

Development of Regional Studies Competence of a Trainee Teacher of Foreign Languages Using Authentic Materials about P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky

Desarrollo de la competencia en estudios regionales de un maestro en prácticas de idiomas extranjeros que utiliza materiales auténticos sobre P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky

Elena CHESNOKOVA ¹; Elena USACHEVA ²

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ABSTRACT:

The authors consider the importance and potential of developing regional studies competence in trainee teachers of a foreign language, which is an issue of international significance, but was not reflected in textbooks on foreign languages. The article shows the way of forming regional studies competence using travel materials of world-famous scientist P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky to the Tian-Shan, as well as a specially developed set of tasks (game stations) created using professionally relevant materials.

Keywords: regional studies competence; teaching reading; learning stations; dialogue of cultures

RESUMEN:

Los autores consideran la importancia y el potencial del desarrollo de la competencia de los estudios regionales en los profesores en prácticas de un idioma extranjero, que es un tema de importancia internacional, pero no se reflejó en los libros de texto sobre lenguas extranjeras. El artículo muestra la forma de formar la competencia de los estudios regionales utilizando materiales de viaje del científico de fama mundial P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky al Tian-Shan, así como un conjunto especialmente desarrollado de tareas (estaciones de juego) creadas utilizando materiales profesionalmente relevantes.

Palabras clave: competencia en estudios regionales; enseñando a leer; estaciones de aprendizaje; diálogo de culturas

1. Introduction

The hypothesis of the research is formulated in accordance with the stated goal and claims that the authentic materials used, as well as a specially designed set of tasks (game stations) should be based on professionally relevant material, which will contribute to the development of regional

studies competence of students at pedagogical universities.

In accordance with the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education for Course 44.03.05, a graduate of a pedagogical university should be able to "develop and implement cultural and educational programs" (Orlova, 2011), which requires certain competences, including socio-cultural competence. However, is it possible to claim that regional studies competence has been formed when a graduate of a pedagogical university cannot present his small motherland in a dialogue between cultures? Thus, it is necessary to develop this competence through foreign language, which is the key point of the methodology of teaching foreign languages in a pedagogical university. So, the goal of this research includes determining and devising the methods and techniques for developing regional studies component.

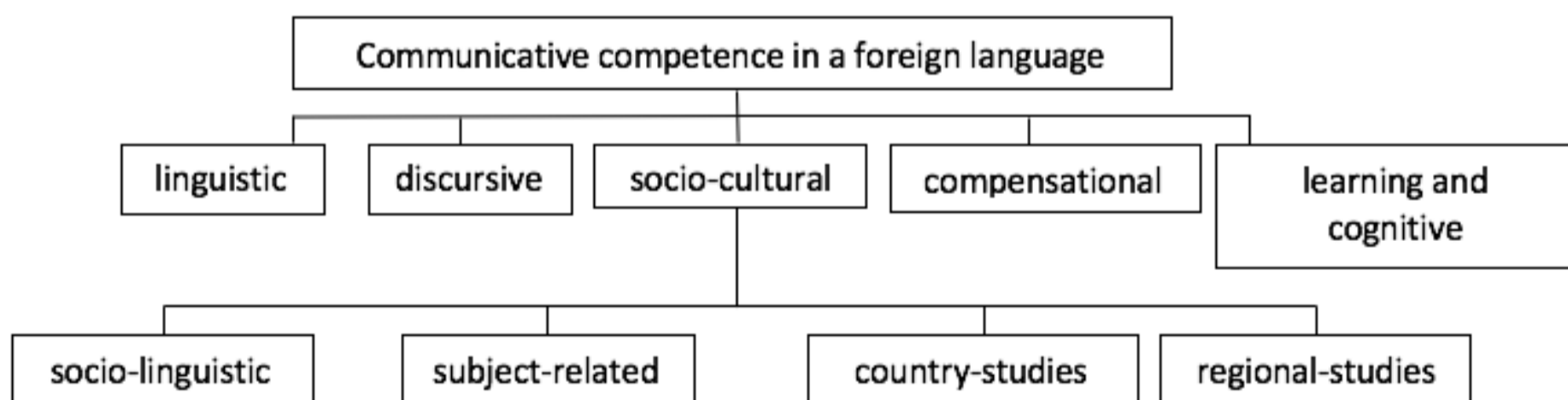
Would-be teachers of a foreign language need to know not only the socio-cultural specifics of the country whose language they study, but they should also deepen their knowledge about the native country and the region where they live. This need is linked with the modern understanding of the process of intercultural communication, the success of which depends on the willingness and ability of participants in intercultural dialogue in a foreign language to use not only knowledge about the culture of the interlocutor's country, but also competently present their national specifics, in particular, to be able to share regionally-specific information about the native land.

