

Language Education: Implementing Multilingualism Ideas from the Russian North Culture Perspective

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Abstract. *The article aims at presenting multilingualism conceptual ideas as promising and effective for being implemented in language education. The theoretical part of the article spells out the concept of multilingualism and its values on the basis of culturological, linguistic-culturological and sociocultural approaches. The article emphasizes that multilingualism develops in the process of forming language and educational policies at all their levels. In the practical part of the article, the authors analyze the results of surveying students on studying foreign languages and cultures. Using methods of theoretical research, introducing a multilingual course book into the educational process and surveying learners and students at Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Russia, allowed revealing the main didactic principles of teaching foreign languages in the context of the diversity of languages and cultures.*

Keywords – *Language Education, Multilingualism, Russian North Culture, Language Teaching Potential, Multilingual Course book*.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last thirty years, the phenomenon of multilingualism has been studied in various scientific fields [3, 9, 18]. Its interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature attracts researchers' attention [15, 17]. However, the scientific-educational potential of this phenomenon, especially in language education, has been studied insufficiently [4, 6, 14]. Multilingualism has been analyzed in different aspects, but the resources of this tool in a multilingual and polycultural educational area have not been investigated completely [1, 2, 13]. We have revealed an obvious contradiction between demand for implementing multilingualism ideas in language education and inactive introduction of multilingualism progressive potential into teaching foreign languages. Thus, the main scientific issue of our research is studying multilingualism teaching potential in language education.

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The complexity of the concept of multilingualism is the main reason for difficulties in researching the issue. The conceptual field of multilingualism is quite big as it comprises diverse research angles closely connected with such phenomena as multilingualism, polyculture, bilingualism, diglossia, multilingual pedagogy, language and educational policies, etc. [4, 7, 15, 17]. For that purpose in the theoretical part, we first focus on researching and clarifying the terminology.

We are convinced that multilingualism development is a constituent part of the process of forming language and educational policies at all their levels: world, European, federal, regional and municipal. At the institutional level, these kinds of policies combine into language education policy. It is evident from the policy discourse of educational institutions, positions and opinions of subjects of educational institutions, e.g. a university [1, 2, 4, 7, 8]. To reveal and justify the interconnection between multilingualism and language education policy, we refer to the political context of the phenomenon under study.

So multilingualism is considered from different scientific standpoints. The authors of the article have analyzed this phenomenon using culturological approach, as well as linguistic-culturological and sociocultural ones. The culturological and linguistic-culturological approaches are used for studies in philosophy, linguistics, pedagogy and other scientific fields [16, 19]. The sociocultural approach is widely used in education and has an applied character [19, 20]. Thus, the third approach becomes a link between scientific-philosophical and educational approaches, as this makes it possible to move from theory to practice.

We believe that studying the notion of multilingualism with the use of culturological methodology allows discovering and introducing the language teaching potential of the phenomenon under study. It creates theoretical prerequisites for applied and practice-oriented course books in language education, which will be presented in the "Results and Discussion" section. Since such a focus of research is used for the first time, we welcome further scientific discussion of the above-stated issue.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The culturological approach to studying multilingualism allows explaining the phenomenon under study to the full extent. Philosopher Kagan carried out a deep methodological analysis of the notion of culture from the perspective of system-activity and synergetic approaches. He distinguishes four forms of being: society, human being, nature and culture. The last one appears in human activity and represents human qualities; ways of activity, which are passed on from one generation to another as values; the variety of objects; secondary ways of activity; a human being as a cultural product; processes of objectification and disobjectification in the context of human communication [12]. The culturological approach lets us consider a human being as a biosociocultural phenomenon, as a culturogenesis subject. Humans develop and form in culture; they are also socialized and get self-realized in it. Communication is an integral part of the process of an individual's formation and development in the context of culture. In accordance with this idea, linguistic-culturological materials ensuring successful communication of individuals both in the educational process and in everyday life are of great value.

A learner forms as a personality, learns new things, acquires such values that will bring them success in communication processes. In addition, the individual's psychics – memory, thinking, consciousness levels, feelings, behaviour – develop. Thus, through familiarization with culture individuals change; through communication, dialogues and polylogues, they become full actors of all ongoing processes. In society, learners acquire certain values, start fulfilling their social functions and even their mission. It was no coincidence that at the end of the last century, they began using the sociocultural approach actively in language education. The approach makes it possible to fully reveal a person's capabilities through the focus of languages, culture and communication interconnected by the idea of values, relationships and interactions [5, 8, 13, 14, 19, 20]. The sociocultural principles such as promoting tolerant treatment for people of other languages and cultures, teaching respectful attitude to learners' own culture and encouraging their interest in learning other peoples' culture are being developed in language education.

