

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

Textbook as Didactic-methodical Support for Foreign Language Education at Universities

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Abstract

The article from the standpoint of systemic, synergistic, competent, professionally oriented and communicative-cognitive approaches considers the textbook as a complex didactic-methodical support for the foreign language educational process in non-linguistic universities. This is justified by the high requirements for foreign language training in the situation with few hours for the students learning a foreign language, the lack of quality modern textbooks and uniformed requirements for their creation. The authors define the textbook as the complex didactic-methodical support for foreign language education, identify its main parameters and describe the content of textbook components. The conceptual-objective component represents the global education goal – the formation of professionally oriented foreign language communicative competence; the subject-procedural - the social experience combining the cognitive, reproductive, creative and emotional-value relationships for students to acquire; the instrumental component with a modified polymodal exercise as its elementary unit, which is capable for being incorporated into any educational technology; and the controlling-evaluating component, combining the evaluation criteria and the evaluation funds for the instructor and the self-monitoring and self-evaluating tools for students. The material of the article can be used to create textbooks for foreign language education in universities.

Keywords: didactic-methodical support; professionally-oriented education; textbook.

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Introduction

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Foreign language education at a non-linguistic university has a number of characteristics. The most significant one is that the main focus of language training is to be oriented towards the professional needs of future professionals. Therefore, the discipline «Foreign Language» is considered in the non-linguistic university as an integrative, interdisciplinary subject contributing to the formation of different competences, namely: communicative, cognitive, informative, social, intercultural and professional (Myagkova, 2016). With sufficient foreign language skills, the University graduates move to the category of highly qualified professionals, able to interact with colleagues from other countries and thus compete in the international labor market. Such important role of the foreign language in the professional and students' personal development leads to a high interest in the quality of didactic and methodical support for the foreign-language education process (Osadchaya, 2012).

At the same time, the researchers note that the theoretical foundation of a textbook, which is traditionally regarded as the main teaching support, is lagging behind the rapidly changing goals and objectives of the modern training process. Thus, the modernization of foreign language education, its intensification, active technological development and digitization often lead to the need for the university's instructors to adapt existing teaching materials or choose the ones among the most appropriate varieties (Levitan & Yugova, 2018). This, in turn, requires additional efforts and time in order to overcome the already numerous organizational and methodical difficulties related to the special features of the curricula, which focus on language skills development chiefly in the 1-2 courses, as well as with the complexity and polyfunctionality of the discipline «Foreign Language» (Smetanina & Matushak, 2012). The situation is worsened by the lack of uniformity in the requirements for a foreign language textbook for higher education. Domestic authors pay attention to its different aspects, for example, text materials selection (E.S. Davidenko, A.A. Mirolyubov, A.E. Uspenskaya, etc.), principles of creating electronic textbooks (V.P. Bespalko, A.M. Kabanov, O.A. Kravtsova, N.V. Levandrovskaya, D.N. Novikov, O.V. Osacheya, etc.), etc.

In this connection, it is essential in the theory of a university textbook on a foreign language to seek out new ways and possibilities for its improvement, to draw up common requirements for its construction, as well as criteria for assessing its quality. Obviously, the main characteristics of a modern foreign language textbook for non-linguistic universities should be its complexity, innovativeness, «flexibility» and dynamism, together representing the textbook ability to serve as an effective tool for learners to achieve personal, meta-subject and subject results, and adapt to the changing educational environment and the participants' needs in the educational process (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2011; Kryachkov, Yastrebova & Kravtsova, 2015; Voskresenskaya, 2017). (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2011; Kryachkov, Yastrebova & Kravtsova, 2015; Voskresenskaya, 2017).

Purpose and objectives of the study

Based on the above, the purpose of this article is to present a foreign language textbook for a non-linguistic university as a complex didactic-methodical support for the foreign language education process. Achieving this goal requires to solve the following problems: a) to clarify the concept of «didactic-methodical support of foreign-language education», as well as, based on the analysis of the previous scientific-methodical experience and taking into account the special features of foreign language training at a non-linguistic university, b) to identify the foreign language textbook parameters as a complex didactic-methodical support; c) to single out its components, their content and educational means to ensure the continuity and successful functioning of the textbook in the foreign language educational process.