2. Literature Review

At different times, regional studies component as part of teaching foreign languages and various issues related to this were explored by R.Z. Bogoudinova (2013), V.K. Shapovalov (1997), and others. These authors presented methodological recommendations and textbooks in English, German and French.

In the theory and methodology of teaching foreign languages, regional studies competence is considered to be part of socio-cultural competence (Figure 1) and is defined as "readiness and ability of the secondary linguistic personality to successfully carry out intercultural communication using the knowledge reflecting the specifics of the regional cultural picture of the world, skills of applying them, the ability to interpret phenomena of the regional culture and ethnic characteristics of the peoples living in the territory of the region, and a positive attitude towards the partner of communication" (Bogoudinova, 2013; Shapovalov, 1997; Yazykova, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2011; *Regional Model ...*, 2016).

Figure 1
Structure of communicative competence in a foreign language



Using the regional studies materials at lessons of foreign language implies combination of teaching and educating in various spheres of culture, which creates positive motivation and promotes more conscious mastering of a foreign language. At the same time, such an approach not only broadens the outlook of students and develops their skills of receiving information from various sources, but it also contributes to the formation of social responsibility of the personality of a trainee teacher by forming a personal attitude toward specific issues related to the development of the region as part of the Motherland.

International researchers, such as H. Shapiro, D. Rene, K. Lauritzen, P. Irving (2011) and others, do not pay a lot of attention to the regional aspect of learning. For example, the authors of this article did not find any fundamental research on this type of competence. All international methods see competence as a set of qualities of a fully-developed personality which can be successful in the 21st century. In the context of globalization, the growth of the digital economy, the development of science and technology, people are constantly learning something new,

adapting to changes and making decisions in non-typical situations.

In addition, these studies, guidelines and manuals do not contain specific instructions on the ways and means of forming regional studies competence of students doing a teacher training course at university.

We believe that the trainee teacher of a foreign language should have knowledge about the history and modern life of the native land, and not only in native, but also in foreign languages studied at university. Students also need to learn how to relate the events of national, regional and world history and explain their attitude to the most significant events and personalities of the region's history and cultural achievements. To make the study of the regional material personally meaningful for each student, a trainee teacher should not only know the methods and techniques for forming regional studies competence, but also work on the development of their own regional studies competence.

