A modern foreign language textbook: personality development content and target users

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Abstract

The anthropological paradigm of modern education makes it necessary to update methods, approaches and teaching tools. The conceptual foundations of the content, functional and structural construction of the textbook as a leading means of teaching foreign language communication should be based on a personality-oriented approach, which is focused on the student's personality, his/her real life and professional needs, motives, and educational goals. The article presents the parameters of a foreign language textbook in terms of the structure that implements the personal-development content of language education by taking into account a specific addressee - student. The authors describe the parameters related to the specificity of the subject "Foreign language". The personal-development content of language education has to be presented in the textbook in the form of a certain methodological system implemented at the level of presentation of specific educational material and its subsequent activation by students. The study examines the conditions under which the textbook will meet the challenges of modern foreign language education. It, in turn, will provide a diverse range of effects on the student's personality and form strategies for independent learning in the process of implementing language education through life.

Key words: foreign language textbook; personality-oriented content; addressability.

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Introduction

The structural and substantial contexts of language education are traditionally formed by a wide variety of textbooks. The issue of a foreign language (FL) textbook has been of interest to both domestic and foreign researchers for many decades.

FL textbooks were studied in terms of the methodological training of a FL teacher (Sadomova 1993, Stepanova 2020), within the FL (Bim 1977, Galskova 2007, Vitlin, 2007, Pavlova 2011a,b etc.) and RFL (Vyatutnev 1983, Shchukin 2018, Zallali, 2017, etc.) teaching systems. The textbook content was analyzed from the perspective of language and speaking skills development (Nefedov 2016). The issue of electronic textbooks was studied in (Sadomova 1998, Kabanov & Yusupova, 2017, etc.). Special attention was paid to professionally-oriented (Pavlova 2011a, Yastrebova & Kravtsova 2019, Patrikeeva 2019, Tareva & Tarev 2014 etc.) and culturally-oriented university textbooks (Purgin, Purgina 2015, Tareva 2017, Stolyarova 2009, Tareva, Shchepilova & Tarev, 2017, etc.). The issue of expert textbook reviews was dealt in (Yakushev 2014a, A.S. Karamnov 2015, etc.). All these studies help to identify the main characteristics of the FL textbook:

− holistic (systemic and conceptual) presentation of content (Yakushev 2014b);
− focusing on coordinating teacher-student activities, learning management (Yakushev 2014 b);
− acquisition of knowledge and development of required skills and abilities, independent creative activities (Yakushev 2014a);
− cultural content (Tarev 2010, Tareva 2009, Pavlova 2011b).

Purpose and objectives of the study

However, despite the numerous FL textbook writing theories, there are no concepts of textbook content, functions and structure from the perspective of intercultural communication training (Tareva 2009) as the main goal of FL teaching and personality development content of continuous language education.

Tareva (2009) holds that these foundations are modern approaches to language education, including the personality-oriented approach as a key one. It focuses on student's personality, life and / or professional needs, motives, and development programs. Within this approach, the FL textbook should be designed in its relationship with student's personality development, internal states, and individual programs of educational and/or professional activities rather than in terms of the logical consistency of its content. The textbook should provide opportunities for individual self-development of students, include possible

individually-determined knowledge acquisition options, develop intercultural skills and abilities (Tareva 2009).

It is necessary to identify key parameters for analyzing FL textbooks in terms of personality-development content of continuous language education.

Literature review

These parameters can be divided into two large groups: (a) the structure of a textbook focusing on the personality-development content of language education, and (b) arrangement of the personality-development content of language education. Features of the FL course are a separate group of the parameters.

The structural parameter is focused on the personality-development content of language education. In this context, the key parameter is targets of the textbook content which involve (a) general orientation towards the FL teaching goal in its relationship with the level of education and requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard (the assessment criterion is integrity of all textbook elements focusing on goal achievement, and (b) personal goal-setting (the assessment criterion is an opportunity for the student to independently determine final and intermediate goals and objectives of FL learning (e.g., descriptors that determine general requirements to the learning results).

The personality orientation parameter is focused on the personal development of students (Kraevsky & Khutorskoy 2007). The criteria for assessing the personality development content are (a) individual and age characteristics, needs and motives; (b) intellectual abilities and training levels; (c) personal significance of the material for students.

It is crucial to have an opportunity to choose an individual educational path, since students "may have personal points of view on the content being studied" (Kraevsky, Khutorskoy, p. 235) (a foreign language). The assessment criteria are (a) the redundancy of content (within the limited federal state educational standards) to build own development paths, and (b) the availability of tools for learning methods of independent creative, cognitive and organizational activities (Kraevskiy & Khutorskoy 2007) (e.g., symbolic means and models that are used to identify, process and fold information required).

