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**TRAINING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OF INTERPRETING
AND TRANSLATION IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT:
ASU BEST PRACTICES**

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The challenges of adaptation faced by international students of interpreting and translation at Astrakhan State University (ASU), which are aggravated by high academic standards, have been successfully overcome owing to a number of factors: the favourable geographic location of ASU, a unique combination of languages (English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Persian (Farsi), Azeri, Kazakh, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese), highly-qualified teaching staff, advanced technologies, and up-to-date equipment.

Keywords: translation, interpreting, Caspian Sea, Asian and European Languages, multilingual educational environment

**ОБУЧЕНИЕ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ ПИСЬМЕННОМУ И УСТНОМУ
ПЕРЕВОДУ В ПОЛИКУЛЬТУРНОЙ СРЕДЕ: ЛУЧШИЕ ПРАКТИКИ АГУ**

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В статье рассматриваются проблемы адаптации, с которыми сталкиваются иностранные студенты-лингвисты в Астраханском государственном университете (АГУ) и которые, несмотря на высокие академические стандарты, успешно решаются благодаря ряду факторов: выгодному географическому положению Астраханской области, уникальному сочетанию языков (английский, немецкий, французский, итальянский, испанский, персидский (фарси), азербайджанский, казахский, арабский, китайский, японский), высококвалифицированному преподавательскому составу, применению передовых технологий и современного оборудования для обучения всем видам перевода.

Ключевые слова: письменный перевод, устный перевод, Каспийское море, азиатские и европейские языки, многоязычная образовательная среда

Introduction. The enrollment of international students in higher education has long been a subject of research. Students coming to another country have to adjust not only to a new academic setting, new teachers, and educational standards, but also to a new culture. The challenges that they face may serve as a basis for enriching university faculty and staff through the new experiences of working with people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, thus developing their cultural sensitivity. Universities should be prepared to meet international students' needs not only academically but culturally as well.

In this article, international T & I students' experiences in the School of Foreign Languages at Astrakhan State University are examined.

Astrakhan as a strategic city of Southern Russia: historical background and the present state of things. Astrakhan State University (ASU) is one of the most dynamically developing universities in Eastern Europe, combining strong academic traditions with innovative technologies. ASU is one of the largest educational establishments in Southern Russia and in the Caspian region, which is a multicultural and poly-confessional region (139 nationalities, 3 world religions). The university was founded in 1932 and has become an international educational establishment since then.

ASU is located in the city of Astrakhan, which is considered the Caspian capital of Russia, as it is currently the only Russian city with access to the Caspian Sea. Not very far from here the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea, splitting into small rivers and rivulets and forming numerous islands – this is why the city is often referred to as the Russian Venice of the South.

As shown in Figure 1, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are located southwest of Astrakhan; a little further on are Turkey, Syria and Iraq. To the south, we have the very beautiful but hardly tranquil country of Iran. Afghanistan and Pakistan are to our southeast. To the east of Astrakhan, we have a whole succession of countries: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.



Figure 1. Astrakhan and the neighbouring territories

Astrakhan has a long and distinguished history. In the past, it was an important city of the Golden Horde. The territory of the modern-day Astrakhan Region was one of the destinations of the Silk Road or Silk Route - an ancient network of routes that were central to cultural, trade and economic interactions through regions of the Asian continent. The Silk Road served as a bridge between Western countries and the East, from China to the Mediterranean Sea. The first written mention of Astrakhan dates back to the 13th century, where it is stated that it was one of the Tatar settlements. In 1459–1556, Astrakhan was the principal city of the Astrakhan Khanate. Back in 1556, Russian Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible captured the Astrakhan Khanate – the component *Tsar of Astrakhan* was added to his official title – and Astrakhan was to serve as Russia's trading gateway to Asia. It is here where numerous fairs were held, and this led to the establishment of various trading *podvories* – mansions belonging to foreign merchants with adjacent grounds and small houses, where they lived and traded. Even in modern Astrakhan, there are traces of those times: you can see Indian, Armenian and Persian *podvories*. They are now architectural and historical monuments and are on the list of cultural heritage sites.

In the 17th century, Astrakhan became an important center of Russian shipbuilding, and Russia's fleet of river vessels departed from here, bound for the Caspian Sea. Furthermore, Tsar Peter the Great regarded the city as the main artery providing trade with Europe, India, Iran and Central Asia.

Undoubtedly, all the above factors contributed to the establishment of a multicultural atmosphere in the city: Astrakhan became home to people of more than 130 nationalities, all of them of varying religious backgrounds. Subsequently, there are many places for worship in the city: churches (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant), mosques, and a Buddhist temple.

Presently Astrakhan retains its status of one of the most ethnically diverse cities, where different ethnic groups have been living and cooperating peacefully for centuries. Of the 1 018 626 people living in the Astrakhan Region (2010) 67.6 % are Russians, 16.3 % are Kazakhs, 6.6 % are Tatars, about 1 % are Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians, Chechens. There are also Kalmyks, Armenians, Koreans, Turks, Uzbeks, and many other nationalities.

Astrakhan is a dynamically developing city of Southern Russia: in 2014 the city hosted the 4th Summit of Heads of Caspian Region States (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Russia, Turkmenistan). In March 2016 the national women's handball teams from Russia, Poland, Mexico and Sweden met in the city of Astrakhan for the right to compete in the 2016 Summer Olympics. From 7 to 14 April 2016 Astrakhan invited delegations from Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan to participate in the International Caspian Technological Forum. The Forum became a global event comprising the entire Caspian Sea region, and an opportunity to discuss the problems and prospects of technology industry development. The roundtable discussions on the forum focused on public-private partnership, the development of new transport corridors "North-South" and "East-West", the prospects of special economic zones, new technologies in the field of shipbuilding and aquaculture development, and so on.

The city's diverse population creates a favourable environment for organizing international cultural events: since 2013 Astrakhan has been hosting the international ethnographical festival – competition *Voices of the Golden Steppe* that is supported by the International Council for Traditional Music (a non-governmental organization in formal consultative relations with UNESCO). The contest is attended by musicians and folk-dancers from Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

Moreover, Translation Forum Russia, which unites interpretation and translation professionals from different countries was held in Astrakhan on 1–3 July 2016.

