instead of the researcher who has to write a paper, the reporter who has to make a scoop, the publicist who has to make an advertisement to entice the Russian public to buy a particular product, or a more everyday scenario (e.g., explaining to a friend what Russians are like). The procedure, <i>mutatis mutandis</i>, will be the same as that described above.</li> <li>• Variation 2: For intermediate and advanced levels and/or even with lower-level excellent learners, you may want to assign more materials concerning the “Russian soul” and/or materials that require more cognitive effort, such as excerpts from historical-philosophical works.</li> </ul>
---------------------------------	---

RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 3

#### 5.3.4 Intercultural Activity No. 4: *May the Best Team Win!*

Our fourth and last RFL intercultural activity is a game based on audiovisual inputs (see Tab. 5).

This activity is aimed at making students explore various aspects of Russian and Russophone cultures by engaging them in a quiz via Kahoot of 10–20 questions that is presented as a team challenge, in which the team that answers the most questions correctly and in the shortest time wins. The themes around which the questions revolve—possibly accompanied by pictures and/or videos to make the quiz more captivating (Kahoot allows to add them to the questions)—will be a good opportunity for learners to address various issues related to multiple identities and cultures in the RFL classroom in both a diachronic and synchronic sense (e.g., dealing with the multiethnic nature of Russia and the various contexts in which Russian is spoken and spread today, but also with the Soviet era as well as with contemporary Russophone literature), leading them on the one hand to deconstruct myths and stereotypes (e.g., the “Russian soul”) and, on the other hand, to construct their own de-essentialist and problematized perception of the Russian-speaking world.

The procedure of the activity is given below:

1. Learners are divided into teams (6–7 people/team or more).
2. One player in charge per team must join the quiz by entering a pin on Kahoot’s website or in a mobile application (Android/iOS) and choosing a unique username for his/her team that can

be used throughout the game. When the game starts, teams must answer the multiple-choice questions that will be projected on the teacher's screen before a time limit. Each team's members will have to agree on the answers by discussing together and the person responsible per team will provide them through his/her device. After each question is answered, the correct answer will be displayed as well as a scoreboard of the points earned by the teams. Answering (correctly) faster will give participants higher scores. When the quiz is over, the dashboard will show a podium with the winning team.

3. After the game has come to an end, it is essential that the teacher spend some time debriefing the activity on the model of the previous activities. Debriefing consists of nine questions in total. As usual, learners should be asked *at least* the three questions marked in italics (no. 3, 5, and 8), which concern "reflection on one's own (students' background) cultures," "reflection on others' (Russian and Russophone) cultures," and "comparison and interaction of cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures)," plus other questions at their choice (according to the specific preferences, available time, and desired results).

### DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

#### **Section 1: Reflection on one's own (students' background) cultures**

- 1) How did you feel about the activity? Did you like it? Why/Why not?
- 2) Do you agree with any of the values and attitudes you learned about in the game? If so, with which one(s)?
- 3) *What did you learn about yourself, your values, attitudes, and cultures through this activity?*

Rationale: a) Make learners understand that values and attitudes differ from culture to culture and from individual to individual; b) raise awareness of the idea of culture as a complex and dynamic human construct; c) introduce students to the concept of multiple cultures and identities, by showing them how values and attitudes may also vary during the individual's life, due to changes in beliefs and perceptions, as well as to personal experiences; d) make learners understand that there are var-

ious ways in which cultures conceive and represent themselves; e) raise awareness that these representations are often not unbiased but rather subject to processes of mythmaking that can generate stereotypes and happen both in others' and one own's cultures (e.g., the "Russian soul" and "dolce vita" lifestyle); and f) introduce learners to the concept of stereotype, by showing them that stereotypes like the "Russian soul" should be rather replaced by generalizations about cultures and ethnic groups functional to learning, allowing for dynamic comparison of cultures.

### **Section 2: Reflection on others' (Russian and Russophone) cultures**

- 4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the quiz's questions: do they entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?
- 5) *How do the values and attitudes you learned about in the game influence and are influenced by a) the Russian and/or Russophone world; b) the individual's own sensitivity and view of life; and c) the broader sociohistorical and cultural contexts?*
- 6) What do you want to explore further after playing this game? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

Rationale: a) Make learners see for themselves that, exactly like their own cultures, the cultures of others (Russian and Russophone) are multiple; b) show them that they are also more complex than they appear to the superficial eye or than they themselves would have us believe (i.e., through national-essentialist discourses); c) bring them closer to the idea that Russian and Russophone cultures are fluid and dynamic sociohistorical constructs; and d) offer them a contextualized and non-essentialist perspective on Russian and Russophone cultures.

### **Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures)**

- 7) How would you relate the values and attitudes you learned about in the game to your own values and attitudes? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are values and attitudes shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?
- 8) *Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?*

- 9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?

**Rationale:** a) Enable learners to make dynamic connections and comparisons between Russian and Russophone cultures and their own cultures; b) help them to bring these cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures) into dialogue with each other; c) broaden their view of relations between cultures; and d) sow the seeds of intercultural sensitivity.

4. At a later stage, the topics from the quiz that resulted more interesting for the students can be used for further optional cultural and intercultural work on Russian and Russophone cultures, and for more related intercultural activities.
5. A possible variation of the game consists of the individual game mode, where each student will play with his/her own device, possibly still providing an opportunity to discuss the questions in pairs or groups. Another variation of this activity includes the use, in place of Kahoot, of similar quiz tools, such as Quizlet or Quizizz, or other learning platforms. The procedure (*mutatis mutandis* and except for the different features of the tools) will be the same as that described above.

Tab. 5

<b>Intercultural Activity #4: <i>May the Best Team Win!</i></b>	
<b>1. Types of authentic materials used</b>	Audiovisual inputs (any)
<b>2. Active learning technique employed</b>	Game
<b>3. Language level</b>	Any (depending on the level of difficulty of questions and accompanying materials)
<b>4. Type of activity</b>	Reading and oral activity (with a listening part)

<b>5. Working methods</b>	Work in teams + plenary work (for debriefing)
<b>6. Steps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have learners divided into teams (6–7 people/team or more).</li> <li>2. Have one player in charge per team join the quiz by entering a pin on Kahoot’s website or in a mobile application (Android/iOS) and choosing a unique username for his/her team. When the game starts, teams must answer the multiple-choice questions that will be projected on your screen before a time limit. Each team’s members will have to agree on the answers by discussing together and the person responsible per team will provide them through his/her device. After each question is answered, the correct answer will be displayed as well as a scoreboard of the points earned by the teams. Answering (correctly) faster will give participants higher scores. When the quiz is over, the dashboard will show a podium with the winning team.</li> <li>3. Debriefing to be held after the activity or afterwards also through visualization tools (e.g., word cloud generators), surveys, or other feedback tools (ask the students <i>at least the questions marked in italics</i>; for a complete critical reflection students should be asked all the questions): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Section 1: Reflection on one’s own (students’ background) cultures</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How did you feel about the activity? Did you like it? Why/Why not?</li> <li>2) Do you agree with any of the values and attitudes you learned about in the game? If so, with which one(s)?</li> <li>3) <i>What did you learn about yourself, your values, attitudes, and cultures through this activity?</i></li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Section 2: Reflection on others’ (Russian and Russophone) cultures</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) How would you describe the cultural setting of the quiz’s questions: do they entail Russian and/or Russophone elements?</li> <li>5) <i>How do the values and attitudes you learned about in the game influence and are influenced by a) the Russian and/or Russophone world; b) the individual’s own sensitivity and view of life; and c) the broader sociohistorical and cultural contexts?</i></li> <li>6) What do you want to explore further after playing this game? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about Russian and/or Russophone cultures?</li> </ol> </li> </ul> </li> </ol>



	<p><b>Section 3: Comparison and interaction of cultures (students' background cultures + Russian and Russophone cultures)</b></p> <p>7) How would you relate the values and attitudes you learned about in the game to your own values and attitudes? Are they similar/different and why? To what extent, do you think, are values and attitudes shaped by individuality, society, history, and other factors?</p> <p>8) <i>Complete this statement: "I used to think... now I think..." How has this activity helped you gain further intercultural insights about interactions between your background cultures and Russian and/or Russophone cultures?</i></p> <p>9) What do you want to explore further after this activity? What are you curious about, or what more do you want to learn about regarding similarities and differences with Russian and/or Russophone cultures?</p> <p>4. At a later stage, you can use the topics from the quiz that are more interesting for the students for further optional cultural and intercultural work on Russian and Russophone cultures, and for more related intercultural activities.</p>
<p><b>7. Variations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variation 1: You may want to have learners play individually using their own devices, possibly still providing an opportunity to discuss the questions in pairs or groups. The procedure, <i>mutatis mutandis</i>, will be the same as that described above.</li> <li>• Variation 2: As an alternative to Kahoot, it is possible to organize the quiz on Quizlet, Quizizz, or similar tools. The procedure (except for the different features of the tools) will be the same as that described above.</li> </ul>

RFL Intercultural Activity for the University Classroom No. 4

## 5.4 Conclusion and Final Remarks

In this last chapter we have proposed some examples of original intercultural activities for today's RFL teaching from an intercultural per-

spective, which are able to convey a well-rounded picture of Russian and Russophone cultures and promote intercultural dialogue between them and students' background cultures, being grounded in the theoretical and methodological principles outlined so far.

Let us make some final remarks at the close of the entire book.

The research path conducted in this work has led us to look with a different, problematized gaze at the topic under investigation and to build new assumptions for modern intercultural RFL teaching.

In Chapter 1 we have focused on the complexity of the idea of culture and intercultural dynamics, advocating a critical and non-essentialist attitude to ILE and RFL. Therefore, we have presented an intercultural theoretical model for RFL teaching which follows a pluricentric approach that refuses an exclusively national view of cultural dimension and includes in RFL as target cultures both Russian and Russophone cultures (i.e., both national and transnational dimensions).

Starting from Chapter 2, we have spent not a few pages addressing the critical aspects of RFL teaching linked with academic theories (Chapter 2) and textbooks (Chapter 3) by employing critical discourse analysis and content analysis research methods. Specifically, Chapter 2 has demonstrated how the concepts of IC and ICC commonly shared by scholars fit into national and cultural essentialist discourses derived from linguo-country and linguocultural studies, thus boosting a monolithic, essentialized, and stereotyped understanding of culture and intercultural dialogue in the RFL area. For its part, Chapter 3, instead, has revealed the presence of national and essentialized representations of Russian reality and intercultural dialogue in RFL textbooks (with Italy as a case study), showing how sometimes they even rely on stereotypes (e.g., "Russian soul").

With Chapter 4, we have shifted the analysis to the concrete educational level, by examining the IE-based RFL teaching practices commonly implemented by university teachers through action research, classroom observation, and survey research methods (with a focus on Italy, Lithuania, and the Euro-American context). Both negative and positive sides of intercultural pedagogy have emerged, stimulating a rethinking of the modalities of culture and IE teaching in the RFL classroom.

Finally, in Chapter 5 we have offered four RFL intercultural activities based on authentic materials (literary texts and audiovisual inputs) and active learning techniques (role play, storytelling, case studies, and games) for the development of critical cultural awareness and the en-

hancement of intercultural dialogue in a university setting. The activities have been commented in detail and accompanied by a description of their general ideas and rationale, as well as of the main methodological principles underlying them.

This study has disclosed the ideological nature of RFL intercultural teaching by investigating its national and cultural essentialist discourses and has advocated a pluricentric and complex image of the Russian-speaking cultural space. Such a critical and non-essentialist understanding is probably not new for FLE in other FLs, as it is for the specific RFL field, where—as we know—static, mythologized, and uncritical ideas and representations of identity and culture (e.g., “Russian soul”) still prevail to this day.

Further perspectives of inquiry opened up by this research lie in the in-depth analysis of the relationships between the various components of teaching activity (teacher, student, textbook, learning environment, etc.) and—to think even more ambitiously—in the collection of more data on how IE-based RFL is taught in Europe and around the world, so as to enable us to corroborate, refute, or reconfigure the results so far and construct an effective teaching model for the entire European and global context.

At the time of writing, since the Russo-Ukrainian war is still going on, the question of Russian and Russophone identities is the order of the day.

The Russian debate on RFL teaching up to this point, insofar as it has been fundamentally built upon national and cultural essentialist discourses, has never in fact been properly intercultural but has come closer to teacher-centered models of a multicultural nature tending toward tolerance rather than dynamic dialogue between cultures. In particular, identifying culture with mere nationality and basing intercultural dialogue on the exchange between static and monolithic cultural identities (as has been done so far by most of the academia) cannot be the key to a real intercultural RFL teaching. This is also testified by the tragic circumstances named above, which indicate the importance of adopting a proper intercultural approach that is able to foster productive interactions between cultures and result in a deeper understanding and respect, bringing about positive changes and transformations at the individual as well as society levels.

From this point of view, even the horizons for future RFL teaching from an intercultural perspective that we seem to glimpse cannot fail to

take into account the critical issues and new ways of conceiving the university teaching of Russian in an FL environment we have pointed out.

First and foremost, it is necessary for a renewed IE-based teaching of RFL that, through research, a more complex and comprehensive vision be made available to teachers that contemplates both Russian and Russophone cultures as target cultures in RFL and considers the dialogue between these and the students' background cultures as the encounter between multiple, rich worlds irreducible to predefined behavioral patterns and categories.

Second, it is also imperative that this manner of understanding RFL teaching does not remain at the theoretical level of teacher training and professional knowledge, but is also implemented in daily teaching practice through appropriate intercultural activities, configured along the lines of those presented here, that help strengthen the learner's intercultural sensitivity.

We are not saying that this will be an easy and immediate process, but what is certain is that it is a process that can no longer be postponed.



## Bibliography

- Abdallah-Preteille, M. (1996). Pour un autre paradigme de la culture: de la culture à la culturalité, pour en finir avec “Babel” [For Another Paradigm of Culture: From Culture to Culturality, to Put an End to “Babel”]. In: M. Abdallah-Preteille & L. Porcher, *Éducation et communication interculturelle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- (2006). Interculturalism as a Paradigm for Thinking About Diversity. *Intercultural Education*, 17(5), pp. 475–483. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980601065764>
- Abrams, Z. I. (2020). *Intercultural Communication and Language Pedagogy: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108780360>
- Afnas'yeva, S. N. (2018). O roli yazykovoy kartiny mira v obuchenii russkomu yazyku kak sredstvu obshcheniya [On the Role of Linguistic Worldview in Teaching the Russian Language as a Means of Communication]. *Vestnik Chuvashskogo universiteta*, 2, pp. 203–210.
- Agar, M. (1994). *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*. New York (NY): William Morrow.
- Akimova, O. A. & Adol'f, V. A. (2016). Osobennosti formirovaniya gotovnosti k mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii inostrannykh studentov v protsesse obucheniya russkomu yazyku [The Peculiarities of Formation of Readiness for Intercultural Communication During the Process of Teaching the Russian Language to Foreign Students]. *Vestnik Krasnoyarskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta im. V. P. Astaf'yeva*, 35(1), pp. 48–52.
- Akishina, A. A. (2011). *Russkiy yazyk v igrakh* [Russian Language in Games]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Akishina, A. A. & Kagan, O. E. (2002). *Uchimsya učit'* [Learning to Teach] (2nd ed.). Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.

