

Textbook: Focus on Students' National Identity

Modeling the World Picture within Education English Language Textbook Discourse

Svetlana V. Michugina* (a), Oksana G. Lukoshus (b)

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

(b) *Moscow City University, 129226, Moscow (Russia), 4-1, 2nd Selskokhoziastvenny Proezd,*
michuginasv@mgpu.ru

Abstract

This article aims at contributing to the discussion regarding the conceptual approach of modeling the world picture within education textbook discourse taking English language teaching as an example. The argument is that education discourse, where a textbook discourse is even more important, should be linked and possible to be referred to the modern present-to-day picture of the world. A speaker, in our case an English language learner, is to be viewed as a representative of both his/her individual and national construal of the globe. But for a few decades, total globalization in all social spheres including education has been transferring national into global issues with the point of urgent necessity to build universal nationless attitude towards facts from reality. In this respect, it comes across as being extremely essential to preserve all the national values and even to reconstruct those which may have been lost. Consequently, a textbook discourse should, first and above all, megaphone a learner's national world picture in comparison to the one of others with existent diversity and specificity, where, nevertheless, the national world picture is to predominate. The paper analyses the student's English language textbook content for different grades to examine the correlation of the English language world picture and the one of the Russian language.

Keywords: globalization; education textbook discourse; a learner's national world picture.

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Introduction

* Corresponding author. E-mail: michuginasv@mgpu.ru

Living in the modern world we have to face all the social transformations which do not only touch as it may seem at first but are introduced to change the whole system of values and moral principles we are used to in everyday life. One of such vital social value modifications is globalization, which has already conquered education as an important human domain where the most essential concepts for building an individual as well as collective world picture are emerged and developed, and, finally, transformed into all other social spheres of an individual (Duncan, 2010; Spring, 2015; Wu and Han, 2010). Speaking about English language teaching results we may easily come to the reason why English has become global as foreign language. Here, in Russia we are living under constant linguistic influence of English as the studied language. Moreover, we also face the cultural impact which is impossible to separate from the language itself. In such circumstances educational discourse has undergone the transformation from foreign language learning context to concept forming as well as the national world picture building instrument.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The research purpose is to examine a student's English language textbook content to single out the components meant to reconstruct the national world picture, so to make a decent attempt to view which of the national world picture is taken as the conceptual basis for English language teaching. To have more objective results the authors took several textbooks of different levels of education and year editions as well as different publishing houses. However, the illustrated textbooks are of the same authors' group, which is supposed to prove the idea that it is a publishing policy more than the authors' initiative. Thereby, in the research there were used a student's textbook 'English' by I. N. Vereshchagina, K. A. Bondarenko and T. A. Pritykina for the second grade of 2005's and 2013's editions and 'English' by Olga V. Afanasyeva and Irina V. Mikheeva for the eighth grade of 2004's and 2018's editions. Besides, there is also an analysis of a student's book 'Spotlight' by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, al eds. for the second grade of 2008's and 2013's editions and those of 2009's and 2020's for the ninth grade. Taking teaching English and correspondently using an English textbook discourse we are going to illustrate the correlation of the English language world picture and the one of the Russian language as the textbooks mentioned above are used for Russian state schools.

Literature review

We start with the discussion of the picture of the world which is, objectively and subjectively, a person's representation of the real world, or the world they find real, due to their cognitive structures within their construal of reality in their mental space. This world modeling is a never-ending process which happens every day in any circumstances a person has to function in. What is more important, a personal individual

world picture has to fit in the global world picture with its possible cultural and language diversity.

The problem of modeling the world picture is not new. Due to Wilhelm von Humboldt and Leo Weisgerber's understanding the way a speaker correlates language and the reality representation in their mental space, there are different interpretations of the term itself and linguistic units which are used to illustrate differences in culture through linguistic world picture (Ivanova, 2019; Titova, 2016; Michugina, 2003 and others). Dealing with educational discourse we are also supposed to work with some conceptual system due to which a speaker perceives, structures, and interprets information from the external world. Thus, a textbook as a type of educational discourse is meant to represent some particular picture of the world. From our point, it must be a speaker's national picture, not any other, no matter what language teaching we are dealing with.

