

# On the Problem of Specialized Foreign Language Textbook for Future Teachers

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## Abstract

Higher education is constantly in search of ways to respond to the requirements of modern society for preparing a qualified specialist. Competence-based approach marked the transition from a theorized to a practical content of teacher training at university, aiming to educate a specialist who possesses the necessary strategies to perform well at a workplace. Pedagogical education strives to meet the necessary requirements, develops new programs, makes changes in the educational process, controls the learning outcomes of students. The undergraduate stage is designed to train a future teacher who both knows the subject itself and the theory of teaching a foreign language. There has recently been a tendency to use an integrated approach that combines subject and didactic components. Students who enroll in the French language program usually have not studied it before, which inadvertently creates a certain overbalance of language learning, especially since methodological disciplines are introduced into the program only in the third year. There is an urgent need to strengthen their methodological training, starting from the first year of study. Such an approach can be accommodated through designing a special educational product and incorporating it into the main foreign language textbook through didactic comments on the studied language material which will contribute to the development of methodological competence. The basis of methodological awareness, formed during the initial stage of studying at university, will significantly contribute to the effectiveness of pedagogical practice and future teaching strategies.

*Keywords:* professional identity, integrated approach, methodological commenting.

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## **Introduction**

The evolution of higher education is associated with Russia entering the Bologna process and is aimed at deepening and expanding the process of preparing students in accordance with the European scale. The objectives of the bachelor's and master's levels are different, but the requirements imply the formation of a specialist who is ready to put their knowledge into practice on the basis of the knowledge gained during 4 years of undergraduate studies. Verbitsky (2018) believes that “the imposition of educational information on the canvas of social, and inherently, professionally substantive activity leads to the assimilation of this information by students at the level of personal meanings and knowledge, and not just the values fixed in scholarship”.

The competence-based approach, which has consolidated in higher education, focuses not only on acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities, but also on the ability and readiness of a former student to use them in their professional activities. It is this postulate that is emphasized by foreign and domestic scholars, in particular Khutorsky (2017), who says that “competence is not limited to knowledge or only to skills. Competence is the sphere of the relationship that exists between theoretical knowledge and practical action”. The result of a graduate's professional training and the level of quality are not demonstrated by the estimated indicators of acquired knowledge, but by certain complex indicators that reveal the degree of formation of professional competence in a particular area.

Thus, during the undergraduate studies a student must master both the subject itself and the methods of teaching it. The significance of this stage is hard to overestimate, since bachelor's programs provide necessary general professional training, the quality of which “determines the viability of the entire chain of general education and professional programs with different duration of study” (Tareva, & Kazantseva, 2011, p. 70). The structure of educational programs is denoted in the Federal State Educational Standard as one of the three main components that affect the quality of education, along with the design of the educational process and learning outcomes.

Professional, and in particular, pedagogical education at the present stage is designed to ensure that the training of a student meets the requirements set by society. Changes in the education system that have taken place in recent decades are reflected in the school stage of education. The transformations that determine school educational process are familiar to university entrants, who will now have to analyze them from a teacher's point of view. A graduate of the program "Pedagogical education", who has chosen teaching at school as their vocation, must have a clear and deep understanding of the a) traits typical of modern educational process, b) psychological characteristics of current students, c) effective

ways of working with them. In a handbook for an aspiring teacher, French methodologists note the importance of social and psychological components of teacher's knowledge and the significance of the teacher's acceptance of learners' psychological characteristics and readiness to use the most effective teaching strategies (Hervieu, 2016).

The subject "Foreign language" has a special place on the list of school disciplines and is particularly challenging due to the lack of clear understanding of what is exactly needed for successful communication with representatives of another culture. The formation of the educational process for training foreign language teachers requires a revision of traditional methods or the introduction of completely new teaching methods, the result of which is "a set of integrated, personally determined competencies that prepare graduates for professional activities in complex, non-standard educational settings" (Tareva, & Mikhailova, 2019, p. 27). Due to the transition to a two-tier system of higher education, each level of which is designed to provide adequate professional training, there arises a fully justified question on the need to optimize the learning process. Upon completing bachelor's degree, the student should not only be fluent in a foreign language and be able to carry out effective communication, but also "successfully realize the personal development potential of modern linguistic-didactic approaches" (Galskova, & Bartosh, 2016, p. 16), having all the variety of modern methodological methods, forms and techniques in teaching schoolchildren.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

