SPECIFICS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPETENCY
DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF
FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION
Socio-cultural competency, as a component of the communicative competence, is one of the most significant qualities that should be developed within the framework of higher education. The significance of this quality is associated with the global nature of modern society. Knowledge and understanding of another culture allows students to gain competitive advantages, including professional ones. As a rule, this quality is developed through the study of disciplines related to the culture in one form or another, that is, the humanitarian cycle.

One of the ways to develop socio-cultural competency is foreign language education, which in the best way allows students to understand the specifics of another culture through the prism of a foreign language. The most effective method in the framework of foreign language teaching is the project method.

For the most accurate determination of the effectiveness of the project method as a means of developing socio-cultural competency, we should take into account all the factors and conditions that contribute to the development of the considered competency through project activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The study of the English language at the university level is activity-based, which corresponds to the age characteristics of teenagers and young people. Since at this stage communicative and cognitive training is carried out, associated with an increase in the content of students' speech, the teachers use methods and techniques to encourage the expression of a personal attitude to the problems discussed, which contributes to the development of socio-cultural and communicative competencies (PAKHOTINA, 2007). Educational and methodological sets (for example, the English language textbooks and teaching aids by I. Orlovskaya and I. Aghabekyan) are developed taking into account the educational and developmental goals (SAMOKHVALOVA, 2012).

Currently, in the state educational standards of higher education, a large role in the formation of various competencies is assigned to the autonomous work of students (to which the method of projects can also be attributed), which, in turn, is aimed at developing the creative potential and cognitive activity, the deeper, more complete, active and creative assimilation of the student’s knowledge. In addition, it is aimed at the formation of professional skills and abilities, and, as noted by S.V. Pakhotina, has a significant impact on the development of students’ socio-cultural competency (DOLZHICH; DMITRICHENKOVA, 2018). Teaching a foreign language in a university is carried out outside the natural language environment. The main source of information is the educational text (OREKHOVA, 2015). However, not all educational texts are effective for the study of the linguo-cultural characteristics of the country of the target language, through the study of which the development of socio-cultural competency takes place, according to the majority of modern researchers (TAYURSKAYA, 2015; SHCHEGLOVA, 2011; BACHMAN, 2009).
For this purpose, we analyzed the educational and methodological context by I. Orlovskaya for studying a foreign language for students of non-linguistic areas (English for Specific Purposes). A crucially important fact is that socio-cultural knowledge and skills are formed through the prism of the perception of American culture by Russian students.

Among the existing methods of teaching a foreign language, the teacher chooses the most optimal. Different methods such as the traditional, grammar-translation, immersion method are based on the inherent competencies of each language aspect (grammar, translation, communication). More precisely, the traditional method is based on the development of productive competency, the grammar-translation method develops cognitive and autonomous competency, the immersion method helps to develop information and communication competency. The project method, in our opinion, is the best way to develop socio-cultural competency, since it allows one to comprehensively and fully consider the life of another society through language learning.

As the part of foreign language education using the project method, students are encouraged to systematize country-specific and cultural knowledge based on the experience of studying other academic disciplines. The interdisciplinary connections in the project method are stronger than in traditional teaching (BIROVÁ et al., 2018). Moreover, it is practically impossible to show talents and abilities, to implement creative ideas, expanding the boundaries of the horizons within the framework of the curriculum based on the English language textbook and the teaching aids by Orlovskaya and Aghabekyan. The proposed exercises are obligatory for all students, without taking into account their individual abilities, while the project method allows expressing all the students’ creative ideas on a given topic.

Summing up, it can be noted that each section of the textbook acquaints students with the peculiarities of a target language culture, teaches them to be respectful and aware of the difference in cultures. However, it cannot be said with certainty that at the end of the course, students would be able and ready to live in a modern multicultural world, possessing socio-cultural competency as a tool that could help avoid conflicts and promote intercultural communication (BLINOVA; DUGINA; ZABOLOTSKIKH, 2018; KRICHEVSKY; DUBOVSKAYA, 2012).