3. Materials and Methods

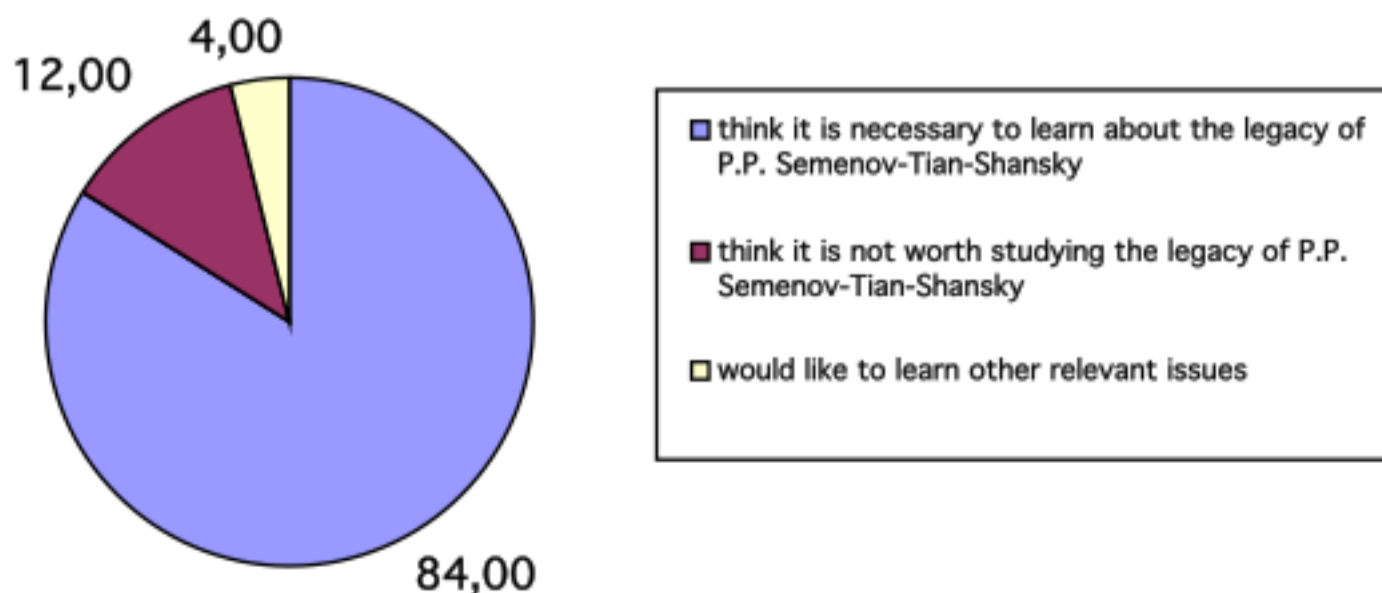
Let us consider the possibility and necessity of forming regional studies competence on the example of a Russian pedagogical university (P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky Lipetsk State Pedagogical University). In 2016 the University was given the name of outstanding Russian geographer, botanist, statesman P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky whose life was closely connected with the Lipetsk region. Having analyzed the experience of working with students, we assumed that they do not know enough about the biography and work of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky to present this information in a multicultural dialogue. Therefore, the study aims to find out how well students are familiar with the legacy of their fellow countryman, and how these gaps in knowledge can be filled by means of a foreign language.

To determine how much students know about the legacy of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, in January 2018 we conducted a survey which embraced 100 students (Figures 2 and 3). Those surveyed were 2-5 year students of the Institute of Philology at P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky Lipetsk State Pedagogical University. The students answered the following questions:

1. Why does the University bear the name of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky?
2. What can you tell a foreigner about P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky in German or English? Why?
3. In your opinion, is it necessary to learn about the legacy of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky at lessons of oral and written practice of the first or second foreign language? Why do you think so?
4. Do you need to develop regional studies competence of students during your teaching practice? If yes, why do you think so?

Figure 2

Survey results for students at the Institute of Philology of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky Lipetsk State Pedagogical University