- Algozzine, B. & Anderson, K. M. (2007). Tips for Teaching: Differentiating Instruction to Include All Students. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 51(3), pp. 49–54. <https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.51.3.49-54>
- Allwright, D. (1988). *Observation in the Language Classroom*. New York (NY): Longman.
- Aman, R. (2017). *Decolonising Intercultural Education: Colonial Differences, the Geopolitics of Knowledge, and Inter-Epistemic Dialogue*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315616681>
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anthony, E. M. (1963). Approach, Method, and Technique. *ELT Journal*, 17(2), pp. 63–67. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/XVII.2.63>
- Antipina, E. S. (2018). Potentsial khudozhestvennogo teksta v ukreplenii dialoga kul'tur: strategii obucheniya kitayskikh studentov-filologov [The Potential of a Literary Text in Boosting the Dialogue of Cultures: Strategies for Teaching Philology Students in China]. *Rossiysko-kitayskiye issledovaniya*, 2(3–4), 3, pp. 169–175.
- Ardzenadze, A. I. (2015). Obucheniye russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu v mezhkul'turnoy paradigme [Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language in a Cross-Cultural Paradigm]. In: L. A. Verbitskaya, K. A. Rogova & T. I. Popova (Eds.), *Russkiy yazyk i literatura v prostranstve mirovoy kul'tur = Materialy XIII Kongressa MAPRYAL (Granada, 13–20 sentyabrya 2015 g.)*. St. Petersburg: MAPRYAL. Vol. 10, pp. 65–68.
- Artyukova, N. S., Saykina, O. S. & Solov'eva, A. A. (2021). Gendernyye stereotypy v uchebnykh posobiyakh po russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu nachal'nogo urovnya [Gender Stereotypes in Teaching Aids on Russian as a Foreign Language for Beginners]. *Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta druzhby narodov*. Teoriya yazyka. Semiotika. Semantika, 12(4), pp. 1236–1246. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2021-12-4-1236-1246>
- Arunraj, T. (2017). Story Telling A Method of Language Teaching. *Notions*, 8(2), pp. 26–30.
- Arutyunov, A. R. (1987). *Konstruirovaniye i ekspertiza uchebnika* [Textbook Construction and Expertise]. Moscow: Pushkin Russian Language Institute.
- (1990). *Teoriya i praktika sozdaniya uchebnika russkogo yazyka dlya inostrantsev* [Theory and Practice of Creating a Russian Language Textbook for Foreigners]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.

- Arzamastseva, N. Yu. (2020). Metody prepodavaniya russkoy literatury inostrannym obuchayushchimsya [Methods of Teaching Russian Literature to Foreign Students]. *Uchënyye zapiski. Elektronnyy nauchnyy zhurnal Kurskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 54(2), pp. 183–190.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (2000). *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203449974>
- Atay, D. (2005). Reflections on the Cultural Dimension of Language Teaching. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 5(3–4), pp. 222–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470508668897>
- Aysman, V. [Eismann, W.] (2018). Identichnost', yazyk, natsiya i etnos. Etnotsentrizm i globalizatsiya [Identity, Language, Nation, and Ethnos: Ethnocentrism and Globalization]. In: N. G. Bragina & A. G. Zhukova (Eds.), *Persekaya granitsy: mezhkul'turnaya kommunikatsiya v global'nom kontekste = Sbornik materialov I Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii (Moskva, 14–16 fevralja 2018 g.)*. Moscow: Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, pp. 14–16.
- Azimov, E. G. (2012). *Informatsionno-kommunikatsionnyye tekhnologii v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Information and Communication Technologies in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Azimov, E. G. & Shchukin, A. N. (2009). *Novyy slovar' metodicheskikh terminov i ponyatiy (teoriya i praktika obucheniya yazykam)* [New Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts (Theory and Practice of Teaching Languages)]. Moscow: Ikar.
- (2021). *Sovremennyy slovar' metodicheskikh terminov i ponyatiy. Teoriya i praktika obucheniya yazykam* [Modern Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts: Theory and Practice of Teaching Languages] (3rd ed.). Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Azimova, N. & Johnston, B. (2012). Invisibility and Ownership of Language: Problems of Representation in Russian Language Textbooks. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(3), pp. 337–349. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2012.01356.x>
- Babae, R. & Yahya, W. R. (2014). Significance of Literature in Foreign Language Teaching. *International Education Studies*, 7(4), pp. 80–85. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v7n4p80>
- Bada, E. (2000). Culture in ELT. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 6(1), pp. 100–110.
- Bagretsova, N. V. (2020). Storitelling v obuchenii inostrannomu yazyku: klyuchevyye aspekty [Storytelling in Foreign Language Teaching: Key



- Aspects]. *Pedagogika i psikhologiya obrazovaniya*, 2, pp. 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.31862/2500-297X-2020-2-25-38>
- Bailey, K. M. (2001). Observation. In: R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 114–119.
- Baker, W. (2015). *Culture and Identity Through English as a Lingua Franca: Rethinking Concepts and Goals in Intercultural Communication*. Berlin, Munich, Boston (MA): De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501502149>
- Balakina, K. D. (2020). Rolevyye igry kak klyuchevaya tekhnologiya razvitiya navykov govoreniya u studentov vne yazykovoy sredy [Role-Playing Games as a Key Technology for Developing Students' Speaking Skills Outside the Language Environment]. *Rusistika*, 18(4), pp. 439–453. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2020-18-4-439-453>
- Balboni, P. E. (1999). *Parole comuni, culture diverse. Guida alla comunicazione interculturale* [Common Words, Different Cultures: A Guide to Intercultural Communication]. Venice: Marsilio.
- (2008). *Fare educazione linguistica* [Doing Language Education]. Turin: Utet Università.
- Balboni, P. E. & Caon, F. (2015). *La comunicazione interculturale* [Intercultural Communication]. Venice: Marsilio.
- Baldasaro, M. M., Maldonado, N. & Baltes, B. (2014). Storytelling to Teach Cultural Awareness: The Right Story at the Right Time. *LEARNING Landscapes*, 7(2), pp. 219–232. <https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v7i2.661>
- Baldwin, J. R., Means Coleman, R. R., González, A. & Shenoy-Packer, S. (2014). *Intercultural Communication for Everyday Life*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Barrett, M. (2013). Introduction – Interculturalism and Multiculturalism: Concepts and Controversies. In: M. Barrett (Ed.), *Interculturalism and Multiculturalism: Similarities and Differences*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, pp. 15–41.
- Basova, A. I. (Ed.) (2014). *Russkiy yazyk kak inostrannyi (s elektronnyim prilozheniyem)* [Russian as a Foreign Language (With an Electronic Supplement)]. Minsk: Belarusian State University.

- Beacco, J.-C. (1992). I discorsi sociali nella lezione di lingua [Social Discourses in the Language Classroom]. In: C. Lavinio (Ed.), *Lingua e cultura nell'insegnamento linguistico*. Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, pp. 159–168.
- (2000). *Les dimensions culturelles des enseignements de langue: des mots aux discours* [The Cultural Dimensions of Language Teaching: From Words to Discourses]. Paris: Hachette.
- (2013). *Specifying Languages' Contribution to Intercultural Education: Lessons Learned from the CEFR*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/specifying-languages-contribution-to-intercultural-education-lessons-l/16808ae53b>
- Beacco, J.-C., Byram, M., Cavalli, M., Coste, D., Cuenat, M. E., Goullier, F. & Panthier, J. (2016). *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Bender, M. & Erle, T. M. (2023). Serious Games for Intercultural Skills – Harnessing Horizontal and Vertical Asymmetries in Expertise and Diversity Across the Curriculum. In: S. Bax, G. van der Laan & T. Leesen (Eds.), *Breaking Barriers: Innovation Through Collaboration*. Tilburg: Tilburg University, pp. 67–77. Retrieved August 18, 2024 from [https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/sites/default/files/download/Breaking%20Barriers%20Innovation%20through%20Collaboration\\_Tilburg%20series%20in%20higher%20education.pdf](https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/sites/default/files/download/Breaking%20Barriers%20Innovation%20through%20Collaboration_Tilburg%20series%20in%20higher%20education.pdf)
- Bennett, J. M. (Ed.) (2015). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Intercultural Competence*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- Bennett, M. J. (1986a). Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In: R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Cross-Cultural Orientation: New Conceptualizations and Applications*. New York (NY): University Press of America, pp. 27–69.
- (1986b). A Developmental Approach to Training for Intercultural Sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), pp. 179–196. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(86\)90005-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(86)90005-2)
- (2013). *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Paradigms, Principles, and Practices* (2nd ed.). Boston (MA): Intercultural Press.
- Berdicevskis, A. (2014). Predictors of Pluricentricity: Lexical Divergences Between Latvian Russian and Russian Russian. In: L. Ryazanova-Clarke (Ed.), *The Russian Language Outside the Nation: Speakers*

*and Identities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 225–246.  
<https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748668458.003.0010>

- Berdichevskiy, A. L. (2007). Pochemu, chto i kak v mezhkul'turnom obrazovanii. Voprosy Kruglogo stola na XI Kongresse MAPRYAL [Why, What, and How in Intercultural Education: Questions From the Round Table at the 11th Congress of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature]. *Mir russkogo slova*, 4, pp. 63–70.
- (2014). Metodika RKI v 21 veke, ili Kak chto-libo izmenit', nichego ne menyaya [Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language in the 21st Century, or How to Change Something Without Changing Anything]. *Mova*, 21, pp. 227–232.
- (2016). Kak napisat' sovremennyy mezhkul'turnyy uchebnyy inostrannogo yazyka? [How to Write a Modern Intercultural Textbook of a Foreign Language?] *Inostrannyye yazyki v shkole*, 10, pp. 12–19.
- (2020). Sovremennaya sistema mezhkul'turnogo inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya [Modern System of Intercultural Foreign Language Education]. In: A. L. Berdichevskiy, I. A. Giniatullin & E. G. Tareva, *Metodika mezhkul'turnogo inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya v vuze*. Moscow: Flinta, pp. 9–36.
- (2021) Soderzhaniye mezhkul'turnogo inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya v vuze [The Content of Intercultural Foreign Language Education at the University]. *Russkiy yazyk za rubezhom*, 286(3), pp. 4–11. <https://doi.org/10.37632/PI.2021.286.3.001>
- (2022). *Metodika prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo v slavyanskoy auditorii vne yazykovoy sredy* [Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language for a Slavic Audience Outside the Linguistic Environment]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust.
- Berdichevskiy, A. L., Giniatullin, I. A., Lysakova, I. P. & Passov, E. I. (2011). *Metodika mezhkul'turnogo obrazovaniya sredstvami russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Methodology for Intercultural Education by Means of Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Berdichevskiy, A. L., Giniatullin, I. A. & Tareva, E. G. (2020). *Metodika mezhkul'turnogo inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya v vuze* [Methodology for Intercultural Foreign Language Education in Higher Education Institutions]. Moscow: Flinta.
- Berdichevskiy, A. L. & Golubeva, A. V. (2015). *Kak napisat' mezhkul'turnyy uchebnyy russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [How to Write

- an Intercultural Textbook of Russian as a Foreign Language]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust.
- Berelson, B. (1952). *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. Glencoe (IL): Free Press.
- Besley, T. & Peters, M. A. (Eds.) (2012). *Interculturalism, Education and Dialogue*. New York (NY): Peter Lang.
- Bettoni, C. (2006). *Usare un'altra lingua. Guida alla pragmatica interculturale* [Using Another Language: A Guide to Intercultural Pragmatics]. Bari: Laterza.
- Bezrukova, V. S. (2000). *Osnovy dukhovnoy kul'tury (entsiklopedicheskiy slovar' pedagoga)* [Basics of Spiritual Culture (Educator's Encyclopedic Dictionary)]. Ekaterinburg: Delovaya kniga.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London, New York (NY): Routledge.
- Bim, I. L. (1977). *Metodika obucheniya inostrannym yazykam kak nauka i problemy shkol'nogo uchebnika (opyt sistemno-strukturnogo opisaniya)* [Foreign Language Teaching Methodology as a Science and Problems of School Textbooks (Experience of Systemic-Structural Description)]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Birova, I. L. (2016). Igra kak metod v obuchenii RKI (rezul'taty odnogo issledovaniya) [Game as a Method in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (Investigation Results)]. *Russkiy yazyk za rubezhom*, 254(1), pp. 15–21.
- Bista, S. K., Nepal, S., Colineau, N. & Paris, C. (2012). Using Gamification in an Online Community. In: *CollaborateCom 2012 = Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Collaborative Computing: Networking, Applications and Worksharing (Pittsburgh, PA, October 14–17)*. Washington (DC): IEEE Computer Society, pp. 611–618. <https://doi.org/10.4108/icst.collaboratecom.2012.250526>
- Blaine, R. & Seely, C. (1997). *Fluency Through TPR Storytelling: Achieving Real Language Acquisition in School*. Berkeley (CA): Command Performance Language Institute.
- Bliznyuk-Biskup, E. (2012). Khudozhestvennyy tekst kak klyuch k ponimaniyu izuchayemogo yazyka (na primere proizvedeniy A. Chekhova i N. Gogolya) [Literary Text as a Key to Understanding the Language Being Studied (On the Example of Works by A. Chekhov and N. Gogol')]. In: I. Popadeykina & R. Czachor (Eds.), *Teoriya i praktika prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo*. Wroclaw: Russian-Polish Institute, pp. 145–152.

- Block, D. (2009). Identity in Applied Linguistics: The Need for Conceptual Exploration. In: L. Wei & V. Cook (Eds.), *Contemporary Applied Linguistics*. Vol. 1: *Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Continuum, pp. 215–232.
- Boas, F. (1911). Introduction. In: F. Boas, *Handbook of American Indian Languages*. Vol. 1, pp. 1–83. Washington (DC): Government Print Office.
- Bodenhausen, G. V., Sheppard, L. A. & Kramer, G. P. (1994). Negative Affect and Social Judgment: The Differential Impact of Anger and Sadness. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 24(1), pp. 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420240104>
- Boehm, A. E. & Weinberg, R. A. (2017). *The Classroom Observer. Developing Observation Skills in Early Childhood Settings* (3rd ed.). New York (NY): Teachers College Press.
- Bogardus, E. (1950). Stereotypes Versus Sociotypes. *Sociology & Social Research*, 34, pp. 286–291.
- Bollinger, D. & Hofstede, G. (1989). *Inter nazionalità. Le differenze culturali nel management* [Inter Nationality: Cultural Differences in Management]. Ed. by G. V. Moscati. Milan: Guerini e Associati.
- Bonciani, D. & Romagnoli, R. (2023). *Mir tesen. Fondamenti di cultura, storia e letteratura russa* [It's a Small World: Basics of Russian Culture, History, and Literature] (2nd ed.). Milan: Hoepli.
- Bonciani, D., Romagnoli, R. & Smykunova, N. V. (2016). *Mir tesen. Fondamenti di cultura russa* [It's a Small World: Basics of Russian Culture]. Milan: Hoepli.
- Bonola, A. & Calusio, M. (2019). Premessa all'edizione italiana [Foreword to the Italian Edition]. In: A. Shibarova & A. Yarin, *Raz, dva, tri! Corso di lingua russa*. Milan: Hoepli. Vol. 1, p. 10 (Italian version of A. Shibarova & A. Yarin, *Davay pogovorim. Russisch für Anfänger und Fortgeschrittene*. Stuttgart: Schmetterling 2018).
- Bonwell, C. C. & Eison, J. A. (1991). *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. ASH#-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1. Washington (DC): The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.
- Borghetti, C. (2016). *Educazione linguistica interculturale. Origini, modelli, sviluppi recenti* [Intercultural Language Education: Origins, Models, Recent Developments]. Cesena, Bologna: Caissa Italia.