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out on the basis of the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education “The Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia” (RUDN). The experimental group included 31 students, the sampling is valid for gender and other significant characteristics.

The purpose of the experimental study was to identify the effectiveness of the project method in the development of socio-cultural competency in the framework of foreign language education.

The practical part of the research work was the development and implementation of project activities, namely the creation of a project in the English classroom (GOREV et al., 2018). The goal of this project was to create a quest: a map of New York City with the points located on it and a series of tasks for each stage of the quest. The theme of the project-quest “Tourist Attractions of New York” was chosen on the basis of the educational material of the textbook by Orlovskaya. The study of country-specific and cultural vocabulary and grammar revision during the project work was supposed to reveal additional aspects, complementing the students’ knowledge on this topic and using other types of activities.

Educational purpose: to promote search activity of students to collect information about historical places and attractions of New York City; activation of students’ speech activity on the topic “Hello, America!” using the studied lexical units on a given topic and revision of the topic “New York, New York”.

Planned learning outcomes: the creation and passage of a quest map.

The project work consisted of three stages (SHARONOVA; TRUBNIKOVA; SOKOLOVA, 2018):
• the initial stage, which included defining the topic, dividing into teams, drawing up a plan, formulating a goal, collecting material;
• the main stage, consisting of the search for information sources, the collection of material and the analysis of possible difficulties;
• presentation of available results for each stage of the quest, selection of the best ideas with subsequent processing and correction;
• at the final stage, completed projects were defended through the passage of this quest by students of parallel groups and discussion of the results.

The task of each stage was to contribute to the improvement of the socio-cultural competency of each student through the use of the project method. Students were asked to choose a landmark they liked, prepare a report on it, studying all aspects of its historical value for the City of New York and for the country as a whole. In addition to the report, the students had to make individual tasks for the group-mates in order to check the knowledge gained during the report about the presented landmark.

This integration of theory and practice made it possible to broaden the cultural horizons of students. In the process of completing homework, the students independently studied many Internet sources, encyclopedias containing material on a given topic. In addition, the study of the historical value of each monument, building or area undoubtedly contributed to the understanding of the peculiarities and the mentality of the country of the target language, as well as linguocultural aspects (VASBIEVA et al., 2018).

The algorithm of the experiment is presented in Table 1 and represents a standard psychological and pedagogical study of the indicated parameters.

Table 1. Algorithm of actions in the course of the experiment

| Algorithm of actions |
|----------------------|
| 1) indicative stage  |
| 2) formative stage   |
| 3) control stage     |

Source: Search data.

RESULT ANALYSIS
For the most accurate identification of the effectiveness of the project method, we conducted the experimental study. We chose 2 academic groups of the RUDN University that were included in the experiment. One of the groups was experimental and consisted of 16 students aged 17-19 years. The other group was a control group of 15 students of the same age. The analysis of the entrance test showed the following results:

in the first (experimental) group, 3 students out of 16 successfully completed the task, which represents 18.75%,
10 students did not complete the task (62.5%),
3 students partially completed the task (18.75%).

In the control group, the ratio was as follows:
2 students successfully completed the task, which represents 13.33%,
11 students did not complete the task (73.33%),
2 people partially completed the task (13.33%).

The data is graphically presented in Figure 1.
The results indicated the low level of students’ knowledge and their socio-cultural competency. Based on the results, we clarified the purpose of the experimental study, which is the formation and subsequent development of the socio-cultural competency of students, by studying the historical and cultural significance of the City of New York for the United States of America.

The next stage, formative, contained the process of planning and creating a project. The task of the experimental group was to develop a quest on the topic “Tourist Attractions of New York”. Students used additional resources, materials and guides (encyclopedias, dictionaries and the Internet sources) to create tasks and quest stations. After the qualifying stage in the form of a voting in which all the students of the group participated, the most interesting (due to the peer evaluation) sights of New York were selected in the amount of 7 places (taking into account the time allotted for the quest), marked on the map of New York with the check tasks: riddles, quizzes and puzzles.