Therefore, both the history of Astrakhan and its current activity testify to the fact that it remains a strategic city for Russia, serving as an organizational platform

for major international events. For this reason, there is an increasing need to have highly-qualified interpreters and translators who possess not only the 'traditional set' of European languages – English, German, Spanish and French – in their language repertoires, but also Farsi, Arabic, Turkish, Japanese, and Chinese, as well as Azeri and Kazakh.

***The School of Foreign Languages of ASU as a unique platform
for international T & I students***

How is international student mobility shaping up? It should be noted that Astrakhan State University benefits from its geographical location in many aspects. As regards training interpreters and translators, ASU students are of different nationalities and religions. Every year there are full-time and exchange students from Asian countries – Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, China, and Japan, as well as students from Eastern and Western Europe – Switzerland, Italy, France, the UK, and Ukraine. Every year students from the USA come for academic mobility. There is network cooperation with the universities in the Caspian Sea Region: L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan Universities (Azerbaijan University of Languages and Baku Slavic University, Azerbaijan).

Over the past seventeen years, the School of Foreign languages (SFL) of Astrakhan State University (ASU) has experienced an increased enrollment of international students at the undergraduate, graduate (bachelor and master) and post-graduate levels (from 12 students in fall 1998 to 68 in fall 2015).

In the 2011–2012 academic year, the number of international students at SFL was 30 students from ten countries of the former USSR. Most of them came from Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. They were followed by students from Georgia and Ukraine (Figure 2).

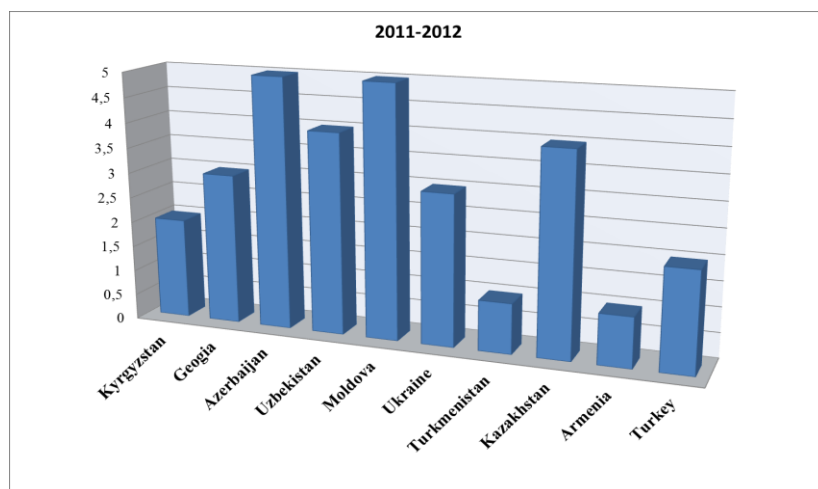


Figure 2. The number of international students at the SFL in 2011–2012

Figure 3 (2012–2013 academic year) shows that such countries as Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Ukraine retained their leading positions in the number of international students, with Turkmenistan being added to the list. Changes in the international situation brought us students from new areas: Abkhazia and Transnistria (also called Trans-Dniestr or Transdnistria, which is a partially recognized state located mostly on a strip of land between the River Dniestr and the eastern Moldovan border with Ukraine). If the overall number of students was 50, then having 16 students from Kazakhstan could be viewed as a favorable tendency in our cooperation with educational institutions from Asian countries. The number of students was rather high: it can be explained by a well-arranged

occupational guidance program for schoolchildren from neighboring towns and cities in Kazakhstan. Every year the schools' career guidance counselors conduct a wide range of career programs interviewing young people (aged 15–17), filling in forms (such as Action Plans), making presentations, organizing & planning work, visiting local employers & education institutions, negotiating service-level contracts with schools, etc. This is a part of a strategic plan for every university to be customer-oriented, especially with the goal of increasing the flow of international students.

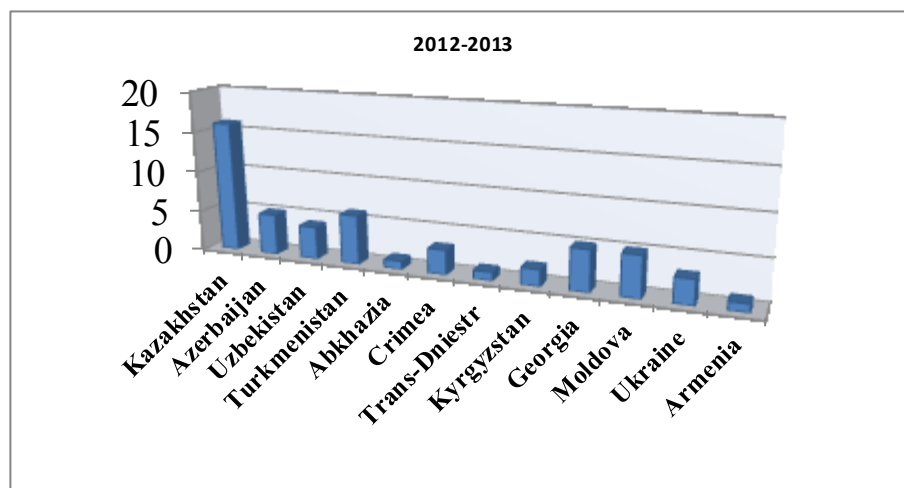


Figure 3. The number of international students at the SFL in 2012–2013

The next academic year of 2013–2014 saw another increase in international students from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan with 19, 7 and 6 students respectively. The prestige of ASU on the international arena and its high academic reputation for working with students of different ethnic backgrounds allowed the institution to attract students from other counties, for example Kyrgyzstan. Their interest is framed by educational services of appropriate quality that we provide (Fig. 4).

