

Arctic and North. 2022. No. 47. Pp. 227–234.

Original article

UDC 81(985)(045)

doi: 10.37482/issn2221-2698.2022.47.268

## Learning about the Arctic and the Russian North (Experience of Distance Schools) \*

Viktoriya A. Maryanchik <sup>1</sup>✉, Dr. Sci. (Phil.), Associate Professor, Professor

Larisa V. Popova <sup>2</sup>, Dr. Sci. (Phil.), Associate Professor

<sup>1,2</sup> Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Naberezhnaya Severnoy Dviny, 17, Arkhangelsk, 163002, Russia

<sup>1</sup> [marvik69@yandex.ru](mailto:marvik69@yandex.ru) ✉, *ORCID*: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1859-3767>

<sup>2</sup> [plaris20@mail.ru](mailto:plaris20@mail.ru), *ORCID*: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8254-8787>

**Abstract.** The article describes the experience of seasonal language and culture schools organized for foreign students at the Northern (Arctic) Federal University. One of the factors that attract participants is the Arctic component in the program content, acquaintance with nature, culture, customs and modern life of the Russian North. The pandemic situation made only a distance format of such schools possible. At the same time, the task of preserving the cultural specificity realized in the activity component was solved. The authors described the main content components of the program of the School of Russian Language and Culture related to the topic of the North and the Arctic: video tours of Solovki, the Museum “Malye Korely”, city tours (videos about Arkhangelsk), texts about Arctic research and travelling to the Arctic, “Northern text” of Russian literature, video lectures and master classes. It is emphasized that the images of the Arctic and the Russian North are the conceptual core of the content of remote seasonal schools. The next distance school of Russian Language and Culture is announced.

**Keywords:** *language school, distance learning, regional content, Arctic, Russian North*

### Acknowledgments and funding

The project is being implemented by the winner of the 2020/2021 Master’s Teachers Grant Competition “Vladimir Potanin Charity Foundation Scholarship Program”.

Seasonal schools as a traditional form of popularization and promotion of the Russian language are actively used by many leading universities in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tomsk, Ekaterinburg, Petrozavodsk, Novosibirsk, and Vladivostok. The Arctic and the Russian North have recently attracted particular attention of foreigners who are interested in Russian culture and language. Since 2013, the Department of the Russian Language and Speech Culture of NArFU named after M.V. Lomonosov provides academic support for seasonal schools for foreigners organized by the Higher School of Social Sciences, Humanities and International Communication and the Department of International Cooperation. As a result of active work, long-term projects are being implemented: “Autumn School of the Russian Language and Culture”, “Winter School of the Russian Language and Culture”, “Summer School of the Russian Language and Culture”.

---

\* © Maryanchik V.A., Popova L.V., 2022

For citation: Maryanchik V.A., Popova L.V. Learning about the Arctic and the Russian North (Experience of Distance Schools). *Arktika i Sever* [Arctic and North], 2022, no. 47, pp. 268–276. DOI: 10.37482/issn2221-2698.2022.47.268

The activity approach, in which the aim of training is not the assimilation of the amount of knowledge, but the speech self-development in the process of activity of a foreign speaker in the objective world, is the methodological basis of all language schools [1, Dinevich I.A.; 2, Sizova T.V., Maksimovskikh A.G.; 3, Snegurova T.A.]. The main principle is immersion in the speech environment, organization of joint activities, therefore, not only the “educational”, but also the cultural program of the project plays a significant role. It was impossible to draw a dividing line between these components: while travelling to interesting places in Arkhangelsk and the Arkhangelsk Oblast, taking a boat trip or cruising on the oldest passenger ship — the wheeled steamer “N.V. Gogol” — along the Northern Dvina River, attending concerts at the Pomor Conservatory (Kircha) and master classes at the School of Folk Crafts, arranging poetic duels and cooking battles, school students accumulated a unique speech experience and got acquainted with the life and customs of northerners.

However, the coronavirus situation was a factor that changed the format of the language schools. NArFU, like many universities in Russia, is switching to distance projects. For 2020–2021, a solid experience in implementing projects in the following format has been accumulated: Summer School 2020, Autumn School 2020, Winter School 2021, Summer School 2021 (headed by M.A. Martynov, A.A. Chekalin). As it turned out, the distance format has not only helped to attract foreign participants, but, on the contrary, has considerably expanded the geography of the participants: Poland, Germany, Argentina, USA, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Pakistan, Cameroon, India, Morocco, China, Nicaragua, Japan, Australia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Tunisia, Brazil, Korea, Jordan, UK, Philippines, Haiti, Algeria, Bangladesh, Italy.

Teaching technologies and technical support for distance projects did not cause any particular difficulties, since teachers of Russian as a foreign language have competencies and experience in the field of working with information and communication technologies. The Teams platform was used for communication, and training classes were created for each group. Practical sessions and other events (opening, round table, lectures, excursions) were held there.