After the successful completion of all stages, we conducted a control measurement test and a questionnaire to determine the level of motivation and knowledge gained during the development of the quest. Thus, all students of both groups were involved in the experimental work. While at the formative stage, project activities were carried out in the experimental group, the control group worked according to the traditional methodology and the current curriculum. Control group students studied lexical units on the topic “New York, New York”, the names of the main attractions of the city, their history and features based on the textbook.

The control stage of our research consisted in a comparative analysis of the results of the entrance and final tests, which checked the level of the socio-cultural competency of students before the start of the project work and after its completion. The purpose of this stage was to reveal the differences of the experimental and control groups, check the assimilation of cultural and country-related knowledge on the topic “New York, New York” using an experimental methodology, final testing of students of both groups, as well as questionnaires to determine the level of students’ motivation (only the experimental group).

At this stage, 31 students participated, of which 16 students studied this topic according to the experimental program. In order to consolidate the studied material and identify the level of knowledge of students, we also developed a final test. We determined the criteria of mastering the educational material (which correlates with the degree of mastering socio-cultural competency).

Based on the data obtained, the number of participants in the experiment and their results were calculated as a percentage. As shown in the diagram, the percentage of those students who completed the task in the experimental group increased from 18.75% to 25%, the percentage
of those who could not complete the task dropped sharply from 62.5% to 6.25%, the remaining 68.75% partially coped with the tasks, which is also very different from 18.75%. In the control group, 53.33% students got excellent and good marks, 33.33% partially completed it, and the percentage of students with unsatisfactory marks decreased from 73% to 13.33%. The data are presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Results of the control stage of the experimental study

![Results of the control stage of the experimental study](image)

**Source:** Search data.

For a more convenient consideration, the results of both groups (before the start of the project work and after the completion of the final testing) are presented in a comparative table (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Comparison of the results of the final testing of the experimental and control groups of students

| Comparison criteria | Experimental group before the project | Control group before the project | Experimental group after the project | Control group after the project |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| The number of students in the group | 16 students | 15 students | 16 students | 15 students |
| Percentage of students who successfully completed the assignment | 18.75% - 3 students | 13.33% - 2 students | 25% - 4 students | 20% - 3 students |
| Percentage of students who partially completed the assignment | 18.75% - 3 students | 13.33% - 2 students | 68.75% - 11 students | 66.67% - 10 students |
| Percentage of students who did not complete the assignment | 62.5% - 10 students | 73.33% - 11 students | 6.25% - 1 students | 13.33% - 2 students |
| Percentage of students with unsatisfactory marks | Decreased by 90% | Decreased by 80% | |

**Source:** Search data.

Summing up, we can say that both methods are effective in their own way for the development of the socio-cultural competency of students, since the results of both groups of students who mastered the new linguistic and cultural knowledge did not decrease, but, on the contrary, improved. However, in the experimental group the percentage of students who successfully...
completed the task was more than in the control group. In addition, the percentage of students who did not complete the task in the experimental group decreased by 90%, while in the control group this percentage decreased by 80%.

In addition to the final testing, the control stage included a questionnaire to determine the level of motivation of students in the experimental group. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions with “yes/no" answers. According to the results of the survey, for approximately 70% of the respondents, project work, in particular, drawing up a quest, was not difficult. In addition, creative activity during the educational process awakens interest in the subject. However, at the same time, 35% of students noted the difficulty of working in a group, despite the effect of rallying in the process of project work.

The results of the questionnaire survey and the control test in both groups showed that the level of motivation for learning and the knowledge gained was higher in the experimental group. Thus, we can conclude that the project method is one of the most effective methods of teaching a foreign language, the formation and development of the socio-cultural competency of students and the creation of the necessary motivational atmosphere during the educational process.