This study continues considering ways to improve foreign language education following such Russian scholars as Bagramova, Bim, Gez, Galskova, Enalieva, Eremin, AKolker, Koryakovtseva, Lyakhovitsky, Moskovkin, Passov, Rogova, Tareva, Tenischeva, Ustinova, Shchukin. One of the priorities in this direction is the need to highlight the professional approach to teaching a foreign language, which is indicated in the works by Gromova, Klyuchnikova, Krupchenko, Kudryashova, Leushina, Milovanova, Myltseva, Polyakov, Rubtsova, Sakharova, Sidorenko, Tenischeva, Ter-Minasova, Khomyakova, Dudley-Evans, Douglas, Waters, Hutchinson, etc. Scientists and methodologists associate the real effectiveness of such training with the creation of a specialized textbook or teaching aid, a special module or an elective course. Non-linguistic universities practice using foreign textbooks for future physicists, chemists, mathematicians, doctors and representatives of other professions not directly related to the language of the profession. Language universities set as their goal the formation of professional knowledge of a foreign language, using up-to-date Russian and foreign textbooks to achieve a high level of foreign language communicative competence of graduates. Pedagogical aspect of training largely correlates with the general trend of language universities, but it is

also necessary to revise the approach towards foreign language teaching from a professional point of view.

Students preparing to teach at school begin to study the theory and methodology of teaching foreign languages only in the third year. The lack of teaching hours, as well as the obvious absence of practical material in the textbooks on methodology, as noted by Malyov, Moskovkin, Chernyshev, Shamov and other scholars, significantly reduce the quality of the methodological training of future teachers. In connection with this problem, it is worth highlighting integrated, interdisciplinary or cross-curriculum, subject-methodological approach to teaching foreign languages in pedagogical universities.

Thus, the question arises: how to improve the level of foreign language teacher training? Should the decision include the creation of a specialized textbook or should there rather be restructuring of the educational process with the use of existing training materials? If one should consider foreign language textbooks that are currently used, with the help of what strategies, methods and techniques would it be possible to ensure an increase in the methodological competence of students? This study attempts to substantiate the answers to the questions posed.

## **Literature review**

The current state of affairs indicates the urgent need to develop an educational product, which in the first year of study at the university can become a reliable guide for future foreign language teachers in comprehending two fundamental components of training - linguistic and methodological. It seems important to highlight the tendency, which has become obvious in recent years, towards enrollment of students with a low level of proficiency in the chosen language or who did not study it at all. In her works, Polish researcher Maria Sichoń emphasizes the complexity of this state of affairs and points out that "la connaissance insuffisante de la langue, représentant à peine le niveau A2 selon le Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues, rend extrêmement difficile la formation linguistique et didactique des futurs formateurs de FLE" (Cichoń, 2009, p. 47). The current situation becomes a "zero point of reference" in the formation of a student's professional identity, which begins to emerge at the stage of choosing a career path and values prevailing in the society, turning to personal experience and ideals as well as socio-linguocultural landmarks.

Professional identity reflects "the integrity of ideas about oneself, conscious activity and emotional experiences associated with the assimilation of professional knowledge and skills, on the basis of which

self-identity as a future professional is formed" (Sushko, 2016, p. 272). It is directly related to the formation of the subjectivity of the future teacher as an integrator of the development of professional skills, which will subsequently allow them to fulfill professional requirements at a high level (Devyatova, 2019). As Algerian scholar Guendouz-Benammar notes, "L'enseignant a une mission complexe exigeant des connaissances, voire une maîtrise, de plusieurs capacités: le savoir, la pédagogie, la didactique, l'évaluation de son enseignement et de son apprentissage" (Guendouz-Benammar, 2015, p. 92).

The importance of students understanding their role in mastering the profession is also noted by Xavier Roegiers, who, expressing the opinion of a whole team of methodologists from different countries, says that the integrativeness of university education defines the student as the center of the educational process, because it is the student who needs to integrate, find solutions in various situations, create a certain professionally oriented product, resorting to a variety of resources and implementing certain steps to achieve the goal (Roegiers, 2012). Sowa pays special attention to professionalization and emphasizes that for a future teacher, "la professionnalisation se définit comme une activité intellectuelle, cognitive, qui s'opère par la transformation des représentations. Les procès mentaux qui se déclenchent lors de l'action font appel au savoir considéré comme instrument et non comme objet" (2016, p. 139).