Thus, taking a Russian learner of the English language Russian national world picture is supposed to be built as the result of perceiving and acquiring the concepts from a textbook discourse. But the result is usually quite the opposite as the English language today is making impact on the Russian language. It is no longer a secret that the media are increasing the flow of new Anglicisms, redirecting public consciousness to alien speech and thinking patterns, replacing our traditional Russian values with others. For several years, the scientists have been discussing the issue of the massive impact of the English language on Russian and Russian-speaking communication (e.g. unnecessary borrowings, discursive code mixing, semantic distortions of native vocabulary (Ter-Minasova, 2016; Yazykova, 2017 and others)). As M. A. Krongauz highlights, we live in the conditions of broadcasting a foreign culture, and the Russian language is on the verge of a nervous breakdown (Krongauz, 2017). This process might lead to the gradual destruction of the traditional Russian-speaking linguocultural environment and national identity. The key role of the national language for national identity and cultural self-affirmation was recognized by the classics of linguistic science, philosophers and educators, such as W. von Humboldt, J. Herder, M. Heidegger and others.

We cannot fail to realize that the goal of globalization is to bring the world to a single Anglo-Saxon standard, that is, to unify the way of life, needs, interests and aesthetic ideals, traditional values and languages. National education systems, traditions and national languages are becoming the target of globalization, since they ensure national identity formation and preservation.

The native language weakening leads to unpredictable social consequences. According to some scholars, due to the loss of their native language, a significant part of the ethnic group is marginalized. A person without a native language loses the 'ethnic core', which leads to people feeling useless and abandoned.

Moreover, as S. V. Michugina points out the constant impact of any information, e.g. negative video and audio, on a child negatively affects cognitive development. Various experiments with preschool children prove that after being presented with violent scenes, they produce similar actions, completely unaware that this is bad and unacceptable (Michugina, 2018). The same is applied to building a particular world picture and national identity formation.

It seems obvious that today new didactic methods and practices of EFLT are required as well as new approaches to English language textbooks. It is important to develop people of many talents who are fluent in foreign language and ready to protect national interests, strengthen the Russian-speaking communicative space and their own identity. To do this, they must be not only fluent in English, but also be able to speak positively and convincingly about their own country.

Methodology

For performing the research there were used methods of content and cognitive analysis together with classifying and statistic methods. The content analysis method combined with cognitive analysis was used to examine and pick out the tasks which contain any concept with a cultural constituent or at least with a reference to some cultural constituent of another concept. The classifying and statistic methods were applied to work out the calculation results as for the percentage of the task stock containing any national culture concepts and the portion of the tasks with Russian culture content in them.

Results

Due to the chronological appearance the first set of student books is 'English' for the second (by I. N. Vereshchagina, K. A. Bondarenko and T. A. Pritykina) and eighth (by Olga V. Afanasyeva and Irina V. Mikheeva) grade in different years' editions.