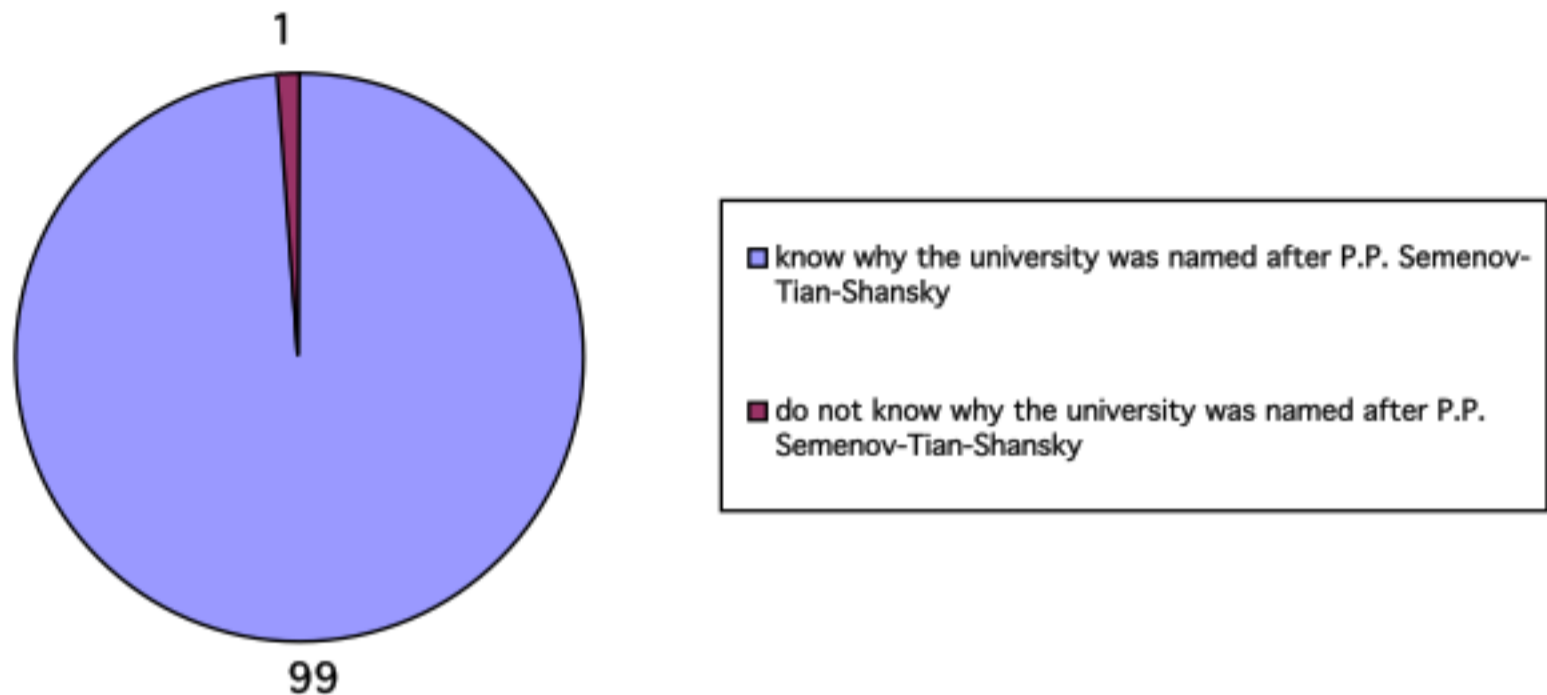


Analysis of the survey shows that, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of students (99%) know why their university bears the name of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, their knowledge about this outstanding scientist is extremely limited, which they admitted with regret answering the second question. At the same time, 12% of the respondents believe that it is not necessary to study in detail the legacy of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky at lessons of oral and written practice due to the insufficient number of hours given to language practice, so students will have to work more on their own. Besides, 4% of respondents would like to study other pressing issues, and 84% of

the respondents mention the need to learn about the legacy of the outstanding fellow-countryman, as, on the one hand, it broadens their scope and promotes learning of a foreign language and, on the other hand, it is important for teaching practice in school and when communicating with foreigners. At the same time, 97% of the respondents claimed that it is necessary to form regional studies competence in schoolchildren during their teaching practice, although they do not suggest how this can be done.

Figure 3

Survey results for students at the Institute of Philology of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky Lipetsk State Pedagogical University



4. Results

The survey showed, on the one hand, students' lack of knowledge about the great scientist, whose name was given to their university, on the other hand – their wish to get acquainted with the legacy of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky at lessons of foreign language. Having studied several English language courses, we could conclude that their content does not fully develop the regional studies competence of a trainee teacher of a foreign language. There is also no comparison of cultural characteristics of students' region, their country and the countries of the studied language. In addition, none of the courses provided scientific justification for forming regional studies competence in the course of teaching a foreign language. Thus, there was a contradiction between realizing the need to form regional studies competence and the lack of scientific provisions on the system of its formation by trainee teachers of a foreign language.

5. Discussion

We propose to use scientific memoirs P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky and C. Thomas "Travels in the Tian-Shan" as contents for training of prospective foreign language teachers (1998).

The book is the result of enormous scientific and public work of the author that took several decades and it tells about the region's stunning nature, life and customs of the local population; it has amazing sense of humor, easy style, and numerous details. "Travels in the Tian-Shan" was translated into English by Lyudmila Gilmour, Colin Thomas and Marcus Wheeler and published in London in 1998. The work presents extremely interesting information on the route of the expedition of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, information about the land, people, their culture, traditions, customs, etc. We think this authentic text can be used for the development of regional studies competence of trainee teachers of a foreign language.

We believe that the development of regional studies competence can be carried out, first of all, when teaching reading and listening in a foreign language. For instance, at the pre-text stage, whose purpose, as we know, is to create motivation for reading or listening to the text and removing language difficulties, students may be asked to answer a number of questions about the content of the text before getting familiar with it. Later, reading or listening, students can check how correct their ideas were. The teacher may also ask students to look at photographs of the places that are mentioned in the text, so that they describe these pictures and suggest how they may relate to the text. To remove language difficulties, students may be given a list of keywords with a definition in a foreign language or a translation before reading or listening to the extract

and then asked to predict the content of the text.