It should also be noted that when analyzing the set of teaching materials for its effectiveness in the formation of socio-cultural competency, we took into account many aspects (VOLKOVA; PANCHENKO, 2018). We assessed the language material of different levels, including authentic texts for listening and reading, which should contain information on geography, history, social life, elements of the linguistic culture of peoples speaking the target language and regional geographic information in relation to communication situations. It was also revealed whether the teaching materials data contribute to the formation of the Russian civic identity of students, the development of a holistic, socially oriented worldview in the process of acquaintance with the history, the life of people of different countries, mastering the skills of adaptation in a dynamically changing world.

CONCLUSION
Having considered the possibilities of introducing project activities into the educational process, we found out that the project work could be used as one of the forms of extracurricular work, as an alternative way of organizing the curriculum and integrate into the traditional system of teaching a foreign language.

The chosen project was a suitable option for integrating in the educational process due to the fact that it provided an opportunity for organizing independent research activities of students. This project had the following characteristics: practical orientation, creative component, clear coordination, internal nature of contacts, group work and a short period of implementation.

The analysis of the results obtained showed that the project method contributed to the development of country-specific and cultural knowledge of students about the realities of the country of the target language. Based on the data that were displayed on the diagrams, the level of socio-cultural competency of the experimental group turned out to be higher than in the control group, and the students of the experimental group were more motivated to study various historical and cultural aspects of the country of the target language (the USA).

As further research in this area, in our opinion, statistical studies of the influence of various pedagogical technologies on the state and dynamics of the development of communicative competence and its structural components are relevant.

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Specifics of the socio-cultural competency development of students in the framework of foreign language education

Especificidades do desenvolvimento de competência sociocultural dos alunos no quadro da educação de línguas estrangeiras

Specifics of the socio-cultural competency development of students in the framework of foreign language education

Resumo
O objetivo da pesquisa é estudar as especificidades do desenvolvimento de competências socioculturais no âmbito da educação de línguas estrangeiras. Para alcançar o objetivo, o experimento foi realizado com o objetivo de estudar a influência do ensino de línguas estrangeiras no desenvolvimento da competência sociocultural. A metodologia de pesquisa e seu algoritmo foram selecionados devido ao propósito do estudo. O trabalho experimental incluiu um complexo experimento psicológico e pedagógico, diagnosticando os parâmetros indicados e sua dinâmica. O grupo experimental incluiu 31 alunos, a amostragem é válida para o sexo e outras características significativas. Os resultados do estudo confirmam que o método do projeto no âmbito da educação em línguas estrangeiras é eficaz para o desenvolvimento da competência sociocultural dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: Competência sociocultural. Qualidades profissionalmente significativas. Educação em línguas estrangeiras. Método de projeto.

Abstract
The purpose of the research is to study the specifics of socio-cultural competency development in the framework of foreign language education. To achieve the goal, the experiment was carried out aimed at studying the influence of foreign language teaching on the development of the socio-cultural competency. The research methodology and its algorithm were selected due to the purpose of the study. Experimental work included a complex psychological and pedagogical experiment, diagnosing the stated parameters and their dynamics. The experimental group included 31 students, the sampling is valid for gender and other significant characteristics. The results of the study confirm that the project method within the framework of foreign language education is effective for the development of socio-cultural competency of students.

Keywords: Socio-cultural competency. Professionally significant qualities. Foreign language education. Project method.

Resumen
El propósito de la investigación es estudiar los detalles del desarrollo de competencias socioculturales en el marco de la educación en lenguas extranjeras. Para lograr el objetivo, el experimento se llevó a cabo con el objetivo de estudiar la influencia de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en el desarrollo de la competencia sociocultural. La metodología de investigación y su algoritmo fueron seleccionados debido al propósito del estudio. El trabajo experimental incluyó un complejo experimento psicológico y pedagógico, diagnosticando los parámetros establecidos y su dinámica. El grupo experimental incluyó a 31 estudiantes, el muestreo es válido por género y otras características significativas. Los resultados del estudio confirman que el método de proyecto en el marco de la educación en lenguas extranjeras es eficaz para el desarrollo de la competencia sociocultural de los estudiantes.

Palabras-clave: Competencia sociocultural. Cualidades profesionalmente significativas. Enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Método del proyecto.