

# Theoretical and methodological aspects of foreign language education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

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**Abstract.** The article proves the validity of the application of the regional-ethnic approach to foreign language education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which is characterized by the presence of the national-regional component in all spheres of individual life activity. The authors identify a number of features to be taken into account, which serve as a basis of the regional-ethnic approach to foreign language education.

**Keywords:** foreign language education, regional-ethnic approach, national-regional component, indigenous peoples

## 1. Introduction

Multinational subjects of the Russian Federation are a specific feature of our country, when the constant search for ways of coexistence, taking into account the interests of representatives of various peoples and ethnic groups, occurs. So, the balance and dialogue between national and international components in the educational process in the conditions of the university is relevant.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The studied category of students is represented by the indigenous peoples of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which are characterized by certain specific features that influence the learning of a foreign language and the interaction of subjects of the educational process at the university [1]. In the logic of reviewing the theoretical and methodological aspects of the study, a detailed review and analysis of external and internal factors affecting the regional university foreign language education are important for a number of objective and subjective reasons.

First, during the Soviet period of development of the country, the northern regions did not have a developed system of higher education and received specialists through the migration process. So, in Yakutia until the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, higher education was represented by only one university, namely the Yakutsk State University (YSU). The sociologist U. S. Borisov writes that the number of students enrolled was 145 per thousand applicants from the secondary school graduates in 1992 [2]. According to the researcher, in view of the large competition in the only higher educational institution of the region and the inaccessibility of higher education in the republic itself, these graduates massively studied outside Yakutia. In the transitional period of the development of our country, the migration processes had the opposite effect. On the one hand, it was at this time that the most qualified visiting specialists left the territory of Yakutia. On the other hand, the opportunities for studying at the

Russian universities decreased from the local population. Today, the situation has arisen when students from among the indigenous inhabitants of the republic choose universities located in their region.

Second, the presence of a large number of children in the family of northerners is typical for the republic. According to demographic indicators, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) traditionally occupies the 1st place among the subjects of the Far Eastern Federal District and leading positions in the Russian Federation. Unlike other Russian subjects, the region was not distinguished by a decrease in the birth rate during the “demographic hole.” The increasing birth rates caused the growing number of children in secondary educational institutions. Subsequently, it affected the student contingent in the regional universities and, as a result, young professionals in the local labor market.

Third, the tendency of increasing urban and decreasing rural population is observed in the republic. The consequences of this process lead to an increase in the number of small schools in the regions of the republic, the direct dependence of the salary of the ulus teacher on the number of students in the classroom. And, as a result, the consequences lead to an outflow of the most qualified subject teachers to urban schools, a general overload of educational institutions in urban areas. These problems caused a shortage of secondary schools in cities with a native (Yakut, for example) language of instruction. In turn, this is directly related to the quality of school graduates, since their subsequent socialization in regional universities is largely dependent on the results of the unified state exam.

Fourth, the content of foreign language education in universities in the region is not sufficiently consistent with the practical needs of the region. Thus, in the republic, joint ventures in the field of mining precious and semi-precious metals, developing oil and gas fields, and building industrial and residential facilities are effectively functioning and developing. Ecological tourism is also on rise. Also, hunting and fishing in the North are extremely attractive to foreigners. Thus, the graduates of non-linguistic specialties in the field of geological exploration, construction, and industry with knowledge of English and Chinese languages are the most popular. As a result, these factors exert their influence as a university foreign language education in the region.

### **3. Results**

The study was carried out on the basis of non-linguistic universities in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the analysis of which indicates the need to take into account the specifics of the region in the presented work. First, it is the socio-economic features. The largest projects in the republic are connected with the development of the mining industry, transport and energy infrastructure, which implies the active involvement of Russian and foreign capital. The experience of their implementation shows that many investor companies in Yakutia are practicing rotational work, and the number of labor migrants from other regions of Russia, the Middle and Far Abroad is increasing. The current situation in the regional labor market is explained by the fact that, first, such an organization of labor is beneficial from an economic point of view due to a noticeable reduction in production costs. Second, according to the employers of the republic, there is a shortage of active, independently-minded specialists from among local labor resources capable of high competition in rapidly changing conditions of the labor market.

Second, cultural and historical features. The problem of preservation and development of national culture in a multi-ethnic state is relevant for Yakutia. Co-habitation in the same territory of representatives of different nations, their close trade ties and personal contacts contributed to fostering a tolerant attitude to another culture and readiness for its perception. Due to the harsh climatic conditions, the indigenous peoples of the republic have a habit of rationally spending their strength and energy. This explains such qualities of the northerners as sluggishness, laconicism, accuracy in speech and movements, extreme restraint in the external manifestation of their emotions, a tendency to accumulate internal experiences in stressful situations. In general, these people had to organize their work together, hence the habit of joint group actions is typical of the modern generation.