Literature review

The main theoretical conceptions for the construction and evaluation of the quality of a foreign language textbook for higher education are formulated by such authors as: A.L. Berdichevsky, J.L. Vitlin, M.V. Ozerova, N.V. Popova, V.N. Trifanova, E.A. Uspenskaya, E.B. Yastrebova, J.S. Boston, N. Harwood, D. Newby, J.C. Richards, B. Tomlinson and others. Their review shows that the most studied issue is the principles of the university textbook construction. The most frequent are the principles of visibility and accessibility, implementation of competence approach, authenticity, continuity, adaptability, autonomy, information capability, functionality, modularity and interdisciplinary character (Titova, 2012; Kravtsova & Novikov, 2013; Uspenskaya & Pas'ko, 2013; Arskaya, 2018; Kashenkova, 2018).

With regard to the requirements and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of foreign language textbooks for non-linguistic universities, many authors note the importance of the tools for independent work in the textbook (Kravtsova & Novikov, 2013; Nefyodov, 2016; Davidenko, 2017); sufficiency, variability and adequacy of the exercises presented therein; the text material authenticity; availability of funds for control/self-control/mutual control (Smetanina & Matushak, 2012; Davidenko, 2017; Kravtsova & Yastrebova, 2019).

Here, it should be as well marked that researchers are looking mainly at a foreign language textbook for special purposes (M.S. Voskresenskaya, O.V. Osadchaya, H. Wisniewska, R.P. Milrud, L.V. Stupnikova, N.A. Yermiyakina, T.V. Kupriachick, K. Hyland, T. Dudley-Evans, M. St. John, T. Hutchinson, etc.). Its characteristics have been examined in some details in foreign and domestic methodical science. These are the modelling of future professional activities, the use of special methodical techniques, the inclusion of short term vocabularies, the saturation of complex grammatical constructions, the dominance of written speech activities, in particular reading to gain special knowledge from foreign sources, etc. (Gnutzmann,

2009; Boulton, Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2012; Milrud, 2013; Arzumanyan, 2019) Such a textbook is designed for a specific profession, taking into account the trainees' professional needs for them to take part in intercultural and interpersonal foreign language communication.

The authors note, however, that language training for special purposes requires learners to have a sufficient level of foreign language proficiency (threshold B1), while practical experience shows that most learners in the junior courses, where «Foreign Language» is studied according to the curricula, have pre-threshold level of language proficiency. Therefore, we believe that foreign language textbooks for special purposes are more appropriate at the advanced stage of professional and language training (master's degree). With regard to the baccalaureate level, we share the such scholars' opinion, as E.S. Davidenko, I.Y. Popova, J.J. Richer, J. Rinder, D.Tual, who believe that for foreign-language baccalaureate education in junior courses professionally-oriented textbooks should be used (Davidenko, 2017; Lopes & Cecilia, 2018; Popova, 2019). The essence of such textbooks is that they do not exclude the everyday language from their content. The content details and structure in the textbooks for professionally-oriented foreign language education are covered in the works of V. Ashutova, T.I. Berezikova, N.V. Bobrova, S.V. Gracheva, A.A.A. Dorofeev, S.V. Lebedev, A.P. Minyar-Belorugoev, E.A. Timofeev, E.V. Shalashova, A.G. Yamshchikova, etc.

F. Pingel's idea that such textbooks should be accompanied by instructions on their application and functionality for both instructors and learners seems interesting (Pingel, 2010). We believe that the distribution of such instructions to individual structure-content components in a textbook will make it much easier for every subject involved in the educational process to work with them and, in the future, will make it possible for the students to acquire the discipline individually, when from the traditional triad «teacher-textbook-pupil» (Yastrebova & Kryachkov, 2017) the teacher's functions are completely transferred to the textbook (Poppi, 2007).

In general, a textbook for professionally-oriented foreign language education enables students to move more painlessly from the stage of school language training to higher education. The purpose of this textbook is to lay the foundations for foreign language communication in the professional sphere, which are improved at subsequent educational levels and within the framework of self-education and self-development.

Methodology

The study is based on systemic, synergistic, competent, professionally-oriented and communicative-cognitive approaches using such methods as analysis of methodical, psychological and pedagogical works on the problem of a university foreign language textbook, content-analysis, synthesis and generalization.

Results

As the research result, the concept of didactic-methodical support of professionally-oriented foreign language education was clarified, the main parameters of a foreign language textbook for a non-linguistic university as a complex didactic-methodical support were formulated, its components and their content are defined, as well as a minimum of sufficient educational means to ensure its successful functioning.