- (2019). Interculturality as Collaborative Identity Management in Language Education. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 2(1), pp. 20–38. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29140/ice.v2n1.101>
- (2022). Quale (e quanta) cultura? Riflessioni sull'educazione linguistica interculturale [What (and How Much) Culture? Reflections on Intercultural Language Education]. *Studi di Glottodidattica*, 7(2), pp. 11–25. <https://doi.org/10.15162/1970-1861/1529>
- (2023). Il concetto di 'cultura' e l'educazione linguistica interculturale [The Concept of “Culture” and Intercultural Language Education]. In: C. Piciocchi & D. Strazzari (Eds.), *Percorsi interculturali*. Trento: University of Trento, pp. 27–44.
- Brander, P. (1998). Using Case Studies in Intercultural Learning in the Dansk AFS Guest Teacher Programme. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 9(sup1), pp. S71–S77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0952-391X/98/030S71-07>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Boulton, E., Davey, L. & McEvoy, C. (2020). The Online Survey as a Qualitative Research Tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24(6), pp. 641–654. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550>
- Breen, M. P. (1985). Authenticity in the Language Classroom. *Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), pp. 60–70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/6.1.60>
- Brooke, S. L. (2006). Using the Case Method to Teach Online Classes: Promoting Socratic Dialogue and Critical Thinking Skills. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 18(2), pp. 142–149. Retrieved August 21, 2024 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1068074.pdf>
- Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco (CA): Jossey-Bass.
- Brumfit, C. J. & Carter, R. A. (Eds.) (1986). *Literature and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The Culture of Education*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv136c601>
- Burke, P. (2009). *Cultural Hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners*. New York (NY): Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203863466>

- Bykova, O. P. (2011). *Obucheniye russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu v inoyazychnoy srede (na primere yuzhnokoreyskikh universitetov)* [Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language in a Foreign Language Environment (Case Study of South Korean Universities)] [Autoreferat doctoral/DSc dissertation, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute]. Retrieved June 21, 2024 from [https://rusneb.ru/catalog/000199\\_000009\\_004855069/](https://rusneb.ru/catalog/000199_000009_004855069/)
- Byram, M. (1989). *Cultural Studies in Foreign Language Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800418080>
- (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- (2000). Assessing Intercultural Competence in Language Teaching. *Sprogforum*, 18(6), pp. 8–13. Retrieved June 21, 2024 from [https://library.au.dk/fileadmin/www.bibliotek.au.dk/Campus\\_Emdrup/Sprogforum\\_arkiv/SPROGFORUM\\_NO\\_18\\_Interkulturel\\_kompetence.pdf](https://library.au.dk/fileadmin/www.bibliotek.au.dk/Campus_Emdrup/Sprogforum_arkiv/SPROGFORUM_NO_18_Interkulturel_kompetence.pdf)
- (Ed.) (2003). *Intercultural Competence*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- (2006). *Languages and Identities*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/preliminary-study-languages-and-identities-intergovernmental-conferenc/16805c5d4a>
- (2009). *Multicultural Societies, Pluricultural People and the Project of Intercultural Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/16805a223c>
- Byram, M., Barrett, M., Ipgrave, J., Jackson, R. & Méndez García, M. del C. (2009). *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters: Context, Concepts and Theories*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/context-concepts-and-theories-autobiography-of-intercultural-encounter/168089eb76>
- Byram, M., Esarte-Sarries, V. & Taylor, S. (1991). *Cultural Studies and Language Learning: A Research Report*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., Gribkova, B. & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1c3>
- Byram, K. & Kramsch, C. (2008). Why Is It so Difficult to Teach Language as Culture? *The German Quarterly*, 81, pp. 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-1183.2008.00005.x>

- Byram, M. & Tost Planet, M. (Eds.) (2000). *Identité sociale et dimension européenne. La compétence interculturelle par l'apprentissage des langues vivantes* [Social Identity and European Dimension: Intercultural Competence Through Foreign Language Learning]. Graz: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <http://archive.ecml.at/documents/identityF.pdf>
- Byram, M. & Zarate, G. (1994). *Definitions, Objectives and Assessment of Socio-Cultural Competence*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- (1995). *Young People Facing Difference: Some Proposals for Teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- (Eds.) (1997). *The Sociocultural and Intercultural Dimension of Language Learning and Teaching*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Byram, M., Zarate, G. & Neuner, G. (1997). *Sociocultural Competence in Language Learning and Teaching: Studies Towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Caffee, N. B. (2013). *Russophonia: Towards a Transnational Conception of Russian-Language Literature* [Doctoral dissertation, University of California]. Retrieved October 10, 2022 from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3z86s82v>
- Cantle, T. (2012). *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137027474>
- Caon, F. & Rutka, S. (2004). *La lingua in gioco. Attività ludiche per l'insegnamento dell'italiano L2* [Language in Play: Playful Activities for Teaching Italian L2]. Perugia: Guerra.
- Carr, R., Palmer, S. & Hagel, P. (2015). Active Learning: The Importance of Developing a Comprehensive Measure. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 16(3), pp. 173–186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146978741558952>
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203496626>
- Castiglioni, I. (2005). *La comunicazione interculturale: competenze e pratiche* [Intercultural Communication: Skills and Practices]. Rome: Carocci.
- Catellani, P. (1987). La categorizzazione sociale [Social Categorization]. In: A. Quadrio (Ed.), *La società pensata. Temi di psicologia sociale*. Milan: Franco Angeli, pp. 77–90.



- Chalaby, J. K. (1996). Beyond the Prison-House of Language: Discourse as a Sociological Concept. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47(4), pp. 684–698. <https://doi.org/10.2307/591080>
- Chastain, K. (1976). *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory to Practice* (2nd ed.). Boston (MA): Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Chechik, I. V. (2019). Aktual'nost' ispol'zovaniya audiovizual'nykh sredstv obucheniya na zanyatiyakh po russkomu yazyku dlya inostrannykh studentov inzhenerno-tekhnicheskogo profilya [The Relevance of Using Audiovisual Teaching Aids in Russian Language Classes for Foreign Students of Engineering and Technical Profile]. *Prepodavatel' XXI vek*, 4, pp. 200–213. <https://doi.org/10.31862/2073-9613-2019-4-200-213>
- Check, J. & Schutt, R. K. (2012). Survey Research. In: J. Check & R. K. Schutt (Eds.), *Research Methods in Education*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage, pp. 159–185.
- Cherneva, N. (2019). Bal'nyye igry v obuchenii russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu [Ball Games in Russian as Foreign Language Teaching]. *Chuzhdoyezikovo obucheniye*, 46(4), pp. 409–415.
- Chernilo, D. (2011). The Critique of Methodological Nationalism: Theory and History. *Thesis Eleven*, 106(1), pp. 98–117. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513611415789>
- Chernobrovkina, I. V. (2022). Development of the “Case Study” Technology in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language in Higher Education and Ways of Its Implementation Among Students. *International Journal of World Languages*, 2(5). Retrieved from <https://www.ejournals.id/index.php/IJWL/article/view/678>
- Chernyshov, S. I. (2009). *Poyekhali!* [Let's Go!]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust. Vol. 1.
- Chernyshov, S. & Chernyshova, A. (2019). *Poyekhali!* [Let's Go!]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust. Vols. 1.1, 1.2.
- Chibisova, N. Yu. (2009). Formirovaniye lingvokul'turologicheskoy kompetentsii inostrannykh uchashchikhsya na podgotovitel'nom fakul'tete [The Ways of Forming the Cultural Linguistic Competence of Foreign Students During the University Preparation Course]. *Izvestiya Tul'skogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Gumanitarnyye nauki*, 2, pp. 316–321.
- Chilikina, E., Son, L. & Khorokhorina, G. (2021). Development of Foreign Students' Intercultural Competence with the Help of Game Technolo-

- gies. In: *2021 IEEE International Conference on Educational Technology (ICET) (Beijing, 18–20 June 2021)*. Red Hook (NY): Curran Associates, pp. 62–69. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICET52293.2021.9563139>
- Chizhova, L. A. (2007). Mentalitetnyye svoystva russkoy yazykovoy lichnosti v zerkale slovarya, grammatiki i morfemnoy struktury slova [Mental Qualities of Russian Linguistic Personality in the View of the Dictionary, Grammar, and Morphemic Structure of the Word]. Retrieved March 13, 2024 from [http://genhis.philol.msu.ru/article\\_166.shtml](http://genhis.philol.msu.ru/article_166.shtml)
- Chun, D. M. (2011). Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence Through Online Exchanges. *CALICO Journal*, 28(2), pp. 392–419.
- Chzhan [Zhang], N. (2015). Obucheniye kul'ture v formirovanii sposobnosti k mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii budushchikh spetsialistov russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo [Culture Teaching in Shaping the Intercultural Communication Ability of Future Specialists in Russian as a Foreign Language]. In: L. A. Verbitskaya, K. A. Rogova & T. I. Popova (Eds.), *Russkiy yazyk i literatura v prostranstve mirovoy kul'tur = Materialy XIII Kongressa MAPRYAL (Granada, 13–20 sentyabrya 2015 g.)*. St. Petersburg: MAPRYAL. Vol. 10, pp. 1102–1104.
- CoE (Council of Europe) (2001). *Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97>
- (2004). *Education Pack: Ideas, Resources, Methods and Activities for Informal Intercultural Education With Young People and Adults* (2nd ed.). Budapest: Council of Europe.
- (2015). *TASKs for Democracy: 60 Activities to Learn and Assess Transversal Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- (2018a). *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Vol. 1: *Context, Concepts and Model*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008318-gbr2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-1-8573-co/16807bc66c>
- (2018b). *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Vol. 2: *Descriptors of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008418-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-2-8573-co/16807bc66d>

- (2018c). *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Vol. 3: *Guidance for Implementation*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008518-gbr-2508-referen-ce-framework-of-competences-vol-3-8575-co/16807bc66e>
- (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/common-europe-an-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learningteaching/16809e-a0d4>
- Cook, G. (2000). *Language Play, Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Corbett, J. (2010). *Intercultural Languages Activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coste, D., Moore, D. & Zarate, G. (2009). *Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/168069d29b>
- Croll, P. (1986). *Systematic Classroom Observation*. London: Falmer Press.
- Cummings, M. G. & Genzel, R. B. (1990). Simulation/Game Design and Adaptation. In: D. Crookall & R. L. Oxford (Eds.), *Simulation, Gaming, and Language Learning*. New York (NY): Newbury House, pp. 67–72.
- Czwalińska, M. (2009). O rabote s khudozhestvennym tekstem v nefilologicheskoy auditorii [Working With Literary Texts for the Benefit of a Non-Philological Audience]. In: L. Szypielewicz (Ed.), *Nauczanie języka rosyjskiego studentów na kierunkach filologicznych i nefilologicznych (7–10 czerwiec, 2009 r.)*. Warszawa, Lublin: University of Warsaw (Institute of Russian Studies), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (Institute of Slavic Philology), pp. 471–477.
- Dalla Libera, C. (2017). *Tra lingue e culture. La comunicazione interculturale fra russi e italiani* [Between Languages and Cultures: Intercultural Communication Between Russians and Italians]. Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari. <http://doi.org/10.14277/978-88-6969-149-2>
- Deardorff, D. K. (Ed.) (2009). *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- (2020). *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story*

- Circles*. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370336>
- Deardorff, D. K. & Berardo, K. (Eds.) (2012). *Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models*. New York (NY): Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003443322>
- Dedova, O. V. (1992). O nekotorykh voprosakh teorii uchebnika russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo [Some Issues of the Theory of the Textbook of Russian as a Foreign Language]. *Russian Language Journal*, 46(153–155), pp. 11–22. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43669686>
- Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in Education: A Theoretical and Methodological Toolbox*. London: Palgrave Pivot. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2>
- Di Pardo Léon-Henri, D. & Jain, B. (2017). Role Play: A Practical Way to Teach Intercultural Communication. *Recherche et pratiques pédagogiques en langues*, 36(2). <https://doi.org/10.4000/apliut.5746>
- Drużyłowska, D. (2023). Ispol'zovaniye “rolevykh igr” (*role plays*) v praktike prepodavaniya RKI kak sposob aktivizatsii kommunikativnykh navykov uchashchikhsya s tochki zreniya lingvodidaktiki [Role Plays in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language as the Method of Activization of the Students' Communication Skills: Linguadidactic Approach]. *Anuari de filologia. Llengües i literatures modernes*, 13, pp. 133–140. <https://doi.org/10.1344/AFLM2023.13.8>
- Duff, A. & Maley, A. (1990). *Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dulebova, I. & Moskovkin, L. V. (2021). Sotsiokul'turnoye sodержaniye sovremennykh uchebnikov russkogo yazyka dlya shkoly i vuzov Slovaki [Sociocultural Content of Modern Russian Language Textbooks for Secondary Schools and Universities in Slovakia]. *Filologicheskiy klass*, 26(2), pp. 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.51762/1FK-2021-26-02-19>
- Dunn, T. M. & Cherup, S. (2023). Storytelling and Success: How Storytelling Can Be Used to Promote Diversity, Cross-Cultural Understanding, and Confidence in the Classroom. *Journal of Education*, 203(3), pp. 690–699. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574211032309>
- D'yakova, M. Yu. (2015). Vizualizatsiya kak tekhnologiya adaptatsii inostrannykh studentov na etape dovuzovskoy podgotovki [Visualization as a Technology of Foreign Students Adaptation in Their Pre-Univer-

- sity Preparation]. In: L. A. Verbitskaya, K. A. Rogova & T. I. Popova (Eds.), *Russkiy yazyk i literatura v prostranstve mirovoy kul'tur = Materialy XIII Kongressa MAPRYAL (Granada, 13–20 sentyabrya 2015 g.)*. St. Petersburg: MAPRYAL. Vol. 10, pp. 334–339.
- Ebel, R. L. (1980). Survey Research in Education: The Need and the Value. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 57(2), pp. 126–134. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1491617>
- Elizarova, G. V. (2005). *Kul'tura i obucheniye inostrannym yazykam* [Culture and Foreign Language Teaching]. St. Petersburg: Karo.
- El'konin, D. B. (1978). *Psikhologiya igry* [Psychology of the Game]. Moscow: Pedagogika.
- Elliot, J. (1991). *Action Research for Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2003). *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Esser, F. & Vliegenthart, R. (2017). Comparative Research Methods. In: J. Matthes, C. Davis & R. Potter (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0035>
- Evsyukova, T. V. & Butenko, E. Yu. (2014). *Lingvokul'turologiya* [Linguocultural Studies] (2nd ed.). Moscow: Flinta.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis. In: T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Vol. 2: *Discourse as Social Interaction*. London: Sage, pp. 258–284.
- Fedotova, N. L. (2016). *Metodika prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo (prakticheskiy kurs)* [Methods of Russian as a Foreign Language Teaching (A Practical Course)] (2nd ed.). St. Petersburg: Zlatoust.
- Feez, S. (1998). *Text-Based Syllabus Design*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.
- Ferri, G. (2018). *Intercultural Communication: Critical Approaches and Future Challenges*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/>

- org/10.1007/978-3-319-73918-2
- (2022). The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House: Decolonising Intercultural Communication. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(3), pp. 381–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2046019>
- Fesenko, O. P., Suvorova, N. N. & Novikova, T. A. (2023). Tekhnologiya storitellinga v obuchenii russkomu yazyku studentov tekhnicheskikh spetsial'nostey [Storytelling Technology in Teaching Russian to Students of Technical Specialties]. *Vestnik Omskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. Gumanitarnyye issledovaniya*, 38(1), pp. 198–204.
- Fiske, S. T. (1998). Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination. In: D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. New York (NY): McGraw-Hill, pp. 357–411.
- Fomina, E. A. (2018). *Psikhologiya mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii v obrazovanii: praktikum* [Psychology of Intercultural Communication in Education: A Practicum]. Stavropol: North-Caucasus Federal University.
- Forbes, L. K. (2021). The Process of Play in Learning in Higher Education: A Phenomenological Study. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 15(1), pp. 57–73. <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v15i1.6515>
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Fowler, S. M. & Yamaguchi, M. (2020). An Analysis of Methods for Intercultural Training. In: D. Landis & D. P. S. Bhawuk (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 192–257. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108854184.008>
- Freddi, G. (1968a). Linguisti e insegnanti di lingue [Linguists and Language Teachers]. *Lingue e Civiltà*, 1(1).
- (1968b). Oltre lo strutturalismo [Beyond Structuralism]. In: C.L.A. Di.L., *La civiltà nell'insegnamento delle lingue = Atti del II Convegno (Desenzano, 11–12 febbraio 1967)*. Bergamo: Minerva Italica.
- (1982). *Didattica delle lingue moderne* [Teaching Modern Languages]. Bergamo: Minerva Italica.
- Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H. & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active Learning Increases Student Performance in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*,

