

Communicative, Educational, Pedagogical Objectives and Planning in Russian Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the problem stems from the necessity to distinctly plan educational process and set the goals for successful mastering of Russian language by foreign students in Russian higher educational institutions. The article is aimed at defining the foreign students' objectives for Russian language training, allowing them to get involved into the learning process and adapt to the society. The leading method to the study of this problem is a practical method allowing to consider it as a process of purposeful planning that favors the improvement of the quality of education and enables foreign students to intensify the study of the language. During the educational planning process, the article proposes to use the concept of interconnected training for the main types of verbal activity that allows to single out the skills and abilities needed to master the communicative competencies, specifying objectives and optimizing the learning process. The article may be useful for researchers who develop a methodology for teaching foreign students, and for teachers who teach Russian language and plan the training of foreigners who are interested in optimization of the learning process.

KEYWORDS

Communicative competence, forms of speech activity, language skills, oral speech, purpose

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Introduction

Foreign students in Russian universities is a special category of students that require increased attention from teachers of Russian as a foreign language and from administration as well (Arkadyeva, Vladimirova & Fedotova, 2012; Valeeva, Aitov & Bulatbayeva, 2016). The methods of teaching Russian as a

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foreign language state that the successful language learning process requires a careful planning and setting of learning goals for the formation of speaking skills. Goal-setting is an important step in the learning process, its success depends on the accuracy and clarity of the goals set for learning process. The methodical category “goal” is one of the basic categories of the methodology. It is known that the objectives determine the “content and mostly teaching methods” (Kostomarov & Mitrofanova, 1998; Masalimova, Porchesku & Liakhnovitch, 2016), “the choice of content, methods, ways, resources, organizational forms of learning” (Shchukin, 2006), assignment submission tools, system of methodological techniques, pedagogical technology and in this regard they can be considered as a factor for optimization of learning process. The main purpose of training at an early stage is to prepare foreign students for the first year of studies in the university, which is a complex goal that includes communicative, educational and pedagogical goals. The practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language shows that the purposes of the stages should correspond to the ultimate goals of teaching Russian language and the ultimate goals of specialist’s training. Thus, the objectives of the initial stage of training are formed taking into account the ultimate objectives of education and are reflected in its content in all its component parts. That’s why the place and role in the preparation of a foreign specialist should be considered as the most important aspect in teaching Russian as a foreign language. The importance of the objectives for teaching Russian language to foreign students led to the development of educational goals optimizing the learning process: the ultimate goals of education, the level of education goals, the group studies goals, the purpose of study, the goal of exercise unit, the assignment goal. The objective element of learning (content of learning goals) is reflected:

- in identification of the areas, situations, problems;
- in the selection of linguistic and extra linguistic material;
- in prepared programs.

In 1996, a concept of “communicative competence” and its components (linguistic, speech, discourse, socio-cultural, social, strategic) were introduced in the document “Modern languages: learning, teaching, assessment. Common European competence of foreign languages proficiency”, 6 levels of language proficiency were described. The goals were formulated and the requirements for the content of language teaching were developed for each level. The state educational standard for Russian as a foreign language (1999) includes six levels of language proficiency (elementary, basic, 1-4 certification levels), the standard describes the requirements for the content of language teaching for foreigners who want to obtain Russian citizenship and for migrant workers coming to work in Russia. The leading parameters for division into levels are: communicative tasks solved by language means; spheres, means, themes, situations of communication where the speaking tasks can be solved and speaking etiquette and cultural correctness of communicative task solutions can be taken into account. Today the main method of the language level assessment is a Test of Russian as a Foreign Language (TORFL). Usage of the methodological “language proficiency” category allows to “get a clearer picture about possible students’ achievements at different stages”, “to assess the student’s effectiveness aimed at achieving particular purposes at a certain educational stage”, “to

formulate a more realistic and clear objectives of the learning process” (Common European competencies..., 2003).

Methodological framework

Research methods

During the process of research the following methods were used: theoretical (analysis of normative documents, pedagogical, linguistic and cultural literature according to the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language, learning and generalization of domestic and foreign lecturers’ experience), observational method (selection of linguistic and extra linguistic material), practical (creation of training programs taking into account the communicative, educational and pedagogical goals of training, drafting the curriculum considering the adaptation process of foreign students in a foreign cultural environment).

Experimental research base

The experimental research base is a Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University (Ekaterinburg). Foreign students from different specialties, who study Russian as a foreign language with a goal to practice it in educational and professional field of communication and active adaptation in Russian society, took part in this pedagogical experiment.

