

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

Approaches to the Methodological Design of a Modern Foreign Language Textbook

Elena Ya. Grigoryeva* (a), Valeriy I. Uvarov (b)

(a) *Moscow City University, 129226, Moscow (Russia), 4-1, 2nd Selskokhoziastvenny Proezd*

(b) *Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow (Russia), Miuskaya sq. 6,
egrig@inbox.ru*

Abstract

The article attempts to identify and analyze the main approaches to the methodological design of a modern foreign language textbook. The data collected by the survey of respondents from among students of various fields of training allowed the authors to identify ten main aspects that are necessary for designing a high-quality modern textbook which meets the requirements of the educational standard and is positively accepted by students as a source of reliable knowledge. The authors pay special attention to the personal and professional qualities of a teacher, especially if he is the author of the textbook with which he works. In conclusion, the authors express the great hope that the promotion of the creation of high-quality educational content will change the modern attitude to the role of a foreign language and make its studying not only mandatory, but also exciting.

Keywords: foreign languages, methodological design, modern textbook, formation of competencies.

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Introduction

Despite the constantly emerging global and national crises, the modern world community does not stop in its development and is in the process of continuous change and modernization. Constant forward movement

* Corresponding author. E-mail: egrig@inbox.ru

in all areas of human activity leads to a regular update of the conditions to which modern members of society should adapt.

In order to meet modern requirements and guarantee its competitiveness in the international arena, each progressive state strives to maintain and develop its scientific potential, to provide itself with professional working personnel in all areas of activity. Regular modernization of the national education system at all its levels makes it urgent to meet the results of the methodological design of the educational process to the current needs and requirements of the state, indicated in the introduction of Federal State Educational Standards of a new generation.

A special place in the strategic development of the educational system should be occupied by the formation of foreign-language communicative competence as an integral part of a holistic professional personality (Shahmohammadi,2018). Specialists with knowledge of a foreign language in our time are no longer a rarity, and fluency in foreign languages is no longer a competitive advantage, but is assumed as a mandatory component of specialist training. The importance of the formation of language competence at all levels of education, especially at the stage of professional specialized training in higher education, becomes the more important the more international relations between states develop. The fluency of specialists in at least one foreign language is strategically important, as it gives them the opportunity to:

- 1) exchange experience with foreign colleagues;
- 2) represent the country in various international projects and debates.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Unfortunately, in reality, the situation with foreign language education and its role in the national education system is somewhat different. In our opinion, the school system develops the language skills of students at the primary and secondary levels, but then levels these achievements, giving the school time completely for the preparation for the Unified State Exam, which involves exclusively template work with educational material and prevents the formation of creative variable thinking. If we take into account that language universities train specialists of a decent level, then the situation with foreign languages in non-linguistic universities often does not meet the modern needs of society. For many years, there has been a process of "absorption" of academic hours for the study of foreign languages by basic and specialized disciplines. If earlier during the five years of the specialty, students had a real opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of a common foreign language and master the professional level, now in one or, at best, two years of the

bachelor's degree, teachers of non-linguistic universities barely have time to form the basis for a satisfactory command of a common foreign language and only slightly illuminate the profile level.

The problem of high-quality methodological design of the educational process is extremely complex and multifaceted (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, Walker, 2018). Taking into account the fact that the quality of the educational process largely depends on three components-the teacher as a representative of the educational system, the student and his personal qualities, as well as the educational content-in this article we will focus on one of them, namely, we will try to analyze the approaches to the methodological design of a modern foreign language textbook mainly for a non-linguistic university (which, however, does not exclude the relevance of some theses regarding the school system).

Literature review

Relatively few studies, both domestic (N.M. Zhukova, P.F. Kubrushko, M.V. Shingareva, etc.) and foreign (L.W. Anderson, D. R. Krathwohl, G. Neuner, B. Tomlinson, H.G. Masuhara, M. Yasmin, etc.), have been devoted to the problem of methodological design of a modern foreign language textbook for special purposes.