- 111(23), pp. 8410–8415. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1319030111>
- Fuchs, E. & Henne, K. (2018). History of Textbook Research. In: E. Fuchs & A. Bock (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Textbook Studies*. New York (NY): Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 25–56.
- Galloway, V. B. (1985). *A Design for the Improvement of the Teaching of Culture in Foreign Language Classrooms*. Hastings-on-Hudson (NY): ACTFL project proposal.
- (1998). Constructing Cultural Realities: “Facts” and Frameworks of Association. In: J. Harper, M. Lively & M. Williams (Eds.), *The Coming of Age of the Profession: Emerging Issues in the Teaching of Foreign Languages*. Boston (MA): Heinle & Heinle, pp. 129–140.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E. & Airasian, P. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River (NJ): Pearson.
- Georgescu, M. (Ed.) (2018). *T-KIT 4: Intercultural Learning*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Ghilardi, M. (2012). *Filosofia dell’interculturalità* [Philosophy of Interculturality]. Brescia: Morcelliana.
- Giacalone, F. (1994). Identità e cultura nei processi interculturali: un approccio antropologico [Identity and Culture in Intercultural Processes: An Anthropological Approach]. In: F. Giacalone, I. Paoletti, R. Perfetti & R. Zuccherini (Eds.), *L’identità sospesa. Essere stranieri nella scuola elementare*. Florence, Perugia: Arnaud, CIDIS.
- Gill, S. & Čaňková, M. (2002). *Intercultural Activities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic Materials and Authenticity in Foreign Language Learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), pp. 97–118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004144>
- (2011). “I Prefer Not Text”: Developing Japanese Learners’ Communicative Competence With Authentic Materials. *Language Learning*, 61(3), pp. 786–819. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00634.x>
- Gonen, S. K. & Saglam, S. (2012). Teaching Culture in the FL Classroom: Teachers’ Perspectives. *IJGE: International Journal of Global Education*, 1(3), pp. 26–46.
- Gorodetskaya, E. V. (2015). K voprosu o razvitii mezhhkul’turnoy kommunikativnoy kompetentsii pri rabote s khudozhestvennym tekstem v protsesse obucheniya RKI [The Question of Development of In-

- tercultural Communicative Competence During Work With Literary Texts in the Process of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. In: A. M. Aleksandrov (Ed.), *Mezhdunarodnoye sotrudnichestvo v obrazovanii i nauke = Trudy IX Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii "Mezhdunarodnoye sotrudnichestvo v obrazovanii i nauke: Aktual'nyye voprosy obucheniya inostrannykh studentov v rossiyskikh vuzakh. 50 let podgotovitel'nomu fakul'tetu"* (Sankt-Peterburg, 20–23 maya 2015 g.). St. Petersburg: Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. Vol. 4: *Aktual'nyye voprosy sovremennogo russkogo yazyka i russkoy literatury*, pp. 48–54.
- Gosling, D. (2002). Models of Peer Observation of Teaching. *Generic Centre: Learning and Teaching Support Network*, 8(10), pp. 1–5.
- Granik, G. G., Borisenko, N. A., Shishkova, S. V., Mironova K. V., Soboleva, O. V. & Vladimirskaia, G. N. (2018). *Kak uchit' russkomu yazyku i literature sovremennykh shkol'nikov? Shkol'nyy uchebnyk segodnya* [How to Teach Russian Language and Literature to Modern Schoolchildren? School Textbooks Today]. Moscow, St. Petersburg: Nestor, Istoriya.
- Grintsevich, T. I. (2014). Proizvedeniye khudozhestvennoy literatury kak interpretator natsional'noy kul'tury [Literary Work as an Interpreter of National Culture]. In: *Text. Literary Work. Reader = Materials of the II International Scientific Conference (May 20–21, 2014)*. Prague: Vědecko vydavatelské centrum "Sociosféra-CZ", pp. 343–346.
- (2021). Znachenie khudozhestvennoy literatury dlya optimizatsii obucheniya inostrannomu yazyku i adekvatnosti mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii [The Importance of Literature in Optimizing Foreign Language Learning and Intercultural Communication Adequacy]. In: N. N. Nizhneva et al. (Eds.), *Idei. Poiski. Resheniya = Sbornik statey i tezisov XV Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii prepodavateley, aspirantov, magistrantov, studentov (Minsk, 23 noyabrya 2021 goda)*. Minsk: Belarusian State University. Vol. 4, pp. 27–31.
- Grushevitskaya, T. G., Popkov, V. D. & Sadokhin, A. P. (2003). *Osnovy mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii* [Basics of Intercultural Communication]. Moscow: Yuniti-Dana.
- Guariento, W. & Morley, J. (2001). Text and Task Authenticity in the EFL Classroom. *ELT Journal*, 55(4), pp. 347–353. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/55.4.347>
- Gudkov, D. B. (2000). *Mezhkul'turnaya kommunikatsiya: problemy obucheniya* [Intercultural Communication: Educational Issues]. Moscow:



Moscow State University.

- Guilherme, M. (2000). Intercultural Competence. In: M. Byram (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge, pp. 297–299.
- Hall, G. (2005). *Literature in Language Education*. Basingstoke, New York (NY): Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, S. & Gieben, B. (Eds.) (1992). *Formations of Modernity*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Hall, J. K. & Verplaetse, L. S. (2000). *Second and Foreign Language Learning Through Classroom Interaction*. New York (NY): Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hannerz, U. (1992). *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*. New York (NY): Columbia University Press.
- Harmer, J. (1983). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London: Longman.
- Haslett, B. B. (2017). Transforming Conflict Through Communication and Common Ground. In: X. Dai & G.-M. Chen (Eds.), *Conflict Management and Intercultural Communication: The Art of Intercultural Harmony*. London: Routledge, pp. 98–122.
- Havis, L. R. (2020). Active Learning Strategies for Promoting Intercultural Competence Development in Students. In: E. Sengupta, P. Blessinger & M. S. Makhanya (Eds.), *Developing and Supporting Multiculturalism and Leadership Development: International Perspectives on Humanizing Higher Education*. Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 127–144. <https://doi.org/10.1108/s2055-364120200000030011>
- Haydari, N. & Holmes, P. (Eds.) (2015). *Case Studies in Intercultural Dialogue*. Dubuque (IA): Kendall Hunt.
- Hendrickson, J. M. (1992). Storytelling for Foreign Language Learners. Retrieved August 3, 2024 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED355824.pdf>
- Hepburn, C. & Locksley, A. (1983). Subjective Awareness of Stereotyping: Do We Know When Our Judgments are Prejudiced? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 46(4), pp. 311–318. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3033719>
- Herreid, C. F. (1994). Case Studies in Science: A Novel Method of Science Education. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 23, pp. 221–229. Retrieved August 17, 2024 from [https://static.nsta.org/case\\_study\\_docs/](https://static.nsta.org/case_study_docs/)

resources/Novel\_Method.pdf

- Higuera-Rodríguez, L., Medina-García, M. & Molina-Ruiz, E. (2020). Analysis of Courses and Teacher Training Programs on Playful Methodology in Andalusia (Spain). *Education Sciences*, 10(4), 105. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10040105>
- Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and Organizations. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 10(4), pp. 15–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.1980.11656300>
- Hofstede, G. & Minkov, M. (2010). Long- Versus Short-Term Orientation: New Perspectives. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 16(4), pp. 493–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602381003637609>
- Holliday, A. (1999). Small Cultures. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(2), pp. 237–264. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/20.2.237>
- (2011). *Intercultural Communication and Ideology*. London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446269107>
- (2013). *Understanding Intercultural Communication: Negotiating a Grammar of Culture*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203492635>
- Holliday, A., Hyde, M. & Kullman, J. (2004). *Intercultural Communication: An Advanced Resource Book*. London: Routledge.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Reading (MA): Addison-Wesley.
- Hoopes, D. S. (1981). Intercultural Communication Concepts and the Psychology of Intercultural Experience. In: M. D. Pusch (Ed.), *Multicultural Education: A Cross-Cultural Training Approach*. La Grange Park (IL): Intercultural Network, pp. 9–38.
- Hopkins, D. (2014). *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research* (5th ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huber, J. & Reynolds, C. (Eds.) (2014). *Developing Intercultural Competence Through Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/developing-intercultural-enfr/16808ce258>
- Hymes, D. H. (Ed.) (1964). *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology*. New York (NY): Harper & Row.
- Ikonnikova, S. N. & Bol'shakov, V. P. (Eds.) (2008). *Teoriya kul'tury* [The

- Theory of Culture]. St. Petersburg: Piter.
- ILPT (Intercultural Learning for Pupils and Teachers) (2018). *Toolbox Guide – Intercultural Learning Classroom*. Retrieved July 8, 2024 from [https://intercultural-learning.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ICL-Toolguide.FV\\_print-version.pdf](https://intercultural-learning.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ICL-Toolguide.FV_print-version.pdf)
- Ionin, L. G. (2000). *Sotsiologiya kul'tury* [Sociology of Culture]. Moscow: Logos.
- Jackson, J. (2020). *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036210>
- Jäger, S. (1993). *Kritische Diskursanalyse. Eine Einführung* [Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction]. Duisburg: Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung.
- Johnson, A. P. (2012). *A Short Guide to Action Research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River (NJ): Pearson.
- Johnson, D. W. & Johnson, R. T. (1999). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning* (5th ed.). Boston (MA): Allyn & Bacon.
- Jones, K. (1982). *Simulations in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jørgensen, M. & Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871>
- Karaulov, Yu. N. (1987). *Russkiy yazyk i yazykovaya lichnost'* [Russian Language and Linguistic Personality]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Kastoryano, R. (2018). Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Redefining Nationhood and Solidarity. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6, 17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0082-6>
- Kember, D. (Ed.) (2000). *Action Learning, Action Research: Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203016343>
- Khaleyeva, I. I. (1982). *Osnovy teorii obucheniya ponimaniyu inoyazychnoy rechi* [Basics of the Theory of Teaching Comprehension of Foreign Language Speech]. Moscow: Vysshaya shkola.
- (2000). “LINGVAUNI” – vklad v kul'turu mira [“LINGVAUNI” – Contribution to the World Culture]. In: *Lingvauni-98: Tret'ya Mezhdunarodnaya konferentsiya YUNESKO (Moskva, 3-7 iyunya 1998)*.

- Moscow: Moscow State Linguistic University, pp. 29–34.
- Khan, A. B., Mansoor, H. S. & Manzoor, S. (2015). The Effectiveness of Grammar Translation Method in Teaching and Learning of English Language at Intermediate Level. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Modern Education*, 1(1), pp. 629–633.
- Kharitonov, A. A. (2013). Slovar' russkoy mental'nosti: Ot idei k voploshcheniyu [Dictionary of Russian Mentality: From Idea to Implementation]. In: *Russkiy yazyk v sovremennom mire: Traditsii i innovatsii v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo i v perevode = Materialy III mezhdunarodnoy nauchnoy konferentsii (Gretsiya, 26 apreliya–1 maya 2013 g.)*. Moscow: Higher School of Translation and Interpreting of the Moscow State University, pp. 876–881.
- King, A. (1993). From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side. *College Teaching*, 41(1), pp. 30–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.1993.9926781>
- Klein, W. (1986). *Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klychnikova, Z. I. (1973). *Psikhologicheskiye osobennosti obucheniya chteniyu na inostrannom yazyke* [Psychological Characteristics of Teaching Reading in a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Prosveshcheniye.
- Kondakov, I. V. (2008). Po tu storonu slova. Krizis literaturotsentrizma v Rossii XX-XXI vekov [On the Other Side of the Word: The Crisis of Literaturocentrism in Russia During the 20th–21st Centuries]. *Voprosy literatury*, 5, pp. 5–44. Retrieved March 13, 2023 from <https://voplit.ru/article/po-tu-storonu-slova-krizis-literaturotsentrizma-v-rossii-xx-xxi-vekov/>
- Kong, N. (2011). Establishing a Comprehensive English Teaching Pattern Combining the Communicative Teaching Method and the Grammar-Translation Method. *English Language Teaching*, 4(1), pp. 76–78.
- Kono, T. (2022). A Review of Language Learning Using Authentic Audio-visual Materials in Foreign Language Classrooms. *Kanagawa kōkado aigaku kenkyū hōkoku*, A-46, pp. 25–29.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1998a). *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1998b). The Privilege of the Intercultural Speaker. In: M. Byram & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Ap-*

- proaches Through Drama and Ethnography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 16–31.
- Krayevskiy, V. V. (1978). Razrabotka teoreticheskikh osnov uchebnika kak sostavnaya chast' nauchnogo obosnovaniya obucheniya [Development of Theoretical Foundations of the Textbook as an Integral Part of the Scientific Basis for Teaching]. *Problemy shkol'nogo uchebnika*, 6, pp. 7–17.
- Krayevskiy, V. V. & Khutorskoy, A. V. (2007). *Osnovy obucheniya. Didaktika i metodika* [Basics of Education: Didactics and Methodology]. Moscow: Izdatel'skiy tsentr "Akademiya".
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- Kroeber, A. L. & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Cambridge (MA): Peabody Museum Press.
- Kryuchkova, L. S. & Moshchinskaya, N. V. (2011). *Prakticheskaya metodika obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu* [Practical Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language] (2nd ed.). Moscow: Flinta, Nauka.
- Kulibina, N. V. (2001). *Khudozhestvennyy tekst v lingvodidakticheskoy osmyslenii* [Literary Text in Linguodidactic Understanding]. [Doctoral/DSc dissertation, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute]. Retrieved September 10, 2022 from <https://www.dissercat.com/content/khudozhestvennyi-tekst-v-lingvodidakticheskoy-osmyslenii>
- (2015). *Zachem, chto i kak chitat' na uroke* [Why to Read, What to Read, How to Read at the Lesson]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust.
- (2018). *Metodika obucheniya chteniyu khudozhestvennoy literatury* [Methods of Teaching Reading Literary Texts]. Moscow: Flinta.
- Ladousse, G. P. (1987). *Role Play*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lafayette, R. C. (1988). Integrating the Teaching of Culture Into the Foreign Language Classroom. In: A. J. Singerman (Ed.), *Toward a New Integration of Language and Culture*. Middlebury (VT): Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, pp. 47–62.
- Landis, D., Bennett, J. M. & Bennett, M. J. (2004). *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231129>
- Landis, D. & Bhawuk, D. P. S. (Eds.) (2020). *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Training* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108854184>
- Langran, J., Vešnieva, N. & Magnati, D. (2011). *Molodec! Parliamo russo* [Well Done! Let's Speak Russian]. Milan: Hoepli. Vol. 1 (Italian version of J. Langran & N. Veshnyeva, *Ruslan Russian*. Birmingham: Ruslan Limited 2008. Vol. 1).
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lasorsa Siedina, C. (2016). Prefazione [Preface]. In: D. Bonciani, R. Romagnoli & N. V. Smykunova, *Mir tesen. Fondamenti di cultura russa*. Milan: Hoepli, pp. XI–XII.
- Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511733048>
- Lebedinskiy, S. I. & Gerbik, L. F. (2011). *Metodika prepodavaniya ruskogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Methodology of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Minsk: Belarusian State Economic University.
- Lee, W. R. (1979). *Language Teaching Games and Contests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leedy, P. D. & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. Upper Saddle River (NJ): Prentice Hall.
- Levine, M. (1994). *Effective Problem Solving*. Upper Saddle River (NJ): Prentice Hall.
- Levy, M. (2007). Culture, Culture Learning and New Technologies: Toward a Pedagogical Framework. *Language Learning & Technology*, 11(2), pp. 104–127. <http://dx.doi.org/10125/44106>
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action Research and Minority Problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), pp. 34–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.tb02295.x>
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2002). Static and Dynamic Views of Culture and Intercultural Language Acquisition. *Babel*, 36(3), pp. 4–11, 37.
- Liddicoat, A. J. & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*. Malden (MA): Wiley-Blackwell.
- Livingstone, C. (1983). *Role Play in Language Learning*. Harlow: Longman.
- Lo Bianco, J., Liddicoat, A. J. & Crozet, C. (Eds.) (1999). *Striving for the Third Place: Intercultural Competence Through Language Education*. Melbourne: Language Australia.