Figure 5 shows another leap in the number of international students in the DFL from 53 to 64 students. For the second time in the 17-year period, students from Turkey were added to the enrollment list of the Department and their number exceeded five persons.

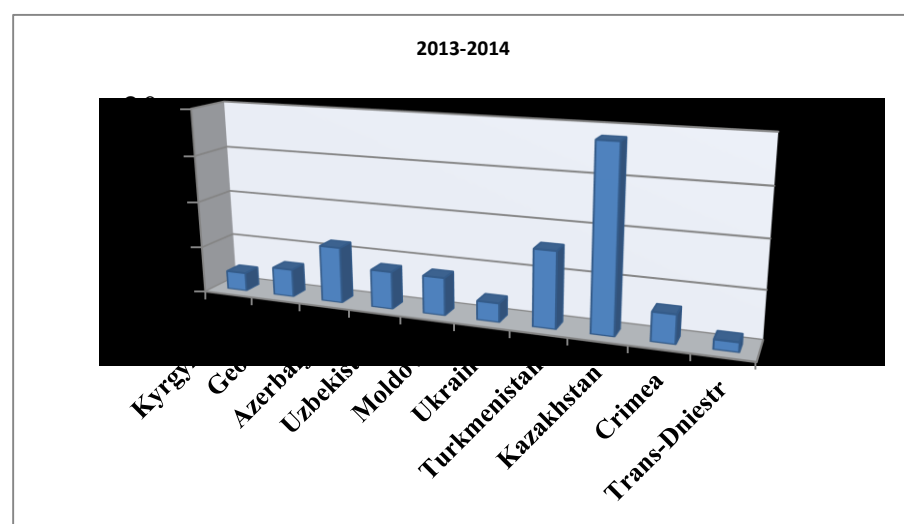


Figure 4. The number of international students at the SFL in 2013–2014

Figure 6 presents recent data with 68 students from 9 countries. The year is characterized by a growing number of students from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The latter two countries are trying to find a way to stem an enormous deficit of doctors, teachers, and engineers. Taking into consideration their insufficient knowledge of Russian and English and cultural differences, students from these countries study together. They do not feel frustration and disengagement, as the faculty has managed to adjust the curriculum for them.

Figure 7 gives a clear picture of the number of international students in the academic year of 2016–2017. According to the graph, the young people from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan continued to make up the significant majority of ASU international students (37 and 23 students respectively) while the number of students from Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine remained almost at the same level compared to the period of 2015–2016. However, students from Turkey did not get enrolled in the ASU due to the visa requirements and chilly diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and Turkish Republic.