However, as mentioned earlier, modern society is constantly evolving and requires the same from the educational environment. The regular updating of the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards, as well as the need to implement a competence-based approach in modern education, require a revision of the parameters of the methodological design of a modern foreign language textbook, its adaptation to the real capabilities of schools and universities.

Methodology

Our research is based on statistical data obtained by the authors using a survey of 300 respondents from the number of bachelor students of a non-linguistic university studying in various fields of training: advertising, management, psychology, economics. As a result of the data collection, it was revealed that only 30% of students consider the foreign language textbooks offered to them (both general English and special) to be "adequate and fully meeting the needs" of students. The remaining 70% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the structure, content and material of the textbooks they use. Based on their responses, the authors compiled a list of requirements that a modern foreign language textbook should meet, and that teachers should take into account when methodically designing their own textbooks and teaching aids.

Results

The list of current approaches to the methodological design of a modern foreign language textbook presented below does not imply ranking the components by the degree of significance, since, according to the authors, they are all equally important in order to create a single high-quality educational product, and the absence of any of the components will indicate a lack of educational material.

When considering the list obtained, it should be noted that the students' opinions were passed through the prism of the professional experience of the teachers-the authors of this article - and, thus, also reflect the competent opinion of the teachers-practitioners.

The authors identified ten components necessary for the design of a truly high-quality modern foreign language textbook. We will focus on each of them in detail.

Discussions

1. Formation of relevant competencies and practical orientation.

If we consider foreign language textbooks for certain areas of training at a university, of course, they should be based on the formation of specific competencies that are relevant for this particular area. Moreover, the principle of competence formation should apply to the entire educational process, from the first task in the textbook to the last one (Prigozhina, Trostina, 2017). The analysis of modern textbooks of a foreign language for specific specialties shows that many educational materials only partially adhere to a steady course on the given competencies, "diluting" the material with various information that is not directly related to the main topic. For example, in business English textbooks, one can find sections devoted to country studies and industrial infrastructure of foreign countries, which, in our opinion, is secondary information and should be taken out of the main content of the textbook.

As the authors of our own textbooks and teaching aids, we are deeply convinced that the result of the formation of specific competencies should have a mandatory exit to their practical application, preferably in situations as close to reality as possible. First of all, we are talking about case studies and role-playing games that allow students to feel like real specialists who solve real life problems. The effective organization of practical development of the competencies formed by students largely depends on the personal and professional qualities of the teacher, their creative and organizational abilities (Borg, 2015; Lisna, 2016). In our opinion, the best option for the maximum practical implementation and development of the formed competencies is the conditions under which the teacher:

- 1) in addition to professional knowledge of a foreign language, has sufficient work experience in the specialty that their students master, that is, knows how everything "works" in reality;
- 2) is the author of the basic foreign language textbook for students of this field of training and can actively participate in the design of the curriculum;
- 3) has the opportunity to share with students their own professional achievements and best practices, being sincerely interested in their future success.

Specifically, it is necessary to focus on textbooks and teaching aids, which also form the specified competencies and contribute to their practical implementation, but are supplementary, not the main materials of the course. Their importance has increased significantly in recent times, when the world is experiencing the impact of the pandemic in the form of distancing and self-isolation. The supplementary material in this situation can and should be used by the teacher to organize independent work of students, which, with the right approach, significantly expands the scope of the educational process and creates a feeling of complete immersion in the subject.

2. The content of the textbook corresponds to the program of the profile discipline.

A high-quality modern textbook of a foreign language should be designed in accordance with the principle of continuity, which assumes a clear structural and logical connection between the content of the textbook (and the logic of the location of its modules) and the program of the profile discipline (Ellis, 2015). Ideally, the material passed in the native language should immediately be consistently worked out in a foreign language. This approach will allow us:

- 1) to build clear parallels and differences between the terminology and the conceptual base of the native and foreign languages;
- 2) to "refresh" the material, thereby more firmly fixing it in the minds of students; and, as it has already been mentioned above,
- 3) to get to the mandatory practical implementation of the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities.