The next parameter is learning productivity whose key target is student's personal educational increment, which involves the internal and external products of the learning process (Kraevsky & Khutorskoy 2007). The assessment criteria are (a) educational situations in which students perform actions required, are

involved in creative activities, and make their own decisions; (b) opportunities for the educational reflection in order to understand, monitor and evaluate the personality-development content of language education by students (e.g., assessment tables for self-assessment); (c) content operability which involves the efficient independent work with the material proposed, the availability and transparency of the guidelines that manage their actions (a system of references and tips in the form of appendices that are required to develop the learning competence, a list of sources that give students a new horizon).

The second group of the parameters includes the personality-development content of a FL textbook. The key parameters of this group are consistency and complexity: the personality-development content of language education should be presented as a methodological system implemented in the educational material and its subsequent activation (a system of exercises), which will act as assessment criteria. For example, the module presentation of content individualizes the learning process, contributes to the self-training activities, regulate the learning pace, and helps to select and arrange the material.

The next parameter is continuity of the personality-development content implemented in the FL textbook (a) at a certain level of education and (b) between the levels of education. When evaluating the textbook by this parameter, it is necessary to take into account that each subsequent content element should be consistent with the previous one and rely on it, thus ensuring the repeatability of the material. It will create a diverse range of impacts on the student's personality and strategies for the independent development outside the target learning context, i.e. in the language learning process throughout life.

In the context of these parameters, it is important to pay attention to one of the universal requirements to the modern FL textbook - its target users, age and psychological and cognitive characteristics of students (Bim & Nefedov).

It is obvious that the textbook as the main FL teaching tool should contribute to the development of student's creative abilities, use activity-based and problematic teaching methods, take into account interdisciplinary knowledge of students, their experience and native languages, create learning motives to improve the FL training efficiency.

Attention is often focused on the textbook content, authentic materials, tasks that contribute to the development of FL skills. Without diminishing the importance and necessity of the material aspect, in order to solve the main didactic tasks, it is important to take into account the target users. For example, the personality development content involves the consistency of texts and exercises with the age characteristics, knowledge, experience and views of students.

The issue of targeting has been studied by many researchers (I.L. Bim, R.P. Milrud & O.V. Nefedov, etc.). The anthropocentric nature of the modern educational paradigm refers *targeting* as a crucial category of the personality-oriented approach to the most significant features of the textbook. M.M. Bakhtin defines *targeting* as a process of addressing someone which is an essential feature of any utterance. O.P. Vorobyova describes *targeting* as a constitutive textual property, through which the idea of the target user and features of his interpretive activity is objectified (Vorobyova, 1993). The addressee as a text production factor is traditionally defined as a "profile of the audience"; a potential or implicit reader (V. Iser), a model of the possible reader built by the author and the interpreter (U. Eco).

The textbook author should take into account the apperceptive background of content perception by the reader. The perception background is dependent on general ideas about the issue under discussion, special knowledge in a cultural or scientific field, views and beliefs of the audience.

In the educational context, we are dealing with the mass addressee, who requires a focus on the average ideas about the audience and the relationship between the addressee and addresser regulated in the direction from the addressee to the addresser and dependent on the guidelines of textbook authors. C. Freinet holds that such textbooks are usually monotonous in writing and do not encourage students to use their mental abilities (Freinet 1928).

Some authors argue that any textbook has its target users that should be taken into account by using special addressing tools. For example, S.A. Gerasimova holds that the targeting of textbooks involves the use of material management tools (tables of contents, methodological notes/prefaces, indexes, reference lists, conclusions, and appendices). The FL textbook presentation format helps the teacher to build an educational path, depending on conditions of the educational process. For this purpose, paragraph elements such as colors or fonts can be used to specify different learning routes (Gerasimova, 2017). The textbook content and structure, being as flexible as possible, are able to adapt to the professional, cognitive, and intercultural needs of students (Gerasimova, 2015). A.A. Alekseeva (2005) argues that the FL textbook structure, language material, topics and communicative orientation are important targeting markers. M.M. Bakhtin used "conditional" or "semi-conditional" addressing forms which can be implicit or explicit addresses in textbooks. These forms guide the author in choosing the textbook style and design. According to O.V. Nefedov, the textbook should include materials that reflect pragmatic interests of modern students (Nefedov, 2015). Thus, when writing a textbook, the author should develop a profile of the target users.

The target user of a modern FL textbook is generation Z with a clip thinking, which determines the process of perception and learning of the linguodidactic material. According to psychologists, the response speed,

the multitasking, the need for novelty, and the information visualization are typical of generation Y. Along with these features, the modern generation finds it difficult to focus attention, perceives information on a piecemeal basis, has poorly developed analytical and communication skills, and a low knowledge acquisition coefficient [Dridze 1980]. These features should be taken into account by FL teachers who daily deal with learning problems in students largely due to their specific way of perception of information. The recommendations provided by psychologists are based on the sociological studies of the generation: maximum visualization, division of the material into small blocks, emotional coloring, vocabulary associations, regular revision, quick task variation, task variety, texts aimed at developing analytical skills.