The main challenge was to keep the cultural specificity, which was implemented in the activity component. The Arctic and the Russian North were a cross-cutting motif of the cultural program of schools organized by NArFU. The project team decided to keep the “Arctic vector” while switching to a distant format.

In February 2022, NArFU plans to hold the fifth distance School of the Russian Language and Culture (headed by I.M. Zashikhina). Let us highlight the main content components of the program of the School of the Russian Language and Culture, representing the Russian North, and the ways of their implementation in the educational process. For the Winter School 2022, two additional general educational (general developmental) programs have been created for different categories of students: for foreign citizens and stateless people (non-Russian speakers and bilinguals) without knowledge of the Russian language and for those already studying it. The volume of the

program is 72 academic hours; the duration of training is two weeks. Each program includes the thematic block “Russian North”, as well as the possibility of including culturally marked material in other topics: “The World of Things: What Surrounds Us”, “Travels and Trips”, “Holidays and Traditions”.

The main forms of work provided by the program:

1. Excursions. The following materials were used for organizing remote excursions: virtual tours of Solovki<sup>1</sup>, video excursion<sup>2</sup> and virtual tour<sup>3</sup> in the “Malye Korely” museum; photo and video presentations of Arkhangelsk and Oblast: brand videos “Arkhangelsk: the Arctic begins here”<sup>4,5</sup>; photo clip “Welcome to the Arkhangelsk Oblast”<sup>6</sup>; commercial “Discovering the North”<sup>7</sup>, etc.

#### 1.1. Solovki

Video materials from the official website [ch.itmo.ru/solovky/](http://ch.itmo.ru/solovky/) (a joint project of the Solovetskiy State Historical, Architectural and Natural Museum–Reserve with the St. Petersburg National Research University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics (ITMO University) and St. Petersburg State University) are used not only in tasks for advanced-level groups, but also when working with elementary-level vocabulary (summer, road, fence, church, icon, etc.). The timing of the videos posted on the website (2-3 minutes) is optimal for methodological processing and use in the classroom as listening material.

#### 1.2. The Malye Korely Wooden Architecture Museum

Three excursions are currently posted on the official website of the Museum of Wooden Architecture “Malye Korely”: in the Kargopol-Onega sector; in the Mezen sector; in the Dvina sector. The duration of each excursion is about 30 minutes, so they are included in the work program of the school as an independent field trip. The methodological development of an excursion in the lesson of Russian as a foreign language includes pre-, in- and post-excursion tasks. Pre-excursion tasks are performed in the lesson before the excursion, and include an introduction to the script (for beginners), lexical and grammatical exercises, and a motivational component. The discussion with the help of the presentation on the museum website of the elements of information to be discovered during the excursion prepares the participants for independent perception of the video

<sup>1</sup> Po Solovkam s ekskursovodom [On Solovki with a guide]. URL: <http://solovky.ifmo.ru/mediateka/objects-video-360> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Muzey derevyannogo zodchestva «Malye Korely». Videoekskursii [Museum of Wooden Architecture "Malye Korely". Video tours]. URL: <https://www.korely.ru/visitors/tours/video/> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Muzey derevyannogo zodchestva «Malye Korely». Virtual'nyy tur [Museum of Wooden Architecture "Malye Korely". Virtual tour]. URL: [http://vm1.culture.ru/vtour/tours/malye\\_korely/pano.php](http://vm1.culture.ru/vtour/tours/malye_korely/pano.php) (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Arkhangel'sk. Zdes' nachinaetsya Arktika (LETO) [Arkhangelsk. Here the Arctic begins (SUMMER)]. URL: <https://cloud.mail.ru/public/4EvS/22jDEMccQ> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Arkhangel'sk. Zdes' nachinaetsya Arktika (ZIMA) [Arkhangelsk. Here the Arctic begins (WINTER)]. URL: <https://cloud.mail.ru/public/2Zt4/2DkNDA1ob> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Arkhangel'sk – pervyy morskoy port Rossii [Arkhangelsk is the first seaport in Russia]. URL: <https://cloud.mail.ru/public/5N9r/4U9UZI5Ry> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Otkryvaya Sever. Arkhangel'skaya oblast' [Opening the North. Arkhangelsk region]. URL: <https://cloud.mail.ru/public/A4rh/Pzhkq2wqk> (accessed 20 October 2021).

material. In order to intensify their perception, it is proposed to do pre-text tasks. For example, to compile a visual dictionary: write down in Russian the maximum number of names of household items (for an advanced group) or objects of nature (for an elementary group) which are seen in the film. Post-excursion tasks are, as a rule, a discussion of impressions, a test of understanding of information. The attention of listeners is drawn to interesting cultural details, for example, to the fact that coffee in the Mezen villages was brewed in samovars and drunk in large quantities.



