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RESEARCH NOTES

Specifics of forming linguistic sociocultural competence among foreign students in the pre-university period

Características de formación de la competencia lingüística y sociocultural en los oyentes internacionales en la etapa preuniversitaria

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Summary
The article considers communicative competence as a sum of several competences such as linguistic, paralinguistic, linguistic-sociocultural, substantial competences, etc. Linguistic sociocultural competence is specifically featured. The article describes linguistic cultural, psychosocial and cultural expertise and skills. The criteria of learning material selection for the formation of linguistic sociocultural competence.

Keywords: educational environment, motives, Russian as a foreign language.

Resumen

El artículo considera la competencia comunicativa como el conjunto de competencias: lingüística, paralingüística, lingüística y sociocultural, temática, etc. Describe conocimientos y habilidades lingüísticas, socio-psicológicas y culturales. Presenta en detalle los criterios de selección del material didáctico para la formación de la competencia lingüística y sociocultural.

Introduction

The pre-university period is an important stage of teaching Russian as a foreign. Along with teaching the Russian language and general theoretical subjects there is a complex process of psychosocial readapting to a new educational organization and adjusting to Russian life conditions. On coming to Russian Federation, foreign students face a lot of troubles: a language barrier, lack of information or a distorted idea about the Russian climate, everyday routine, culture and traditions may become stressful and slow down the readapting process. Those professors who teach Russian as a foreign language play a vital role in the improvement of adaptation abilities during the language training of foreign students in the pre-university period.

Formulating of problem

The modern system of preparatory training is not always successful in overcoming the challenges related to readapting among foreign students and, therefore, becomes an obstacle to their full comprehension of the educational program according to the State Educational Standard for Russian as a foreign language. Moreover, brought up in the different cultural environment, many foreign students find themselves in an international learning group, each of them with different individual psychological features, cognitive styles and strategic competences. The abovementioned factors often slow down the educational process in the pre-university period (the first term). In this connection, universities face the challenge of forming linguistic sociocultural competence among foreign students in the pre-university period.

Discussion

Features of communicative competence

Forming the skill of foreign-language communication is the core objective of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

The notion of communicative competence was lent from abroad. It was studied by N.F. Aliferenko, N.B. Ishkhanyan, M.N. Vatyutnev, E.M. Vereshchagin, V.G. Kostomarov and other linguists.

M.N. Vatyutnev was the first scholar who introduced the term in the Russian language education and proposed to define it as “selecting and following the communication codes according to an individual’s ability to adapt to different communicative situations; the ability to classify situations according to the topic, the goals, the communication settings before and

during the communication in the process of mutual adaptation"(Vatyutnev, 1977, p. 38). I.A. Zimnyaya has made a valuable contribution to the maintaining of the idea about communicative competence. Her researches have shown that communicative competence is "the individual's ability to be the agent of communication" (Zimnyaya, 2009, 27), which is both the result and the aim of language education.

The aim of language training is teaching how to communicate in the certain situations, regulated and expanded according to the program, on the topics, contained and not contained in the program, with foreign-language linguistic means. Therefore, I. A. Zimnyaya reckons that as an ability, communicative competence can only be formed, developed and detected, while it is foreign-language communication that can be taught (Zimnyaya, 2009, 29). Linguistic competence is a crucial part of communicative competence, which is the element of a tripartite opposition: a language ability – a language-related process – a language standard. A.A. Leont'ev defined the language ability as "a specific psycho-physiological mechanism, formed in a bearer of the language and based on neurophysiological preconditions and communication" (Zimnyaya, 2009, 29). E.M. Vereshchagin and V.G. Kostomarov consider linguistic competence an individual's ability to make grammatically correct sentences (even without regard of their contents), whereas communicative competence is a sum of social and national cultural codes, stereotypes and values which determines both the appropriate form and the contents of utterances in foreign language (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1983, p.269).

Some educational assistance specialists (Vishnyakov, Dunaeva, 2017, p.168) give an expanded the insight of communicative competence by adding linguistic, paralinguistic, linguistic sociocultural, and substantial competences, etc. Communicative competence means the linguistic expertise and skills including vocation-related language, specialty specifics, county specific knowledge, etc.