In the context of a foreign language teacher training integration processes indicate a clear focus on the unification of scientific knowledge and determine the long-term prospects for the development of education. According to Malyov (2015, p. 9), integration is nothing more than "a way of overcoming the disunity of academic disciplines, removing difficulties in the process of forming a holistic view of professional activity among students, and optimizing the content of professional and methodological training in current conditions".

Specified by Russian methodologists (Almazova, Bezukladnikov, Bim, Zimnyaya, Rogova, Safonova, Solovova, Furmanova et al.), the parameters of the professional competence of a foreign language teacher point to the inextricable connection between the subject area and the methodological component, to the interpenetration and interdisciplinarity that create their common didactic space (Galskova, 2017). In modern scholarship, the above provisions are reflected in a number of competencies: linguodidactic, linguo-methodological, professional-methodological, communicative-methodological, which, despite the terminological discrepancy, are aimed at solving the following challenges - a future foreign language teacher should form their professional linguistic personality; self-determine in the profession while assimilating professional values; develop from the position of

"incrementing" methodological techniques for presenting linguistic material, substantiating the sequence of studying phenomena; master linguistic knowledge, skills and abilities.

At the same time, important factors determining the position of scholars include the consistency, staging and sequence, as well as the succession and continuity of integrative and differentiated training, which is considered as "a pedagogically organized process of enriching the methodological experience of students at different educational levels, which is based on the strategy of professional and personal development of a student as a subject of methodological activity" (Malyov, 2015, p. 171). The key question remains: at what stage of studying at university is it necessary to use integrative technologies aimed at solving this problem? Traditionally, in the first years at university, the linguistic foundations of the future profession are determined, a foreign language communicative competence is formed, which in the third year, in the process of mastering the subject "Methodology of teaching foreign languages", is transformed into one of the components of professional competence, combining subject-content and procedural activity aspects of future activity, based on understanding the systemic structure of the language and the set of rules for using linguistic units in speech.

## **Methodology**

The latest updates of the basic educational program of the undergraduate program "Pedagogical Education" are being actively implemented and clearly demonstrate the practical orientation of teacher training, which is reflected in a wide range of practices: from introductory (linguistic) and sociocultural to psychological, pedagogical, academic and intercultural communication practices. Immersion in different contexts of the future profession starting from the first year, redistribution of teaching hours to specialized disciplines are important arguments for introducing systematic, purposeful and at the same time smooth and progressive "stimulation" of students to comprehend the methodological foundations of language teaching.

It should be noted that nowadays there is a sufficient number of teaching aids for higher education in a variety of specialties and training profiles, however, for future bachelor teachers, in our case, the French language, training is carried out on the basis of authentic communicative methods of foreign authors, which are used throughout the world for the general public and are aimed at achieving a specific level of proficiency (A1-B2). When studying a language from scratch, university teachers often use Russian academic methods and modern manuals in the field of the Humanities, but they do not take into account the peculiarities of the training profile of a future specialist in the field of foreign language education.

As we see it, an effective tool that contributes to the integration of linguistic and methodological components can be the development and connection of a special educational product - an addition-accompaniment to the main textbook on a foreign language, which will contain didactic comments on the studied language material, revealing to a future teacher the algorithm and basic methodological techniques for the presentation of linguistic phenomena. An important cognitive attitude for a first-year student is the modeling of future professional activity through the prism of their own educational experience, according to the principle "today I teach myself and tomorrow I will teach others".

In this regard, the main aim of developing an Appendix to a textbook on a foreign language is to form the foundations of methodological awareness of future teachers, which should become a connecting thread between all aspects of the language (vocabulary, phonetics and grammar) and didactic patterns of assimilation of knowledge, acquisition and development of skills. In this case, the student becomes the subject of the process of assimilating knowledge, and, consequently, the subject of the process of forming professional competencies. The introduction of the Application resource to the main textbook can be considered as an educational and methodological complex for special purposes. At the same time, such a tandem will fully meet current requirements to textbooks presented and developed at the turn of the century by Bim (1999), as it substantiates the achievement of the ultimate goal of teacher training, covers professionally important components of the content of training, possesses an external structure, takes into account positive methodological tendencies, etc. Below is a more detailed presentation of the concept of the Application under development.