At the stage of reading or listening to the text, which aims to develop these skills and checks the understanding of what has been read or heard, the teacher can use test tasks of an open and a closed type. Also, the teacher may ask students to trace the route of the expedition on the map.

At the stage after reading or listening, which aims to develop communicative competence, students may be given various creative assignments. For example, to write an eye-witness report, to present the text in the form of a telegram, an e-mail or a post in a live journal, to interview the main character, to develop and describe the route of the journey made by P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, to create a booklet advertising this trip, to act as a guide, etc.

To teach speaking, the teacher may give the following questions for discussion:

Is it important for a trainee teacher of a foreign language to have vast knowledge of their small motherland? What would you tell a foreigner who is interested in culture/history/literature, etc. of your native land? How can a teacher make students interested in the history of their native land?

To practice dialogue skills, students in pairs discuss the approximate route of a journey they could make to the places visited by P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky during his expeditions.

With students in their last years of study, it may be viable to conduct a role play – a talk show on the topic "New sides of well-known people", with such roles, apart from the moderator, as P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, M.M. Prishvin, I.A. Bunin, and others.

To teach writing, the teacher can ask students to write an abstract to scientific memoirs of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky "Travels in the Tian Shan".

Authentic materials about P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky may provide content for several learning stations. Learning stations (Lernstationen) is an organizational form that can be filled with various learning technologies. For teaching foreign languages, working in a 'stations mode' is "a set of activities specially organized by the teacher, conducted in student groups and aimed at solving certain tasks during the final check" (*Orlova, 2011*).

We propose to form regional studies competence by using learning stations, which will teach students to independently apply knowledge in new conditions; this will also enable to create and use a learning situation that is as similar to the conditions of real communication as possible. The number of participants in each team varies from three to five students. Teams can be formed by the teacher, by students' themselves, by lot or using game technologies. Students can use reference materials (dictionaries, reference books, copy books, the Internet) only at the stage of preparation for a journey, but it is not allowed to use records or reference materials going through stations.

Teams travel through stations in random order, and the time allocated for preparation for the journey and traveling through the stations is limited. It may be viable to give feedback. Students check their answers for the station with keys immediately during the activity.

It may be viable to differentiate tasks using color. For example, each group has to pass one red, blue and green station. These stations should contain the minimum the students have to master.

The element of competition – the wish to do as many stations as possible within the given time and to show a higher result makes training effective. The teacher can award the winners according to the results of the activity.

Students' reflection is also important, as it is when they can discuss the value of the knowledge obtained, identify the tasks that were most or least difficult, air their opinions and ideas whether they will be able to use this assignment (learning stations) and this content in future teaching.

The teacher uses the scientific memoirs of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky "Travels in the Tian-Shan" to select texts when preparing a journey through stations and devises various tasks based on these texts.

Texts should be of approximately the same size and difficulty. Since students can use dictionaries and other reference materials when preparing for a journey through the stations, no adaptation of the texts is required.

For example, to get some initial information about the biography of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, the teacher can give the following texts, dividing them first into logical parts for better presentation of the material and give them to either a group of students or individually. It is feasible to give questions for checking the understanding of what has been read before working with the texts.

TEXT 1

The **Tian Shan**, also known as the **Tengri Tagh**, meaning the Mountains of Heaven or the Heavenly Mountain, is a large system of mountain ranges located in Central Asia. The highest peak in the Tian Shan is Jengish Chokusu, at 7,439 metres (24,406 ft) high. Its lowest point is the Turpan Depression, which sits at 154 m (505 ft) below sea level.

The Chinese name for Tian Shan may have been derived from the Xiongnu word Qilian (simplified Chinese: 祁连; traditional Chinese: 祁連; pinyin: Qí lián) – according to Tang commentator Yan Shigu, Qilian is the Xiongnu word for sky or heaven. Sima Qian in the Records of the Grand Historian mentioned Qilian in relation to the homeland of the Yuezhi, and the term is believed to refer to the Tian Shan rather than the Qilian Mountains 1,500 kilometres (930 mi) further east now known by this name. The Tannu-Ola mountains in Tuva has the same meaning in its name ("heaven/celestial mountains" or "god/spirit mountains"). Tian Shan is sacred in Tengrism, and its second-highest peak is known as Khan Tengri which may be translated as "Lord of the Spirits".