- Long, M. (1985). A Role for Instruction in Second Language Acquisition: Task-Based Language Teaching. In: K. Hyltenstam & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lu, P. & Corbett, J. (2012). An Intercultural Approach to Second Language Education and Citizenship. In: J. Jackson (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*. New York (NY): Routledge, pp. 325–339.
- Lucy, J. A. (2001). Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis. In: N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Oxford: Pergamon, pp. 13486–13490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/03042-4>
- Lustig, M. W., Koester, J. & Halualani, R. (2017). *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures* (8th ed.). Boston (MA): Pearson.
- Magnati, D. & Legittimo, F. (2017). *Davajte! Comunicare in russo* [Let's Communicate in Russian]. Milan: Hoepli. Vols. 1, 2.
- Makarova, M. Yu. (2011). Osobennosti izucheniya russkoy literatury v inoyazychnoy auditorii [Peculiarities of Studying Russian Literature With Regard to a Foreign-Speaking Audience]. In: A. Krasovski (Ed.), *Russkiy yazyk i kul'tura: teoriya i praktika prepodavaniya v shkole i v vuze = Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo nauchno-metodicheskogo seminara, posvyashchennogo 20-letiyu Rumynskoy assotsiatsii prepodavateley russkogo yazyka i literatury (Bukharest, 30.09.2010–04.10.2010 g.)*. Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, pp. 127–130.
- Mansouri, F. & Arber, R. (2017). Conceptualizing Intercultural Understanding Within International Contexts: Challenges and Possibilities for Education. In: F. Mansouri (Ed.), *Interculturalism at the Crossroads: Comparative Perspectives on Concepts, Policies and Practices*. Paris: UNESCO, pp. 25–46. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259511>
- Mao, W., Cui, Y., Chiu, M. M. & Lei, H. (2022). Effects of Game-Based Learning on Students' Critical Thinking: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 59(8), pp. 1682–1708. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07356331211007098>
- Markina, E. & Garcia Mollá, A. (2022). The Effect of a Teacher-Centred and Learner-Centred Approach on Students' Participation in the English Classroom. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Languages*

- es & Literature*, 15(3), e1007. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.1007>
- Marshall, J. (2016). *First Person Action Research: Living Life as Inquiry*. London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473982598>
- Martinelli, S. & Taylor, M. (Eds.) (2000). *Intercultural Learning T-Kit*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Retrieved from [https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox\\_tool\\_download-file-112/t%20kit%20intercultural%20learning.pdf](https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-112/t%20kit%20intercultural%20learning.pdf)
- Maslova, V. A. (1997). *Vvedeniye v lingvokul'turologiyu* [Introduction to Linguocultural Studies]. Moscow: Naslediye.
- Masyuk, M. R. & Suvorova, E. G. (2013). Rol' sotsiokul'turnoy kompetentsii v protsesse obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu [Role of Social and Cultural Competence in the Course of Training in Russian as a Foreign Language]. In: *Russkiy yazyk v sovremennom mire: Traditsii i innovatsii v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo i v perevode = Materialy III mezhdunarodnoy nauchnoy konferentsii (Gretsiya, 26 apreliya–1 maya 2013 g.)*. Moscow: Higher School of Translation and Interpreting of the Moscow State University, pp. 176–181.
- Matias, C. E. (Ed.) (2021). *The Handbook of Critical Theoretical Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429056963>
- Matyushenko, V. V. (2010). Metod case study v obuchenii inostrannomu yazyku studentov nelingvisticheskikh vuzov [The Case-Study Method in Teaching a Foreign Language to Students at Non-Linguistic Universities]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo oblastnogo universiteta*. Pedagogika, 4, pp. 128–132.
- McKay-Semmler, K. L. (Ed.) (2022). *Case Studies for Intercultural and Conflict Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- McKeachie, W. J. (1999). *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*. Boston (MA): Houghton Mifflin.
- McKiernan, M., Leahy, V. & Brereton, B. (2013). Teaching Intercultural Competence: Challenges and Opportunities. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 5(2), pp. 218–232. <https://doi.org/10.14658/PUPJ-IJSE-2013-2-9>
- McNiff, J. (1988). *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. London: Routledge.



- McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2011). *All You Need to Know About Action Research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Meer, N., Modood, T. & Zapata-Barrero, R. (Eds.) (2016). *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474407083.001.0001>
- Men [Meng], L., Kur'yanovich, A. V. & Tsao [Cao], Zh. [R.] (2023). Zaimstvovannaya leksika kak fragment russkoy yazykovoy kartiny mira v aspekte lingvokul'turologicheskogo opisaniya [Borrowed Vocabulary as a Fragment of the Russian Language Picture of the World: Linguocultural Description]. *Rusistika*, 21(4), pp. 406–423. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2023-21-4-406-423>
- Mertler, C. A. (Ed.) (2019). *The Wiley Handbook of Action Research in Education*. Hoboken (NJ): Wiley- Blackwell.
- Mezzadri, M. (2015). *I nuovi ferri del mestiere. Manuale di glottodidattica* [The New Tools of the Trade: Handbook of Language Education]. Turin: Bonacci, Loescher.
- Mickan, P. (2011). Text-Based Teaching: Theory and Practice. *Gaikokugo kyōiku jānaru*, pp. 15–24. Retrieved from <https://repo.lib.tokushima-u.ac.jp/en/82217>
- Mihăilă, R. M. (2011). Intercultural Communication in Online Games: Obstacles and Opportunities. In: K. Gallagher (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Critical and Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives*. Leiden, Boston (MA): Brill, pp. 157–165. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848880634\\_019](https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848880634_019)
- Mikk, J. (2000). *Textbook: Research and Writing*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Miksyuk, R. V. (2019a). Khudozhestvennyy tekst na urokakh russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo [The Role of Literary Text in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. *Vysshye tekhnicheskoye obrazovaniye*, 3(1), pp. 59–62.
- (2019b). Formirovaniye mezhkul'turnoy kompetentsii pri chtenii khudozhestvennykh tekstov na urokakh RKI [Formation of Intercultural Competence in Reading Literary Texts During Classes of Russian as a Foreign Language]. In: *Obshchestvennyye i gumanitarnyye nauki = Materialy dokladov 83-y nauchno-tekhnicheskoy konferentsii professorsko-prepodavatel'skogo sostava, nauchnykh sotrudnikov i aspirantov (s mezhdunarodnym uchastiyem) (Minsk, 4–15 fevralya 2019 g.)*. Minsk: Belarusian State Technological University, pp. 119–120.

- Miloslavskaya, S. K. (2001). Mezhhkul'turnaya kommunikatsiya v svete zadach internatsionalizatsii obrazovaniya [Intercultural Communication in the Light of the Challenges of the Internationalization of Education]. *Mir russkogo slova*, 4, pp. 14–24.
- (2008). Uchebnik russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo – unikal'noye sredstvo formirovaniya obraza Rossii v mire: k teoreticheskomu oboznovaniyu lingvopedagogicheskoy imagologii [Textbook of Russian as a Foreign Language as a Unique Means of Creating the Image of Russia in the World: Towards a Theoretical Justification of Linguopedagogical Imagology]. *Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta druzhby narodov. Voprosy obrazovaniya: yazyki i spetsial'nost'*, 4, pp. 10–15.
- Milroy, E. (1982). *Role-Play: A Practical Guide*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- Mishan, F. (Ed.) (2004). *Designing Authenticity Into Language Learning Materials*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Mishan, F. & Kiss, T. (2024). *Developing Intercultural Language Materials*. New York (NY): Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032651385>
- Mitchell, R. & Myles, F. (2004). *Second Language Learning Theories* (2nd ed.). London: Hodder Arnold.
- Mitrofanova, O. D. & Kostomarov, V. G. (1990). *Metodika prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Methods of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Mixon, M. & Temu, P. (2006). First Road to Learning: Language Through Stories. *English Teaching Forum*, 44(2), pp. 14–19.
- Moloney, R. & Saltmarsh, D. (2016). 'Knowing Your Students' in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(4), pp. 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2016v41n4.5>
- Montero Perez, M. (2022). Second or Foreign Language Learning Through Watching Audio-Visual Input and the Role of On-Screen Text. *Language Teaching*, 55(2), pp. 163–192. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444821000501>
- Montgomery, D. (1999). *Positive Teacher Appraisal Through Classroom Observation*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Moraru, M. (2011). Khudozhestvennyy tekst v praktike prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka na seminarakh po perevodovedeniyu s tochki zreniya ego ekvivalentnosti [Literary Text in the Practice of Teaching Rus-

- sian at Seminars on Translation Studies From the Point of View of Its Equivalence]. In: A. Krasovski (Ed.), *Russkiy yazyk i kul'tura: teoriya i praktika prepodavaniya v shkole i v vuze = Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo nauchno-metodicheskogo seminara, posvyashchennogo 20-letiyu Rumynskoy assotsiatsii prepodavateley russkogo yazyka i literatury (Bukharest, 30.09.2010–04.10.2010 g.)*. Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, pp. 236–248.
- Moskovkin, L. V. & Shchukin, A. N. (2012). *Khrestomatiya po metodike prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Reader on the Methods of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language] (3rd ed). Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- (2013). *Istoriya metodiki obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu* [History of the Methods of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Müller-Hartmann, A. (2000). The Role of Tasks in Promoting Intercultural Learning in Electronic Learning Networks. *Language Learning & Technology*, 4(2), pp. 117–135. <http://dx.doi.org/10125/25103>. Retrieved from <https://www.lltjournal.org/item/10125-25103/>
- Mustajoki, A., Protassova, E. & Yelenevskaya, M. (Eds.) (2019). *The Soft Power of the Russian Language: Pluricentricity, Politics and Policies*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429061110>
- Nanni, A. (2003). Metodi didattici per educare all'interculturalità [Teaching Methods for Intercultural Education]. *Educación y futuro: revista de investigación aplicada y experiencias educativas*, 8, pp. 61–70.
- Nazarova, Y. (2022). Storytelling in Foreign Language Teaching. *European Multidisciplinary Journal of Modern Science*, 6, pp. 426–429. Retrieved from <https://emjms.academicjournal.io/index.php/emjms/article/view/421>
- Nelyubin, L. L. (2016). *Tolkovyy perevodovedcheskiy slovar'* [Explanatory Dictionary of Translation] (8th ed.). Moscow: Flinta, Nauka.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- Nistratova, S. L. (2023). O roli bazovykh tsennostey v prepodavanii RKI. (Na primere nositeley ital'yanskoy i russkoy lingvokul'tur) [On the Role of Basic Values in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language. (On the Example of Speakers of Italian and Russian Linguocultures)]. *Vestnik Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy gumanitarnyy universi-*

- tet. Literaturovedeniye. Yazykoznaniiye. Kul'turologiya*, 8, pp. 44–58. <https://doi.org/10.28995/2686-7249-2023-8-44-58>
- Nodari, C. (1995). *Perspektiven einer neuen Lehrwerkkultur. Pädagogische Lehrziele im Fremdsprachenunterricht als Problem der Lehrwerkgestaltung* [Perspectives of a New Teaching Culture: Pedagogical Teaching Objectives in Foreign Language Teaching as a Problem of Textbook Design]. Aarau: Sauerländer.
- Nørgård, R. T., Toft-Nielsen, C. & Whitton, N. (2017). Playful Learning in Higher Education: Developing a Signature Pedagogy. *International Journal of Play*, 6(3), pp. 272–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2017.1382997>
- Nosonovich, E. V. & Mil'rud, R. P. (1999). Parametry autentichnogo uchebnogo teksta [Parameters of the Authentic Educational Text]. *Inostrannyye yazyki v shkole*, 1, pp. 18–23.
- Nostrand, H. L. (1989). Authentic Texts and Cultural Authenticity: An Editorial. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(1), pp. 49–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1989.tb05310.x>
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667336>
- Nuss, S. V. & Kogan, V. V. (Eds.) (2023). *Dynamic Teaching of Russian: Games and Gamification of Learning*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003369721>
- OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) (2018). *Preparing Our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World: The OECD PISA Global Competence Framework*. Paris: OECD Library.
- Oetzel, J. G. (2009). *Intercultural Communication: A Layered Approach*. New York (NY): Vango Books.
- O'Leary, M. (2020). *Classroom Observation: A Guide to the Effective Observation of Teaching and Learning* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315630243>
- Omaggio, A. C. (1993). *Teaching Language in Context* (2nd ed.). Boston (MA): Heinle & Heinle.
- Ovchinnikova, E. N. (2012). K opredeleniyu terminov “uchebnik” i “uchebnoye posobiye” [About Definition of the Terms “Textbook” and “Manual”]. *Gumanitarnyye naychnyye issledovaniya*, 5. Retrieved October 10, 2022 from <https://human.snauka.ru/2012/05/1189>

- Ovsienko, Ju. G. (2002). *Il russo. Corso base* [Russian: A Basic Course]. Rome: Il Punto Editoriale (Italian version of Yu. G. Ovsienko, *Russkiy yazyk dlya nachinayushchikh*. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy 1995).
- Panitz, T. (1999). Collaborative Versus Cooperative Learning: A Comparison of the Two Concepts Which Will Help Us Understand the Underlying Nature of Interactive Learning. Retrieved August 5, 2024 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED448443.pdf>
- Papademetre, L. & Scarino, A. (2000). *Integrating Culture Learning in the Languages Classroom: A Multi-Perspective Conceptual Journey for Teachers*. Melbourne: Language Australia.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse Dynamics: Critical Analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Pasqualotto, G. (2012). Prefazione (Filosofia e intercultura) [Preface (Philosophy and Interculturality)]. In: M. Ghilardi, *Filosofia dell'interculturalità*. Brescia: Morcelliana, pp. 5–17.
- Passov, E. I. (2000a). *Kommunikativnoye inoyazychnoye obrazovaniye. Kontseptsiya razvitiya individual'nosti v dialoge kul'tur* [Communicative Foreign Language Education: The Concept of Development of Individuality in the Dialogue of Cultures]. Lipetsk: Lipetsk State Pedagogical University.
- (2000b). *Programma-kontseptsiya kommunikativnogo inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya* [Program-Concept of Communicative Foreign Language Education]. Moscow: Prosveshcheniye.
- (2007). *Russkoye slovo v metodike kak put' v mir russkogo Slova, ili Est' li u metodiki budushcheye? Nauchno-fantasticheskoye esse* [The Russian Word in Methodology as a Way to the World of the Russian Word, or Does Methodology Have a Future? A Science Fiction Essay]. Lipetsk: Interlingva.
- Passov, E. I. & Kuzovleva, N. E. (2010). *Osnovy kommunikativnoy teorii i tekhnologii inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya* [Basics of Communicative Theory and the Technology of Foreign Language Education]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Patte, M. M. (2012). Implementing a Playful Pedagogy in a Standards-Driven Curriculum: Rationale for Action Research in Teacher Education. In: L. E. Cohen & S. Waite-Stupiansky (Eds.), *Play: A Polyphony of Research, Theories, and Issues*. Lanham (MD): University Press of America, pp. 67–89.
- Pavan, E. (2020). *Dalla didattica della cultura all'educazione linguistica*

- interculturale* [From the Didactics of Culture to Intercultural Language Education]. Limena: libreriauniversitaria.it.
- Peacock, M. (1997). The Effect of Authentic Materials on the Motivation of EFL Learners. *ELT Journal*, 51(2), pp. 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/51.2.144>
- Penas Ibáñez, B. & López Sáenz, M. C. (Eds.) (2006). *Interculturalism: Between Identity and Diversity*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction*. New York (NY): Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410600790>
- Petrikova, A., Kuprina, T. & Gallo, Ya [J.] (2015). *Osnovy mezhkul'turnoy didaktiki* [Basics of Intercultural Didactics]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Phillips, N. & Hardy, C. (2002). *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412983921>
- Pingel, F. (2010). *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision* (2nd ed.). Paris, Braunschweig: UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000117188>
- Plamenatz, J. (1973). Two Types of Nationalism. In: E. Kamenka (Ed.), *Nationalism. The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 23–36.
- Podosinnikova, A. A. (2011). Khudozhestvennyy tekst na zanyatiyakh RKI kak sredstvo aktivizatsii rechevoy deyatel'nosti studentov [Literary Text in Classes of Russian as a Foreign Language as a Means of Activation of Students' Speech Activity]. In: A. Krasovski (Ed.), *Russkiy yazyk i kul'tura: teoriya i praktika prepodavaniya v shkole i v vuzе = Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo nauchno-metodicheskogo seminara, posvyashchennogo 20-letiyu Rumynskoy assotsiatsii prepodavateley russkogo yazyka i literatury (Bukharest, 30.09.2010–04.10.2010 g.)*. Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, pp. 257–264.
- Podruchnaya, L. (2013). Fol'klornyy tekst na zanyatiyakh RKI: vospriyatiye i interpretatsiya russkoy narodnoy skazki [Folklore Texts in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language: The Perception of Russian Folk Tales]. *Slovo.ru: Baltiyskiy aktsent*, pp. 39–44.
- Politzer, R. (1959). *Developing Cultural Understanding Through Foreign Language Study*. Report of the Fifth Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Teaching. Washington (DC): Georgetown University Press, pp. 99–105.