In philological research, a linguistic-culturological approach is widely used. Within the approach, there are notions of discourse, cultural seme, concept, cultural background, cultural archetypes, communicative space [16]. Such research reveals deep connections between language and culture, studies the interaction between them, promotes understanding of intercultural communication processes in all spheres of people's lives. It should be emphasized that language, culture, intercultural communication are constantly developing, changing dynamically with possible progressive or regressive movement trajectories. Therefore, the language education system is not static, either. It is open for additions, innovations and non-standard learning models. Ideas of multilingual and polycultural environment offer a richer palette of values to acquire, reflection and personal growth [3, 4, 9, 11, 14, 17].

III. METHOD

The work on the research issue consisted of several stages. First, we studied the concept and the conceptual field of the multilingualism phenomenon accepted in the international scientific community. Then we analyzed the multilingualism phenomenon using culturological and linguistic-culturological approaches. We also spelt out the notion of language education. Analyzing the main ideas in the concept of a multilingual course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" from the culture perspective became the next stage of our research. We studied propositions of culturological, system, activity and synergetic scientific approaches and chose some ideas for the concept of a multilingual course book. The values of competence and sociocultural approaches were also included in the concept of the course book. So, the methodology of the scientific approaches became basic for the sociocultural approach applied and implemented in language education.

To identify multilingualism prospects in language education, we conducted a survey "On studying foreign languages and cultures". One hundred and ninety-three learners and students of Northern (Arctic) Federal University (NArFU) took part in the survey. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions in three thematic clusters: 1) the respondents' background information including their experience in learning foreign languages; 2) their interest in and motivation for learning languages and cultures including their native culture; 3) their interest in a multilingual course book. The survey data were analyzed, systematized and visualized.

In order to evaluate the language teaching potential of the course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy", we analyzed the didactic principles implemented in it. On the basis of the theoretical and practical research, we revealed the language teaching potential of multilingualism.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of our practical research. We start with the survey results and analysis of the data obtained.

In the first thematic cluster about the respondents' background, we got the following information. The majority of the respondents (94 people) were undergraduate students. In addition, master students (6 people), postgraduate students (13 people), speciality students (30 people) and learners of the "Polyglot" language centre (50 people) were involved in the survey.

As for the experience in learning foreign languages, the overwhelming majority of those surveyed (148 people of 193) had studied English as their first foreign language at school. Some respondents studied German (39 people) and French (2 people). International students also participated in the survey. For four of them Russian was the first foreign language.

With regard to the number of studied foreign languages, we obtained the following data: more than half of the

respondents (119 people) studied or are studying one foreign language. About a quarter of the respondents (54 people) have studied two foreign languages. Fourteen people stated that they knew three foreign languages. There are also students who can speak four or five languages (4 and 2 people, respectively).

In the survey we touched upon the issue of motivation for learning foreign languages and that of interest in comparing texts in the native language and a foreign one. The answers to the questionnaire show that the motivation to learn languages is high: one hundred and sixty-one of 193 people said that they would like to speak two and more foreign languages. Most of the respondents (121 people of 193) admit that they are interested in comparing texts in their native language and a foreign one.

The survey data showed that interest in the native culture in relation to foreign languages is very high. One hundred and fifty-eight people of 193 would like to learn how to talk about their culture in a foreign language (Fig. 1), and one hundred and forty-five people of 193 believe that their native culture is interesting for foreigners (Fig. 2).

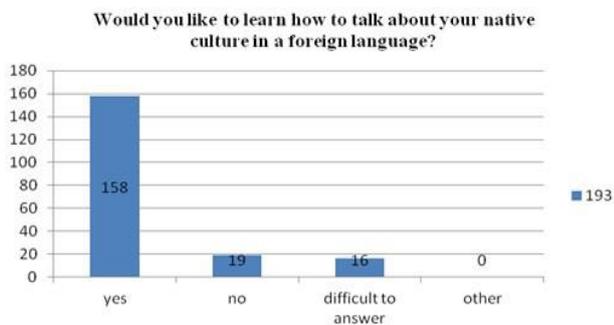


Fig. 1. The respondents' answers to question 6 of the questionnaire

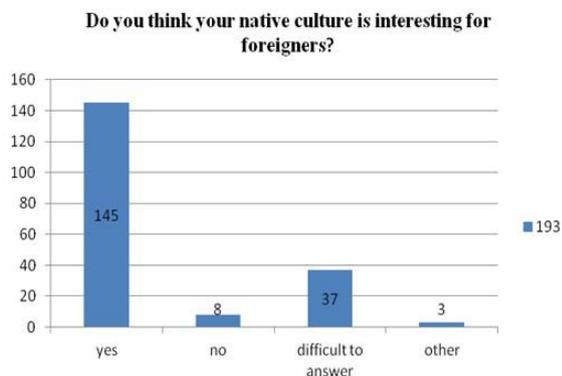


Fig. 2. The respondents' answers to question 7 of the questionnaire

As for the teaching potential of the multilingualism concept, most respondents (126 answers of 193) think, that it is simultaneous work with texts about culture in the native language and in a foreign one that motivates for learning foreign languages (it was a multiple choice question). Forty-three respondents believe that working with texts about culture in the language of this culture is most motivating for

learning foreign languages. Twenty-five respondents would prefer texts in their native language.