TEXT 2

Pyotr Semenov was born into a noble family and studied at Saint Petersburg University. Together with Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Semenov attended secret meetings of the "Petrashovsky Circle" (a literary discussion group of progressive-minded commoner-intellectuals in St. Petersburg). During the 1850s he studied geography and geology in Berlin under Alexander Humboldt and Carl Ritter, whose writings he translated into Russian.

On Humboldt's suggestion, Semenov was determined to explore the largely unknown mountains of the Tian Shan. In 1856, he set off from Barnaul on his first expedition, passing through the Altay Mountains and visiting Lake Issyk Kul on his way. In 1857, he returned to the Tian Shan, exploring the interior of this hitherto unknown mountain range. Semenov was the first European to see the scenic panorama of the Tengri Tag, and its most beautiful peak, the colossal Khan Tengri.

One of his most interesting discoveries was to disprove Humboldt's earlier claims about Tian Shan's supposed volcanic origins. Semenov found no evidence of volcanic activity anywhere in the mountains. The next year, he published the first systematic description of the Tian Shan. The reputation of this monograph was such that half a century later Nicholas II of Russia authorized him to add the epithet "Tian-Shansky" (that is, "of Tian Shan") to his last name.

Semenov also became interested in statistics and did his best to advance this discipline in Russia. He served as Chairman of the Central Committee for Statistics from 1864 until 1874, when it was transformed into the Statistical Committee of the Ministry of Interior, of which he remained Chairman until 1891. It was largely due to his efforts that the first census of the Russian Empire was held in 1897. The same year, he was made a member of the State Council of Imperial Russia.

During his frequent visits to Switzerland, Italy, and France, Semenov – a man of considerable fortune – amassed a collection of old Dutch masters, which later passed to the Hermitage Museum and was dissipated by the Soviets. His insect collection consisted of ca. 700,000 specimens, while more than a hundred new species were named after him. Semenov was a member of 53 learned societies and managed the Russian Geographical Society from 1873 until his death, using this position to encourage the exploration of inland Asia, notably by Nikolai Przhevalsky and Pyotr Kozlov.

Semenov's memoirs were published after his death in four volumes. Several of his descendants, including a son, Andrey Semenov-Tian-Shansky, continued his work and became scientists of note.

The information presented in the text correlates with the assignments for the stations.

For objective result, each station should allow students to earn a certain number of points, for example, 10.

There should be twice as many stations as participating teams. On the one hand, students can choose stations that they would like to pass, on the other hand, teams will not have to wait for the station they have not done to be "free".

The teacher can use the following topics for the stations:

Biography of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky;

P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky's study in Berlin;

Ideas of P.P. and V.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky on geography;

Geological studies of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky;

Ideas of V.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky on conservation of natural heritage;

The name of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky on the map of Russia;

Interesting facts from the life of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky;

Collections of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky;

Scientific legacy of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky;

P.P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky as a statesman;

Expeditions of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky;

Memorial museums of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, etc.

The following tasks can be devised for the stations:

Fill in the gaps (an open clause task);

Fill in the gaps with these words and phrases, there is one extra phrase;

Say which of the proposed statements is incorrect;

Answer the questions;

Say which facts from the biography refer to certain periods;

Complete the sentences;

Match Russian and English geographical names;

Match parts of the statements;

Match words and their definitions;

Match a picture (photo) with a description (the name of the geographical object);

Find and correct a mistake in each statement;

Put biographical facts in the correct order;

Make sentences from these words;

Find and mark certain objects on the geographic map;

Translate the sentences into English, etc.

Before starting to work on learning stations students are divided into groups. The teacher prepares cards, each containing from two to four texts. A student chooses a card and within 10-15 minutes (depending on the number of texts and the level of the group) works with the texts. The student should understand the texts and memorize as much information as possible. Next, students form teams in such a way that in each of the teams there are students who read at least one of the texts. To facilitate and speed up this process, the teacher can number the cards and students form groups so that each team has all the card numbers.