- Pomarolli, G. (2019). La lingua come ingegnere del carattere nazionale: Studi di *lingvokul'turologija* [Language as an Engineer of National Character: Linguocultural Studies]. *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 53(sup), pp. 383–394. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2019/01/029>
- (2023). *Il discorso sulla lingua e il carattere nazionale nella Russia post-sovietica. Studi di linguoculturologia* [Discourse on Language and National Character in Post-Soviet Russia: Linguocultural Studies]. Città di Castello: I libri di Emil.
- Potapova, M. M. (2002). *Rolevyye igry na urokakh russkogo yazyka* [Role-Playing Games in Russian Language Lessons]. St. Petersburg: Sudarynya.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Prince, M. (2004). Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), pp. 223–231. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00809.x>
- Prokhorov, Yu. E. (1995). *Lingvostranovedeniye. Kul'turovedeniye. Stranovedeniye: Teoriya i praktika obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu* [Linguo-Country Studies. Culturology. Country Studies: Theory and Practice of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Pushkin State Russian Language Institute.
- Prokhorov, Yu. E. & Sternin, I. A. (2011). *Russkiye: kommunikativnoye povedeniye* [Russians: Communicative Behavior] (4th ed.). Moscow: Flinta, Nauka.
- Pugachëv, I. A. (2011). *Etnooriyentirovannaya metodika v polikul'turnom prepodavanii russkogo yazyka inostrantsam* [Ethnocentric Methodology in Polycultural Teaching of Russian to Foreigners]. Moscow: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.
- Puleri, M. (2016). *Narrazioni ibride post-sovietiche. Per una letteratura ucraina di lingua russa* [Post-Soviet Hybrid Narratives: For a Russian-Speaking Ukrainian Literature]. Florence: Firenze University Press. <https://doi.org/10.36253/978-88-6453-367-4>
- Raybourn, E. M. (2009). Intercultural Competence Game That Fosters Metacognitive Agility and Reflection. In: A. A. Ozok & P. Zaphiris (Eds.), *Online Communities and Social Computing*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 603–612. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-02774-1\\_65](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-02774-1_65)
- Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2008). *The SAGE Handbook of Action Re-*

- search: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607934>
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2022)[1]. *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture* (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 February 2022 at the 1423rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies). Retrieved from [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680a563ca](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680a563ca)
- Regmi, P. R., Waithaka, E., Paudyal, A., Simkhada, P. & van Teijlingen, E. (2016). Guide to the Design and Application of Online Questionnaire Surveys. *Nepal Journal of Epidemiology*, 6(4), pp. 640-644. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3126/nje.v6i4.17258>
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: A Description and Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (3rd ed.). London: Longman.
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., Fico, F. & Watson, B. R. (2019). *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research* (4th ed.). New York (NY): Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429464287>
- Rifkin, B. (1998). Gender Representation in Foreign Language Textbooks: A Case Study of Textbooks of Russian. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(2), pp. 217–236. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1998.tb01195.x>
- Risager, K. (1991). Cultural References in European Foreign Language Textbooks: An Evaluation of Recent Tendencies. In: D. Buttjes & M. Byram (Eds.), *Mediating Languages and Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Theory of Foreign Language Education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, pp. 181–192.
- (2005). Languaculture as a Key Concept in Language and Culture Teaching. In: B. Preisler, A. Fabricius, H. Haberland, S. Kiærbeck & K. Risager (Eds.), *The Consequences of Mobility: Linguistic and Socio-cultural Contact Zones*. Roskilde: Roskilde University, pp. 185–196.
- (2006a). *Language and Culture: Global Flows and Local Complexity*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- (2006b). Culture in Language: A Transnational View. In: H. L. Andersen, K. Lund & K. Risager (Eds.), *Culture in Language Learning*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, pp. 27–44.
- (2007). *Language and Culture Pedagogy: From a National to a Trans-*



- national Paradigm*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599613>
- (2012). Linguaculture and Transnationality: The Cultural Dimensions of Language. In: J. Jackson (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*. London: Routledge, pp. 101–115.
- Rixon, S. (1981). *How to Use Games in Language Teaching*. London: Macmillan.
- Roschelle, J. & Teasley, S. D. (1995). The Construction of Shared Knowledge in Collaborative Problem Solving. In: C. O'Malley (Ed.), *Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*. Berlin: Springer, pp. 69–97. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-85098-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-85098-1_5)
- Rossel's, V. M. (1971). Realiya [Realities]. In: *Kratkaya literaturnaya entsiklopediya*. Moscow: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya. Vol. 6, pp. 227–228.
- Rössler, P. (2012). Comparative Content Analysis. In: F. Esser & T. Hanitzsch, *The Handbook of Comparative Communication Research*. New York (NY): Routledge, pp. 459–469.
- Rosstat (Federal State Statistics Service) (2021). *Vserossiyskaya perepis' naseleniya 2020 goda* [All-Russian Census of Population 2020]. Retrieved from <https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020>
- Rowell, L. L., Bruce, C. D., Shosh, J. M. & Riel, M. M. (Eds.) (2017). *The Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research*. New York (NY): Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-40523-4>
- Rozenal', D. E. & Telenkova, M. A. (1985). *Slovar' -spravochnik lingvističeskikh terminov* [Reference Dictionary of Linguistic Terms] (3rd ed.). Moscow: Prosveshcheniye.
- RU-1 CS–Bari (2019/2020). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Bari Aldo Moro. Retrieved May 19, 2024 from <https://www.uniba.it/it/corsi/lingue-culture-turismo-mediazione-internazionale/studiare/programmi-corso-di-laurea-in-lingue-e-culture-per-il-turismo-e-la-mediazione-internazionale-a.a.-2019-20/italiano/caratozzolo-112-ling-trad-russa-1-19-20-it.pdf>
- (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Bari Aldo Moro. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.uniba.it/it/corsi/lingue-culture-turismo-mediazione-internazionale/studiare/programmi-corso-di-laurea-in-lingue-e-culture-per-il-turismo-e-la-mediazione-internazionale-a.a.-2021-22/italiano/caratozzolo-112-ling-trad-russa-1-21-22-it.pdf>

- (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Bari Aldo Moro. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.uniba.it/it/corsi/lingue-culture-turismo-mediazioneinternazionale/studiare/programmi-a-a-2022-23/caratozzolo-112-ling-trad-russa-i-22-23-it.pdf>
- (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Bari Aldo Moro. Retrieved May 19, 2024 from [https://www.uniba.it/it/corsi/lingue-culture-turismo-mediazione-internazionale/studiare/programmi-a-a-2023-2024/ling-trad-russa-1\\_m-caratozzolo\\_112\\_23-24\\_ita.pdf](https://www.uniba.it/it/corsi/lingue-culture-turismo-mediazione-internazionale/studiare/programmi-a-a-2023-2024/ling-trad-russa-1_m-caratozzolo_112_23-24_ita.pdf)
- RU-1 CS–Bologna (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Bologna. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unibo.it/it/didattica/insegnamenti/insegnamento/2022/328739>
- (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Bologna. Retrieved May 19, 2024 from <https://www.unibo.it/it/studiare/dottorati-master-specializzazioni-e-altra-formazione/insegnamenti/insegnamento/2023/328739>
- RU-1 CS–Chieti-Pescara (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at G. d’Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://scuolaeconomia.unich.it/home-lingua-russa-i-11123>
- (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at G. d’Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://scuolaeconomia.unich.it/home-lingua-russa-i-11398>
- RU-1 CS–Florence (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Florence. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unifi.it/index.php?module=ofform2&mode=1&cmd=3&AA=2022&afId=618429>
- RU-1 CS–Genoa (2020/2021). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Genoa. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://corsi.unige.it/off.f/2020/ins/43180>
- (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Genoa. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://corsi.unige.it/off.f/2021/ins/50757>
- RU-1 CS–Macerata (2019/2020). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Macerata. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://docenti.unimc.it/viktoriya.malchenko/cours->

- es/2019/21282
- (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Macerata. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://docenti.unimc.it/giuseppina.larocca/courses/2021/24537>
- RU-1 CS–Milan (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Milan. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unimi.it/it/corsi/insegnamenti-dei-corsi-di-laurea/2023/lingua-russa-1>
- (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Milan. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unimi.it/it/corsi/insegnamenti-dei-corsi-di-laurea/2024/lingua-russa-1>
- RU-1 CS–Milan/Catholic (2019/2020). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from [https://www8.unicatt.it/upl/proguc/MI/2020/ITA/LING/Lingua\\_letteratura\\_russa\\_1\\_triennalisti\\_Calusio.docx](https://www8.unicatt.it/upl/proguc/MI/2020/ITA/LING/Lingua_letteratura_russa_1_triennalisti_Calusio.docx)
- (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from [https://www8.unicatt.it/upl/proguc/BS/2022/ITA/LING/Lingua\\_russa\\_1\\_Bonola.docx](https://www8.unicatt.it/upl/proguc/BS/2022/ITA/LING/Lingua_russa_1_Bonola.docx)
- (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from [https://www8.unicatt.it/upl/proguc/MI/2023/ITA/LING/3A0A\\_Lingua\\_letteratura\\_russa\\_1\\_triennalisti\\_Calusio.docx](https://www8.unicatt.it/upl/proguc/MI/2023/ITA/LING/3A0A_Lingua_letteratura_russa_1_triennalisti_Calusio.docx)
- RU-1 CS–Modena-Reggio Emilia (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://personale.unimore.it/rubrica/contenutiad/mabiasio/2022/63193/N0/N0/9999>
- (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://personale.unimore.it/rubrica/contenutiad/mabiasio/2023/68670/N0/N0/9999>
- RU-1 CS–Naples (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Naples L’Orientale. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from [https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?content\\_id=21092&content\\_id\\_start=1&ID\\_Utente=3242](https://docenti.unior.it/index2.php?content_id=21092&content_id_start=1&ID_Utente=3242)
- RU-1 CS–Padua (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Padua. Retrieved August 3,

- 2023 from <https://didattica.unipd.it/off/2021/LT/SU/SU2294/000ZZ/LE05105279/A1302>
- (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Padua. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.didattica.unipd.it/off/2022/LT/SU/SU2294/000ZZ/LE05105279/A1302>
- RU-1 CS–Palermo (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Palermo. Retrieved May 19, 2024 from [file:///C:/Users/Linda/Downloads/scheda\\_trasparenza\\_169986.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Linda/Downloads/scheda_trasparenza_169986.pdf)
- RU-1 CS–Parma (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Parma. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://corsi.unipr.it/it/ugov/degrecourse/263485>
- RU-1 CS–Perugia (2019/2020). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Perugia. Retrieved May 19, 2024 from <https://www.unipg.it/didattica/corsi-di-laurea-e-laurea-magistrale/archivio/offerta-formativa-2019-20?view=elencocorsi&idcorso=213&annoregolamento=2019&idins=173526>
- RU-1 CS–Salento (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Salento. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unisalento.it/futuri-studenti/cosa-studiare/corsi-di-laurea/-/dettaglio/insegnamento/166088/lingua-e-traduzione-lingua-russa-i?inheritRedirect=true>
- RU-1 CS–Siena (2019/2020). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Siena. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://www.unisi.it/ugov/degrecourse/282347>
- (2020/2021). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Siena. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://www.unisi.it/ugov/degrecourse/313455>
- (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Siena. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://www.unisi.it/ugov/degrecourse/282403>
- (2022/2023a). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Siena. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unisi.it/ugov/degrecourse/389067>
- (2022/2023b). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Siena. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://www.unisi.it/ugov/degrecourse/395888>

- (2023/2024). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Siena. Retrieved May 18, 2024 from <https://www.unisi.it/ugov/degrecourse/468192>
- RU-1 CS–Turin (2021/2022). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at the University of Turin. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.lingue.unito.it/do/home.pl/View?doc=Lettorati/rus-so.html>
- RU-1 CS–Venice (2022/2023). Russian-1 Course Syllabus for First-Year RFL Students at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Retrieved August 3, 2023 from <https://www.unive.it/data/insegnamento/381575/programma>
- Rusetskaya, M. N., Rublëva, E. V. & Khekhtel, A. S. (2019). The Use of Audiovisual Technologies in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (as Exemplified by Podcasts). *Amazonia Investiga*, 8(20), pp. 582–595. Retrieved from <https://amazoniainvestiga.info/index.php/amazonia/article/view/185>
- Rybchenkova, L. M. & Zinina, E. A. (2004). Uchebno-metodicheskiy komplekt po predmetu [Educational-Methodological Set by Subject]. In: S. G. Antonova & A. A. Vakhrusheva (Eds.), *Sovremennaya uchebnaya kniga: podgotovka i izdaniye = Sbornik statey*. Moscow, pp. 51–64.
- Sadokhin, A. P. (2014). *Vvedeniye v teoriyu mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii* [Introduction to the Theory of Intercultural Communication]. Moscow: Knorus.
- Safonova, V. V. (1991). *Sotsiokul'turnyy podkhod k obucheniyu inostrannym yazykam* [Sociocultural Approach to Teaching Foreign Languages]. Moscow: Vysshaya shkola, Amscort International.
- (1992). *Kul'turovedeniye i sotsiologiya v yazykovoy politike* [Cultural Studies and Sociology in Language Policy]. Voronezh: Istoki.
- (1996). *Izucheniye yazykov mezhdunarodnogo obshcheniya v kontekste dialoga kul'tur i tsivilizatsiy* [The Study of Languages of International Communication in the Context of the Dialogue of Cultures and Civilizations]. Voronezh: Istoki.
- Salkhanova, Zh. Kh. (2013). Sintez kul'turnykh traditsiy kak forma khudozhestvennogo soznaniya [Synthesis of Cultural Traditions as a Form of Creative Thinking]. In: *Russkiy yazyk v sovremennom mire: Traditsii i innovatsii v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo i v perevode = Materialy III mezhdunarodnoy nauchnoy konferentsii (Gretsiya, 26 apreliya–1 maya 2013 g.)*. Moscow: Higher School of