Discussions

First of all, we will consider the essence of the concept «didactic-methodical support». Content-analysis of this concept and related terms «education-methodical support», «technological support» presented in methodical, psychological and pedagogical literature (N.A. Antonova, V.D. Vasilyeva, A.M. Novikov, P.I. Obrastsov, E.F. Smirnova, etc.) allowed us to conclude that the system of resources aimed at achieving educational goals and organized mainly in a textbook or in a teaching and learning materials complex is a mandatory component of any educational support. If the textbook is to be regarded as an integral didactic-methodical support, then it must cover all the components of modern foreign language educational system - approaches, objectives, content, methods, means, organizational forms, the educational process itself and result (Galskova, 2018). From this perspective, we view the textbook for professionally oriented foreign language education as *an integral didactic-methodical support, which system includes the means of the organization, implementation and management of the educational process in accordance with its guiding approaches and principles, based on a defined content, which functions in collaboration between the teacher and the learners (between the learners themselves) and aims at achieving the educational goals.*

Based on this definition, and taking into account the research on the problem of a university foreign language textbook, discussed earlier, and the implementation specifics of professionally-oriented foreign language education (professional orientation of a language training), it is logical to single out its next parameters.

1. *Complex, integrated character.* This parameter is necessary because a foreign language textbook at a non-linguistic university should be a synergistic educational model, because unlike a school textbook, it is not a part of the teaching and learning complex, but an integrated didactic-methodical support that is minimally sufficient to achieve the expected educational results.

2. *Stimulating, motivating nature.* The need to strengthen the stimulating and motivating functions of the foreign language textbook for students is related to the fact that in junior courses where the subject is taught

the learners often have a low level of motivation in language and profession. The reason for this is that they do not have a clear understanding of their future profession nature as well as the difficulties in moving to a new, more complicated level of foreign language training.

3. *Professional orientation*. In order to meet the aims and objectives of foreign language education in non-linguistic universities, the textbook must carry professionally-oriented content. Its essence is that not only does the textbook content acquire a professional orientation, but also the actualizing methods of work (including elements of project, research activities, etc.). Professional orientation also implies grading the organization of the textbook content, in which the mastery of discipline takes place in a gradual transition from communication on everyday topics with the inclusion of professional elements to real communication in the professional spheres.

4. *Bidirectional character*. This parameter emphasizes the importance and equality of the subjects of the educational process. Based on this, the textbook, as an integrated didactic-methodical support, is simultaneously and equally oriented towards instructors and students.

5. «*Adapted-adapting*» (Stepanova, 2019) *character*, which implies the presence in the textbook of not only variable subject content and educational means, but also means of methodical assistance to instructors and students. Their availability will help the former to adapt the textbook easily to the language training process context (to students' language proficiency levels, to their individual, personal and subject characteristics) and will contribute to their methodical competence. In the case of students, these means will facilitate their adaptation to independent textbook work so that then they can successfully engage in foreign language self-education.

This makes it possible to move on to the second task of the study, namely, to identify in the textbook as an integrated didactic-methodical support its structure components, such as *conceptual-objective, subject-procedural, instrumental and controlling-evaluating ones*, and to present their contents and educational means to ensure the successful functioning of the textbook in the foreign language educational process at a non-linguistic university.

The conceptual-objective component is presented mainly in the textbook introduction and introduces the subjects to the set of approaches and principles it embodies, as well as to the social demands in the sphere of higher education in non-linguistic universities. The latter is formulated as a global goal: the creation of professionally oriented foreign language communicative competence and thereby contribution to the learners' personal and professional self-realization. In this case pragmatic objectives can be visualized in

each individual textbook module. This visualization of the textbook framework and the objectives of the foreign language training will further provide the textbook with a stimulating and adapted-adapting character, as it introduces clarity, comprehensiveness and orientation into the educational process, enhancing its effectiveness.

The content of the *subject-procedural* component includes a fragment of social experience in cognitive, reproductive, creative and emotional-value activities, which is necessary for students to acquire. The content of the social experience components changes slightly, while respecting the parameter of the professional orientation of the textbook. In this case, the cognitive experience contains subject-linguistic and subject knowledge. The first group are: a) language knowledge and rules for using it to construct statements and get information with an everyday, sociocultural and professional orientation; b) knowledge of terminology and the most typical linguistic phenomena; b) knowledge of a linguistic country-specific nature. These are essential for achieving mutual understanding in a professional, interpersonal and intercultural communication. The second group consists of subject knowledge about the profession, its specific features and importance in the world labor market, professional culture, both in the home country and in the countries of the language being studied.