The analysis of the current situation in several non-linguistic universities in the capital indicates a complete or partial non-compliance with the principle of continuity. In the teaching of the courses "Foreign language in professional activity", manuals on the basic foreign language or textbooks with an implicit set of formed

competencies are often used. The main reason for this dissonance is the previously mentioned difference in the hours allocated for studying a foreign language in a non-linguistic university, and their constant rejection in favor of specialized and basic disciplines. In our opinion, this situation indicates obvious underestimation of the role of a foreign language in the formation of a full-fledged professional personality of a future specialist and requires an immediate review of priorities.

3. A science-based approach to the selection and logical design of the textbook structure.

Since the goal of any textbook is to develop students' adequate thinking and consciousness, which implies a huge responsibility, the selection of material for the textbook should always be logically and scientifically (methodically) justified. Moreover, in the process of creating a textbook, it is necessary to consult specialists in the field for which the training potential of the textbook is designed (Leaver, Davidson, Campbell, 2021). Provided that the quality of the material used is confirmed and does not cause doubts, the following additional criteria can be proposed for the selection and structuring of the material, which will help to improve the efficiency of working with educational content and increase the level of its relevance:

- 1) all information contained on the pages of the textbook must be extremely up-to-date and updated within the time limits established by the regulations;
- 2) in addition to an informative text of an encyclopedic nature, more attention should be paid to authentic texts of various styles, genres, and national origin (the opinion of authors from different countries of the world will allow to more objectively highlight important issues, look at the situation from different points of view, thereby developing an important critical thinking skill in students);
- 3) theory should always be followed by practice in the most diverse formats;
- 4) since many modern foreign language textbooks include a grammatical component in their structure, it should certainly be reflected in the text, audio and video content of the textbook.

4. The content of the textbook corresponds to the personal qualities, characteristics and capabilities of students.

Even the most modern and informative textbook will significantly lose its effectiveness if it does not take into account the characteristics of the target audience, which means the personal qualities, characteristics and capabilities of students. Thus, in order to ensure the maximum usefulness of their textbook, the author

must first be familiar with the students (their typical representatives) to whom the textbook is addressed (Setzekorn, 2020). For the author of a foreign language, the knowledge of their target audience is especially important, since the initial level of language proficiency of all participants in a study group or an entire course may differ from the generally accepted parameters due to certain circumstances. One example would be the introduction or termination of an entrance test in a foreign language. In our opinion, if the level of the group is slightly lower than the required level for working with a textbook, this textbook should not be replaced with a simpler one, since excessive underestimation of the complexity of the educational process can make it completely useless. For the correct selection of the level of complexity, the teacher should focus on the concept of "accessibility" (Graus, Coppen, 2016). In other words, the textbook should be moderately complex, but accessible for students to master, in order to provoke the development of their communication skills, but not stagnation and regression.

The content and structure of the textbook tasks should take into account not only the profile direction of students' training, but also, at least, their "humanitarian" or "technical" mindset.

The authors also adhere to the idea of the need for a two-stage presentation of text material (Ryzhova, Grigorieva, Dorofeeva, 2020) for each topic (module) of the textbook. The role of the first text is to introduce students to the essence of the question and show them the key vocabulary with its subsequent development in post-text tasks. The second text is practice-oriented and involves the active use of the vocabulary and grammar of the first text in the process of active communication when discussing the problems of the second text. In addition, the second text clearly demonstrates the practical usefulness of the material being studied, thereby contributing to the motivation of students. This methodological approach will also allow us to observe the principles "from simple to complex", "from theory to practice", and from individual lexical / grammatical units to the holistic construction of the discussion.

5. Maximum visualization of educational content.

It is scientifically proven that about 80% of the information about the world around us comes from the visual organs. This circumstance cannot be ignored in the methodological design of a modern textbook (Samoilova, 2019). As for the foreign language textbook, the following visual educational content seems to be effective:

- 1) diagrams and tables-for working with grammar material;
- 2) drawings, graphs, photos - for description and discussion;

- 3) audio material should, if possible, be replaced with video, making links to legal sources on the Internet;
- 4) a special role is played by the color palette of the textbook, if it is possible to publish it in color (at the same time, do not forget that many modern textbooks are transferred into digital format, where color carries an important informative function);
- 5) the material used in the course of practical final tasks on the topic - in case studies and role-playing games.

