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Course in the "Fundamentals of the Russian Language History" in the System of Philological Training of Primary School Teachers

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Abstract

The relevance of the study stems from the drawbacks in the state program in the Russian language within the system of training primary school teachers which does not provide for learning the history of the Russian language. Meanwhile, lots of linguistic phenomena studied at primary school may be explained if teachers and children simply know the history of the language, and not just learn meaningless data by heart.

In this regard, the article aims at grounding the necessity of not only synchronic but also a diachronic study of the Russian language by future primary school teachers.

The leading method of the research on this issue is the experiment being carried out at the faculty of primary education of Moscow State Pedagogical University. The authors have worked out the course "Fundamentals of the history of the Russian language". The course has been introduced in the section of the program named "elective courses". In total, about 150 students have participated in mastering the course over the two years. In this article, the authors also prove the necessity of creating a special teaching aid for students of the faculty of primary education.

The technology developed by the authors promotes better training for the modern teacher of the primary school. The authors believe that the main result of the course is training of a mindful teacher-researcher, broadening of the mind. The teacher who can state the problematic issue and the teacher who is trying to penetrate deep into the essence of the phenomenon should be prepared for modern schools. The teacher should be able to deliver knowledge to students.

Keywords: Russian language history, historical alternations, orthogram, primary school, history of the language.

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Introduction

At the faculty of elementary education at Moscow State Pedagogical University, a lot of attention is traditionally paid to the philological training of future primary school teachers.

The relevance of the study stems from the drawbacks in the state program in the Russian language within the system of training primary school teachers, which does not provide for learning the history of the Russian language. Meanwhile, teachers with the native language other than Russian always have to confront linguistic phenomena which cannot be explained relying only on the synchrony facts (Karavashkina, 2018).

Everything that cannot be explained at the current level is traditionally regarded by the school curriculum as "historical alternations". While this might be the truth, those alternations have own reasoning. That is the justification for the introduction of the elective course "Fundamentals of the history of the Russian language" into the philological training program of primary school teachers at the faculty of elementary education at Moscow State Pedagogical University.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The study aims at grounding the necessity of not only synchronic but also a diachronic study of the Russian language by future primary school teachers through the introduction of the elective course "Fundamentals of the history of the Russian language" into the philological training program of primary school teachers at the faculty of elementary education at Moscow State Pedagogical University. The course is designed to give a clear view of the phenomena of modern phonetics, lexicology, phraseology, and grammar (morphology and syntax) of the Russian language. These phenomena can be explained only with a diachronic approach to the Russian language studies. The course pieces together students' observations on the facts of the history of the Russian language which were obtained during the studies of the previous courses on linguistics. This course also complements students' linguistic education and broadens their minds. Besides, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that lots of orthograms being taught in primary school can be explained through this kind of new knowledge.

Literature review

Analysis of the existing contemporary scientific and educational literature shows that it is created only for training philologists at universities. For instance, the textbooks recommended nowadays by the state standards (Ivanov, 1990; Khaburgaev, 1986) and exercise books (Ivanitskaya, Kandaurova, Litvina, &

Stetsenko, 1986), set to guide studying the old Slavonic language (2 semesters) and historical grammar of the Russian language (2 semesters). Meanwhile, the main purpose of this training is mainly the knowledge of the basics of grammatical laws of the language evolution and the reading skills, abilities to understand and analyze ancient texts. Compelling and thought-provoking books by Istrin (1988) "1100 years of Slavic alphabet" or by Kolesov (1982) "History of Russian language in short stories" cannot be used as a teaching aid. It should be noted that in the meantime, there are no textbooks or any education literature on the history of the native (Russian) language for students of non-philological majors. It is also necessary to point to the fact that the course "Fundamentals of the history of the Russian language" completes the philological training of the future primary school teacher and, therefore, requires revising basic theoretical concepts, for example, described in the book by Reformatskiy (1996). It also requires considering the peculiarities of future work, for instance, the knowledge of the elements of the Russian paleography (Schepkin, 1999).

