

Project Work in Teaching “News Media Language”



**INTERNATIONAL
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE
PROJECT**

DO RUSSIA AND LATIN AMERICA
MATTER?
TO EACH OTHER?
IN THE WORLD?

<http://www.acr.scilib.debryansk.ru/ruslat1/index.html>



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Foreword

"You tell me, and I forget. You teach me, and I remember. You involve me, and I learn."

(Benjamin Franklin)

First, the idea to do this Project emerged as a one to let realize this great principle of education in teaching languages.

The idea is really nice but as usual it turned out that it is not that simple to make it real and I desperately needed extra inspiration and strength.

But a nice saying goes

"Don't waste time waiting for inspiration. Begin, and inspiration will find you." (H. Jackson Brown, Jr. "On Wisdom") And – a coincidence? - today a thing happened which made me decisive never to let this dream and idea go off and stubbornly go on.

I was giving the task for our next classes of "News Media Language" to one of the groups – they were given 2 newspaper articles and were to prepare a review about the election clamour and election after-effects in Nicaragua. And there was one remark addressed to me:

"Why don't we read something entertaining? Nicaragua! Why? Why should we be interested in Africa? What does it matter to us?"

...Africa...matter...I stood dumb.

And we are talking about development, globalization, international cooperation, education at last!? What future is in store for us if our young people have such an attitude to life?

Is our education worthy if it doesn't provide students with broad-based education, doesn't create adaptable, articulate, creative students demonstrating intellectual curiosity and exhibiting fine academic accomplishments?

Even this one remark was enough to make me move on and make my students interested, keen, crazy about things they study. And a very sage and wise saying has become my lead:

"Donde haya un arbol que plantar, plantalo tu. Donde haya un error que enmendar, enriendalo tu. Donde haya un esfuerzo que todos esquivan, hazlo tu. Se tu el que aparta la piedra del camino."
(Gabriela Mistral, poeta chilena)

"Wherethere isa tree to plant, plant it. Wherethere isa mistake to correct, correct it. Wherethere is an effort that everyone avoids, do it. You be the one who moves the stone off the path."

So, we set off doing this Project to try to move this "stone" of stereotyped thinking and indifference even if a bit.

Why Russia and Latin America?

The Teacher's choice

Every country is a unique one and a little world in itself. Some countries are completely different, others are said to be close and akin to each other. I have suggested studying relationships between Russia and Latin America for a number of reasons:

- **political prominence:**

these days Russia and Latin America are colourful figures on the political arena the both arousing political controversies and playing an important role underestimated by many of those in power. And the information about events is quite often either distorted or withheld in the Press,

- **cultural diversity:**

the both are very colourful nations with rich customs and traditions and interesting history of building cultural relationships and of the cultures permeating each other,

- **linguistic prominence:**

Russia and Latin America are areas of the two most widely spoken languages in the world: Russian is now the 5th most widely spoken language in the world, Spanish is the 4th.

And the both are among the 5 official languages of the UN: English, French, Chinese, Spanish and Russian.

- **good background of relationships:**

Russia and the countries of Latin America were known to have friendly and cemented ties worthy of being restored and promoted. "Clubs of International Friendship" («КИД») were the realia of the Soviet epoch, we had a one at our Faculty as well.

- **desire and necessity to break stereotypes:**

the role of Russia and the countries of Latin America, our images are more often than not distorted and coloured in the Press. To promote friendship and cooperation we are to get to know each other as we are not as somebody makes us think.

"Why Latin America?"

The Students' voice

Not to seem imposing, enforcing and imperial as to the selection of the problem here I will give the opinion of my students.

This was the question they asked me. But answered themselves. And the answer was really unexpected. I thought they would parrot something of the stereotyped "Why? It's so far away? And why not England or the USA, because we learn English?"

So, I repeated the question asking them back: "Why Latin America?"