Stages of the study

The study of the problem was conducted in 3 stages:

The first stage: normative documents, scientific and theoretical, psychological and pedagogical, methodological sources of information were studied and analyzed, the specific features of planning professional and pedagogical training for foreign students were analyzed, the main objectives of foreigners’ training in universities were specified, the main areas of communication at the first stage of language acquisition were identified;

The second stage: the description of the planning and training goals depending on the priority speech activities for the formation of foreign students’ communicative and professional competencies were determined; the selection of linguistic and extra linguistic material was conducted; the model of formation of the students’ communicative competence during their studies of Russian by reading scientific and official texts was developed;

The third stage: the planning with consideration of practical data was conducted, the system implementation of Russian linguistic competence in order to fulfil the ultimate goals in learning Russian language was carried out in the educational process, conclusions were formulated, the results of the study were recorded.

Results

The objectives and the content of the communicative Russian language teaching model

Recognition of the principle of communicative language teaching as a leading one led to the fact that researchers single out the meaningful



communicative spheres of communication for students at the initial stage. The most significant ones are social and domestic, social and cultural, educational and professional spheres of communication. The study of the foreigners' communicative spheres allows to determine the situations of communication and to include them in educational process, and it contributes to the specification of communication objectives. The purpose of the communicative model of teaching Russian as a foreign language is to develop students' communication skills in solving problems by means of a foreign language, to be able to communicate in different life situations. Thus, the teacher should create a situation of natural communication and to be its immediate participant. Therefore, the methodology of Russian as a foreign language is based on the communicative linguistics, studying speech communication as a form of human interaction through the language. It's possible to select the most important characteristics of the language: consistency, because everything has to be studied all together and mutually organized; functionality, because language means are used for communication purposes, but the order of presentation and mastery of language means in the content of the statement should be defined; communicativeness, since language is a means of communication –this is its main purpose. In modern methodologies of Russian as a foreign language (RFL) there exist the necessary prerequisites that allow to clarify and specify purposes of teaching Russian as a foreign language in the certain circumstances. Training according to the types of speech activity: speaking, listening, reading; writing is not relevant at this stage, because 1) there is not enough time (additional educational program comprises only 180 hours), 2) it doesn't allow to determine what the specific type of activity in a certain situation should be taught for, and what is a student's minimum of communicative competencies in order to be able to identify the level of his/her training, for example, for further education in the specialty. Here we can recall the concept of the interconnected training to the main types of speech activity by I.A. Zimnyaya (2001), which is very important for learning Russian language at the initial stage while preparing for the major education. This approach allows to single out a specific set of skills and abilities that are necessary and sufficient for the acquisition of communicative competencies in various kinds of speech activity, thus optimizing their learning process and specifying goals in grammar, creating the conditions for the new knowledge acquisition for students in their training program. First of all, it is a problem of language systems interference, the increase in the thesaurus, the ability to use skills in different communicative situations in speech at different levels. In this case, the practical work in obtaining writing skills is very effective: writing texts of various genres with required skills and abilities that are taught during the first year of studies (a memo, statement, explanatory memorandum, letter to parents, postcard to a friend), determining the *ultimate* goal of learning how to write as a preparation of students to write professional texts (annotation, abstract, curriculum vitae, course paper), implying the mastery of skills and abilities not only in official but in scientific style as well.

The strategy of language mastering in the process of reading texts

Communicative competence is an ability to engage in communication and maintain it in different situations. The communicative competence is considered as a set of competencies ensuring communication. It allows to realize the process of learning a foreign language as learning to communicate through language.