Next, students in the teams "travel" through the stations and record the results of their work in special route sheets. There are three columns in the route sheets, in the first one students write down the number of the station, in the second – their answers, in the third one students jot down the number of points received. After passing each station, students check their answers with the keys placed on a special stand. They cannot use any reference materials or recordings when passing through the stations.

Using learning stations enables to meet the requirements of cooperative learning: students work with the information on their own, and doing the stations, they share the information obtained with fellow students, teaching them.

When the time allotted for passing the learning stations is over, the results are summed up, the teacher names and awards the winners. As a homework assignment, students can be asked to do the remaining stations. Students can also prepare a station on their own.

At the stage of reflection, students are invited to finish the sentence:

For me, it was interesting to learn

I did not expect (...) that ...

It was difficult for me ...

It was easy for me ...

In the future I would like to

I would like to share the following information ...

In order to check students' knowledge the teacher can conduct a delayed test of a closed type.

We believe that learning stations have obvious advantages. First of all, this unusual activity stimulates students' interest, and the element of competition makes a lesson more dynamic. Working in groups creates positive psychological climate, students are active throughout the lesson and learn not only from the teacher, but also from each other.

It is important for students of a pedagogical university to act not only in the role of trainees, but also to try themselves in the role of a teacher. To do this, students may be asked to prepare assignments for texts from the scientific memoirs of P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky "Travels in the Tian-Shan" and conduct a part of a foreign language lesson (a didactic role play).

Preparing students for teaching practice, the teacher may conduct a competition for the best multimedia excursion in a foreign language to the places where Semenov-Tian-Shansky travelled. Students can submit their projects, which will fully reflect the development of regional studies competence of the trainee teacher of a foreign language.

6. Conclusion

The research findings made it possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. Lessons of oral and written practice play a great role in vocational training of students of a pedagogical university. To achieve this goal, these lessons should not only teach students philological issues, but also help them master a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication in various spheres of professional activity. We believe that this task can be solved by expanding the range of general topics for discussion. At the same time, the areas and topics of lessons on developing communicative skills in a foreign language should be chosen according to the socio-economic situation in the region.
2. Considering the fact that the role of a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication in various spheres of social and economic life is constantly growing, we believe regional studies competence should be seen as part of communicative competence in a foreign language. We define regional studies competence as the willingness and ability of the secondary linguistic personality to carry out successful intercultural communication in a foreign language, which, in turn, is based on knowledge about the specifics of regional culture and the ethnic characteristics of peoples living in the region and a positive attitude to the partner of communication.
3. The system of methods and techniques for teaching a foreign language in a vocational course on oral and written practice with the regional component to students doing pedagogical programs (philological major) is determined by the goal of education – the formation of regional studies competence, along with linguistic, sociolinguistic, socio-cultural, strategic, discursive, professional-pedagogical, compensatory and educational-cognitive competencies. The learning content is represented by the knowledge about the region, country, language, culture, as well as values, intercultural skills, attitudes, motives and personal qualities of participants in intercultural communication. Other components include teaching principles that are in line with learner-centered, activity and intercultural approaches, teaching methods and techniques, educational tools (a course book as a model for implemented methodology, online resources), organizational forms of educational interaction of students and teachers with the focus on group and pair work.
4. It is necessary to simulate the future professional activity of students using educational and methodological set of regional studies tasks, online resources, video and audio materials, a wide range of business and role plays, professionally-oriented projects which are focused on vocation training and help students realize the important role of a foreign language in professional intercultural communication.

In conclusion, we would like to note that it is important to pay special attention to the

development of regional studies competence in the foreign language course done by would-be teachers of a foreign language. Despite the fact that modern foreign language course books have hardly any tasks on regional studies, it is necessary to include elements of regional studies in teaching foreign languages to a would-be teacher, which should be done using authentic texts in a foreign language, various methods and forms of teaching.

This condition should be met to ensure that trainee teachers of a foreign language can not only develop and implement cultural and educational programs, but adequately represent their small motherland to their pupils and representatives of other cultures.

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1. P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky Lipetsk State Pedagogical University, Lipetsk, Russia. E-mail: tschesnokova.elena@rambler.ru

2. P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky Lipetsk State Pedagogical University, Lipetsk, Russia

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