

# IMPROVING VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN NON-LINGUISTIC MAJORS VIA INTEGRATED FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE STUDIES

## ACADEMIC COURSES

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### Abstract

In the contemporary fast-paced multicultural world the significance of foreign language communication in the future professional activity of undergraduates is undeniable. As a result the development of a professionally-oriented linguistic personality is viewed as a topical issue, crucial for a person to be capable of overcoming the stereotypes, conducting inter-cultural dialogue in everyday and professional environments. The article focuses on exploring the potential of integrated foreign language and culture study academic courses to improve vocational training in non-linguistic majors at Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation.

The article examines the role of the integration of cultural and linguistic disciplines in the formation of professional motivation, values and relevant knowledge about the culture of the countries of a studied language, integrative competencies seen as the goals and results of vocational education as well as development of personal qualities required in the future professional activity, integration and socialization of future professionals.

The authors presented the theoretical model tested in many years of their teaching practice. This model reflects the specific features of the integrative linguistic and cultural approach aimed at developing a professionally-oriented linguistic personality of students doing non-linguistic majors. The authors also identified the structural components of the model, including its theoretical basis and methodology, goal-setting, motivation, content, technology and assessment components. Furthermore, the authors provided interactive and integrative technologies to successfully realize their model.

The research data collected with the help of traditional research methods of observation and product analysis allowed the authors to come to a number of conclusions. The most important of them is that

integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines allows to significantly improve the professional development of the linguistic personality in non-linguistic majors. These students thrive to learn foreign languages and view them as a valuable means of mastering their profession and improving their career prospects. Finally, the unique integrative model provided by the authors introducing basic values and traditions of national cultures, encoded in language and art as a cultural activity, does allow to form the personality with a holistic, systemic world view, the graduate who has professionally oriented foreign language skills and competence based on professional and linguistic knowledge of general and professional culture.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, Culture Studies academic courses, professional culture, linguistic personality, integrative competency based model.

## INTRODUCTION

The role of a foreign language in the future professional activity of graduates of the university in today's dynamic multi-cultural world makes the problem of formation of linguistic personality topical and acute. A linguistic personality is expected to be able to use the potential of the language for professional, personal and social and cultural self-realization. He/she is expected to be able to overcome stereotypes and conduct an inter-cultural dialogue in general and professional fields. Finally, he/she is expected to successfully adapt to other cultures and societies.

Expansion of international contacts in various fields of education, science and culture makes a language an instrument of language professional activity in non-linguistic fields. However, based on their experience of teaching foreign languages, observation and product analysis the authors of this article came to the conclusion that undergraduate students have a low level of professionally oriented foreign language skills. Their level does not often meet the requirements of the Federal State Education Standards of Higher Vocational Education designed to train a competent professional

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capable of meeting world standards of professionalism in his/her

field, ready for life-long learning, continuous professional development, social and professional mobility. Students do not always demonstrate the ability to read and translate special purpose texts with a dictionary, speak and write in writing in the field of professional activity and have a poor command of the professional vocabulary and terminology. Undergraduate students do not use a foreign language as a means of expanding professional horizons, mastering the general cultural and professional knowledge and competence in independent research, working with scientific and informative literature in foreign languages on the Internet. Most students consider a foreign language as a secondary course challenging and timeconsuming. They are motivated to study a foreign language to communicate in the field of international tourism and business. The level of motivation to learn foreign languages for vocational purposes is relatively poor. Hence the question how to improve the language skills of bachelors of non-linguistic majors arises. How are students expected to exploit the potential of language as a means of professional and social and cultural orientation in a contemporary multicultural world?

An analysis of the scientific and pedagogical, philosophical, linguistic and cultural literature as well as the authors' teaching experience in high school is that the problem of improving the training of undergraduate students of non-linguistic majors might be tackled with the help of theoretical model [211]. It reflects the peculiarities of integrative linguistic and cultural approach aimed at developing a professionally-oriented linguistic personality of students doing non-linguistic majors. It shows the role of integration of cultural and linguistic courses in the developing professional motivation, knowledge about the culture of the country of a studied language. Furthermore it illustrates integrative competencies as the goals and results of vocational education and personal qualities required in their future professional activity, culture adaptation and socialization of a future professional.