Our respondents also mentioned some other motives for learning foreign languages. They are: seeking employment abroad; cooperation with foreigners; an opportunity to learn another mentality through a language; modern society requirements according to which it is necessary to know foreign languages; communication with foreigners in their native languages; access to scientific literature in foreign languages.

The next question of the questionnaire was also a multiple choice one. It was aimed at identifying the motives for studying the culture of other countries. In the respondents' opinion, an opportunity of comparing cultures of different countries (108 answers) is most motivating for studying the culture of those countries. A different way of life and a chance to learn the native culture comparing it with other cultures were also mentioned as motives for learning the culture of other countries (61 and 56 answers, respectively). The answer choice "other" included the following motives: discovering new opportunities while staying in another country; travelling and communicating with foreigners; understanding peculiarities of the way of life and traditions of other countries.

It was also important for us to find out if there is an interest in a course book in six languages. As it can be seen from the diagram (Fig. 3), only 71 people of 193 respondents said that it would be interesting for them to learn a foreign language with a course book in six languages. Eighty-four people found it difficult to answer, and thirty-four participants gave a negative answer.

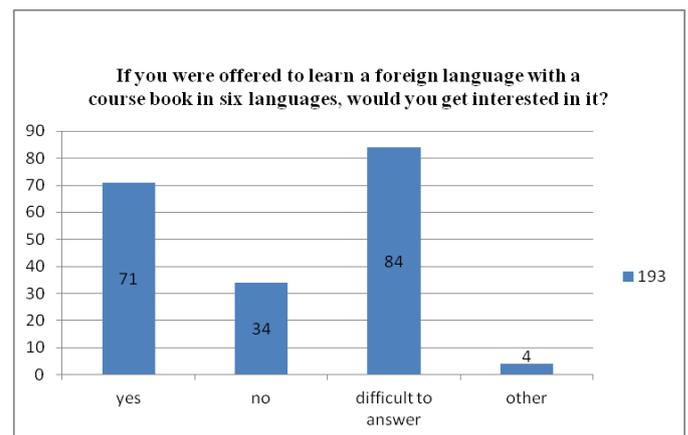


Fig. 3. The respondents' answers to question 10 of the questionnaire

The fact that most respondents found it difficult to answer the question about their interest in learning a foreign language with a course book in six languages or gave a negative answer to it is explained in the following way. The overwhelming majority of the respondents are not familiar with the content, structure, concept, idea and principles of the course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy". Therefore, most of the survey participants have no multilingual experience in learning foreign languages. In particular, they have no experience in learning foreign

languages with a multilingual course book which comprises identical texts and tasks to them in six languages (Russian, English, German, French, Norwegian and Chinese) including their native language. In our opinion, the respondents would have given more affirmative answers to the question if they had known the idea, structure and principles of our multilingual course book.

Multilingual experience in learning foreign languages means acquiring new knowledge of cultures and languages; developing learners' ability to compare their native culture with a foreign one; teaching respectful attitude to different languages and cultures; learners' ability to describe phenomena of their native culture in foreign languages while communicating with representatives of other nations. The course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" helps learners gain such experience. It emphasizes the prospects of introducing it into language education and proves the potential and values of the concept of multilingualism.

As follows from the results of the survey, at NArFU the students' motivation for learning foreign languages is very high. The students' answers also showed their great interest in studying cultures of other countries and a desire to learn their native culture comparing it with other cultures. The course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" can be an effective tool in learning other languages, other cultures and learners' native culture, including comparisons between them.

In accordance with the further research methodology, we turn to analyzing the language teaching potential of the multilingual course book. We identified its language teaching potential on the basis of theoretical and statistical analysis of the texts presented in the course book and the tasks to them. The course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" is intended for learning six languages by various target groups on the basis of such modern didactic principles of teaching foreign languages as competence and activity approaches, communicative language teaching, interactivity, sociocultural orientation, learner-centred teaching, active and autonomous learning, the principle of multilingualism [6].

Learning based on the competence approach assumes that learners are aware of their learning goals and know why they are doing some activities suggested by the teacher. In the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the learning objectives for the subject of Foreign Languages are formulated as language skills [10]. It should be noted that the course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" includes tasks on the following language skills: reading, speaking (a dialogue and a monologue), and writing. Learners develop the skill of listening while listening to each other and their teacher. Since there are no tasks on listening in the course book, the principle of developing all the language skills is implemented incompletely.