## **Results**

Teaching students in the program "Pedagogical education. Foreign language (French)" at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education of Moscow City (Teachers' Training) University in a group of beginners is carried out on the basis of the educational methodological complex of authors Girardet, & Pêcheur "ÉCHO" of the Parisian publishing house "Clé internationale", each of the levels of the line corresponds to one of four years at university. The set for students consists of a textbook and workbook, as well as a DVD with audio and video files. For the teacher, there is a Guide Pédagogique, containing lesson descriptions with recommendations for organizing group and individual activities. The methodology itself, as the authors note, is built from the position of the activity-based approach, which is considered as the optimal model for immersing students in the situational context of the Francophone world, where they become main participants of various events (Girardet, 2013).

However, from the standpoint of preparing future teachers of the French language, this approach is not optimal, since it cannot ensure the solution to all the aforementioned aims. Our ideas are supported in the work “Qualité des manuels, qualité de leur usage et qualité de la formation à leur usage” by a renowned French researcher in the field of linguodidactics Christian Puren. The scholar says that “dans la situation actuelle en didactique des langues, où s'impose une approche pluriméthodologique seule capable de permettre à l'enseignant de gérer la complexité des processus d'enseignement-apprentissage, la formation des enseignants ne peut plus, comme jadis, recourir à un entraînement à l'utilisation de manuels censés mettre en œuvre de manière rigoureuse et systématique telle ou telle méthodologie particulière” (2020, p. 1).

This approach provides rationale for the "strengthening" of the teaching materials with a specially developed professionally oriented Application, which, from lesson to lesson, should perform, on the one hand, the function of an intermediary and interpreter of the author's didactic strategy, helping students to immerse themselves in full comprehension of all aspects of the French language, on the other - to be a moderator, organizer and conductor of this process, living it “as if from within”.

According to this concept, the Application as an educational product will be based on fundamentally important general methodological principles, the key ones among which are the principle of taking into account the specifics of the subject of the educational process (level of language proficiency, professional orientation), the principle of feasibility and accessibility (an adequate form of presentation and explanation of material in the native language), the principle of integrativity (mastering the linguistic and communicative foundations of a foreign language in combination with methodological support), the principle of a problem-based approach to teaching (emphasis on creating diverse educational situations that contribute to finding an optimal and effective solution to achieving a set goal), the principle of awareness (understanding a clear connection between mastering the subject area and teaching methods, using their own educational experience).

As for the structure, the Appendix will be in the form of a methodological commentary, which is traditionally referred to as information and methodological products. The genre purpose of a methodological commentary is defined as analysis, description, examination and generalization of the studied material. At the same time, methodological commentary should contain expert explanations of a specialist in the field of linguodidactics, argumentation and logic of matching it to a particular section of the textbook "Echo" of a specific method, technique, teaching aids and type of activity.



## **Discussions**

For first-year students studying French from scratch, the use of the commenting resource as a methodological tool which demonstrates the subject of mastery in step-by-step dynamics should become the basis for the formation of their own professional identity. At the same time, this is a great opportunity to feel like students who start to learn a language that is unfamiliar to them, to critically assess the effectiveness of the proposed methods and techniques, and to observe advancement (Del Olmo, 2016). The parity of interaction of linguistic and methodological aspects at the first stage of training is considered as the basis for the "integrity of professionally significant linguistic, communicative, methodological and didactic knowledge, skills and experience of linguistic-methodological activity, which includes professionally significant personal qualities, and ensures the effectiveness of professional educational activities of the future teachers" (Mosina, 2014, p. 9).

## **Conclusion**

The importance and necessity of an integrated approach in foreign language teaching and the methods of teaching it in the education of future teachers has been outlined by many Russian and foreign scholars. This research determines the beginning of the formation of a student's professional identity starting from the first year of studying at the university, before the course "Methodology of teaching foreign languages", which is part of the third-year curriculum. This approach is primarily determined by the intention to pay more attention and time to teaching practical strategies for mastering a foreign language, understanding the algorithm for introducing new grammatical and lexical material, assimilating strategies and techniques for effective learning. The current state of higher professional pedagogical education puts all foreign languages, except for English, in the position of "minor" languages. In this regard, it is important to understand that undergraduate students who begin to study French at the university must master not only the methodology of foreign language teaching, but also the language itself, which creates a certain lack of time for a high-quality result of their training. The solution to this problem can be an addition-accompaniment to the main textbook of a foreign language, which includes a methodological commentary containing the analysis, description, examination and generalization of the studied linguistic material. Thus, the use of an integrated approach to educating future foreign language teachers will allow to form their methodological awareness, which will serve as solid support for getting further insight into the profession in the senior years at the university.

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