The objective this study pursues is to design the model aimed at the formation of a professionally-oriented, competent, language oriented person via language and culture integration in higher education institutions. Students doing non-linguistic majors due to this approach are sure to become aware of social and cultural sense of their future professional activity.

The applied methods are as follows: analysis of the problem based on the study of philosophical, linguistic, psychological and educational, cultural, sociological, methodological literature; analysis of programs and textbooks for linguistic and cultural disciplines, the federal state educational standards of higher education, research and compilation of pedagogical practice and personal experience on the issue of research; teacher observation, questioning and testing of students, analysis of the results and the outcome of their current jobs; methods of cultural studies, linguistic methods, modeling method.

## BACKGROUND

Integrative competence processes dominate in the modern system of education. It can be explained by the necessity of formation of the person with a holistic worldview. Integration implies the unity of single components. In the education system the integration is aimed at the formation of the person with socially significant qualities.

In this regard, taking into account social and cultural changes, the need for integration of the fundamental, humanitarian, expertise, providing comprehensive vision by specialists of their professional activities increases. Today humanization of higher education means that cultural approach plays a crucial role. This approach determines all components of the content of education to culture and the human being as its creator, who has the capacity for cultural self-development in the course of their professional activity. Cultural knowledge promotes integration in culture, in other words, inclusion of modern specialists in culture. Therefore students are aimed at searching and comprehending the cultural meanings and values in professional activity. Furthermore, professional training focuses on intercultural interaction.

Integration involves the integrity of the academic, educational and scientific process that will certainly be reflected in the projected model, aimed at the formation of a professionally-oriented, competent, language creative person during the university training of students doing non-linguistic majors. The training aims at the realization of social and cultural sense of their future professional activity.

Language and culture integration process is carried out in the following way. The elements (concepts, images, ideas, signs, symbols, values, cultures and knowledge of the values and meanings, and

semantic-symbolic features of the language and culture encoded in the art methods scientific knowledge, competence), language (practical course of foreign language, geography, introduction to the theory of intercultural communication, and other subjects) and cultural (cultural studies, world

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culture, history and theory of culture, and others) disciplines, which reveals the relationship, the interaction of national-regional foreign language and culture are integrated in the same course (module, theme, program section).

Language and culture integration aims at restoring and reunification of unity and integrity of perception of the world, systematic thinking, which will enable a student to cover the world culture through the activation of its linguistic, cultural, intellectual and artistic creativity. Language and cultural integration is aimed at adaptation of professionals to rapidly changing conditions in the social and cultural, political and social fields in the context of globalization and cultural integration. Language and culture approach is the core of language and culture integration [12]. Language and culture approach is understood by the authors as a set of methodological components aimed at the social and cultural training of specialists in the formation of the unity and integrity of their common cultural, special and professional competence, based on the totality of knowledge, skills and their effective application, as well as professionally relevant and personal professional qualities, their value orientations, ability of self-determination, self-realisation in culture [11].

Students receive knowledge about specific aspects of culture in both Practical Course of the Foreign Language and Country Studies. Courses in Culture Studies, History and Theory of Culture, World Culture also play a crucial role. Thus, the knowledge about the culture gain integrity and is considered in conjunction of the various parties in the social and cultural context, thus contributing to the realization of a personal orientation training, overcoming narrow professional thinking of the future professionals doing non-linguistic majors. The need for integration of a foreign language and culture is justified by the tendency of transition from knowledge of the centrist orientation of training to student-oriented one. Taking into account a substantive and organizational-methodological point of view it is

necessary to integrate the educational disciplines, forms, methods to build a complete 'mosaic' picture of the world and man. Each piece of will reflect a particular component of this 'mosaic'.