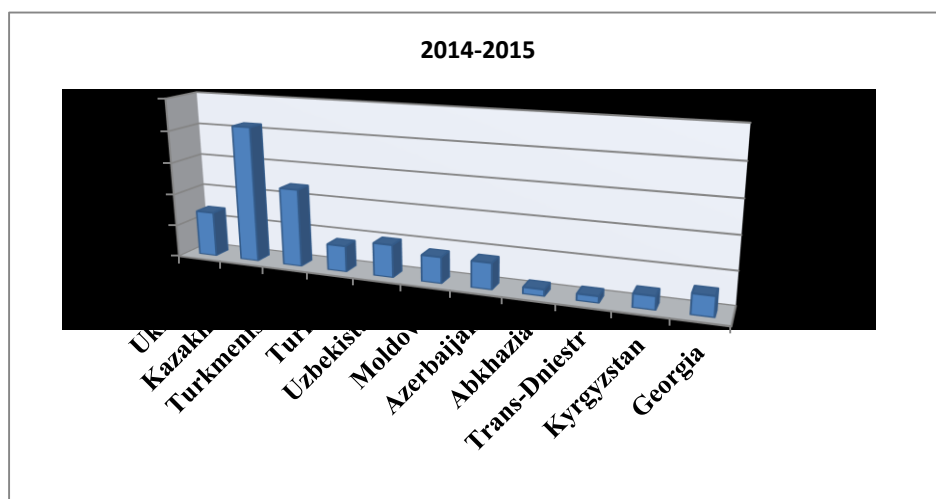


Figure 5. The number of international students at the SFL in 2014–2015

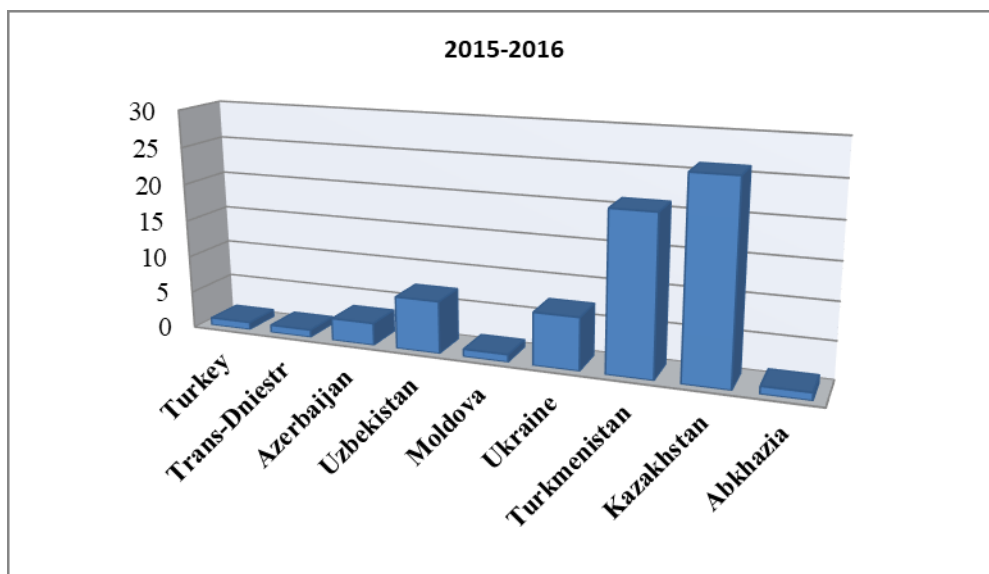


Figure 6. The number of international students at the SFL in 2015–2016

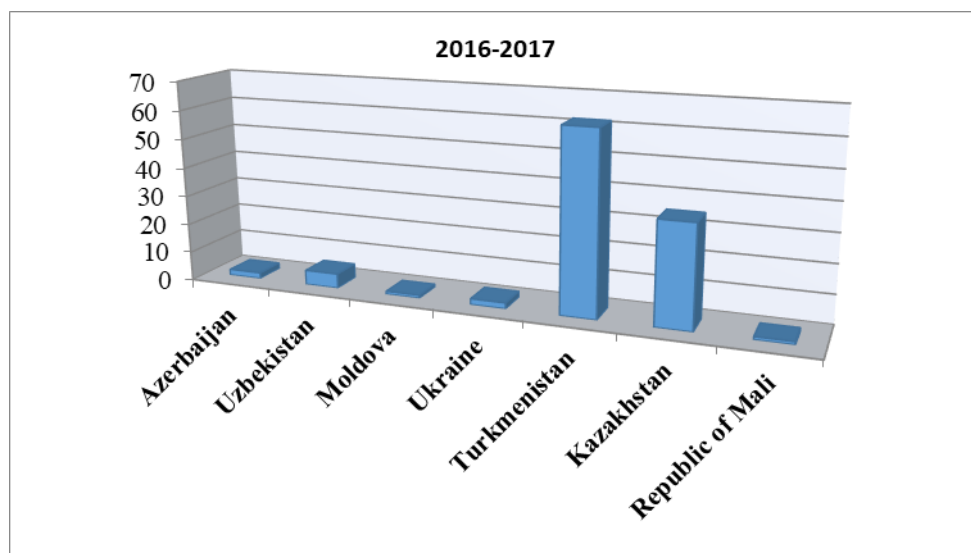


Figure 7. The number of international students at the SFL in 2016–2017

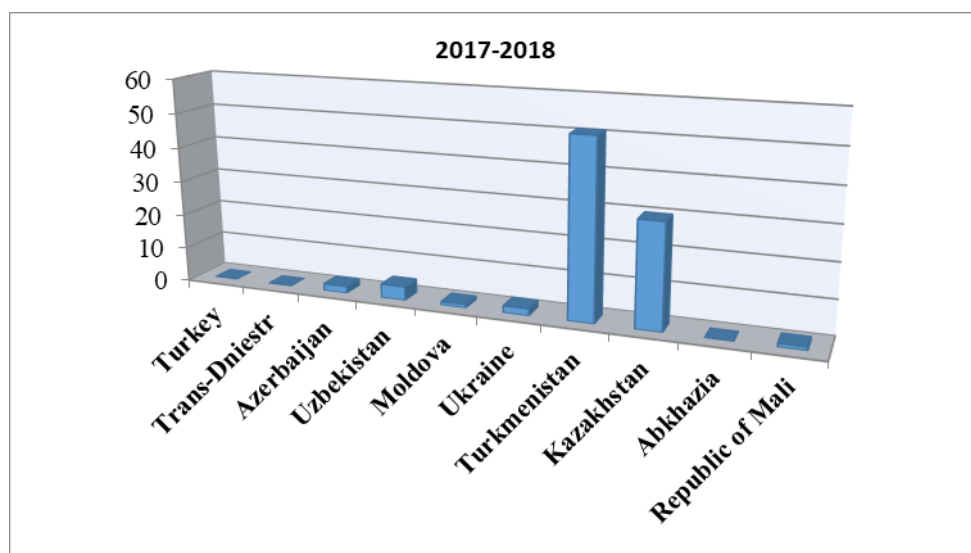


Figure 8. The number of international students at the DFL in 2017–2018

Fig. 8 presents the number of international students coming to study at Astrakhan State University within the period of 2017–2018. That year was marked by a sharp increase in the number of international students by 54 % (38 people). It is connected with a new educational import policy conducted by the incoming Rector. Moreover, collapsing of Russian currency made our education more accessible for students from the CIS countries. Another fact is that a student from the Republic of Mali came to get enrolled in the ASU School of foreign languages for the first time.

The academic year of 2018–2019 shows a steady growth of international applicants to ASU, though the geography of their academic migration has remained almost the same (Fig. 9). The main stream of the international students is represented by those from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and the Republic of Mali. Still, the share of students from Turkmenistan in 2018–2019 increased dramatically. All in all, 134 international applicants were enrolled on different Bachelor's degree programs at the School of Foreign Languages, ASU.