The answer was:

"Because it is so far away, we don't know anything about it, it's unusual to study this topic and we don't pay attention to Latin America. So, it's so interesting and catching." (Kate Morozova)

"It's so far away, it's so unusual, in Latin America the countries are developing ones and why are we always interested in rich countries?!" (Julia Kurkina)

"Of course if we speak about our studies and work it'd be better to study English-speaking countries but to study Latin America is useful – we know nothing about them." (Anton Trepachev)

"I don't like the Englishmen and the Americans. Not because they are rich or stuff but because they are cunning, strange, always have something on their minds and think only of material values. Latin Americans are not such ones." (Mikhail Kudinov)

So, with this "luggage" of knowledge and ideas and attitudes we "plunged" into doing the Project.

Part I. Project Aims

The Teacher's voice

The **aim** of the Project is:

to put computer technology (Multimedia technology, Computer-mediated communication) to use in the service of good language teaching methodology to enrich the educational program and the learning opportunities of the students.

The Project addresses issues at the intersection of **language** and **cross-cultural communication**.

It is done within the language discipline "**News Media Language**" and presupposes **Interdisciplinary Connections** (see Part II).

It is aimed at the following.

First, arousing the students' interest and enthusiasm for language and cultural studies and fostering their communicative competence by new forms of activities and "plunging" into the topic never studied before.

We must remember that learning a language is more than an academic exercise.

Secondly, in the time of globalization and cultural contacts it's very important for students (especially so for students of linguistics I think) to keep their eyes and minds open, to be familiar with foreign countries and cultures, to be politically-minded and active.

The Project is presupposed to raise political and cultural awareness of the students concerning different events in Russia and Latin America, to make the students find out interesting facts about the history of our former and existing relationships and to path ways for building up ties through education, language and culture in the possible nearest future.

The students are to develop critical and analyzing mind: to learn that no country can exist only within its boundaries but what happens in the world influences any other country, to be able to estimate how events happening in Russia and Latin America can influence political situation in them and in the rest of the world.

Thirdly, in our world developing and promoting cultural and language ties is of high priority. And Priority Number One is to revive the ties which were ruined after the collapse

of the Soviet Union and make the new ones stronger and better. Not only diplomatic ties but ties through cultures and languages. Things have changed so much, it's time we changed too:

"Vivo unos dias en casa del novelista Simonov..."

Yo le digo:

- *...Pero, mi querido Simonov, los paices levantan barreras, juegan al enemigo, se disparan en guerras frias y los hombres nos quedamos aislados. Nos acercamos al cielo en veloces cohetes y no acercamos nuestras manos en la fraternidad humana.*
- ***Tal vez cambiaran las cosas – me dice Simonov sonreido...*** (P.Neruda)

Summing up

By the time the Project is done the students will

- "discover" Latin America
- "re-discover" Russia
- get to know the background of various relationships between the both
- find out grounds for further cooperation (doing International cooperation project in purely linguistic topic, etc)
- train the language/languages
- develop communication skills
- learn how to use Computer technologies in education.

The Students' voice

Expectations of the Project

(opinion poll of the Team)

(original spelling and the rest are preserved)

"What do I expect from this project? First of all, I'd like to learn more about Latin America, consequently to know as much as it's possible about the political set-up, about culture, simply about people. Secondly, I'd like to know about the former relations between Russia and Latin America and to begin communication with people today anyway. Through www., maybe." (Mikhail Kudinov)

"1) I expect that the new cultural ties will be established, esp. with the students of foreign universities. 2) It's also interesting to find out if people abroad are of the same opinion of Russia as we are. 3) I want to learn if people in another Hemisphere, on another continent suffer from the same problems and have the same cultural values. 4) I'd like to find out what made us "friends" in the past and if it's possible to form a union again." (Irina Gorbarchuk)

Subjective Point of View!!! I'm very interested in Latin American literature. I've already read many books written by famous writers from Brazil, Guatemala, Venezuela and other countries. I feel that the way they think is very close to that of Russians. So I think that it will be very useful to study the culture of those countries (may be to learn the language!) because it is really very interesting. It's a pity we don't study Spanish at our faculty, so I think that we should at least participate in such interesting projects." (Kate Nazarevich)