Notion of linguistic sociocultural competence

Originally**,** the notion of linguistic sociocultural competence was introduced into the scientific apparatus by I.G. Ishkhanyan. The researcher defines linguistic sociocultural competence as "an individual's ability to provide appropriate intercultural communication, based on: a) knowledge of culture specific lexical units and its appropriate usage in the intercultural communication; b) the expertise in sociocultural scenarios and nation-specific codes, with the communicative technique adequate to the culture; c) the ability to use cultural background knowledge to establish mutual understanding with the culture-bearers" (Ishkhanyan, 1996, p. 9). As a multidimensional construct, linguistic sociocultural competence includes linguistic, social and cultural aspects, which are necessary in overcoming adaptation challenges among preparatory department students. Linguistic sociocultural competence has the following functions: 1) value-orienting function is related to the social nature of educational goals. Under these circumstances the formation of the linguistic sociocultural competence results in acquiring the intercultural communication competence that provides the participation in cultural dialog, as well as interrelation of values and humanity. That leads to the formation of a secondary linguistic personality with positive experience of domestic and foreign cultures;

2) Cognitive humanistic function is linked to the acceptance of foreign culture, a direct access to its values, the elimination of stereotypes and prejudices, the setting of a positive attitude to the bearers of the language and the culture, along with studying the linguistic diversity;

3) Motivational function reflects the country-specific and sociocultural materials which form a linguistic sociocultural competence stimulating and encouraging foreign students to the subject and the study itself;

4) Regulatory function is related to a sufficient understanding of native speakers, as well as its ee linguistic sociocultural comprehension and the correct form and contents of students'

own utterances, which eliminate the possibility of a cultural shock. It means that such a function regulates the adequate mutual perception between the participants of communication.

To summarize, linguistic sociocultural competence is an individual's ability to participate in educational cognitive activity and communicate in a foreign language in different situations such as everyday formal life, vocational training, sociopolitical and sociocultural spheres, which based on 1) knowledge of culture specific lexical units and its appropriate usage in the intercultural communication 2) the expertise in sociocultural scenarios and nation-specific codes, with the communicative technique adequate to the culture; 3) the ability to use historical cultural, sociocultural and ethnic cultural background knowledge to establish mutual understanding with native speakers.

Aspects of linguistic sociocultural competence

A successful readapting to a new educational and sociocultural environment among foreign students from preparatory departments may depend on a certain level of linguistic sociocultural competence. Following I.G. Ishkhanyan's approach, we determine three aspects of linguistic sociocultural competence:

1) linguistic cultural expertise and skills;

2) sociocultural expertise and skills;

3) cultural expertise and skills (Ishkhanyan, 1996, p. 26).

Let us consider the aspects more closely. Linguistic cultural expertise and skills mean the knowledge of culture specific lexical and linguistic units, which once appeared due to a historical cultural background of an ethnos and the ability to extract historical cultural and nation-specific information from them, along with the ability to use the material in the intercultural communication.

At the pre-educational stage learning such culture specific linguistic units as non-equivalent vocabulary, background vocabulary, personal and geographical names, is especially important, with idioms, connotative vocabulary and aphorisms significant to a less extent. These units have no direct equivalents in the mother-tongue of the foreign students and, thus, require special methods of semantization. The students are to learn a certain vocabulary list to recognize the lexical units in speech, to conceptualize separate, communicatively meaningful background vocabulary, and to react to the connotation emotionally. Some units may be comprehended in a receptive or productive way. At the beginning of learning a language (Basic User level) the limit of receptive comprehension of these lexical units should exceed the one of productive comprehension (about 600 words). Before expanding the limit, it is advisable to take into consideration the place where the students study. It is generally known that a vast majority of these non-equivalent units is urban toponymical words and word combinations (names of firms, institutions, organizations, etc.) and personal names. Another way to increase a foreign student's vocabulary at the A level of Russian is to introduce terminology and urban toponymy according to the speciality.

General sociocultural expertise and skills include knowledge of the country, communication with native speakers and use of communicative technique. This expertise and skills are obtained during primary socialization (life and upbringing in family) and secondary socialization (life in society).

The expertise in communication strategies and tactics presupposes:

– speech expressiveness (the ability to speak clearly and precisely, to use facial expressions and gesture appropriately, to keep an appropriate private distance in communication);

– subject orientation (the ability to speak on the topic, demonstrating knowledge of the subject);

– recipient orientation (the ability to read a recipient's intention, to assess their sociocultural status, to show interest and tact, politeness and sensitivity);

– goal orientation (the ability to express the intentions and goals correctly);

– self-regulation and action regulation (the ability to view oneself from the outside, to

evaluate one's actions critically and achieve the goal);

– speech culture (the ability to enter a conversation, to interrupt, to прервать, to assure, etc., along with the ability to speak clearly and precisely, in a logical and coherent manner, etc.).