- Translation and Interpreting of the Moscow State University, pp. 801–811.
- Sapir, E. (1921). *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York (NY): Harcourt, Brace & Company.
- Sarmento, C. (2014). Interculturalism, Multiculturalism, and Intercultural Studies: Questioning Definitions and Repositioning Strategies. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 11(4), pp. 603–618. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2014-0026>
- Saydakhmetova, D. (2020). Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language Through Stories. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 8(5), pp. 75–78.
- Scarcella, R. C. & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The Tapestry of Language Learning: The Individual in the Communicative Classroom*. Boston (MA): Heinle & Heinle.
- Schnapper, D. (1986). Modernité et acculturations. À propos des travailleurs émigrés [Modernity and Acculturation: About Migrant Workers]. *Communications*, 43, pp. 141–168.
- Schneider, J. & von der Emde, S. (2006). Conflicts in Cyberspace: From Communication Breakdown to Intercultural Dialogue in Online Collaborations. In: J. A. Belz & S. L. Thorne (Eds.), *Internet-Mediated Intercultural Foreign Language Education*. Boston (MA): Heinle & Heinle, pp. 178–206.
- Schneider, M. (1997). Interkulturelles Lernen im Russischunterricht [Intercultural Learning in Russian Lessons]. *Fremdsprachenunterricht*, 41(50), 3, pp. 162–165.
- Schulz, R. A. & Ganz, A. (2010). Developing Professional Consensus on the Teaching of Culture: Report on a Survey of Secondary and Postsecondary German Teachers. *Die Unterrichtspraxis*, 43(2), pp. 175–193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-1221.2010.00079.x>
- Seelow, D. (2022). *Games as Transformative Experiences for Critical Thinking, Cultural Awareness, and Deep Learning: Strategies & Resources*. Boca Raton (FL): CRC Press. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003201465>
- Seelye, H. N. (Ed.) (1996). *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*. Boston (MA): Intercultural Press.
- Sell, J. (2017). Storytelling for Intercultural Understanding and Intercultural Sensitivity Development. In: J. Chlopczyk (Ed.), *Beyond Storytelling*. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Gabler, pp. 223–249. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-55111-1\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-55111-1_11)

org/10.1007/978-3-662-54157-9\_12

- Senatorova, O. A. (2020). Uchebno-prakticheskoye posobiye po lingvokul'turologii dlya inostrantsev, izuchayushchikh russkiy yazyk: kontseptsiya i sodержaniye [A Coursebook on Linguocultural Studies for Foreigners Studying the Russian Language: Concept and Content]. *Rusistika*, 18(3), pp. 315–327. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2020-18-3-315-327>
- Senchenkova, E. V. (2020). Format rolevoy igry kak uspehnaya tekhnologiya obucheniya RKI na urovne A1 [Role-Play as a Successful Technology in the Process of Learning Russian as a Foreign Language (A1 Level)]. *Russkiy yazyk za rubezhom*, 279(2), pp. 48–52. <https://doi.org/10.37632/PI.2020.279.2.007>
- Sercu, L. (2005). *Foreign Language Teachers and Intercultural Competence: An International Investigation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853598456>
- Serrat, O. (2017). Storytelling. In: O. Serrat, *Knowledge Solutions: Tools, Methods, and Approaches to Drive Organizational Performance*. Springer: Singapore, pp. 839–842. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9\\_91](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9_91)
- Settles, B. (2012). *Active Learning*. Cham: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-01560-1>
- Shaklein, V. M. (Ed.) (2019). *Rusistika*, 1(17): “Sovremennyye uchebniki russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo” [Modern Textbooks of Russian as a Foreign Language].
- Shamsutdinova, E. Yu. (2008). Tolerantnost' kak pedagogicheskaya problema v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka v inoyazychnoy auditorii [Tolerance as a Pedagogical Problem in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. *Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta druzhby narodov. Voprosy obrazovaniya: yazyki i spetsial'nost'*, 4, pp. 24–27.
- (2020). *Tolerantnost' kak kommunikativnaya kategoriya* [Tolerance as a Communicative Category]. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Shardakova, M. & Pavlenko, A. (2004). Identity Options in Russian Textbooks. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 3(1), pp. 25–46. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0301\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0301_2)
- Shchukin, A. N. (1981). *Metodika ispol'zovaniya audiovizual'nykh sredstv* [Methodology for the Use of Audiovisual Media]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.

- (2003). *Metodika prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Vysshaya shkola.
- (2008). *Sovremennyye intensivnyye metody i tekhnologii obucheniya inostrannym yazykam* [Modern Intensive Methods and the Technologies of Teaching Foreign Languages]. Moscow: Filomatis.
- (2017a). *Teoriya obucheniya inostrannym yazykam (lingvodidakticheskiye osnovy)* [Theory of Foreign Language Teaching (Linguodidactic Basics)]. Moscow: Ikar.
- (2017b). *Metody i tekhnologii obucheniya inostrannym yazykam* [Methods and Technologies of Teaching Foreign Languages]. Moscow: Ikar.
- (2018a). *Prakticheskaya metodika obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu* [Practical Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Flinta.
- (2018b). *Russkiy yazyk kak inostrannyi. Osnovy uchebnikovedeniya* [Russian as a Foreign Language: Basics of Textbook Studies]. Moscow: Ikar.
- (2019). *Metodika prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language] (6th ed.). Moscow: Flinta.
- Shchukin, A. N., Moskovkin, L. V. & Yanchenko, V. D. (2022). *Lingvodidakticheskiy biograficheskiy slovar'* [Linguodidactic Biographical Dictionary]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy.
- Sheremet, O. V. & Ozdemir [Özdemir], E. (2021). K voprosu ob ispol'zovanii storitellinga na zanyatiyakh po RKI v usloviyakh turetsko-russkogo bilingvizma [The Question of the Use of Storytelling in the Classes of Russian as a Foreign Language in the Conditions of Turkish-Russian Bilingualism]. *Yazyk i tekst*, 8(2), pp. 51–61.
- Shibarova, A. & Yarin, A. (2019). *Raz, dva, tri! Corso di lingua russa* [One, Two, Three! A Russian Language Course]. Milan: Hoepli. Vol. 1 (Italian version of A. Shibarova & A. Yarin, *Davay pogovorim. Russisch für Anfänger und Fortgeschrittene*. Stuttgart: Schmetterling 2018).
- Shibko, N. L. (2011). *Metodika obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu* [Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Minsk: Belarusian State University.
- (2014). *Obshchiye voprosy metodiki prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [General Issues of the Methodology for Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. St. Petersburg: Zlatoust.



- Shliakhovchuk, E. & Muñoz García, A. (2020). Intercultural Perspective on Impact of Video Games on Players: Insights From a Systematic Review of Recent Literature. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 20(1), pp. 40–58. <https://doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2020.1.004>
- Shokhidova, M. (2023). Using Case Study to Develop Students' Intercultural Competence in EFL Classrooms. *Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy and Culture*, 4(5), pp. 327–331. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/4QCVT>
- Simpson, A. & Dervin, F. (2019). The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture: Ideological Refractions, Othering and Obedient Politics. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 2(3), pp. 102–119. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v2n3.168>
- Singleton, R. A. & Straits, B. C. (2009). *Approaches to Social Research* (5th ed.). New York (NY): Oxford University Press.
- Sinochkina, B. M. (2018). Russkiy yazyk v massmediynom prostranstve Litvy: k probleme variativnosti [Russian Language in the Mass Media of Lithuania: The Problem of Variability]. *Medialingvistika*, 5(1), pp. 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu22.2018.110>
- Skalkin, V. L. (1981). *Osnovy obucheniya ustnoy inoyazychnoy rechi* [Basics of Teaching Oral Foreign Language Speech]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis*. New York (NY): D. Appleton-Century Company.
- Smirnov, V. I. (2001). Uchebnaya kniga v sisteme didakticheskikh sredstv [Educational Books in the System of Didactic Tools]. *Universitetskaya kniga*, 10, pp. 16–26.
- Sokolova, L. V. (2015). Interpretatsiya poeticheskogo teksta na urokakh RKI v aspekte mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii [Interpretation of the Poetic Text During Lessons of Russian as a Foreign Language in the Aspect of Intercultural Communication]. In: L. A. Verbitskaya, K. A. Rogova & T. I. Popova (Eds.), *Russkiy yazyk i literatura v prostranstve mirovoy kul'tur = Materialy XIII Kongressa MAPRYAL (Granada, 13–20 sentyabrya 2015 g.)*. St. Petersburg: MAPRYAL. Vol. 10, pp. 944–949.
- Solomonova, A. A. (2018). Khudozhestvennyy tekst v mezhkul'turnom uchebnom protsesse [Literary Text in Intercultural Learning Process]. In: N. G. Bragina & A. G. Zhukova (Eds.), *Persekaya granitsy: mezhkul'turnaya kommunikatsiya v global'nom kontekste = Sbornik materi-*

- alov I Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii (Moskva, 14–16 fevralja 2018 g.)*. Moscow: Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, pp. 257–258.
- Spitzberg, B. H. & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence. In: D. K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage, pp. 2–52.
- Sternin, I. A. (2000). *Modeli opisaniya kommunikativnogo povedeniya* [Models for Describing Communicative Behavior]. Voronezh: Garant.
- Stockwell, E. (2015). Using Web-Based Exploratory Tasks to Develop Intercultural Competence in a Homogeneous Cultural Environment. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 53(6), pp. 649–659. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2015.1049642>
- (2018). Teaching Culture in Foreign Language Classes. *Foreign Language Education Research*, 22, pp. 11–23.
- Stone, P. J., Dunphy, D. C., Smith, M. S. & Ogilvie, D. M. (1966). *The General Inquirer: A Computer Approach to Content Analysis*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- Stringer, D. M. & Cassiday, P. A. (2009). *52 Activities for Improving Cross-Cultural Communication*. Boston (MA): Intercultural Press.
- Stubbs, M. & Delamont, S. (1976). *Explorations in Classroom Observation*. New York (NY): John Wiley & Sons.
- Suyarova, A. & Veliyeva, S. (2021). Metodika keys-stadi pri obuchenii ruskomu yazyku kak inostrannomu [Case Study Methodology in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language]. *Aktual'noye v filologii*, 3(3). Retrieved from <https://art.jdpu.uz/index.php/ruslit/article/view/1769>
- Sysoyev, P. V. (2003). *Kontseptsiya yazykovogo polikul'turnogo obrazovaniya* [The Concept of Linguistic Polycultural Education]. Moscow: Evroshkola.
- (2008). *Yazykovoye polikul'turnoye obrazovaniye: teoriya i praktika* [Language Polycultural Education: Theory and Practice]. Moscow: Glossa-press.
- Tajfel, H. (1969). Cognitive Aspects of Prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues*, 25(4), pp. 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1969.tb00620.x>
- Tajfel, H. & Forgas, J. P. (1981). Social Categorization: Cognition, Values and Groups. In: J. P. Forgas (Ed.), *Social Cognition: Perspectives on Everyday Understanding*. London: Academic Press.

- Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1979). An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In: W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey (CA): Brooks/Cole, pp. 33–47.
- Tanner, M. W., Shvidko, E. & Rasmussen, S. (2009). Making Time to Teach Culture Without Taking Time. *Faculty Publications*. 5967. Retrieved from <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/5967>
- Tarasov, E. F. (1996). Mezhekul'turnoye obshcheniye – novaya ontologiya analiza yazykovogo soznaniya [Intercultural Communication—A New Ontology for Analyzing Linguistic Consciousness]. In: N. V. Ufimtseva (Ed.), *Etnokul'turnaya spetsifika yazykovogo soznaniya*. Moscow: Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, pp. 7–22.
- Teliya, V. N. (1996). *Russkaya frazeologiya. Semanticheskii, pragmaticheskii i lingvokul'turologicheskii aspekty* [Russian Phraseology: Semantic, Pragmatic, and Linguocultural Aspects]. Moscow: Shkola “Yazyki russkoy kul'tury”.
- Ter-Minasova, S. G. (2000). *Yazyk i mezhekul'turnaya kommunikatsiya* [Language and Intercultural Communication]. Moscow: Slovo.
- Theobald, E. J., Hill, M. J., Tran, E., Agrawal, S., Arroyo, E. N., Behling, S., Chambwe, N., Cintrón, D. L., Cooper, J. D., Dunster, G., Grummer, J. A., Hennessey, K., Hsiao, J., Iranon, N., Jones, L., Jordt, H., Keller, M., Lacey, M. E., Littlefield, C. E., Lowe, A., Newman, S., Okolo, V., Olroyd, S., Peacock, B. R., Pickett, S. B., Slager, D. L., Caviedes-Solis, I. W., Stanchak, K. E., Sundaravardan, V., Valdebenito, C., Williams, C. R., Zinsli, K. & Freeman, S. (2020). Active Learning Narrows Achievement Gaps for Underrepresented Students in Undergraduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 117(12), pp. 6476–6483. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1916903117>
- Thornbury, S. (2006). *An A–Z of ELT*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.
- Ting-Toomey, S. & Takai, J. (2006). Explaining Intercultural Conflict: *Promising Approaches and Directions*. In: J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Communication: Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage, pp. 691–724. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976176>
- Tlostanova, M. V. (2004). *Zhit' nikogda, pisat' niotkuda. Postsovetskaya literatura i estetika transkul'turatsii* [Living Never. Writing From Nowhere: Post-Soviet Literature and the Aesthetics of Transculturation]. Moscow: URSS.