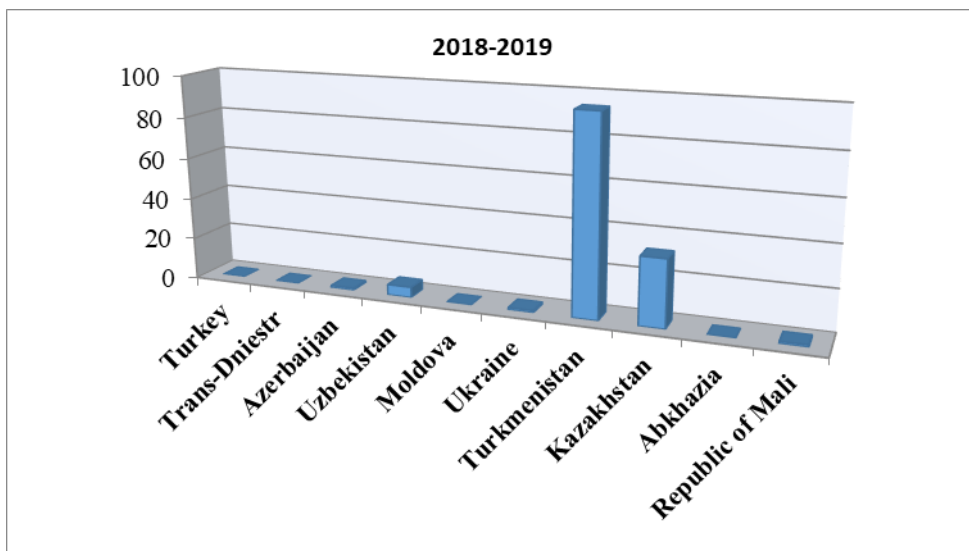


Figure 9. The number of international students at the DFL in 2018–2019

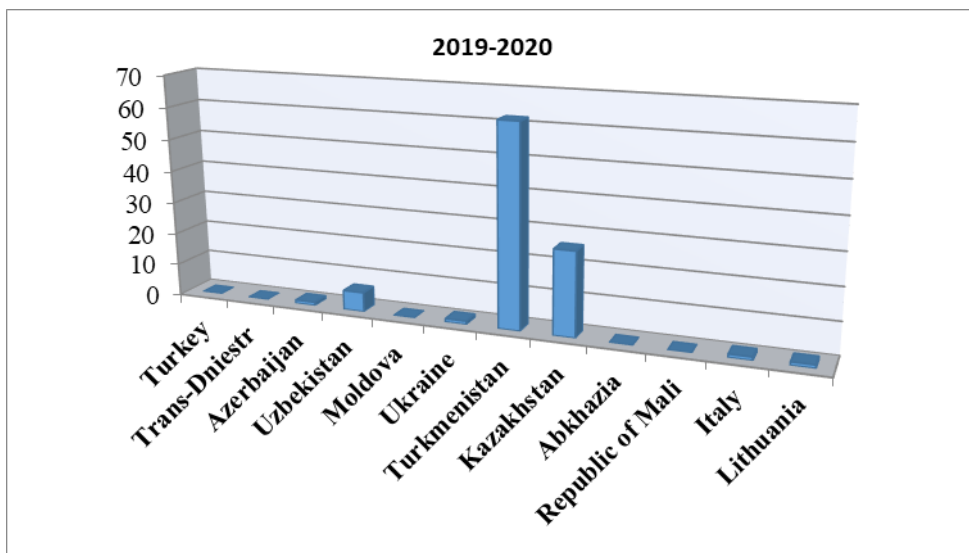


Figure 10. The number of international students at the DFL in 2019–2020

The next academic year of 2019–2020 proved to be different for ASU international student academic program. As Figure 10 demonstrates the general number of international students from Turkmenistan (62 people) and Kazakhstan (26 people) dropped as compared with the previous year. However, ASU enlarged its international students geography enrolling the applicants from the Central Europe, Italy, and the Baltic region, Lithuania: the former student applied for the Master's degree course and the latter applied for a Bachelor's degree program at the School of Foreign Languages, ASU.

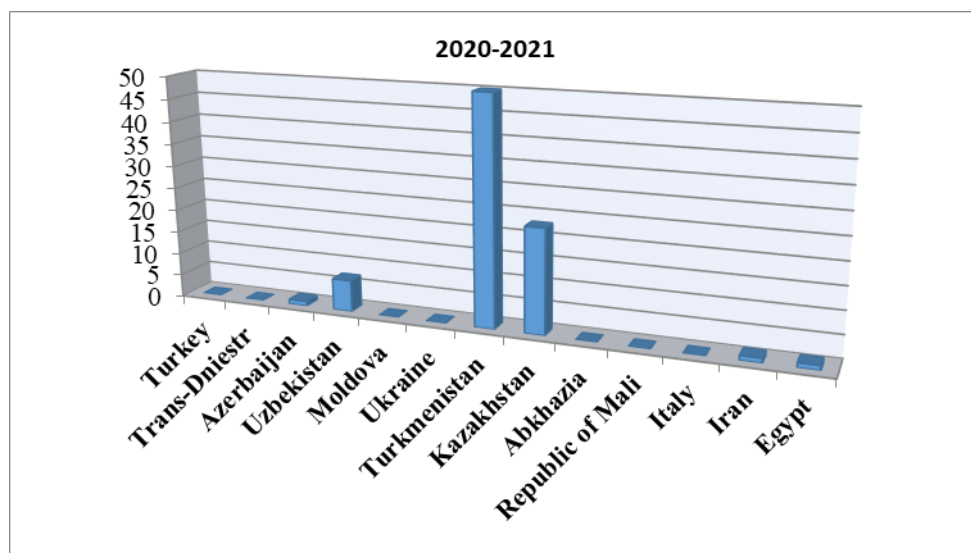


Figure 11. The number of international students at the DFL in 2020–2021

As is seen from Figure 11 the year 2020–2021 saw a significant fall in the number of international students in many universities which is explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even up to 4 September 2020, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation did not give clear instructions on how the universities should organize their work with international students. In spite of the pandemic and owing to successful promotional campaign ASU continued the enrollment process, and 82 applicants from different countries became students of The School of Foreign Languages. Our neighbours from the Caspian Region states are traditionally in the lead: 50 students from Turkmenistan and 23 from Kazakhstan were enrolled. A student from Iran who got her MA degree from the Faculty of Philology chose to continue her education and joined the Master program in translation, which is realized in the School. This testifies to the fact that the School of Foreign Languages retains its attractiveness for students from abroad.

Unique language combinations. The linguistic context of the SFL is unique for having twelve languages (five European: English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and seven Asian: Persian, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, Arabic, Azeri, Kazakh), all equally important. At the dawn of the School in 1945 there were only 2 languages: English and German. French was added in 1964, and the integration of Asian languages began in 2001 with Persian and Turkish.

Opening in Astrakhan in February 2001, the Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Iran reinforced international cooperation between Iran and Astrakhan. Furthermore, the start of the International North-South Transport Corridor construction, which is a route for moving freight between Russia, Iran, India, Europe and Central Asia, has increased trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Tehran, Baku, Bandar Abbas, Astrakhan, Bandar Anzali, etc. Many Russian companies opened offices in Iran, and they required people who spoke Persian.