Methodology

For this research, we have used the following research methods. First, the theoretical methods were employed. We analyzed the training program of the modern Russian language for students of the faculty of primary education and marked out the sections which require historical comments. Besides, all these sections have been correlated with the school curriculum. We also focused on the facts in the history of the language which are supposed to be learnt by heart by children at modern schools. Second, practical methods were used. We carried out a survey (questionnaire and quiz for students) to find out the level of interest in particular facts in the history of the language and why some facts in the modern language are to be memorized without explanation. Also, there were questions and situations where students had to explain and analyze some linguistic phenomena, for example, the phenomenon of "the fluent vowel". Students were also asked if they faced the situation (during their school practice) when school children asked them to explain some orthograms which are supposed to be learnt by heart.

Having analyzed the research literature, we put forward a hypothesis – knowing the basics in the history of the Russian language not only broadens the minds of students but also helps them in the future teaching of the native language in the primary school.

The sample comprised students from the faculty of primary education of Moscow State Pedagogical University who chose the elective course "basics of the history of the Russian language". The experiment was carried out for 2 years.

At the ascertaining stage of the experiment, students, under the supervision of the teacher, marked out the set of phenomena which they could not explain, relying only on the knowledge of the modern Russian language.

During the forming experiment, students studied the basic issues of the historical phonetics, morphology, and syntax during one semester. Students noted phenomena which they could explain in the modern language relying on this knowledge. For example, learning the ancient reduced vowels "Ъ" and "Ь", they learnt to differentiate strong and weak positions of those sounds in the Old Russian language and could make conclusions regarding the existence of alternations in the modern language, for example, the alternation of the vowel "О" with the nil of the sound (лоб//лба) or the vowel "Е" with the nil of the sound (лев//льва).

During the control stage of the experiment, students were asked to do the test in the Russian language. While analyzing this test they had to explain lots of orthograms relying on the knowledge of the history of the Russian language. Besides, students took a different look at the material which they would have to teach and also offered a few noticeable projects which can be carried out with the pupils of the primary school. For example, the project devoted to the history of the Russian alphabet or names of domestic animals. In addition, we would like to note that students have become more confident in using an etymological dictionary (Shansky, Ivanov, & Shanskaya, 1961) and other reference literature (Encyclopedic dictionary of a young philologist, 1984).

Results

Designing the training program, we concluded that it is essential to work out a unique teaching guide, based on the concept of the entire course. The concept of the course is as follows: all students must not only gain knowledge in the history of the Russian language at every class they have but also they must be capable of explaining an orthogram which is often studied at elementary schools or less frequently at secondary schools. We see the future textbook on this course as a modern workbook with good reference materials. Working with such a study guide, students would be capable of correlating facts, trying to explain this or that linguistic phenomenon and they would be capable of recording their conclusions. Also, we plan to add some texts in the Old Russian language to the future textbooks. These texts should be readable and have good content for modern youth and also relate to different centuries so that learners could imagine the language which was spoken by Alexander Nevskiy or Ivan the Terrible.

In the future, we plan to create electronic assistance for this course where different scenes from the feature films connected with historical figures can be put. The aim is to make students pay their attention to the way how the film-makers try to age their characters' speech.

Discussions

There is no doubt that what indeed makes this course effective is that it is taught to senior students and it completes the philological training of primary school teachers.

It is worthwhile noting that there are a number of limitations and difficulties. First, the place for this course was found only within the "optional courses" of the curriculum which means that it cannot be taught to all students. Second, there are no textbooks designed for students of the faculty of elementary education (the textbook which is geared to span academic hours regulated by the academic curriculum). Finally, there is still a question whether this course is expedient. The very benefit and the use of this knowledge for the primary school teachers are being doubted.

Conclusion

We believe that the main result of the study and of the course should be training of a mindful teacher-researcher and broadening of the mind. The teacher should be able to state the problematic issue and the teacher who can penetrate deep into the essence of the phenomenon and deliver this knowledge to students.

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