- Tomalin, B. & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural Awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (1995). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*. Alexandria (VA): Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tomlinson, C. A. & Allan, S. D. (2000). *Leadership for Differentiating Schools & Classrooms*. Alexandria (VA): Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Tompkins, P. K. (1998). Role Playing/Simulation. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 4(8). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Tompkins-Role-Playing.html>
- Torresin, L. (2022a). What a Modern Intercultural-Based RFL Textbook Should Look Like. *Prilozi proučavanju jezika*, 53, pp. 271–288. <https://doi.org/10.19090/ppj.2022.53.271-288>
- (2022b). La “competenza comunicativa interculturale” nell’insegnamento del russo come LS (RKI). *Teorie e pratiche didattiche, problemi e criticità* [“Intercultural Communicative Competence” in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language (RKI): Theories and Teaching Practices, Problems, and Critical Issues]. *Scuola e Lingue Moderne*, 1-3, pp. 22–28.
- (2023a). The Dark Sides of an Intercultural-Based Teaching of RFL: A Critical Approach. *Annali di Ca’ Foscari. Serie occidentale*, 57, pp. 153–176. <https://doi.org/10.30687/AnnOc/2499-1562/2023/11/007>
- (2023b). L’insegnamento interculturale del russo come lingua straniera: problemi vecchi e nuovi [Intercultural Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language: Old and New Problems]. *Studi di Glottodidattica*, 8(1), pp. 31–43. <https://doi.org/10.15162/1970-1861/1819>
- (2023c). Literature on the Intercultural Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language (2007–2022): Some Critical Notes. *Iris Journal of Educational Research*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.33552/IJER.2023.01.000511>
- (2023e). Culture in Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) Textbooks in Italian Universities: Critically Analyzing Concepts of Culture and Intercultural Competence. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 5(2), 1759. <https://doi.org/10.59400/fls.v5i2.1759>
- (2024). Russistica italiana e didattica del russo all’università. Rassegna analitica di dieci anni (2013–2023) di ricerca [Italian Russian Studies and Russian Teaching at University: Analytical Review of Ten Years (2013–2023) of Research]. *Studi Slavistici*, 21(1), pp. 193–208. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1120775523000000>

doi.org/10.36253/Studi\_Slavis-15536

- Torrezin [Torresin], L. (2022c). Vuzovskoye prepodavaniye russkoy literatury na urokakh RKI v mezhkul'turnoy perspektive [Higher Education Teaching of Russian Literature in Russian Language Classes: An Intercultural Perspective]. In: R. A. Ogorodnikova & A. A. Emel'yanova (Eds.), *Rossiya i mir: transnatsional'nyye kommunikatsii i vzaimoproniknoveniye kul'tur = Sbornik statey mezhdunarodnoy mezhdistsiplinarnoy nauchnoy konferentsii (Moskva, 22 aprelya 2022 g.)*. Moscow: Knigodel, pp. 356–365.
- (2022d). “Russkaya dusha” v prepodavanii RKI: kriticheskiy analiz stereotipnykh diskursov v sovremennoy didakticheskoy praktike [“Russian Soul” in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language: A Critical Analysis of Stereotypical Discourses in Contemporary Didactic Practice]. In: S. Gudurić, J. Dražić & M. Stefanović (Eds.), *Jezici i kulture u vremenu i prostoru*. Novi Sad: University of Novi Sad. Vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 451–461.
- (2023d). Kakaya kul'tura? Problema kul'turnogo elementa v uchebnikakh po RKI [What Kind of Culture? The Problem of the Cultural Element in the Textbooks of Russian as a Foreign Language]. In: S. V. Gusarenko, S. G. Kydreva, F. R. Odekova & O. I. Pantelidi, *Aktual'nyye problemy prepodavaniya russkogo yazyka kak nerodnogo/inostrannogo: rossiyskiye i zarubezhnyye praktiki = Materialy Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-metodicheskoy konferentsii (Stavropol', 26–30 sentyabrya 2022 g.)*. Stavropol: North Caucasus Federal University, pp. 353–361.
- (2023f). Prepodavaniye RKI v Italii segodnya na fone kul'tury otmeny [Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language in Italy Today Against the Background of Cancel Culture]. In: V. P. Abramov, I. N. Lekareva & A. A. Nemyka (Eds.), *Dialog yazykov i kul'tur: opyt, innovatsii, perspektivy = Materialy II Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii (Krasnodar, 26 oktyabrya 2022 g.)*. Krasnodar: Kuban State University, pp. 66–86.
- Tóth, Á., Lógó, P. & Lógó, E. (2019). The Effect of the Kahoot Quiz on the Student's Results in the Exam. *Periodica Polytechnica Social and Management Sciences*, 27(2), pp. 173–179. <https://doi.org/10.3311/PPso.12464>
- Triandis, H. C. (1994). *Culture and Social Behavior*. New York (NY): McGraw-Hill.

- Trushina, L. B. (Ed.) (1981). *Soderzhaniye i struktura uchebnika russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Content and Structure of a Textbook of Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Tsertsvadze, M. G. (2011). Problema mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii v obuchenii russkomu yazyku kak nerodnomu [Problems of Intercultural Communication in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language]. In: S. I. Yakimova (Ed.), *Literatura i zhurnalistika stran Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskogo regiona v mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii XX–XXI vv. = Sbornik nauchnykh statey po materialam mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii (17–18 marta 2011 goda)*. Khabarovsk: Pacific National University, pp. 175–179.
- Tszin [Jing], Ya & Nizkoshapkina, O. V. (2023). Formirovaniye russkoyazychnoy kommunikativnoy kompetentnosti v protsesse prepodavaniya RKI s ispol'zovaniyem metoda «storitelling» [Using the Storytelling Method in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language to Form Russian-Speaking Communicative Competence]. *Moskovskiy pedagogicheskiy zhurnal*, 4, pp. 93–107. <https://doi.org/10.18384/2949-4974-2023-4-93-107>
- Tupal'skiy, N. I. (1976). *Osnovnyye problemy vuzovskogo uchebnika* [Main Problems of University Textbooks]. Minsk: Vysheyschaya shkola.
- Turner, J. C. (1985). Social Categorization and the Self-Concept: A Social Cognitive Theory of Group Behavior. In: E. J. Lawler (Ed.), *Advances in Group Processes: Theory and Research*. Greenwich (CT): JAI Press. Vol. 2, pp. 77–122.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (2001). *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*. Paris: UNESCO. [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13179&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
- (2005). *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000142919>
- (2006). *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000147878>
- (2010). *Education for Intercultural Understanding*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000189051>
- (2013). *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000219768>

- Van Deusen-Scholl, N. & May, S. (2017). *Second and Foreign Language Education* (3rd ed.). Cham: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02246-8>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Stories and Racism. In: D. K. Mumby (Ed.), *Narrative and Social Control: Critical Perspectives*. Newbury Park (CA): Sage, pp. 121–142.
- (2001). Critical Discourse Analysis. In: D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 352–371.
- (2008a). *Discourse and Power*. New York (NY): Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2008b). *Discourse and Context: A Sociocognitive Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Varichenko, G. V. (2015). Rol' formirovaniya kul'tury povedeniya v obuchenii inoyazychnomu obshcheniyu [The Role of Cultural Behavior Formation in Foreign-Language Communication Teaching]. In: L. A. Verbitskaya, K. A. Rogova & T. I. Popova (Eds.), *Russkiy yazyk i literatura v prostranstve mirovoy kul'tur = Materialy XIII Kongressa MAPRYAL (Granada, 13–20 sentyabrya 2015 g.)*. St. Petersburg: MAPRYAL. Vol. 10, pp. 200–204.
- Vashchekina, T. V. (2016). Khudozhestvennyy tekst na zanyatiyakh po RKI: analiz i kommentirovaniye [Literary Text in the Classroom of Russian as a Foreign Language: Analysis and Comment]. In: *Prepodavaniye russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo v vuze: traditsii, novatsii i perspektivy. IV Mezhdunarodnaya nauchno-metodicheskaya konferentsiya (25–26 fevralya 2016 g.) = Sbornik nauchnykh statey*. Moscow: MGIMO University, pp. 515–521.
- Vasil'yeva, G. M. (2016). Mezhkul'turnaya kommunikatsiya [Intercultural Communication]. In: I. P. Lysakova (Ed.), *Metodika obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu*. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Kursy, pp. 86–95.
- Vasilyuk, I. P. (2010). Prikladnaya lingvokul'turologiya: problemy otbora i analiza yazykovogo materiala dlya praktiki obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu [Applied Linguocultural Studies: Problems of Selection and Analysis of Language Material for the Practice of Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. *Izvestiya Rossiyskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta im. A. I. Gertsena*, 123, pp. 24–33.

- Vereshchagin, E. M. & Kostomarov, V. G. (1973). *Yazyk i kul'tura: lingvostranovedeniye v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Language and Culture: Linguo-Country Studies in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. Moscow: Moscow State University.
- Verkuyten, M., Yogeewaran, K., Mepham, K. & Sprong, S. (2020). Interculturalism: A New Diversity Ideology With Interrelated Components of Dialogue, Unity, and Identity Flexibility. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(3), pp. 505–519. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2628>
- Veselovskaya, T. S. (2020). Vyyavleniye kartiny mira na osnove analiza chastotnykh kollokatsiy v uchebnykh tekstakh po russkomu yazyku dlya mladsheklassnikov [The Linguistic World-Image in Russian Language Primary School Textbooks: A Corpus Study]. *Etnopsikholingvistika*, 3, pp. 224–237. <https://doi.org/10.31249/epl/2020.03.16>
- Vinokur, T. G. (1993). *Govoryashchiy i slushayushchiy. Varianty rechevogo povedeniya* [Speaker and Listener: Speech Behavior Options]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Vlakhov, S. I. & Florin, S. P. (1980). *Neperevodimoye v perevode* [Untranslatable in Translation]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyye otnosheniya.
- Volkov, V. V. & Gladilina, I. V. (2014). *Khudozhestvennyy tekst v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* [Literary Text in the Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language]. Tver: Tver State University.
- Vorob'ev, V. V. (1997). *Lingvokul'turologiya (teoriya i metody)* [Linguocultural Studies (Theory and Methods)]. Moscow: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.
- (1999). O stazuse lingvokul'turologii [On the Status of Linguocultural Studies]. In: *Russkiy yazyk, literatura i kul'tura na rubezhe vekov = Materialy IX Mezhdunarodnogo Kongressa MAPRYAL (Bratislava, 16–21 avgusta 1999 g.)*. Bratislava: MAPRYAL. Vol. 2, pp. 125–126.
- Vyatutnev, M. N. (1982). Ot metodov k tselostnomu podkhodu v obuchenii vladeniyu russkim yazykom kak inostrannym [From Methods to a Holistic Approach in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language]. *Russian Language Journal*, 36(125), pp. 25–38. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43674339>
- (1984). *Teoriya uchebnika russkogo yazyka dlya inostrantsev (metodicheskiye osnovy)* [Theory of the Russian Language Textbook for Foreigners (Methodological Basics)]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Vyatutnev, M. N., Sosenko E. Yu. & Protopopova, I. A. (1977). *Gorizont* [Horizon]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Vol. 1.



- Vyatutnev, M. N., Vokhmina, L. L. & Kochetkova, A. I. (1983). *Russkiy yazyk* [Russian Language]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk. Vol. 2.
- Vygotsky [Vygotskiy], L. (2012). *Thought and Language*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- Wajnryb, R. (1992). *Classroom Observation Tasks: A Resource Book for Language Teachers and Trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Walker, R. & Adelman, C. (1975). *A Guide to Classroom Observation*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203393253>
- Ware, P. D. & Kramsch, C. (2005). Toward an Intercultural Stance: Teaching German and English Through Telecollaboration. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(2), pp. 190–205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00274.x>
- Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis* (2nd ed). Newbury Park (CA): Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412983488>
- Whorf, B. L. (1956). *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1976). The Authenticity of Language Data. In: J. F. Fanselow & R. H. Crymes (Eds.), *On TESOL '76*. Washington (DC): TESOL, pp. 261–270.
- (1990). *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wiest, L. R. (2003). Twelve Ways to Have Students Analyze Culture. *The Clearing House*, 76(3), pp. 136–138.
- Willes, K. (2017). Sampling Decisions. In: M. Allen (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage, pp. 1544–1546.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Harlow: Longman.
- Witchalls, P. J. (2015). Teaching and Learning Intercultural Business Communication Through an Authentic Case Study: An Experience Report. *interculture journal: Online-Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Studien*, 14(24), pp. 67–76. Retrieved June 18, 2024 from [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/45013/ssoar-interculture-j-2015-24-witchalls-Teaching\\_and\\_learning\\_intercultural\\_business.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/45013/ssoar-interculture-j-2015-24-witchalls-Teaching_and_learning_intercultural_business.pdf?sequence=1)
- Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (Eds.) (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020>
- World Bank (2010). *Intercultural Communication*. Washington (DC): World Bank.

- Wragg, E. C. (1999). *An Introduction to Classroom Observation* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Xu, Q. (2011). Role Play - An Effective Approach to Developing Overall Communicative Competence. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 7(4), pp. 36–39. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020110704.317> Retrieved from <http://cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/j.ccc.1923670020110704.317>
- Yanova, N. N. & Mirzoyeva, V. M. (2011). Vospriyatiye pushkinskogo teksta v inostrannoy auditorii [Perception of Pushkin's Text by a Foreign Audience]. In: A. Krasovski (Ed.), *Russkiy yazyk i kul'tura: teoriya i praktika prepodavaniya v shkole i v vuze = Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo nauchno-metodicheskogo seminara, posvyashchennogo 20-letiyu Rumynskoy assotsiatsii prepodavateley russkogo yazyka i literatury (Bukharest, 30.09.2010–04.10.2010 g.)*. Bucharest: Bucharest University Press, pp. 231–235.
- Young, M. D. & Diem, S. (Eds.) (2023). *Handbook of Critical Education Research: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Emerging Approaches*. New York (NY): Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003141464>
- Yusupova, N. M. (2021). Case Study Method for Teaching Russian Language as a Foreigner. *The American Journal of Interdisciplinary Innovations and Research*, 3(3), pp. 75–78. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajjir/Volume03Issue03-13>
- Zapata-Barrero, R. & Mansouri, F. (2022). A Multi-Scale Approach to Interculturalism: From Globalised Politics to Localised Policy and Practice. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 23, pp. 775–795. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00846-w>
- Zarate, G. (1986). *Enseigner une culture étrangère* [Teaching a Foreign Culture]. Paris: Hachette.
- (1993). *Représentations de l'étranger et didactique des langues* [Representations of the Foreigner and Language Didactics]. Paris: Didier.
- Zaytseva, I. A. & Lapshina, S. S. (2020). Lingvokul'turologiya kak baza dlya mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii na urokakh RKI v sisteme vysshego obrazovaniya (na primere kviza) [Linguocultural Studies as a Basis for Cross-Cultural Communication in the Russian Language Teaching System in Higher Education (On the Example of the Quiz)]. *Sovremennoye pedagogicheskoye obrazovaniye*, 6, pp. 155–160.
- Zepeda, S. J. (2013). *The Instructional Leader's Guide to Informal Classroom Observations* (2nd ed.). New York (NY): Routledge.

- Zhukova, I. N., Lebed'ko, M. G., Proshina, Z. G. & Yuzefovich, N. G. (2013). *Slovar' terminov mezhkul'turnoy kommunikatsii* [Glossary of Intercultural Communication Terms]. Moscow: Flinta, Nauka.
- Zhuravlëva, L. S. & Zinov'yeva, M. D. (1984). *Obucheniye chteniyu (na materiale khudozhestvennykh tekstov)* [Teaching Reading (On the Basis of Literary Texts)]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Zimnyaya, I. A. (1989). *Psikhologiya obucheniya nerodnomu yazyku (na materiale russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo)* [Psychology of Teaching a Non-Native Language (On the Basis of Russian as a Foreign Language)]. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk.
- Živov [Zhivov], V. (2012). Il capitale linguistico e le sue trasformazioni nella storia linguistica del secolo scorso [Linguistic Capital and Its Transformation in the History of Russian in the 20th Century]. *Studi Slavistici*, 9(1), pp. 71–84. [https://doi.org/10.13128/Studi\\_Slavici-12229](https://doi.org/10.13128/Studi_Slavici-12229)
- Zuyev, D. D. (1974). Problemy struktury shkol'nogo uchebnika [Problems of School Textbook Structure]. *Problemy shkol'nogo uchebnika*. Moscow: Prosveshcheniye, pp. 28–46.
- (1983). *Shkol'nyy uchebnik* [The School Textbook]. Moscow: Pedagogika.
- (2017). Uchebnik [Textbook]. In: *Bol'shaya rossiyskaya entsiklopediya*. Moscow: Bol'shaya rossiyskaya entsiklopediya. Vol. 33, p. 149.





This book is devoted to the topic of teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) from an intercultural perspective with special attention to the university context and Italian-speaking students.

It is underpinned by three main aims. The first is to provide the reader with a theoretical-operational framework on intercultural RFL teaching, giving him/her the methodological tools to study this area and/or to apply it to his/her own teaching. The second is to promote a critical awareness among readers of the dominant ideologies and discourses underlying both academic research on the subject and the teaching materials themselves, so as to enable them to take note of the problems of RFL intercultural teaching (compared to the issues of foreign language education of other languages) and attempt to overcome them, with a view to enhancing teacher learning/development. The third—more general—aim seeks to help the reader look at the RFL area as if through a lens that shows different angles and shades, thus leading to greater understanding of the complexity of teaching and learning processes as a whole.

The study discloses the ideological nature of RFL intercultural teaching by investigating its national and cultural essentialist discourses and advocates a pluricentric and complex image of the Russian-speaking cultural space which is rather new for the field, where static, mythologized, and uncritical ideas and representations of identity and culture (e.g., “Russian soul”) still prevail to this day.