That is why it is possible to say, for example, that obtaining reading skills is a process of learning how to communicate through reading. The requirements formulated in the state reading standards can determine the student's communicative competence in the beginning. The study shows that the goal of obtaining reading skills should be the achievement of a minimum level of reading. But a student should be an experienced reader and be able to read such texts competently. Text material presented in modern educational textbooks is adapted and not always accompanied with audio recordings, therefore, it cannot prepare foreign students for reading the original textbooks that they should absorb starting from the first lessons. That is why it is offered to create a new type of learning and corrective textbooks, to introduce authentic materials with audio recordings for reading, taking into account the professional orientation of students. Most probably there should be records of different types: 1) the recordings of oral lessons associated with strengthening the orthopedic standards; 2) recordings that form the ability to understand texts of different functional styles; 3) recordings that form the ability to understand the educational and scientific texts aimed at the training type. In the beginning, teaching Russian language, as noted above, should be carried out using the material of the functional speech styles: official, scientific (general studies and social sciences – sub-genres), journalistic and artistic. However, foreign students are not able to learn a lot of materials during a compressed period of additional courses (maximum 180 hours), thus it leads to a problem of selection of material for the receptive and productive learning. Teacher has to minimize speaking, textual and lexical and grammatical material for productive learning, which should ensure the achievement of the intermediate objective: the possibility to communicate, including the training and professional life, as well as the achievement of the ultimate goal: preparing for studies in university. While selecting the educational and didactic materials it is advisable to take into account the specialty, level of students' general education, their ability to learn languages, study conditions (in particular, early or late arrival of foreign students). Recently, the research of mastery and language proficiency strategies connected to the ways of acquiring and storing information in the process of studying texts has begun to develop intensively. Mainly, the study of these factors were conducted by cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics E. Rosh (1975), G.V. Yaeger (1990), E.S. Kubryakova (2004), Z.D. Popova & I.A. Sternin (2007). The problem of learning the oral teaching and professional communication is considered fully studied. Nowadays, more than one hundred strategies influencing the language studies are described. In general, there are two groups of strategies: the group that influences learning directly and the group that contributes to learning. The first group includes the cognitive strategies used to comprehend the material, strategies helping to cope with difficulties that come up in the process of communication. The second group of strategies involves the creation of conditions for learning, contributing to overcoming the psychological and communication barriers in language training. Since all language relations can be modeled, teaching Russian language is carried out using the communicative and speech patterns. Communicative model is a model where, by substituting other words or phrases, one can create sentences with the same structure. The sequence of the grammar introduction depends on the frequency of the certain grammatical forms usage in the language. Training using the model must be repeated at least 10 times. In



teaching practice, models of speech acts corresponding to the specific situations and motives of communication, are offered.

Development of learning goals taking into account the linguistic cultural competence

Teaching language is always connected to the history, society and culture of the people who speak this language. Language and culture do not only closely cooperate; the language is a part of culture. Implementation of the ultimate goals of Russian language training demands from foreign students the respective regional geographic and linguistic knowledge. E.I. Passov (2007), speaking about the content of foreign language education as a methodical category, notes that “the content of foreign language education is a foreign language culture”. First of all, cognitive and aesthetic needs provide interest in language study, stimulate their speech activity, form the communicative competencies. According to A. Vezhbitskaya (2001), the images of the world differs by “cultural scripts” that reveal the linguistic peculiarities of different cultures. While teaching Russian as a foreign language in non-native language environment during the modeling communicative speech situations, it’s necessary to consider fairly stable character of texts where the linguistic identity fulfills its potential. Therefore, in the process of students’ communicative competence formation, it is necessary to thoroughly select and organize learning activities and exercises, carefully choose training material, build training and speaking situation in order to raise the level of grammatically correct oral speech, deepening and expanding the lexical and grammatical knowledge, thus it is necessary to choose such communicative and speaking models that “can be easily transformed and allow the speaker to extract primary and secondary sense from the speech context” (Biryukova, 2014). Foreign students in cross-cultural communication are faced with the dialogue between two cultures: native and studied. This is a “good mutual understanding between two participants of the communicative act belonging to different national cultures” (Kostomarov & Vereschagin, 1990). Foreigners act as recipients of information about aspects of life in Russia they are interested in and as addressers of information about their countries. Understanding the new culture associated with obtaining specific knowledge about the country, but “another reality is learned with the help of native culture images, understood and reinterpreted in the learning process” (Tarasov, 1996). Cultural information increases the motivation to learn a language, taking into account the age, interests, national identity, the students learn the following topics: “Ural cuisine”, “Ganina Yama – the Royal family”, “Maslenitsa Festival”, “Easter”, “Great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin”, “Russian painter A. Serov”, etc., thus, they have an opportunity to know more about Russian writers, poets and artists, their art, to learn proverbs, idioms, tongue twisters. Getting the regional geographic, cultural information of the topic, they improve their skills in various types of speech activity, develop the communicative culture based on the “communication understanding, providing decoding of sign systems and cultural codes, good perception of socially important processes that lead to harmonious communication” (Evtyugina, 2014; Evtyugina, Simonova & Fedorenko, 2016). The main goals of teaching Russian as a foreign language: communicative, educational, pedagogical are achieved better if work in class is combined with the systematic and purposeful extracurricular work. Diverse forms of extracurricular work – visiting museums,