All the above events paved the way for promotion of the Persian language and its inclusion into the list of languages taught. In Russia there are few universities where Persian is taught, but Astrakhan State University is one of them. Emphasis is equally placed on each of the four language skills: reading, listening comprehension, speaking, and writing. The curriculum draws on a broad cultural context that allows students to acquire profound knowledge of social, cultural, and academic institutions, which complements and reinforces the language learning process. Every year students of the SFL at ASU participate in the **Persian Language and**

Literature Olympiad at Moscow State University, and they are always commended for their excellent command of the language.

Kazakh and Azeri were introduced in 2011 when the Caspian Higher School of Interpreting & Translation (CHSIT), which is a joint project of the European Commission and the European Parliament and Astrakhan State University, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the UN Secretariat and the Government of the Astrakhan Region was opened. Today the Caspian Higher School of Interpreting and Translation (CHSIT) runs 2 master programs: 1) Theory of Translation & Interpretation: Intercultural / Interlingual Communication and 2) Translation theory and practice for professional communication. Master students of these international programs have opportunities for internships and future employment in international organizations of the EU, the UN, transnational companies and joint ventures of the Caspian and Central Asian regions. Having graduated from the intensive 2-year program, students are awarded a Master's degree and get the opportunity to take accreditation tests to work for these European institutions.

The CHSIT cooperates with universities in Geneva, Madrid, Turkey and Ljubljana within the framework of the European Parliament DG INTE grant project that promotes dissemination of best practices in conference interpreting training between EU and non-EU languages. ASU has extensive experience in organizing and hosting large-scale international events in partnership with the European Commission and the European Parliament DGs, UN agencies and other international bodies.

With the extension of academic programs this number will automatically increase. All these languages and cultures contribute to students' personal and professional development. Even if such a high number of languages is unusual at other universities, there are good examples of teaching them to international students whose mother tongues are Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Turkish, Italian, French, etc. at the SFL in ASU. That is why today much attention is paid to the theoretical research in terms of teaching several languages at the School.

International T & I students: challenges in training and adaptation techniques. For most international students, who arrive in Astrakhan to enter the SFL and who want to become translators and interpreters, the first challenge they face is immersion in a new culture, which occurs as immersion in a different community, a different language, a different environment, different food and different social communication habits. In order to achieve their academic goals and succeed in completing the T & I courses, first and foremost they have to undergo adaptation period, which consists of some stages (physiological, psychological, social, cultural, etc.) All of these adaptation stages take up time and energy, and they are all interrelated. However, the focus of this article is the international T & I students' challenges, so some adaptation techniques practised at the SFL will be presented.

As our practice shows, there are three main issues regarding international T & I students' adaptation at the SFL of ASU: (a) language barrier, (b) different communication styles, and (c) the process of adapting to Russian culture and the culture of learning languages.

Regarding language difficulties, students whose native language differs significantly from Russian and whose command of English is not sufficient may experience a twofold challenge of switching off between different languages and mastering each. International students' knowledge of Russian is actually characterized by restricted lexical and grammatical communication ability in both everyday and academic spheres. Therefore, they experience difficulty expressing their opinions and managing such tasks as working with a dictionary, writing a synopsis, taking notes, etc.

Cross-cultural differences can often enhance or even add to the differences in communication styles, compounding the entire issue. As communication skills are very important for establishing and maintaining good relations, especially in the collectivistic and socially interdependent cultures to which Asian students belong, it

is a priority to understand the various aspects of different communication styles and be able to switch from indirect and non-verbal communication into direct and verbal communication.

Moreover, the long process of adapting to Russian culture requires learning new ways of doing the things they are used to. It is important to be aware of how language is used in another culture and to see through the culturally-specific patterns of communication. To both learn and mimic Russian ways of living requires much time and effort. Therefore, it is vitally important to reduce the negative impact of cross-cultural encounters by checking for accuracy, giving students more time to respond, and having students first write down what they want to say. Although both international students and faculty make good efforts on this front, more can still be done. Facilitating cross-cultural adaptation requires psychological preparation, empathy, guidance, and patience.

Experience shows that international students know little about other countries and cultures, even neighbouring ones. Driven by stereotypes, they arrive with unreliable, inaccurate information about other cultures and are preoccupied by the prejudice that cannot help but affect their adaptation to another social environment. All this brings the issue of social adaptation to the foreground.

At the SFL we voice concern about two main issues: academic and social challenges. Sometimes the students' expectations do not coincide with what we expect them to do and lead to disappointment. For example, if a student is used to gaining knowledge and information from the teacher, the latter may think that the student does not contribute ideas. International students may feel anxious in discussion sections or small classes where their teachers expect students to be engaged in conversations. In some cases, international students have ideas but do not know how to jump into the conversation. Brainstorming, mind maps, and team work make it possible for an international student to be engaged in critical thinking and to share his or her ideas with others. Possible solutions to this issue include providing direct guidance, giving clear expectations and increasing flexibility of teaching modes.

The faculty of the SFL are aware of dealing with multicultural educational processes and all the above mentioned challenges. So, they are prepared and come with a set of techniques to ease the challenges of the adaptation period and overcome the difficulties of learning a new culture. Those techniques are manifold, have different dimensions and function at different levels: preliminary, intermediate and undergraduate. Each level has its own set of techniques, including various forms of adaptation activities, and most of them are of an end-to-end nature.

International students are the most vulnerable at the preliminary level due to the impact of culture shock and an alien environment, so the international department of ASU and SFL teachers and tutors get the students involved in different activities. Orientation activities are arranged before classes begin and include tours of the university campus, the sights of Astrakhan, and the SFL. These tours are aimed at getting students familiar with the city they are going to live in while studying, as well as the structure of the university, its campus, dormitories, and facilities.

Another very important activity is an introduction to the ASU website and its useful education portal. At the same time the students receive access to the ASU library and e-library (*non-school activities*).

As for the *classroom activities*, they are aimed at making the students' transition period for learning as seamless as possible. After taking placement tests, the students attend Russian courses for multicultural groups. Additionally, they join and attend English courses for multicultural groups, where the principle "I am like others" helps to increase their self-assessment levels. Here, the learning-teaching environment is modified and adapted to any ethnic and cultural specifics of the group, including the history, texts, values, beliefs and perspectives of people belonging to

different cultural backgrounds. These factors and students' learning abilities are all taken into account.