Learners should be able to speak a foreign language. It means they can understand a foreigner's speech and be understood by the person, argue, express their own opinions

and respond to the interlocutor's words. The offered tasks are expected to help them achieve this learning goal. Only in this case, learners will be able to adequately interact with representatives of other cultures in a foreign language. Therefore, in class, they should be offered to participate in everyday life activities like discussing an excursion or a trip plan, setting up a route or a holiday program. These are some topics presented in the course book. It means the full implementation of the activity approach principle.

Learners should be able to communicate in everyday life situations. Foreign language lessons are to help them prepare for it. Training in class with the course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" is based on real communication situations like weekend planning, discussing holidays and local traditions. It shows the full implementation of the communicative language teaching principle.

In class, learners have to communicate with each other while doing exercises and tasks. Such interaction is carried out in whole-class activities, group and pair work. In this way, we create language environment where communication takes place during cooperative activity. As a result, learners will be able to reproduce a similar speech situation out of class, too. In the course book there are numerous interactive tasks like interviewing a person with an interesting life story and introducing the results of the work in class; describing one of the town streets while the other learners try to guess which street it is. The learners can also talk to each other about folk crafts or cooperate in making a presentation of interesting places in the Arkhangelsk region. Therefore, the interactivity principle is fully implemented.

As a rule, our speech is associated with social context, which should also be taken into account when teaching foreign languages. In this regard, in class, it is reasonable to reproduce authentic communication situations that take place in real life. You should pay attention to the content of language material in relation to a particular communication situation. It means that the learners' utterances in class are most likely to be used in real speech practice. In the course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy" the full implementation of this principle is determined by its sociocultural themes.

Learners' speech activity should be relevant to their age, interests, social environment, etc. The texts selected in the course book describe everyday life situations in the light of the cultural traditions of the Russian North: visiting an architectural monument or a fair; practicing northern crafts; visiting a cultural heritage site; observing wedding traditions. As a result, the material studied in class is learnt as this information is interesting and personally meaningful. Representatives of different age categories, from schoolchildren to seniors, will find interesting and personally meaningful topics. So the learner-centred teaching principle is almost fully implemented.

Learners are full participants of the educational process, i.e. they can ask questions, choose topics for discussion, formulate rules and have practice, evaluate their activities and reflect on them, take part in organizing educational or

extracurricular activities. In this way, their learning becomes active.

Effective learning strategies and reflection develop learners' autonomous learning. It helps them study independently. For that purpose the course book offers tasks like "Analyze the information you have got and make the following marks in the text: I knew about it; I have learnt about it; I thought... but it has turned out...; I find it important". However, this principle is implemented incompletely.

Instruction must be based on the learners' previous language experience acquired while learning their native language and other foreign languages, in order to intensify the learning process in a multilingual context. Besides, this course book gives a unique opportunity to compare the lexical, grammatical and graphic structures of six world languages. Thus, the modern didactic principles of teaching foreign languages are fully implemented in the course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy".

Observing the above-mentioned principles assists in the formation of learners' ability to communicate in a foreign language orally and in writing in order to solve problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction. The language teaching potential of the course book is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. THE LANGUAGE TEACHING POTENTIAL OF THE COURSE BOOK "CULTURE IN THE NORTH. MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY" (ABRIDGED)

Text	Principles											
	Competence Approach				Activity Approach	Communicative Language Teaching	Autonomous Learning	Interactivity	Sociocultural Orientation	Learner-centered Teaching	Active Learning	Multilingualism
	reading	speaking	writing	listening								
How Arkhangelsk appeared	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
Weekend Advertisements	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
The Silver Necklace of Russia	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Meeting the Arctic	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
The Library Named after N.A. Dobrolyubov	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

The performed analysis has shown that the principle of autonomous learning is least expressed in the course book. This fact must be taken into account when planning classes. If the autonomous learning principle is poorly implemented in the tasks to the texts teachers can use additional exercises. Using a foreign language as the language of instruction will help them develop learners' skill of listening comprehension.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In language education, the ideas of multilingualism are reflected in the concept of a multilingual course book "Culture in the North. Multilingual Pedagogy". The language teaching potential of this course book is high owing to the use of modern didactic principles such as implementation of the ideas of competence and activity approaches, interactivity, sociocultural orientation, learner-centred teaching, active and autonomous learning, etc. The course book helps to learn foreign languages while working with texts about the Russian North culture and doing tasks aimed at developing skills of reading, speaking and writing. Additional tasks on listening and exercises encouraging autonomous learning will further improve the language teaching potential of the course book. It should be emphasized that learners show a great interest in studying cultures of other countries and a desire to learn their native culture as well as compare it with a foreign one. Therefore, the course book enables them to improve their speech competence and gain multilingual experience. The authors recommend the course book for learning foreign languages to different target groups: schoolchildren, young and mature people.

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