Every foreigner who learns Russian has a sort of pragmatic skills and expertise in communicative tactics, types of verbal behavior, and codes of conduct, appropriate in their culture and obtained in a natural course or deliberately. However, they are not quite transferable to the intercultural communication with a representative of other culture and may cause numerous misunderstandings including cultural shock. That is why the expertise in the codes and traditions of the foreign culture and the ability to use them appropriately are considered an integral part of linguistic sociocultural competence. The national cultural specifics of communication constitute a system of factors that influence the differences in the organization, forms and types of communication. These are social factors, cultural traditions and specific verbal and non-verbal means which are reflected in the conditions of intercultural communication and taken into account by participants of communication.

Due to their conventional nature, these sociocultural and pragmatic rules are quite hard to remodel, thematize and didactize. Additionally, there is not enough time for such activities at the lessons. The solution lay in extracurricular lessons in the afternoon, organized by professors. Foreign students should get the opportunity to learn the specifics of Russian verbal and non-verbal behavior and find the differences between domestic and Russian cultures. Such sensitization of the students to the issue of the cultural differences in communicative codes should take place not to make the students culturally adapted, but to give them more leeway in the intercultural communication and the right to choose the level of such cultural adaptation.

Having implemented a survey and analyzed nation-specific, psychosocial and linguistic pragmatic rules and codes of conduct, also known as nation-specific etiquette (Aliferenko, 2010, p. 254), we came to a conclusion that there is certain psychosocial knowledge and conventionally appropriate skills of using it, which are relevant for achieving practical goals of forming linguistic sociocultural competence. The expertise includes:

a) the knowledge of so-called "safe subjects";

b) the knowledge of sociocultural scenarios and nation-specific behavior which include ritual and verbal codes and behaviors in typical situations (social contacts) and real life conversations which are strictly regulated with social traditions and codes: meeting, saying goodbye, introducing yourself and making an acquaintance, congratulating or asking for help, criticizing and thanking, paying compliments and react to them, speaking on the phone, talking to a taxi driver, a waiter, information desk staff or a shop assistant, etc.

Such non-verbal communication elements as gestures, poses, facial expressions, emotional state are of great importance in the nation-specific behavior. A foreigner's choice of a non-verbal means of communication depends on the situation, a recipient's gender, age, social group, etc. Receptive comprehension of paralinguistic communication means may be of highest priority in the formation of a linguistic sociocultural competence among the foreign students. We consider everyday life gestures (greeting gestures, emotional assessments, counting gestures and the like) to be comprehended in a productive way, whereas the verbal description of gestures, facial expressions and other means is a considerable body of language with national cultural potential which students are to learn both in in a receptive or productive way, though to a lesser extent. One should bear in mind that these words and expressions, describing gestures and facial expressions along with their emotional meaning, are the part of national culture.

Cultural expertise includes knowledge of historical and cultural background (the formation and development of an ethnos and the main historical events, which shaped its destiny); sociocultural background (the social stratification and the situation of society, the main authorities, the rights, freedoms and duties of the individual, etc.); ethnic cultural background (Russian way of life, national cuisine, holidays, customs, traditions, specific

features of the national character, Russian folklore, etc.), and semiotic background (the symbols, generally accepted in the Russian culture, the specifics of signs, advertisements, etc.) (L'vova, 2013, p.13). The expertise may help a foreign to student understand and identify the recipient's sociocultural status, as well as their way of life, experience, views, to reach an understanding in the intercultural communication, to attain the values of the foreign country and broaden their own cultural experience. It is the integration of culture into the theory and practice of teaching foreign language that lays groundwork of preparing the students for an appropriate intercultural communication which is both the core objective and the means of teaching Russian at the pre-educational stage.

Having described the aspects of linguistic sociocultural competence, required for a foreign student's better comprehension and successful adaptation, let us define the term.