#### INTEGRATIVE COMPETENCY BASED MODEL STRUCTURE

The subject preparation of the future specialist must focus not on the set of knowledge and skills but on their need for self-education and self-realization, social and cultural adaptation, which is impossible without the integrative and competent approach to the study of a foreign language. As a result the need to build studying process with a holistic, integrative – competence-based approach implying the integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines in the training of future professionals of non-linguistic majors is obvious. The competence is viewed as the ability to effectively apply the knowledge, skills and personal qualities in their professional activities. Competence approach is implemented by us in the model as a set of methodological components, aimed at creating vital professional and personal qualities common cultural, special and professional competencies of future professionals in order they could successfully apply them in practice. Enhancing the professionally significant interdisciplinary knowledge via educational topics, reflecting the national mentality, a typology of cultures, value systems, traditions and customs, manners and etiquette, codes of sign-symbolic culture, etc. contributes to developing a specialist with a holistic, systemic vision of the world. The level of competence will enable them to successfully and flexibly adapt to the modern world. Apart from this it develops value attitude to professional knowledge, forms a common cultural, professional and special competence.

In our model, substantive core of the integration of linguistic and cultural knowledge are a valuesemantic and semantic-symbolic features of the language and culture encoded in art as a cultural activity that contributes to the knowledge of ourselves and the world through a culture based on moral and spiritual experience of generations, helping to orient in a modern, multicultural space and adapt to a rapidly changing world [13]. Integrative approach to teaching language and culture helps to discover the emotional experience and moral and spiritual values of other people through a value system of the people, allowing to preserve their own cultural identity, thereby preventing inter-ethnic conflicts.

Tested in years of practice, the theoretical model reflecting the specific linguistic and cultural competency integrative approach to the formation of professionally-oriented language person, includes the following components: theoretical basis and methodology, goal-setting, motivation, content, technology and assessment components.

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### 3.1 Theoretical and Methodological Component

Theoretical basis and methodology component includes ideas and justifications for the main approaches to the problem and its solution.

The theoretical model is based on fundamental approaches of cultural linguistics, linguistics and semiotics [3, 4, 10, 14, 15, 16], the theory of intercultural communication [15], the idea of integration of language and culture [9,15], the methods of teaching a foreign language and intercultural training [ ] integrative competence [7,9], axiological and cultural approaches to education [2, 5], the concept of dialogue among cultures and pedagogical dialogue [4, 5], the concept of linguistic identity [7]. Designing the model we took into account the results of studies related to the issue of professional development of the individual in the process of learning a foreign language [6, 8, 9, 15, 17].

### 3.2 Goal-setting Component

Goal-setting component addresses interdisciplinary goals and objectives to master the system of language and culture knowledge and competence, the disclosure of the value-sense picture of the world through the knowledge of languages and cultures, self-determination, motivation for personal and professional self-improvement. Furthermore, it promotes the awareness of future professionals of their social and cultural significance, the level of professional competence which will enable them to successfully adapt to the modern multicultural world, to focus on the system of universal values, to integrate into the national and world culture, build willingness and ability to participate in social and cultural and intercultural communication, intercultural dialogue, culture building activities.

### 3.3 Motivation Component

Motivation component is reflected in the value orientations, ways and needs of the individual, aimed at activities of social responsibility for the professional activity, in choosing the means to achieve this

goal. To build positive motivation to learn foreign languages in the complex the following components are used:

- features of the content of educational material of integrated language and culture disciplines aimed at personal and professional self-improvement;
  - the structure and nature of teaching and learning in class and out of class activities of students;
  - a variety of interactive teaching methods, contributing to the development of creative activity of students;
  - assessment of knowledge and competence.
- In turn, such factors such as understanding of the objectives of education and awareness of the importance of the acquired knowledge in practice; professional orientation training influence the formation of a positive teaching and learning motivation. In addition to the professionally-oriented purposes such reasons as self-assertion and self-realization (career development and maintenance in life); the use of English as the medium of communication, and using the Internet, studying the culture of the target language country to commit leisure travel, improving speaking skills to participate in international internships, international conferences, continuing education abroad play a crucial role.

### 3.4 Content Component

Integration involves designing content-based synthesis of professionally significant linguistic and culture knowledge and interdisciplinary competences, aimed at enhancing the creative potential of the individual, coupled with the future social and professional activity of students. Professionally significant components of content, the most important in cognitive and educational aspects contributing to the achievement of the unity of common cultural, professional and specialized competencies are of great importance.