Fig. 1. Fragment of the video excursion in Malye Korely.

### 1.3. Arkhangelsk

The first acquaintance with the city takes place in the format of a video tour around Arkhangelsk, prepared by the NArFU media center “Arctic Bridge”, A. Chekalin and A. Vdovichenko. The tour takes place synchronously with the use of video, which is posted on the Teams platform.



Fig. 2. Anna Vdovichenko leads a video tour of Arkhangelsk.

During the practical sessions, students get acquainted with the city where the school is held. The main informational and conceptual message of the school organizers: Arkhangelsk is the capital of the Russian North, Arkhangelsk is the gateway to the Arctic. Photo, video materials, an-

imation products are used to visualize the image. Thus, the animated film “Arkhangelsk” by *Gracheva Elena* (Alexander Tatarskiy Animation Studio), located on the MultRussia resource <sup>8</sup>, evokes an emotional response. The text is composed of simple constructions, the simple content is filled with patriotic sounds: *What a beautiful flag we have. What a golden coat of arms we have. Our capital is the beautiful city of Moscow.* The listeners will learn the following information about Arkhangelsk: *it is the capital of Pomorye, it is the land of the sea, forests, lakes.* The short two-minute film tells about traditional crafts of the Pomors, maritime trade with England at the time of Ivan the Terrible, the Solovki, about Lomonosov as the first Russian academician, his homeland — Kholomogory, about the storytellers Boris Shergin and Stepan Pisakhov.

The brand video "Arkhangelsk: the Arctic begins here" lasts five minutes. Within the framework of the school, it is used in the classroom as a listening material for the thematic lesson “Travels and journeys”. The video gives a glimpse into the museums of Arkhangelsk: The Northern Maritime Museum, the Museum of Artistic Development of the Arctic named after A.A. Borisov, the Arkhangelsk Gingerbread Museum, visit the Malye Korely Museum again, see the city of Severodvinsk, Yagry Island, the White Sea. The video is a starting point for discussing the topic of travel. Expeditions to the Arctic are discussed at an advanced level. Fragments of Arctic Floating University expedition diaries are offered for reading <sup>9</sup>. The texts chosen for the methodological work are those that combine the vocabulary and knowledge of the Arctic presented in other videos. For example, in the diary entry of Irina Skalina dated June 26, 2016, we find fragments: “We came up to the Bolshoy Solovetskiy Island and stood at the roadstead, and quite far away ... As it was promised the day before, it turned out to be very fresh at Solovki. Here, in fact, winds always blow quite strongly. Small breaking crests ran cheerfully across the sea”. On the one hand, the text actualizes the image of Solovki, on the other hand, it allows you to show language material that is interesting for listeners who speak Russian well (the meaning of the verb “to come up” in the professional speech of sailors, the discursive word “moreover”, impersonal sentences in the description of the weather “fresh”, “blow”, adverbs of degree “quite”, “very”). In the same text, we also encounter the name of the Arctic painter: “Marina, by the way, asked about the icon-painting workshop where the artist Alexander Borisov studied. She was told that they would find information, if not about a famous student, then at least about the workshop at that time”. The revise of information, the thematic and lexical connection of all types of speech activity is the methodological principle of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

In the group of beginners, speech training is also built around the “Arctic” topic. With visual support of reproductions of paintings by the first polar artist Alexander Borisov, answers to the

---

<sup>8</sup> Mul't-Rossiya. Arkhangel'sk [Mult-Russia. Arkhangelsk]. URL: <https://vimeo.com/133544814> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>9</sup> SAFU. Arkticheskiy plavuchiy universitet. Dnevnik ekspeditsii 2016 [NARFU. Arctic floating university. Expedition diaries 2016]. URL: [https://narfu.ru/science/expeditions/floating\\_university/2016/dnevnik-ekspeditsii/?ELEMENT\\_ID=317096](https://narfu.ru/science/expeditions/floating_university/2016/dnevnik-ekspeditsii/?ELEMENT_ID=317096) (accessed 20 October 2021).

questions are given: 1) Where did the artist go? Where was the artist? (Novaya Zemlya), 2) What/whom did the artist see on Novaya Zemlya? (ice, sea, seal, polar bear).