6. The ability to easily adapt the material to specific changing tasks.

This approach to methodological design refers more to the supplementary educational material, since it is less rigidly focused on the competencies prescribed in the discipline program. An example of easily adaptable educational content can be a collection of authentic professional texts, as well as a textbook "on survival" in the modern world. Such material of good quality can be a great addition to various profiles, as well as be used for independent work of students.

7. Motivational and emotionally positive content.

Given the high quality of the textbook, it is extremely important to observe one more condition, without which the educational process will either not take place or will be extremely ineffective. We are talking about the motivation of students and their sincere interest in working with the teacher and the textbook. Of course, in this matter, the primary role is played by the professionalism and personal qualities of the teacher, who is able to captivate students from the first lesson and prolong their motivation for the entire academic course by creating and maintaining a positive creative atmosphere in the classroom (Zhukova, Kubrushko, Shingareva, 2015). However, the textbook itself can take on part of this important function if its content includes really interesting material for students and provides exciting formats for working with it. This question brings us back to the idea of the expediency of a true teacher to have their own textbook, thoroughly familiar to them, with a variety of additional materials already prepared for it in advance.

8. A variety of formats for working with the material, involving both individual and pair work, as well as group work.

The variety of task formats and work with them, in addition to the motivating function, has another important task – to teach students to work in different modes: independently, in pairs and in groups (Nooruddin, Yasmin, 2019). The latter mode is extremely important for the further professional self-

realization of the personality of future graduates, when, starting their career advancement, they get into a new team, on the cohesion and efficiency of which the success of the entire company will depend. The ability to work in a team is one of the mandatory items in the resume of a modern applicant for a good job.

9. The ability to use the textbook autonomously for independent work of students.

The authors of this study are convinced that the ideal textbook can be called the one that is equally suitable both for working in the classroom and for independent study of the material by students. This feature of the textbook is particularly relevant to us against the background of the current predominance of distant learning formats, which involve a huge array of independent work of students and a small number of webinars to check the comprehension and mark the results (Tomlinson, Masuhara, 2017). In addition, the target audience does not have to include only students. These can be any people interested in learning a foreign language.

10. Introduction of game technologies.

Last on the list, but no less important, is including game elements in the structure and content of the textbook. It may seem that the game as a methodical technique has already been mentioned above, when it came to creative final tasks in the form of cases and role-playing games. However, this is only partly true. The fact is that, in our opinion, the potential of game technology is far from being limited to "local" cases and role-playing games. If the subject matter of the textbook and the program of the discipline as a whole allow, we offer a qualitatively new level of application of game technology, which we call the "concept of the global game". In short, it is a game modulation extended for the entire duration of the subject study, consisting of many modules and completely replacing the classical model of teaching a foreign language. Students get the roles of employees of the company that meets their training profile. Throughout the course they move up the career ladder, solving real problems, working in a team in an environment as close to reality as possible. Developing and organizing a global game is a very energy-consuming process. However, it justifies the efforts of the teacher invested in it, as it has a high level of efficiency, and can also be used in a template for various specialties. At the same time, the textbook acts as a navigation guide in the created game environment. More information about the technology of the global game can be found in the article "The concept of the global game in teaching students a foreign language" (Uvarov, 2019, p. 107-115).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the authors want to draw attention to the fact that the creation of a high-quality modern

textbook is not just an important condition for effective teaching of the discipline, but also a huge responsibility. Designed on the basis of high-quality selected material, taking into account all the aspects mentioned above, a textbook on a foreign language or any other discipline will always be positively welcomed by students and be convenient for the teacher.

The appearance of an increasing number of high-quality textbooks on a foreign language, in our opinion, should attract the attention of the publicity and show that the study of foreign languages can and should be not only a strategically important condition for the progress for the society, but also an extremely exciting creative process that comprehensively develops the student's personality.

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