theaters, excursions, theme evenings contribute to more successful mastering of the language. For example, after learning the topic “At the theatre”, students go to the theater, or the topic “Ganina Yama - the Royal family” they visit the holy places and improve practical language skills, improve abilities in various types of speech activity and already produce their own statements based on real life experiences in particular communicative situation. For learning Russian language and for adaptation of foreign students it's very important to hold cultural, socio-linguistic events. Extracurricular and general university activities (“Speaker's contest”, “Readers' contest”, “Quiz about Russian literature and language”, “Russian painters”, “University Saturdays”) contribute to speech activation at different levels of communication, form the background cultural and geographic knowledge, foster tolerance in a multicultural environment. Consequently, the training speech behavior should be implemented not only in exercises in the classroom, based on abstract models, it will be less effective even if it is accurately simulated situations, if these models are not implemented in real communication. Festivals, competitions, joint events, i.e., common activity, give an opportunity for training speech models and for establishing tolerant, friendly, trusting relationships between students of different nationalities. The implementation of educational and pedagogical objectives of foreign students' training through Russian language is a long-term process involving the work of teachers of all disciplines and covering a large number of different directions. This is a sequential multi-step process and not a one-year study program.

Discussion

Goal setting in education is one of the most important themes in pedagogy and methodology. The research conducted by V.P. Beshpal'ko (1989), B.V. Belyaev (1965), V.G. Kostomarov & O.D. Mitrofanova (1998), V.G. Kostomarov & E.M. Vereschagin (1990) are devoted to it. The work on effective planning of the linguistic content taking into account communicative, educational, pedagogical training purposes (Passov, 2007; Zimnyaya, 2001; Shchukin, 2006) is carried out in the system of language education methodology. Considering the change of the world status of Russian language, a sudden augmentation of foreign students, foreign workers and insufficient development of the objectives of the educational process planning in new social conditions – all these factors became the prerequisites to the study of this problem at a new educational level. The strategic objective of the initial stage is to provide foreigners with possibility to quickly get involved into the educational process and adapt to society. This position corresponds to the basic requirement for the teaching Russian as a foreign language organization considering communication needs. The necessity to take into account the future expert's communication needs makes one to look critically at the learning objectives in the current educational situation with non-Russian speaking students in many Russian universities. Firstly, there are no departments (dean's offices) in universities engaged in the pre-university preparation of foreign students. Secondly, there are no preparatory faculties where students would study Russian as the main subject for a year (six months), but not as an additional subject (after fundamental studies), hence there is no step-by-step training. As a result, students begin their studies without sufficient knowledge of the Russian language. They usually have no prior training before they start studying their specialty and it creates some difficulties for them and for the teachers because there is no common language of



communication. Thirdly, it is difficult to define common approaches in teaching methods because students differ according to various criteria:

- initial level of Russian language;
- the overall level of school preparation;
- the level of culture;
- professional differentiation.

The union of representatives of the Eastern Iranian, North Caucasian, Turkic and other language groups (students' native languages belong to different language groups) determines the specific difficulties in learning language as a system. There is a very serious contradiction between the university request (student is already being trained a certain specialty: "Economics", "Mechanical Engineering", "Law") according to the professional cycle program, higher education program in Russian language and culture of speech and foreign students' ability to study Russian as a foreign language (as a non-native) in addition. The principle of active communicativeness allows to determine the communicative purpose of learning through the system of communicative tasks, thus in Russian language training for foreigners we can highlight: the mastery of Russian language as a means of communication, means of acquaintance with Russian reality, Russian culture and language of their future profession. First of all, student needs fluent communication in order to master all subjects of his/her university program; it's not possible without knowledge of Russian language, the training is conducted in Russian both for foreign and Russian students. The teacher of Russian language is the one who is mostly responsible for foreign students' adaptation to Russian language environment. The fundamental questions that are directly related to the implementation of the ultimate goals of future specialist's training require urgent solution, and if succeed, it will contribute to the optimization of the educational process.

Conclusion

Thus, during the planning the educational process content, the following requirements should be taken into account:

- the sufficiency of the educational content for the implementation of the final and intermediate goals in teaching Russian as a foreign language;
- the possibility of mastering the selected content by students at every stage of education and in specific conditions;
- the use of results of scientific and practical research in the field of teaching Russian as a foreign language;
- the purposeful planning of education in changing conditions is a factor contributing to the optimization of the educational process.

Taking into account the nominated goals, strategies and principles of education planning for Russian as a foreign language, the article describes the experience of teaching Russian language at an early stage from the standpoint of communicative and active concept, combining the best achievements of active and verbal approach with the concept of communicative competence; it draws attention to the factors that contribute to the intensification of the educational process, improvement of the foreign students' training quality in Russian

language. The implementation of educational and training objectives of foreign students' training through Russian language is a long-term process involving the work of teachers of all disciplines and covering a large number of different directions. This is a sequential multi-step process and not a one-year study program.

Recommendations

This article may be useful for researchers who describe methods of teaching Russian language, programming of foreign students' training and for teachers who are interested in intensification of the language mastering and communication skills training in educational, professional and everyday spheres of foreigners' communication.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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