Of equal importance are peer-to-peer education and tutor guidance. The former gets the students ready for cooperation with other students in solving educational tasks, and the latter makes sure their adaptation process is going well. As experience shows, the students take comfort in the fact that they are "not alone" and they can turn to an official for guidance.

Association of fellow-countrymen meetings play a great role in reducing "homesickness," lessen the adaptation period, and promote student involvement in social or extracurricular activities (*non-school activities*).

At the intermediate level, when the students have already gained some experience in learning in an alien cultural environment, they continue to attend English courses for multicultural groups. However, the influence of their home culture is expected to reduce. The above course is also characterized by learning-teaching multicultural awareness. The teaching methods and techniques are flexible; they are arranged in accordance with the expected and assessed achievements of the students and related to them learning skills.

Another adaptation activity is Russian folk culture dance / singing clubs, which the students can choose and attend after classes. Moreover, they are to participate in English-language contests (British fairy-tales, British and American poetry) and Russian-language contests (Russian poetry). As a rule, such contests are multifold as the students are encouraged to work in multicultural groups, get acquainted with British and American culture and literature or Russian literature, and demonstrate their language skills and creativity.

"Socialization" activities are organized at the university level and aim to develop social skills and cooperation between different university schools and their students. They usually include theatre performances and cultural thematic contests.

At this level the adaptation activities also get the international students involved in different Culture Weeks (native culture exhibitions, performances, feast of national cuisines). Here, the students host events that let fellow students get acquainted with their cultures and traditions. In addition, foreign culture film festivals are arranged by different SFL departments with the same purpose.

At this level of adaptation, the students go on attending meetings of the Association of their fellow countrymen. With its support they organize and participate in national holidays and celebrations.

At the undergraduate level the international students proceed to take part in the aforementioned activities, which are held at a different frequency: attending Russian folk culture dance / singing clubs, socialization activities: theatre performances, contests of Russian language, different Culture Weeks, participation in English-language contests, and tutor meetings. What is remarkable about this level of adaptation is their maturity and confidence in living in a "now not-so-alien" cultural environment. What is more, the international students start to counsel and supervise their junior countrymen who are just beginning their path towards cultural adaptation.

School of Foreign Languages: Factors of Successful Performance. As mentioned above, positive experience in teaching international students and managing their culture adaptation process in the multicultural environment is ensured by several factors including the unique geographical location of the Astrakhan Region, historical background, and present-day policies. But, undoubtedly, the Foreign Languages School at ASU, with its educational programs, curricula, attitudes and practices, contributes a lot to sustain such performance. It is successfully achieved due to several factors, among them: a well-organized faculty structure; the professional level of the teaching staff; periodic standards-aligned professional development and professional advancement; cooperation with local organizations in the public and private sectors, who are potential employers of SFL graduates;

the availability and maintenance of a number of cultural centers involved in providing specialized culture and language courses and traineeship to the SFL students.

The implementation of multicultural awareness as well as the field of expertise is reflected in a wide range of the School chairs: the Chair of English Philology, the Chair of the English Language for Humanities, the Chair of the English Language for Economic Professions, the Chair of German Philology, the Chair of Roman Philology, and the Chair of Asian Languages. Such approach to the arrangement of specialization profile of the chairs is correlated with specific academic subjects taught to the students, their profession training and cultures studied.

Due to the Russian Federal State Standards of Higher Education, all the teachers at the SFL meet the "highly qualified" requirements, which basically include the following: a scientific degree, a teaching credential, academic subject matter competence, modern technology competence, education and socialization methodology competence, knowledge of the Federal State Educational Standards, prior experience in the academic content area, standards-aligned professional development in the academic content area. Though it may be confusing for European or American Education Systems, the faculty of the SFL, like the ones of any other Russian State educational establishments, is arranged according to the Russian educational traditional ranks hierarchical structure: a teaching assistant – a senior lecturer – an associate professor – a full professor at the top. In its turn, every rank has a number of requirements to meet. In addition to the basic requirements mentioned above, a teaching assistant and a senior lecturer are to hold practical classes and a course of lectures (teaching assistants are not allowed to hold a course of lectures), to be engaged in research activity, to write scientific articles and get them published in the corresponding journals, whereas an associate professor and a full professor must have a scientific degree of Candidate of Philological Sciences and of Doctor of Philological Sciences, respectively, and are to plan, organize and control the educational processes, to hold lectures, to be engaged in scientific activity, to write scientific papers, to take part in local and international scientific conferences, to participate in different R&D projects, and to supervise and coordinate the scientific activity of the students and post-graduates at the School.

No doubt, the quality of the interns' and graduates' training greatly depends on the professionalism and successful practical experience of the teaching staff. Most of the SFL teachers who are responsible for interpreting and translation training courses are practicing translators or interpreters themselves either in organizations of the private and public sectors of the Astrakhan Region or freelancers. Such involvement of the SFL teaching staff in the practical interpreting and translation activities is explained both by the political, economic and social conditions of the Astrakhan multicultural region and by educational reasons. As mentioned above, Astrakhan hosts many politically, economically and culturally significant events of regional, national and international levels. So, the SFL teachers have been working as interpreters at different international scientific conferences. In terms of cooperation with local businesses and organizations, they are also commissioned to translate various materials. It should be noted that the students majoring in interpreting and translation are, as a rule, invited to attend conferences, congresses and other such events so as to have an opportunity to 'learn from the job', to observe the peculiarities of the interpreting profession. As a result, the interpreting experience and practice of the SFL staff can't help but gain the trust and confidence of the students, promote their respect for the teachers, which consequently leads to the maintenance and encouragement of professional spirit and respect for the profession.