The parameter inherent in the FL course is intercultural orientation of the personality-oriented language education implemented in the FL textbook. Within this approach, the FL teacher should not focus only on the FL communicative competence development. It is advisable to encourage students to study differences between peoples, develop their understanding and acceptance of these differences, which will help to use a foreign language in various authentic contexts. Firstly, in addition to the processes that bring peoples closer together, in the modern world, there are global conflicts whose solution requires dialogues, negotiations to reach a consensus. These aspects should be taken into account in the modern educational process. Secondly, the value of foreign language education is increasing, and students should be ready to communicate with representatives of different cultures in the modern constantly changing world. All these factors undoubtedly make the intercultural orientation of personality development language education crucial.

N.D. Galskova and T.M. Dridze argue that the personality-development potential of intercultural language education approach can help to develop communication skills in students and allow them to become competent participants in the intercultural communication process, aware of their civic and ethnocultural identities. In addition, N.D. Galskova emphasizes the need to model the educational process as an active "dialogue of cultures" contributing to the cultural relativism and effective interaction. M. Bennett believes that the recognition of cultural differences is a prerequisite, important for the pluralism based on the adequate perception of intercultural communication situations. At the same time, to provide insight into the linguistic and ethnic cultures of native speakers, the FL teacher should pay attention to student's linguistic and ethnic culture, cultural identity and national style (Baryshnikov 2000). In other words, it is necessary to study and compare two cultures rather than to suppress native cultures of students. The boundaries of the educational process, where intercultural communication situations are modeled should be expanded to help students to develop an ability participate in the "dialogue of cultures". In the process of familiarizing with a foreign culture in the context of the "dialogue of cultures", students can use cognitive means of their native cultures to understand the ones of a foreign culture, new knowledge about a foreign culture acquired in the

process of its cognition, new knowledge about his native culture acquired when learning a foreign culture. This is the main mechanism for developing an ability to participate in the intercultural communication process (Galskova 2016). The intercultural orientation of personality-development FL education is promising, providing great opportunities for modern education.

It should be emphasized that modern language education aims to help students to develop traits required for mutual understanding and adequate communication with representatives of different cultures in various authentic contexts. This task requires changes in the teaching process and new didactic tools. Along with exercises intended for the development of communication skills, the FL textbook should contain tasks aimed at learning foreign and native cultures, which should be equally represented, and culturally determined because communication skills can be developed only in real communication situations. In addition, the process of modern FL textbook writing should not be limited to the selection of new, authentic texts. In accordance with the new FL teaching objectives, it requires new methodological support of these texts, efficient methods of assessing reading or listening comprehension, innovative methods of teaching students to communicate in a foreign language (Pavlova 2016).

The textbook material should include both authentic texts and texts that contain cultural or professional information that can help students to become successful professionals. The task hierarchy allows students to be involved in the intercultural communication process and develop cognitive abilities and independence (Pavlova 2016). The FL textbook should be in compliance with the new model of the educational process, which is non-linear due to the change in the curriculum. Thus, the textbook should set trends rather than control activities of teachers and students. In this vein, it would be appropriate to talk about the educational autonomy of students as their professional and personal self-determination skills.

Methodology

Evaluating the effectiveness of modern FL textbooks is considered to be an urgent and complex problem nowadays. The most effective way to evaluate pedagogical transformations is an expert assessment – a collective assessment conducted with a system of methods, in accordance with existing standards and specially developed criteria.

Results

In this section, the main criteria used in FL textbook assessment are presented. Currently, an expert assessment includes pedagogical and scientific textbook evaluation. The objectives are to evaluate: 1) the compliance of the FL textbook content with the component of the Federal state educational standard of

General education; 2) the compliance of the FL textbook content with the age groups and students' psychological characteristics; 3) the possibility of continuity of training at the appropriate level of general education; 4) the potential to achieve the results of mastering the basic educational program of general education at the appropriate level of general education (when examining for compliance with the federal state educational standard of the corresponding level of general education).

Discussions

Evaluating the FL textbook should involve not only the compliance with modern requirements, but also the compliance with the quality characteristics described above. As a rule, they are not taken into account during the compliance assessment, thereby reducing the level of objectivity.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is possible to design a modern FL textbook that will meet the challenges of modern foreign language education, i.e. it will help to use a foreign language as a means of intercultural communication, to understand and assimilate behavior of other peoples, to expand the individual picture of the world by assimilating the linguistic and conceptual picture of other peoples, and to better understanding own language and culture.

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