Both knowledge groups are offered to learners in texts, which, in order to enhance the textbook adapted-adapting character, are divided into three types: *educational professionally-oriented*, *professionally-oriented* and *professional*. The texts are characterized by the degree of methodical organization and the level of their content professional orientation. Thus, the educational professionally-oriented text is a methodical authentic text with a significant proportion of simplification and reduction, belonging to the everyday and sociocultural communication spheres, which is indirectly linked to the learners' future profession. A professionally-oriented text is an authentic text related to the sociocultural and vocational communication spheres, and a professional text is an original text of scientific and popular science styles reflecting the specifics of the profession being studied. The existence of these three types of texts makes it already possible at the junior stages of higher foreign language education to acquaint students with the characteristics of their future profession, and also helps to fill the gaps in school language training if necessary. This has a positive effect on the textbook motivating character as well, because there is no sharp immersion in the professional language, which ensures continuity between foreign language education in general and higher education schools.

Reproductive experience consists of speech habits, which are the students' learning methods of solving reproductive communicative tasks in the everyday, sociocultural and professional spheres. Speech skills that generate creative experience are divided into: a) reading and understanding texts of sociocultural,

professionally-oriented and professional content; b) writing and transmission of professionally oriented and other types of information and intensions in accordance with the aims and purposes of communication; c) listening comprehension in the course of direct and indirect everyday and professionally-oriented communication, and d) speaking in the form of a monologue or dialogue on everyday sociocultural and professionally-oriented topics.

One cannot exclude from the content of the subject-procedural component universal learning actions, since the experience shows that undergraduate junior students often have a low level of their language proficiency. Finally, the experience of emotional value relations is formed by values, emotions and feelings generated by the acquisition of the content of professionally oriented foreign language education.

The next component, *the instrumental one*, is represented by the means that ensure the direct functioning of the textbook as a didactic-methodical support during the instructor and students' interactions. Therefore, this structural component has the greatest synergic ability, openness and adaptability, enabling it at once to implement several textbook parameters - stimulating, professionally oriented, adaptive and bi-directional character. The content of the component contains the following educational means:

- a) means of organizing and managing the process of professionally-oriented foreign language education, means of ensuring interaction between instructors and students as well as between students, represented by such educational technologies: cooperative learning, case-study, project, information-communication, etc.;
- b) means for foreign language self-education – exercises and assignments for independent work;
- c) means of methodic assistance for instructors and learners - memos, instructions, manuals, algorithms, etc.

We pay special attention to the fact that a textbook elementary educational unit is *the modified polymodal exercise*, which can be included in any educational technology thus allowing for additional adapted-adapting textbook capabilities. It is *a specially organized exercise on the basis of educational professionally-oriented, professionally-oriented and professional texts, aiming at developing / improving speech habits and developing speech skills through the implementation of various combinations of receptive, reproductive and productive actions to solve a professionally oriented speech-thinking task in a problem situation* (Kirillovykh, 2020). This exercise creates the conditions for the simultaneous formation, improvement of habits or development of skills in all types of speech activities (reading, speaking, listening comprehension and writing) and may change the sequence of inclusion of the latter according to the stage

of training in professionally oriented foreign language communication and the level of students' learning proficiency. By actualization of all types of speech activities and reconfiguring them, a modified polymodal exercise is the optimal means to achieve the expected results in the situation with limited number of foreign language classes, which we have at a non-linguistic university.

The *controlling-evaluating* component of the textbook is presented primarily by the criteria for assessing the levels of formation of target competence, which are taken into account in the development of the instructor's assessment fund and self-monitoring and self-evaluation tools for learners. The assessment fund consists of test packages with measuring materials. These include scales for evaluating the products of the students' professionally-oriented foreign language activities, tests, testing and monitoring lists. Self-assessment scales, tests, key assignments, portfolio, etc. are the tools for self-monitoring and self-assessment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we underline once again that the current conditions for the realization of foreign language education in non-linguistic higher education require a fresh look at the theory of construction and the definition of the main functions of the textbook. The university textbook must now act as a complex didactic-methodical support for the foreign language educational process, be equivalently aimed at instructors and students have a wide range of adaptation possibilities, ensure continuity between the different levels of language training and finally act as a catalyst for personal and professional self-realization of learners.

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