"Carrying out this project we should draw the parallel between these 2 countries (?): Russia and Latin America, know more about their traditions, find out common features, what make us close. I think, it will be the process of relationship building." (Kate Bukhty)

"I think that that project will be an inducement for me to obtain some information about Latin America and that knowledge will add up to the small stock of those things I know in the sphere of geography and culture of other countries. Because I think that at the moment I'm too ignorant of global events and prominent personalities." (Julia Kurkina)

"I suppose that this project will help us to learn more about the history of Latin America and Russia. It will broaden our horizon. It has practical value for our language learning. Maybe it can help us to establish relations with this country (?) and especially students who will assist in this project." (Olga Rubel)

"To know as much as possible about L.A. 'cos it's the second farthest place in the World. The first is "Antarctida" (?). So, the culture should be different and interesting. On the other hand, I think we've much in common 'cos peoples of our countries don't pay much attention to becomming (?) rich, I mean not working hard, but be cunny (?) and very quick-witted. So, as in Russia, there is a great soul, but not cold brains." (Kate Morozova)

"From this project I expect: - to set the international relations between Russia and Latin America, - to enrich our knowledge about these countries, - to collect the most interesting facts about Latin America and share it with other people, - to give our foreign partners the information about Russia that they don't know, - to publish this project in a magazine." (Anton Trepachev)

Summing up

We want to know about:

Latin America's political set-up

Latin America's culture

Latin America's people

Latin America's problems

Latin America's values

Latin America's former relations with Russia

Latin America's opinion of Russia

the history of Latin America and Russia

We want to:

communicate with Latin Americans

make friends again, build up relations

train the language / languages

share what we will learn about each other with other people

make each other know those things which have been unknown to us so far.

Part II. Language Teaching

Language Teaching and Learning Requirements

The Project is tailored to meet the requirements set by the educational program for Faculties of Foreign Languages of the language discipline “**News Media Language**”, 4th year of study.

Doing the Project in this discipline gives us huge possibilities:

- the discipline presupposes **Interdisciplinary Connections:**

Culture

Economics

Politics

Geography

Teaching

Media Studies

Computer Technologies (generally and in education)

translation

- doing the Project the students are to gather authentic materials from various sources. Mass media is one among the most important ones and directly and indirectly the students are to touch upon the problem of the modern role of the Press and Freedom of Expression as to the events and the role of Russia and Latin America in the world.

The study program of this year has the following range of topics to be studied:

Term 1

At the Map of the World

Political Set-up

The Press - another power branch.

Term 2.

Schooling and Education - a problem of national and world importance.

Building up ties and relationships. Summits, meetings, forums, congresses.

While doing and presenting the Project it's required that the students should

- use their essential and extra political vocabulary, gained knowledge in political and cultural spheres, etc in natural situations and discussions of different kinds – e-mail communication, presentation-making, interviews, essay writing on films etc,

- try to present some materials in the form of interesting and unusual exercises to train the language.

Through Computer-mediated communication the students are motivated by having culture-to-culture, person-to-person interaction. This, together with peer-to-peer and teacher feedback, improves their written and oral language skills.

☑ *the list of Essential Vocabulary items for each topic is attached*

☑ *the list of Extra Vocabulary items from audio-texts, newspaper and magazine articles, Web sites is attached*

Part III. Technical Requirements

General

Type of the Project:

- Informational-practical: gathering information, distributing it among all the participants, analyzing and generalizing it for a wider public, using the results for teaching and learning.
- Coordinated: the Project supervisor not only supervises the work but is himself an active participant
- International
- Group Project

Obligatory requirements:

(can see also <http://www.ioso.ru/distant/library/publication/types.htm>)

1) Well defined aim of Project work demanding using information from various fields of knowledge

2) Practical and theoretical significance of Project work, in our case:

- *the problem is of public, political, cultural and linguistic importance*

- *collaborative work of the students from different countries at the Site*

- *involvement not only of the students but all people interested: linguists, writers, newspaper editors etc*

3) students' studying much on their own – individually, in pair or in groups:

- *Trepachev Anton, Ira Gorbarchuk – Public Opinion Polls*

- *Individual work at a Latin American country chosen and Russia, at a newspaper chosen*

- *Individual work at presentations devoted to famous Latin American writers, essays, gathering material for Tutti Frutti*

4) to structure the contents of the Project (see the Project Site Map), to settle the date when the task is to be done

5) for some forms of work such as documentaries making it is necessary to have general discussions after seeing the film

CALL Awareness

Before starting the Project it's desirable if not necessary that the students should become aware of CALL through instructions and acquainting themselves with online materials on the topic.