The content includes such elements of culture as: knowledge, ways of working, emotionally-valuable experience and personal perception of the world, the experience of creative activity, as well as elements of culture. The principle of the interconnected training to all activities using the professionally-oriented material is regarded as the core of the contents component.



The basic values and traditions of national cultures, encoded in language and art as a cultural activity are meaningful integration core of linguistic and cultural knowledge. The content component reflects

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the semantic field of subject-integral disciplines in which meaning blocks educational topics, sections of integrated courses enriched by language and cultural concepts, images, ideas, characters, symbols, and values are of foremost importance. Interdisciplinary competence, professionally significant knowledge about the culture of studied languages, their history, mentality, values, culture as a complex synergetic system of intercultural communication, communicative act and concept have enhanced. The basics of the national concepts and others are also covered. In the integrated content of language and culture subjects we can identify:

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Mentality in the typological, national and professional dimension of culture; common things that unite the representatives of a particular culture, and something special that distinguishes one culture from another are examined. For example, the works painted by W. Hogarth (Marriage à la mode) and P. Fedotov (Courting Major) which tell about the theatre of life and comedy of manners arousing interesting associations contribute to understanding the mentality of English and Russian national character;

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Images as the essence of language, which contains basic information about the connection of words with the culture. For example, when considering the semiotics of the Russian church and the medieval English cathedral, the students' attention is focused on the symbolism which helps to understand non-verbal language and meaning, to penetrate into the spiritual life of another culture, to understand the mentality of its representatives, comparing this culture with your own one;

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Components that reflect the values and meanings of different cultures, aimed at identifying reasons for the dialogue of cultures. They help to identify the correlation of cultural values. Thus, for example, universal and national concepts, reflecting the unity of language, culture and consciousness, experience, knowledge of the world of the English and

Russian: home, family, tradition, freedom, a sense of humor, and others are considered and rendered. In addition, to represent various concepts natural language (words, proverbs) and language arts (painting, architecture, sculpture, film, music, etc.) that allows you to simulate the world from different angles are integrated.

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The texts of culture as a set of cultural signs having linguistic and cultural value (for example, a person is regarded as the text, the semiotic analysis of the advertising text, and others are given);

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General cultural, professional and special competence.

Here interdisciplinary competences are of great importance: a)

social and individual and general

cultural: the ability to use a wide range of language tools in daily and professional communication; b)

general scientific: knowledge of the principles of classification of languages, the ability to use specific

differences of natural, artificial languages and secondary modeling systems; c) instrumental: a

willingness to have a verbal and non-verbal communication, knowledge of different genres of science

fiction and business one; d) professionally-oriented, that is skills to build business communication in

intercultural interaction of multicultural environment, relying on the knowledge of sign-symbolic

systems as well as skills to provide arguments [2, p. 231-232].

The proposed model of the subject organization of content forces students to explore the various

types of culture, to reveal their relationship and specific

manifestations in the global and regional

multicultural space (for example, to understand the global culture as well as all-Russian and national

culture of the Russians), to develop emotional and value attitude to the language on the basis of

creativity, imagination, harmony, phonetic and semantic levels of language, which give a holistic

coverage of the speech situation, and consider language as a part of the culture. The contents of the

model should be organized so that not only to stimulate the self-realization of the future professional,

but also promote understanding of their social and cultural mission.

Thus the content of texts and

lexical and grammatical material is thematically linked with

specific subjects studied as part of the

academic curriculum of a particular major and have a social and cultural aspect.

In the structure of the integrated linguistic and cultural knowledge

the following aspects are allocated:

linguistic, social and cultural, cultural, vocational, national and regional, competence, personal and creative.

We believe that at each stage of training it is of great importance to:

1) to select the content of teaching material taking into account its motivational effect on students; 2) establish interdisciplinary links with courses and an inter-cycle links with core subjects at the level of

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facts, ideas, concepts, laws, laws and ways of life; 3) apply the technology relevant to the integrated content and that ensure students' interest in a foreign language by determining personal significance and practical value of acquiring knowledge and building competence.