Criteria of selecting educational material to form linguistic sociocultural competence

According to Educational program for Russian as a foreign language and State Educational Standard for Russian as a foreign language (level B1-B2), the selection and presentation of educational material for the formation of linguistic sociocultural competence among preparatory department students can be represented in the following scheme:

I. Day-to-day sphere of communication (the fulfilment of such everyday social roles as a public transport passenger, a buyer, a patient and the like):

– the subjective knowledge of Russian etiquette in typical and standardized situations in this sphere of communication;

– the background knowledge of the subjective code and the code of conduct in typical and standardized situations;

– the communicative intentions of the foreign student and the recipient's reaction to them (etiquette phrases, speech stereotypes and clichés) in typical and standardized situations;

– vocabulary: a) culture specific linguistic units - background vocabulary, non-equivalent vocabulary, urban toponymy: «общежитие» (student dorm), «банк» (bank), «улица Миклухо-Маклая» (ulitsa Miklucho Maklaya), «метро Юго-Западная» (Yugo-Zapadnaya metro station), etc.; b) general topic vocabulary;

– non-verbal means (gestures, facial expressions);

– conventional signs, signal codes regulating verbal and non-verbal behavior of native speakers (schemes, street signs, etc.).

II. Educational professional sphere of communication (a social role of a student):

– the subjective knowledge of Russian higher education system, the structure and traditions of universities, its code of conduct and culture of communication;

– the background knowledge: the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication traditions at university in typical and standardized situations;

– vocabulary: a) culture specific linguistic units - background vocabulary, non-equivalent vocabulary: «ректорат» (the rectorate), «деканат» (the Dean's office), «староста» (a monitor), «зачет» (a credit), «зачетная книжка» (a grade book), «стипендия» (scholarship), etc.; b) general vocabulary;

– etiquette phrases (greeting, saying goodbye, request, etc.);

– speech stereotypes and clichés used in typical and standardized situations at university (in the library, in the Dean's office, in the cafeteria, etc.);

– non-verbal means (gestures, facial expressions).

Based on the interdisciplinary coordination at preparatory departments, the educational material includes:

– the subjective knowledge of the life and endeavor of prominent Russian scholars and their contribution to the science;

– vocabulary: a) culture specific linguistic units - personal and geographical names, terms, background vocabulary, non-equivalent vocabulary: «академик» (academician), «доктор наук» (Ph.D.), etc.; b) general scientific vocabulary.

III. Sociopolitical sphere of communication:

– the minimum subjective knowledge of Russian Federation political organization, its economic and social development, political, economic, cultural contacts with other countries, especially those where the foreign students come from;

– vocabulary: a) culture specific linguistic units - personal and geographical names, idioms, aphorisms, background vocabulary, non-equivalent vocabulary; b) mass media vocabulary: «Государственная Дума» (the State Duma), «губернатор» (the governor), etc.

IV. Sociocultural sphere of communication (a social role of a visitor of exhibitions, museums, concerts, etc.):

– the subjective knowledge: specially selected situations and subjects ("Moscow sights", "Russian art", etc.);

– the background knowledge: Russian rich cultural heritage over 10 centuries of its history;

– vocabulary: a) culture specific linguistic units - personal and geographical names, aphorisms, groups of background vocabulary and non-equivalent vocabulary: «русская культура» (Russian culture), «Третьяковская галерея» (Tretyakov Gallery), «Эрмитаж» (The State Hermitage), Pushkin, Tchaikovsky, Tolstoy and others); b) general topic vocabulary;

– the etiquette phrases used in the sociocultural sphere of communication;

– non-verbal means (gestures, facial expressions).

This scheme of selecting educational material for the formation of linguistic sociocultural competence among preparatory department students is oriented to the spheres of communication, relevant for the foreign students who study in Russia. Sociopolitical and sociocultural spheres of communication are relevant to a lesser extent, as they require an expertise in linguistic units, linguistic cultural experience, and a considerable communicative competence.

Conclusiones

1) The main objective of the education in the pre-university period is to prepare a foreign student for an active educational activity in a Russian university. The objective is complex; it includes linguistic (teaching Russian), subjective (teaching general subject) and readapting aspects.

2) The linguistic sociocultural adaptation of foreign students in the pre-university period is a complicated process of getting used to and readapting to a new sociocultural environment through learning the Russian language and culture in order to appropriately fulfil different social roles in day-to-day, educational professional, sociopolitical and sociocultural spheres of communication.

3) The integration of foreign students into the system of Russian psychosocial relations provides their realization of their rights, duties, and social codes, which facilitates their linguistic sociocultural adaptation in a foreign country.

4) The selection of educational material for the formation of linguistic sociocultural competence among preparatory department students depends, to a greater extent, on their social roles during their study in Russia.

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