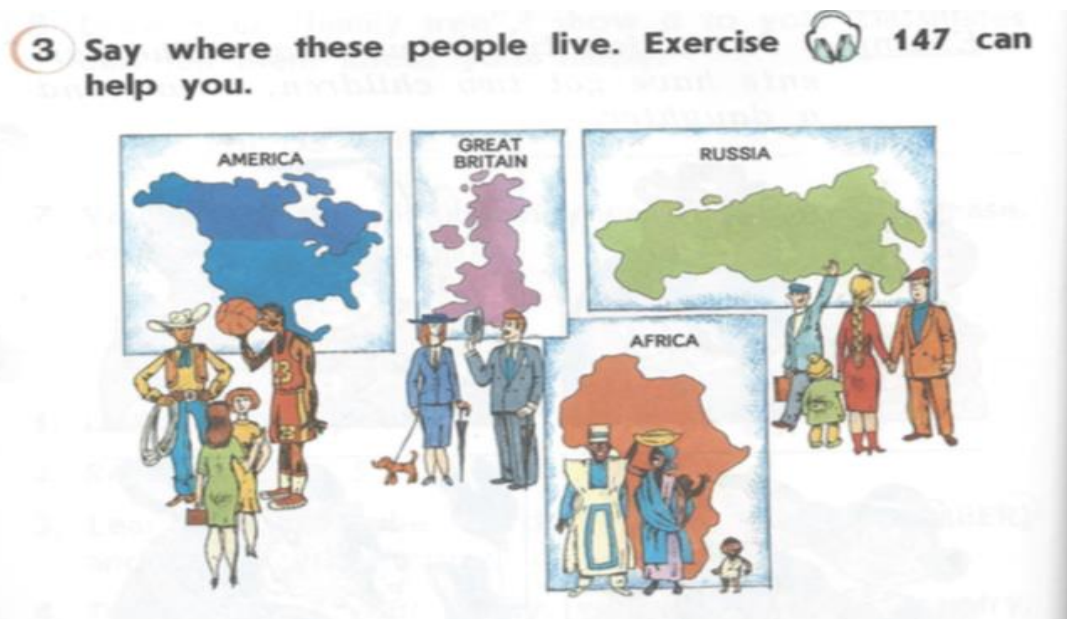
The second-grade textbook of 2005's edition by I. N. Vereshchagina, K. A. Bondarenko and T. A. Pritykina is designed to have the sections to follow: Let Us Learn (4 tasks), Let Us Read and Learn (5 tasks), Let Us Talk (2 tasks), Let Us Write (2 tasks), Puzzle Time (1 task). The 2013's edition features the same lesson structure but for the number of tasks assigned, the extra section that appeared is Homework. Since the unit structure is the same, it is relevant to focus on the assignment stock in a single unit. The results in Table 1 allow to conclude that the 2005's edition contains no Russian-culture referred tasks, while the 2013's edition saw a 14% increase (see Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of task stock conveying national culture concepts

Student's book	Year edition	Grade	Unit no., pages	Number of tasks, 100%	National culture concept content tasks, %	Russian culture concept content tasks, %
'English' by I. N. Vereshchagina, K. A. Bondarenko and T. A. Pritykina	2005	2	16, pp. 42-46	14	7%	0%
'English' by I. N. Vereshchagina, K. A. Bondarenko and T. A. Pritykina	2013	2	50, pp. 17-22	14	28%	14%


What stands out in the Table is that the cultural concepts contained in the editions are mostly of Anglo-Saxon focus, they are basic due to the conceptual level of the second-grade students and toponyms by their linguistic nature (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Task sample conveying national culture concept content



As it was clear from the results mentioned in Table 1 there is a progressive Russian concept expansion in the general concept content stock, but they are again limited as to some small context usage where they are used as toponyms (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Task sample conveying Russian culture concept content



Let Us Read

6 Learn to read these words and sentences: first read them to yourself, then aloud as quickly as you can.

[1] live, I live, he lives. — Where do you live? — I live in Russia. I live in Moscow. — Where does his uncle live? — He lives in America. — Does her husband live in Africa? — No, he doesn't. He lives in Great Britain.

[i:] street, a street — streets, what street. — What street do you live in? — I live in Pushkin Street. — What street does your cousin live in? — He lives in Lomonosov Street.

The eighth-grade textbooks of 2004's and 2018's editions are logically structured, and each unit has the same framework as Revision, Reading for Country Studies, Reading for Information, New Language (Grammar section, Vocabulary section), Listening Comprehension, Reading for Discussion, Speaking, Miscellaneous, Project Work. Such a structure made it possible to skip a detailed analysis of all the units and represent the results of thorough comparison of the first unit only in each edition. Scrutinizing all type tasks in Unit 1 in the 2004's edition it is eventual that of the 100% assignment stock only 33% may be interpreted as the one, which have some reference to cultural concepts. Even much lower percent, that is 7%, is represented by assignments having Russian culture concepts. The percentage itself is uncritically very low and makes it almost impossible to build the true national world picture for those learners who study English using this student book.

Moreover, of those 33% of tasks, which do contain cultural concepts or their constituents, the dominant national world picture is the Anglo-Saxon one where American and UK's world pictures prevail, that is 26% of the total number of assignments.