### 3.5 The Technology Component

The technology component of the model of integrative competence of professional development of students doing non-linguistic majors is based on the widespread use of technologies (tested by the authors of the article) ensuring high level of learning process. The content is aimed at the formation of a creative personality, capable of professional self-development and self-improvement. There are such technologies as projects (creative, research, problem-educational, cultural, educational, practiceoriented, computer projects, presentations on various topics) [12], business and role-playing games, quests; multimedia lectures, binary lectures, seminars, discussions, analysis of the cultural practices of urban space, teamwork, discussions, dramatizations of specific situations, the method of case studies, simulations of life and professional situations, the method of dialogue and situations of intercultural interaction aimed at enhancing creativity and other personality-focused activities.

All these methods of classroom work in combination with independent extracurricular work of students, which is a logical continuation of the first, contribute to the enhancing of interest to the profession. Apart from it these methods ensure the formation of common cultural, special and professional competence.

Interdisciplinary projects (for example, Axiological and Symbolic Component of the Teacher's

Activity of, Influence of Youth Subcultures on the Teaching Culture, Peculiarities of Russian-British Business Cultures in International Business), and others are crucial.

The games are of great importance in professional integrated linguistic and culture education. They perform a number of functions: culture formation, cognitive, learning, communication, developmental, semiotic, educational and relaxation ones. The game stimulates the activity, flexibility of thinking, increases interest in the studied material, allows to create value-semantic competence, skills and personal qualities of students.

Role-play and story-role games -imagination, simulation games (simulation of the contents and forms of professional activity) are welcomed, for example, At the Court, At the Hotel, On the Plane, Bank Operations, At the Office etc.

The role games such as an imaginary journey (Kazan with the Eyes of International Travelers, the Kazan of E. Turnerelli, A Journey to the British Parliament, An Imaginary Tour to the English Crystal Palace) are used. Apart from these, role discussions, for example, The Legal System of England and Russia, mock press-conferences The Elections in My Country, Human Rights can take place at the lessons. In advance students distribute and perform different social roles according to the scenario (joint ventures leaders, parliamentarians, judges, travelers, diplomats and others alike). Such games contribute to self-reflection, improvement of oral communication skills, extend special purpose vocabulary of the students. Furthermore, they facilitate meeting communication challenges, boost interest in learning the foreign language as students are emotionally and cognitively engaged in a game and tend to be creative and imaginative in the simulation process.

Game technologies help to engage students in linguistic situations similar to those in their future working environment and enable students to gain communicative experience. For example, team work on Culture of Modern Britain. In advance the teacher introduces students to the topic, goals, objectives and terms. The whole group is divided into teams: Scientific and Technological Culture, Moral Culture, Economic Culture, Literature, Architecture, Art, Music, Theater. The captains are elected, functions within each team are distributed. To engage students in independent activities during the preparation

the teacher gives a task to the whole group – to make slide shows, select music accompaniment, feature film episodes, make up quizzes on the given topic. At the beginning of the class the teams introduce themselves, then each team demonstrates the homework, at the next stage all the contestants give their performances. At the end of the class the conclusions are made and the work of the teams is assessed.

Case-study method, integrated seminars allow to raise the issues common to several academic disciplines, for example, Images of Flowers and Birds in English Painting, Animal Genre in the Art of the Twentieth Century (to unite Foreign Language, Fine Arts, Music, Biology); The Inner World of the Child in Children's Portraits of English and Russian painters, The Communicative Behavior of Children in the Russian and English Family, Game as a Universal Category of Culture, Game in Life of

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Animals, Game Content of Sports, Psychoanalysis and Culture (Z. Freud, E. Fromm, C. Jung), (to Foreign Language, Pedagogy, Law, Culture, Museum Studies, Biology, Physical Education, Psychology, etc.). Integrated linguistic and culture problems are solved at the seminars, during the debate (for example, Young British Artists –for the Sake of Art or Fame and Money?) and problemsolving lectures (Victorian Morality: Good or Evil?, The Transformation of the Image of “Lady” and “Gentleman” in Modern Culture and others). They do not promote only independent study and research activities on the part of the students, but also encourage the emotional attitude to learning a foreign language, understanding its importance in the future professional activity.