(see e.g. <http://www.gse.uci.edu/faculty/markw/call.html> with other useful references, <http://www.fredriley.org.uk/call/langsite/>)

Project Presentation

The Project implies usage of **computer technology** - Multimedia technology, Computer-mediated communication (e-mailing with foreign students, international online discussions, looking for sources of authentic materials) together with employing good **language teaching methodology**.

It's advisable that the Presentation of the data should include a variety of forms:

- text,
- graphics,
- sound,
- animation,
- video.

Any innovations are welcome!

Intercultural Exchange

The students can communicate synchronically (**Skype, chat**)

and

asynchronically (**forums** and **email** and **Blogs**).

Through

RUSLAT Students Community at <http://groups.google.com/>

Our e-mail: RUSLAT@googlegroups.com

The students collaborate either in small teams or individually.

The counterpart teams are to be combined (of about the same size).

After the groups are formed the students can exchanged photos of each team. It will make the project more exciting and more personal.

They can use e-mail to discuss the issues they work at and for peer review of the presentation of this or that part of their work.

Each small group concentrates on their task. When they cope with it (e.g. Public Opinion Polls) they send it to each student of the team who after reading it prepare comments and these reactions are then sent to all the members of the students's groups.

After discussing it with teammates in class and teammates on the Net and getting feedback, the students prepare a final version for the Presentation.

By mutual agreement the Participants can choose different forms of cooperation.

Part IV. List of Participants

For the Project not to be one-sided but interesting, authentic and worthy International Cooperation with Latin America's Universities is desirable.

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The Team:

The **4th year** students (group 401).

Native language – Russian. Other languages spoken – English, German.

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Part V. Project work schedule

The meetings of the team are to be held each week or twice a week but regularly.

At every meeting the plan of actions should be discussed and accepted.

At each further meeting the team gets to know if and how they have coped and succeeded with the tasks set previously, share and discuss new ideas and set new goals.

Throughout the week occasional discussions with the project supervisor can be held by e-mailing.

Activities	Done by	Done
Film Watching		
"The Lost City"		✓
"El Topo"		✓
"The Road to Guantanamo"		✓
"The Motorcycle Diaries"		✓
"The City of God"		✓
"El Salvador"		✓
"Clear and Present Danger"		
"Las Bandidas"		
"Evita"		
"Farmingville" by Carlos Sandoval		
Presentations		
Gabriel Garcia Marquez	Zubareva Nastya	✓
Isabel Allende	Rubel Olga	✓
Borges	Kate Bukhty	
Paolo Coelho	Ksenia Karpenko	✓
Carnival de America Latina: Brazil and Mexico	Kate Kapitanova and Alisa Gorinova	✓
"Che" Guevara	Nastya Zubareva	✓
Allende	Misha Kudinov	

Colombia	Marina Khalimonenko	✓
Venezuela	Nastya Dolzhenkova	
Bolivia	Julia Kurkina	✓
Mexico	Alisa Gorinova	✓
Uruguay	Elena Pyankova	✓
Interviews		
Interview “Visiting Costa Rica” with James Freeman		✓
“The Road to Guantanamo” – general information, film	Anton Trepachev	✓
Interview with Mario Bustillo		✓
Letter-Interview “Vacation in South America”, Svetlana Brezanskaya		✓
Letter-Interview “Visiting South America”, Norbert Raabe		✓
Visiting Cuba Interview with Victor Sluzcewski		✓
Interview “Visiting Central and South America”, Alexander Gorbachev		✓
Interview “Visiting Mexico”		✓

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