The 2004's and 2018's edition comparative study allows to face no principal difference of the national culture concept content task percentage distribution in 2018's 'English' edition by Olga V. Afanasyeva and Irina V. Mikheeva. We can only see the increase of 1% for the tasks containing some of the Russian culture concepts. The results are registered in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of task stock conveying national culture concepts

Student's book	Year edition	Grade	Unit no., pages	Number of tasks, 100%	National culture concept content tasks, %	Russian culture concept content tasks, %
'English' by Olga V. Afanasyeva and Irina V. Mikheeva	2004	8	1, pp. 3-42	73	33%	7%
'English' by Olga V. Afanasyeva and Irina V. Mikheeva	2018	8	1, pp. 3-44	74	32%	8%

With a deeper look at the content of the tasks which convey the national culture concepts it is essential to underline the fact that in most cases such concepts are embodied within one or two notions mentioned in a task. It may be a sentence containing a geographical name, mostly toponyms to be exact (see Fig. 3).

Figure 3. Task sample conveying geographical names

UNIT 1

11 **A. Read the examples to remember how to form the *subjunctive mood*.**

<p>I If only it <u>were</u> winter now! If only we <u>could visit</u> Great Britain! If only they <u>had</u> a pet!</p>
<p>II If it <u>were</u> summer, there <u>would be</u> a lot of flowers in the country. If I <u>could find</u> John's address, I <u>should/would fax</u> it to you. If he <u>began</u> taking photos, he <u>would make</u> a wonderful photographer. If I <u>were asked</u> about it, I <u>shouldn't/wouldn't answer</u>.</p>
<p>III I wish it <u>were</u> warm today. I wish we <u>could go</u> there at once. We wish we <u>had</u> a cottage in the country. I wish she <u>knew</u> the truth.</p>

Summarizing all the section tasks it is possible to find a better variety of cultural concepts as they may correlate with some arts notions, literary characters, and sights. The only task, which has a high potential for building the Russian world picture is speaking assignment 69 on page 42. However, the text itself is given just as an example to follow, and not a single concept is realized in any learners' activities (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Assignment 69 on page 42 from ‘English’ for the eighth grade by Olga V. Afanasyeva and Irina V. Mikheeva

69 Choose any famous person or someone you know well and speak of his or her professional career.

EXAMPLE:

Mikhail Vasilevich Lomonosov was born in 1711 near Archangelsk in the north of Russia. When a boy he didn't go to school as there were no school where he lived. Instead he studied Russian grammar and arithmetic on his own while helping fishermen at sea. In 1730 young Mikhail went to Moscow to get a regular education. In 1731 he became an academy student. He made wonderful progress and in 1731 won a scholarship to University of Marburg, Germany. There he worked in the field of sciences and also wrote lyric poetry. In 1745 he returned to Saint Petersburg and was appointed professor of chemistry at the Academy of Sciences. Working there he organized a laboratory and made a lot of discoveries in chemistry and physics. He is also known as a reformer of the Russian language and a contributor to Russian literature. In 1757 he became a councillor of Moscow University which he had helped to found.

The next set of student books to analyze is ‘Spotlight’ by Virginia Evans, al eds. for the second and ninth grades in different years’ editions. The analysis included examination of all the tasks within one unit at random as the whole textbook structure is of the same architecture.

The second-grade textbooks of 2008’s and 2013’s editions are logically designed. Each module contains 4 lessons, Portfolio and Fun at School sections. The tasks in each module aim at developing Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking skills. The results of the analysis are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage of task stock conveying national culture concepts

Student’s book	Year edition	Grade	Module no., pages	Number of tasks, 100%	National culture concept content tasks, %	Russian culture concept content tasks, %
‘Spotlight’ by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, Olga Podolyako and Julia Vaulina	2008	2	5, pp. 98-115	22	4,5%	0 %
‘Spotlight’ by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, Nadezhda Bykova and Marina Pospelova	2013	2	5, pp. 98-115	22	4,5%	0 %

As the table shows the editions feature only one national culture concept content task, which is presented at the end of each module under the title ‘Spotlight on the UK’ (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Task samples conveying national culture concept content



It is relevant to highlight that the textbooks do not contain any description of the task itself – it remains unclear what learners should do with the short text on Cornwall – whether to read it or study any other information.