## 2. Lectures

Traditionally, the program of seasonal schools includes a lecture on the culture of the Russian North. For the remote format, a lecture, provided by the Humanitarian Institute of the NArFU branch in Severodvinsk, was chosen. The lecturer is Tatyana Vasilyevna Shvetsova, Candidate of Philological Sciences, the topic of the lecture is "Linen folklore of the Russian North". It is about towels and northern embroidery. The cabinet-museum of the Humanitarian Institute presents seven towels, which were brought from field expeditions to the Pinezhskiy district of the Arkhangelsk Oblast. Students will learn that there are different types of towels (Easter, wedding, friendship, etc.), why a towel must not be embroidered at night and why lace must not be inserted in the middle, how many times one rapport of a pattern should be repeated on a towel, why cuckoos and nightingales should not be embroidered, and a lot of interesting information about this subject of folk culture.



Fig. 3. The lecture is read by Tatyana Shvetsova.

## 3. Literary halls, acquaintance with the work of northern writers

The practical sessions include introduction to the phenomenon of literary art — the northern text, whose place in the system of local (urban and regional) supertexts that have developed in Russian literature was first identified by Professor E. Sh. Galimova. "Immersion into the northern context through the word — the intricate reality and fiction of Stepan Pisakhov's fairy tales, the music of the poetry of Nikolay Rubtsov, etc. — it is a technology, a process, and a result of Russian language schools" [4, Maryanchik V.A., Shestakova T.E., p. 118]. Methodological developments for students of seasonal schools are collected in the manual "Russian North: a reading guide for foreigners studying the Russian language" [5, Maryanchik V.A., Korostenko E.N., Onegina A.S.].

## 4. Master classes

Students of remote schools are interested not only in art, the sights of the Russian North and its traditional culture, but also in the real life of modern people. The program includes a culi-

nary master class in a stream format, which is held not in a film studio, but in a real kitchen, not by professional chefs, but by ordinary people. A master class on baking pancakes was held at the Summer School 2021. Before the broadcast, listeners were given a list of ingredients needed to cook the dish together. Live communication of the participants and joint action allowed foreigners not only to taste truly Russian pancakes, but also to find out how they differ from their “brothers” in the world, when you need to say “the first pancake is lumpy”, how to pronounce the beautiful word “slightly” in Russian, and much more.



Fig. 4. Polina Chekalina leads a master class on making pancakes.

The images of the Arctic and the Russian North are the conceptual core of the content of the Russian language and culture distance language schools, conducted by NArFU named after M.V. Lomonosov. Competency-based content of online classes correlates with the Arctic, northern topics. Undergraduates of the Department of the Russian Language and Speech Culture are actively involved in creating content and conducting classes. Online schools have become a platform for testing within the framework of the Master's programs of the course “Technologies for distance learning of Russian as a foreign language”. The practice of conducting distance schools in 2020–2021 allowed to accumulate organizational and academic experience, as well as presentation training material for the successful implementation of such projects. The Winter School, announced for February 21 — March 5, 2022, will continue to maintain the “Arctic vector” of language schools for its students and acquaint foreigners with the Arctic and the Russian North.

## References

1. Dinevich I.A. Intensivnoe obuchenie russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu v formate letney yazykovoy shkoly: iz opyta raboty [Intensive Training in Russian as a Foreign Language in the Format of a Summer Language School: From Work Experience]. *Sovremennaya nauka: aktual'nye problemy teorii i praktiki. Seriya: Gumanitarnye nauki* [Modern Science: Actual Problems of Theory and Practice. Series of Humanities], 2020, no. 9–2, pp. 10–15.
2. Sizova T.V., Maksimovskikh A.G. Tekhnologiya obucheniya russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu v yazykovykh shkolakh [Technology of Teaching of Russian as a Foreign Language at Language Schools]. *Kant*, 2018, no. 3 (28), pp. 86–91.

3. Snegurova T.A., Viktor O.M. Letnyaya yazykovaya shkola: problemy i perspektivy [Summer Language School: Problems and Perspectives]. *Aktual'nye nauchnye issledovaniya v sovremennom mire* [Actual Scientific Research in the Modern World], 2016, no. 10–6 (18), pp. 142–146.
4. Maryanchik V.A., Shestakova T.E. Severnyy (Arkticheskiy) federal'nyy universitet imeni M.V. Lomonosova: Filologiya v arkticheskikh koordinatakh [Northern (Arctic) Federal University Named after M.V. Lomonosov: Philology in the Arctic Coordinates]. *Mir russkogo slova* [The World of Russian Word], 2021, no. 1, pp. 110–120. DOI: 10.24411/1811-1629-2021-1-110-120
5. Maryanchik V.A., Korostenko E.N., Onegina A.S. *Russkiy Sever: posobie po chteniyu dlya inostrantsev, izuchayushchikh russkiy yazyk* [Russian North: Reading Guide for Foreigners Studying Russian]. Arkhangelsk, NArFU Publ., 2018, 120 p. (In Russ.)

*The article was submitted 21.10.2021; accepted for publication 15.11.2021.*

*Contribution of the authors: the authors contributed equally to this article.*

*The authors declare no conflicts of interests.*