The independence and logical way of thinking, language skills and debating skills are easily developed via discussions, for example, Moral Rules in Theory and Practice: the Confrontation or Coexistence?, Freedom of Choice and Responsibility in the Modern World). Mysteries such as Baker Street Puzzles, used to train will-be lawyers, philosophers, programmers and students of other majors are used to develop skills in reading, listening, speaking, language practice, individual and pair work as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills [6].

Binary lectures, delivered by two teachers or the teacher and an

assisting student focus on addressing and more profound and systemic understanding of the problems common to a number of disciplines (such as Enlightenment Picture of the World in the English Art and Literature, Reflection of Communication Values in the Cultural Peculiarities and others.)

Taking into account the fact that today young people are mostly "visuals" multimedia lectures are delivered, for example, at Hermitage-Kazan Centre (The Art of XXI Century. Modern British Style (1960-2000), Rebellious Artists: L. Freud, F. Bacon, D. Hockney (1960-70s), Music From Punk to Synth-pop, 1990s-2000s: the Elusive Street Artist Banksy and others). The lectures make it possible for students to determine associative-image links between the native and second languages, identify the structure and content of concepts, a variety of senses and comprehend the symbolic dimension of culture.

A research portfolio method develops the ability to work with different sources of information on cross-disciplinary issues, including specialized training and scientific literature (e.g., journals like English at School, Cultural Studies Issues, Philosophy Issues, Journal of Applied Psychology and Psychoanalysis, Observatory of Culture, etc.), works of art, Internet resources, audio-visual sources (for example, Russian TV channel Culture shows), publications on Culture Studies, History, Psychology, Philosophy, Pedagogy, etc. in the original (e.g., Shakespeare on the World Ballet Stage, The Works of the Classics of Psychology, etc.). Students of the Department of Education make up illustrated glossaries in their major; linguistic and culture games for school students (for example, In Search of Artifacts and others.) during their teaching practice; write reports for scientific conferences, and write articles for the collection of student scientific work (e.g. Terra Lingua et Reliquiae issued by Institute of International Relations, Kazan State University, RF); analyze the cultural practices of urban space; develop distance learning excursions to museums, travel itineraries on a variety of cultures; and participate in international exhibitions, apply for student grants and so on.

### 3.6 Assessment Component

The assessment component of the model determines the levels and criteria for evaluation of formation of competence of students. Three levels: low, medium and high are identified. The assessment is viewed according to cognitive, emotional and motivational, value-

oriented and communicative-activity criteria [13].

The results of experimental work showed the positive dynamics of cognitive, emotional and motivational, value-oriented, communicative-activity criteria that demonstrates the effectiveness of the proposed model, aimed at improving the vocational training of professionals in non-linguistic majors as well as determining mastery of general cultural, professional and specialized competencies.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

As our research has shown, the basic conditions for the successful operation of the proposed model, aimed at the formation of professionally oriented, competent, linguistic creative person on the basis of integration of bachelors doing non-linguistic majors that are aware of the social and cultural meaning of their professional activities, are as follows:

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- culture-centred focus of integrating the potential of linguistic and cultural disciplines, promoting the formation of the personality with systemic vision of the world, the development of integrative competence and personal qualities crucial for professional work, self-realization, self-creation and self-determination in the culture and society;
- designing the contents on the basis of synthesis of professionally – relevant linguistic and cultural knowledge and interdisciplinary competences, aimed at enhancing the creative potential of the individual, coupled with the social and professional activities;
- selection of creative and professionally-focused technologies of training relevant to teaching material and the objectives of building an integrated system of integrative competences of a linguistic identity, ensuring the improvement of their training within constantly updated innovative forms of class, out-of-class and independent work of students;
- focus on the development of social and cultural experiences of the individual, the search and decoding of value-semantic framework to make it possible to navigate in a multicultural space

via continuous development of artistic and cultural heritage of the foreign and native culture.

Thus, during in academic training of students doing non-linguistic majors it is essential to build the educational process based on the principles of integrity, relevant cultural concepts, professional and communicative focus, problem approach, creativity, motivation to learn a foreign language, the principle of comprehensive training to all kinds of speech, and of social and cultural activities, the unity of teaching and education that will enable to form the competencies required for a successful career.

The organization of educational process on the basis of integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines contributes to perfection of vocational training of students even in non-linguistic majors.

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