However, unlike the first set of textbooks analyzed, ‘Spotlight’ does contain Russian culture concept tasks, though they are included not in the Module itself, but are presented at the end of the book under ‘Spotlight on Russia’ title (see Fig. 5).

Figure 5. Russian culture concept content tasks



As in the case of ‘Spotlight on the UK’ it remains not clear what kind of tasks learners are expected to perform with the Russian culture information.

The ninth grade ‘Spotlight’ by Virginia Evans, al eds., of both the year editions has the same structure based on language competences combined with different linguistic aspects. There are six sections, they are Reading and Vocabulary, Listening and Speaking, Grammar in Use, Vocabulary and Speaking, written Skills, English in Use, and two additional ones, Culture Corner and Across the Curriculum. The examination results of the two editions are clear to see the growth of national culture concept task percentage up to 65 percent maximum and sill a very low percentage of Russian culture referred tasks (see Table 4).

Table 4. Percentage of task stock conveying national culture concepts

Student’s book	Year edition	Grade	Module no., pages	Number of tasks, 100%	National culture concept content tasks, %	Russian culture concept content tasks, %
‘Spotlight’ by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, Olga Podolyako and Julia Vaulina	2009	9	1, pp. 1-24	63	62%	6%
‘Spotlight’ by Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, Olga Podolyako and Julia Vaulina	2020	9	1, pp. 1-24	63	65%	8%

With a step deeper into linguistic units, which are intended to build the world picture, it is appropriate to mention a circle of personal names used in all the four ‘Spotlight’ student books, but again they are of Anglo-Saxon origin, only with some insertions of Russian ones. Besides, there is a multicultural variety of place names where Russian sights are also presented but not many. Linguistically most concepts are realized in the form of toponyms.

Discussions

This paper has investigated the problem of modeling the world picture within education textbook discourse taking English language teaching as an example. Any educational discourse especially a textbook one is a potential instrument for building a learner’s world picture with all the peculiarities of their national identity

and values. But with the example of textbook discourse from the two sets of student books widely used in Russian comprehensive schools we have confirmed the totally opposite situation. In all the four student books of different year editions the Russian world picture is hardly represented as the dominant one. Moreover, in 2005's 'English' for the second grade by I. N. Vereshchagina, K. A. Bondarenko and T. A. Pritykina the percentage of cultural concept content is very low (7%), and the percentage of the one of the Russian culture is equal to zero. The 'Spotlight' set widely illustrates a multicultural approach to education thus contradicting again the idea of building a national world picture, the Russian national world picture, to be exact.

Conclusion

Summing up the research data, the two sets of textbooks analyzed pay a modest attention to Russian culture, which contradicts a modern intercultural approach to teaching foreign languages. As E. G. Tareva underlines 'the selection, organization of the content of the textbook (teaching material), the sequence of educational activities must comply with the principles of intercultural approach to education. In the process of a textbook design these principles dictate the need to take into account the peculiarities of interaction of subjects (different cultures), expressed by means of a language. Such textbooks provide the focus on the accumulation of knowledge about the target language country's culture and the development of strategies that give the opportunity to understand the native and foreign cultures on the basis of their comparison. This will form a linguistic system of cognitive, emotional, evaluative, and behavioral attitudes to other cultures, i.e. to the universe, whose image is not only national but also global and multicultural' (Tareva 2017, p. 254). The English language textbook analysis shows that the student books do not respond to modern social challenges as they fail to contribute to solving the acute problem of preserving the Russian-speaking mentality.

Education authorities in Russia are to realize the necessity to recover Russian heritage and create relevant education textbook discourse maintaining Russian unique way of thinking about multiculturalism, where Russian diversity and specificity stands harmoniously among the myriad versions of world curriculum. It should not blindly imitate the Anglo-Saxon mode of teaching practice but represent cultural content possible to refer to all the Russian culture riches. This does not at all mean creating opposition between Russia and the globe, but rather stating equality by the language studied. As a step toward the direction, an understanding of modeling cultural concept content in educational textbook discourse with a choice of language that can narrate the culture in its own authentic and unique way (Beech & Artopoulos, 2015; Wu & Han, 2010; Arce-Trigattia & Anderson, 2018).

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