The present-day state of Russia's economic development and the peculiarities of the labor market change and development have induced higher educational establishments to seek and maintain their links with potential employers for their graduates in the public and private sectors, so as not to flood the labor market with interns from this or that professional field. ASU is not an exception and in this

context, the SFL administration has been on the alert to observe tendencies of supply and demand of the labor market for interpreters and translators in local enterprises and organizations and to expand and promote its cooperation with these local businesses. Actually, such partnerships have proven beneficial for both sides, for by allowing SFL students to have their interpreting and translation traineeships at the sites of these organizations, the businesses' administrations have the chance to get a better look at their potential employees. In turn, students are able to test their skills in interpreting and translation, to see their job from the inside, to gain new practical knowledge, to prove their worth, and to establish new contacts.

In this respect the SFL interpreting and translation students have great opportunities to spend their traineeship at such organizations as the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations of the Astrakhan Region, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Astrakhan Region, the General Consulates of Iran and Kazakhstan, the Astrakhan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, at the University Schools such as the Innovative Physics and Mathematics Institute, the Russian–American Centre of Education and Research, the Centre of Translation Studies and Conference Interpreting, Schools of Agriculture, Architecture. The Astrakhan ship-building yards, which are internationally known, among them OJSC *Krasnye Barrikady Shipyard*, the *Caspian Energy Group*, have been taking students for interpreting and translation traineeship for many years. Local private businesses representing different industries are also interested in such cooperation with the SFL.

Very often the SFL students spend their internship periods outside Astrakhan in partner companies and organizations. It should be mentioned that SFL students of conference interpreting had a unique opportunity to work at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games Organizing Committee. Almost annually they go for their interpreting traineeship to the Centre of Translation Studies and Conference Interpreting, the Directorates General for Interpretation and Translation of the European Parliament and European Commission (Brussels), the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ca' Foscari University of Venice etc. So, such a wide range of SFL links with enterprises and organizations can't but make the SFL competitive in the educational market and attract applicants from different cities of the Russian Federation and many foreign countries.

As stipulated by the Federal requirements for the teaching staff of the SFL as well as any other School of ASU, every teacher is to take standards-aligned professional development and professional advancement courses on a regular basis so that they may be "professionally fit" and up-to-date. To this end, the faculty is engaged in a variety of activities, such as on-line courses, workshops, seminars, trainings, etc., aimed at introducing educational innovations in methodology and technology, adopting new ideas and sharing their own professional experience. Such events are not connected solely to the university, and can take place either locally, at other Russian region's higher educational establishments or at foreign universities and educational centers. For example over the last three years, their geography has been quite wide, including Poznan, Poland for the annual meeting of *Societas Linguistica Europaea* (2014), the University of Wiesbaden, Germany for a seminar on "German Cultural Studies Dictionaries" (2014); the Directorates General for Interpretation and Translation of the European Parliament and European Commission, Brussels, the "Training for Trainers" seminar (2015); Astrakhan State University, Russia for the seminar on "Usage of Distance Learning System «Moodle» in Educational Process» (2015); the USA, FULBRIGHT program, "English Teacher Assistant Program" (2013–2014); the Caspian Higher School of Interpreting and Translation, Astrakhan, Russia, the training seminar of International Association of Simultaneous Interpreters for the Teachers of Interpreting and Translation from Russian and CIS Universities (2014); International House, Moscow BKC, Russia, the training seminar "How to Prepare Students for IELTS" (2014); University of Oregon, USA, on-line training course "English for Specific Purposes, Best Practices for Courses and Materials" (2015), etc. Though this list is

far from being complete, it clearly demonstrates the SFL teaching staff's commitment in respect of their constant professional development and advancement.

It is well known that the educational process at the SFL is a success due to the contribution of a number of centers of different languages and cultures, which were opened and have been working at the SFL for several years. Among them are the Center of Turkish Language and Culture, the Center of Iranian Studies and Farsi, the Center of Chinese Language and Culture, and the Center of Japanese Language and Culture. These centers arrange their activity aimed at consolidating the cultural links between ASU students and universities in the countries whose cultures they represent. The specialists working there are highly qualified teachers; some of them are Russians, who have studied on different programs at the Universities of China, Iran, and Japan; others are native speakers and have come to work at the SFL by invitation. They organize various cultural events, educational projects, where all the SFL students, from freshmen to undergraduates, are involved. Their assistance in promoting and holding language courses cannot be overestimated, as they are extremely popular among not only the SFL students but also students of other higher educational establishments and schools.

Conclusion and prospects of research. The experience of adapting international students of interpreting and translation at Astrakhan State University (ASU) brings us to further research on how to deal with the most modern challenges of our world, all of which are connected. And here we must talk about blended learning as one of the ways to bring together professionals and schools located far from each other in order to give future translators and interpreters more opportunities to prepare themselves for the real world. It is not just about combining traditional and virtual methods; it is also about what kind of blended professions are in need in the nearest future. FIT President Henry Liu predicts the yet-unmet need of governments, civic society and corporates of communication experts who are media-savvy and well-versed in bicultural and regional-specific branding. And the question is: what is the future of translation and interpreting education? We don't know for sure, but it will be multi-modal, multi-centric and multidisciplinary. And blended learning is one of efficient ways to make our graduates more competitive and flexible on the market; ways to face and deal with the changing paradigm of training new generation language professionals.

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ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ЖАНРА «КИНОРЕЦЕНЗИЯ»

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Описаны конститутивные признаки жанра «кинорецензия», установлен интертекстуальный характер исследуемого жанра, проанализированы лексико-семантические особенности жанра «кинорецензия», являющегося одним из наиболее востребованных жанров сетевого массово-информационного дискурса.

Материалом исследования послужили тексты кинорецензий в англоязычных онлайн изданиях, среди которых сайты любителей кино, сайты газет (The New York Times, The Guardian и др.), сайты кинокритиков (сайт Р. Эберта и др.). Всего было проанализировано 100 английских кинорецензий за 2020 год. Тексты данных кинорецензий находятся в открытом доступе в сети интернет. Общий объём проанализированного материала составил 200 страниц. Для выявления лексико-семантических особенностей жанра «кинорецензия» нами был проведён интерпретативный анализ текстовых фрагментов англоязычных кинорецензий.