Third, we would like to note some ethnolinguistic features. The functioning of two state languages, Russian and Yakut, is constitutionally fixed. The national languages of the indigenous peoples of the

North (Even, Evenk, Dolgan, Yukagir, Chukchi) are recognized as official in the places of their compact residence. Under the influence of political, socio-economic, cultural and historical factors, the Yakut-Russian bilingualism arose and is actively developing in the region. Yakutia is characterized by heterogeneity in ethnic composition: the prevalence of one or other leading language of communication is observed in different parts of the region.

In the course of the study, the peculiarities of students from among the indigenous peoples of Yakutia, influencing the process of mastering foreign language teaching material and interaction with participants in the educational process at the university, were highlighted:

- *Psychological and physiological*: a low level of personal initiative; a decreased mental activity; propensity to operate with images and group them into schemes; inertness; introversion; tendency to depression; failure to intervene in internal experiences;
- *Socio-pedagogical*: a group form of organization of the educational process; a practical orientation of educational activity; cultivating a positive attitude towards work; perseverance in overcoming difficulties; difficulties in social adaptation; indecision in unfamiliar surroundings; growing internal migration; striving for ethnic identity;
- *Lingvodidactic*: a language barrier during the adaptation period; plurality of linguistic identity; the Yakut language prevalence in the field of family communication; interethnic tolerance; separate communication medium [3].

The founder of the scientific school of contextual education A. A. Verbitsky emphasizes that the professional formation of a future specialist should occur in a qualitatively different educational activity with a vector for understanding the changes that occurred in the educational system in recent years [4]. Following his logic about the external and internal conditions of life of the individual, which affect both the process and the results of perception and transformation of the existing reality, we propose to consider teaching foreign languages to university students from among the indigenous peoples of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in a regional-ethnic context.

To the external context, we would attribute the socio-economic, cultural, historical, ethno-linguistic specificity of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), as well as the psychological, physiological, socio-pedagogical, linguodidactic features of the contingent of students. And also, the specific features arising from the students of the North when studying a foreign language belong to the external context. To the internal context, we would like to assign the content of the studied academic discipline, the professionally oriented directionality of foreign language education in a non-linguistic university by consistently saturating the educational process with elements of professional activity.

#### **4. Discussion**

In the contemporary research, we encounter such concepts as “ethnocultural approach,” “national education,” “national-regional component,” “regional education”, etc. (Miroshnichenko [5], Kharitonova [6], and others). We can also assert that both in theoretical works and in educational practice, the importance of taking into account the ethnos of students is noted. The essence of this problems in the regional education systems of Russia is typical in many respects due to common social, historical, economic factors, as well as the presence of active bilingualism and multilingualism.

In the 90s of the last century, after the collapse of the Soviet state, on its former territory, national republics (Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Tatarstan, Chechnya, Yakutia, etc.) began to actively promote the ideas of the practical implementation of sovereignty at all levels, including in education. Ethnopedagogy was singled out as an independent science. The national-regional component has become firmly established in the regional education structure of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. In particular, the regional curricula was developed, textbooks and teaching aids were published, training (and retraining) of teachers and instructors was carried out. We explain the growing interest in regional education as a threat to the loss of identity for smaller peoples and their protest against global trends in unifying lifestyles, blurring differences between cultures and spiritual values. And, as a result, ethnosocial and ethno-confessional local conflicts appear.

The concept of “regional-ethnic approach to foreign language education” has epy goal of searching for new reserves of pedagogical activity in modern conditions of the development of methodological science. This approach has developed under the influence of external and internal factors. To such factors, we attribute the following: globalization of education; a constantly changing content of higher education; a growing labor market competition for competent specialists with foreign language competence; as well as certain specific features characteristic of a particular ethnic group of students in the study of a foreign language.

The regional-ethnic approach to foreign language education implies mastering the language and its culture by maximally reflecting the specificity of the region, culture and spiritual values of the ethnic group of students in the content, forms, and methods of instruction.

The outlined approach is universal and applicable throughout the country. In each subject of the Russian Federation, such an educational space should function, reflecting its regional characteristics and the specifics of the ethnos inhabiting it. The essence of the regional-ethnic approach is that its implementation will allow to organically introduce into the practice of foreign language education the comprehension of world, all-Russian, regional trends in the field of higher education. More than that, it would contribute to the identification of the social order and the regional specifics for training competitive graduates. Lastly, this approach to correlate the method of teaching a foreign language in a non-linguistic university with the characteristics of the ethnos of students.

## 5. Conclusion

The main characteristics of the regional-ethnic approach to foreign language education include: (1) filling the content of foreign language education in the trinity of “country-region-ethnos”; (2) a harmonious correlation of the all-Russian, region-wide and inherent ethnic groups living in the territory of a specific subject of the Russian Federation, the specifics of the principles and approaches to the organization of the educational process; (3) the choice of elements, conditions, forms, methods and means of pedagogical activity depending on the characteristics of the students' ethnicity.

On the one hand, this approach presupposes the education of students of ethnic identity, a clear awareness of their belonging to a particular ethnic group within Russian society. In particular, the modern youth demonstrate a noticeable desire to learn and preserve their native language and culture. On the other hand, active processes of integration and globalization, a significant expansion of international relations require the formation of a multicultural personality.

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