Didactic Principles of Developing Professional Linguistic Personality in Foreign Language Training

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Abstract

This paper reports the transformation of the bases of the “linguistic personality” theoretical model as a result of changes in socio-pedagogical and professional context of society. The preconditions under discussion brought about the necessity of working out didactic principles for higher institutions, which largely contribute to the formation of a new type of the educational model – that of “professional linguistic personality”, based on competency. Overview of interdisciplinary research shows incipient humanistic tendencies emerging in the system of Russia’s education, which call forth both anthropic and technological insight into the principles of foreign language teaching. One of the main characteristics of developing language intelligence is the emphasis on mental performance – training learners to become operationally effective by means of programmed learning and self-education. However uncovering individual meanings is impossible without feedback, based on Internet cross-cultural dialogues. The results of the study have led us to the formulation of a set of principles and requirements which provide for maturing new skills to be invested directly in the productive force of a University graduate. Closely interconnected, they make up one single system to create a methodology for projecting essential features of modern society, thereby upgrading its socio-cultural and scientific potential.

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1. Introduction

One of the foundations of our research is understanding the essence of the concept of “linguistic personality”, originally initiated by Karaulov (1987), who posits it as an accomplished personality, expressed in the language and through the language, that develops its identity at three consecutive levels: 1) verbal and semantic (mastery of lexical, grammatical and phonetic language material); 2) cognitive or thesaurus-like (forming the world picture); 3) motivation and pragmatic (formation of the system of goals, motives and attitudes of the individual – the motivational level of his communicative needs). In the 80’s the components of the model are regarded as evaluation criteria of language proficiency (Bogin, 1980).

Most research at the turn of the century tend to centre around “bicultural linguistic personality” (Xaleeva, 1989), with the FL learner acquiring special qualities in the second phase of socialization. In terms of Stepin (2006), that means building secondary structures in a cognitive system of the recipient that could well agree with the knowledge possessed by representatives of another socio-cultural community.

The theory develops due to the fruitful contribution made by (e.g., see Elizarova, 2005; Karasik, 2004; Leontovich, 2002; Ter-Minasova, 2000; Furmanova, 1994). Despite the differences in interpretations, the scholars are united by a common approach to this social phenomenon as a set of the individual’s abilities to organize a dialogue with other cultures.

At the beginning of the XXI century the evolution of the FL learner model is associated with globalization: changes in the system of values as a means of constructing social and professional identity, the spread of electronic communication. “The professional linguistic personality” (PLP) comes into being shortly before the adoption of Federal State Standards of Higher Professional Education (2012). What is really essential is that the didactic model allows the comparison of the content of education in various Universities, regardless of the existing formal differences.

In simulating a stable system of socially significant qualities, which characterize the individual as a member of a particular professional community, one should take into account a set of didactic principles, which provide for the formation of the “professional linguistic personality” in higher institutions.

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

The current study analyses didactic principles that lay claim to FL training. “Didactics” is a branch of science of pedagogy, which represents a theory of training and education, and answers the question: “How to teach?”. The principles of training are among the basic categories of methodology, while their implementation in the training process provides its effectiveness. Exaggerating the significance of some of the principles and underestimating others lead to the decrease in their effectiveness.

Incipient humanistic tendencies emerging in the system of Russia’s education, call forth both anthropic and technological insight into the principles of FL training. The implication is that the principles of developing PLP prove to be just the assumptions that rest upon the traditional nomenclature of didactic principles since the times of K.D. Ushinsky, which have improved under the influence of social progress and the development of basic sciences. They are determined by social order, which varies depending on changes in social and economic life, by training practice, which not only tests the validity of a principle, but also suggests new directions of research. In fact, the system of principles, being an open system, allows for the possibility of introducing new principles and reconsidering the existing ones.

Thus, in the context of contemporary semantic and axiological priorities of FL teaching, didactic principles are expected to change the very gist of the methods of shaping the PLP.

While specifying the nature of FL training, modern theory of professional FL teaching targets it at the idea of developing the individual’s natural self, culture of thinking and creative skills – with the help of programmed training and the use of autonomous strategies in speech and mental activities. In this study we adopt a qualitative methodology to prove the validity of the above hypothesis by discussing different approaches. However the important problem is that few scientists have by now addressed didactic principles while researching into the educational model.
2.1. Anthropic approach

Philosophers consider cultural and educational environment to be a space for personal development. Therefore, in describing didactic principles Gerasimov (2005) touches upon integrity which ensures interaction with the individual:

- the principle of cultural integrity – shaping the totality of relations of the individual in the environment based on the indissoluble unity of biological and mental, social and spiritual, rational and irrational, consciousness and self-consciousness;
- the principle of activity – following the individual’s learning trajectory, basing on cognitive and value-orientation pre-experience;
- the ego-centered principle – creating conditions for maturing individuality through the development of a sense of responsibility in front of the inner “self”;
- the principle of tolerance – cultivating the understanding of another “ego” equal in its manifestations to the own "ego" while getting acquainted with the aggregate social relations;
- the dialogical principle – shaping a humanitarian type of thinking with its dia-logic and dialogue as the only possible way to communicate with the outside world.

2.2. Axiological approach

Exploring interaction between the process of cognition and that of cross-cultural communication, methodologists note that it results from the acquisition of verbal and semantic code of the target language, i.e. the language picture of another world, which places an accent on comparing different conceptual systems in FL training, in the context of world and national cultures (Galskova, 2004). Among didactic principles, contributing to the formation of the linguistic personality, Galskova (2013) distinguishes (1) maximum reliance on students’ individual communicative, cognitive, social, professional and life experience; (2) selection and design of the subject content in terms of its impact on the emotional, sensual, motivational sphere of students; (3) orientation of the educational process on the formation of a stable system of students’ value attitudes; (4) reduction of speech simulation in favour of authentic FL communication; (5) creation of favourable conditions for students’ initiative, creativity, innovation; (6) revitalization of different forms of self-evaluation, self-reflection, self-organization in order to build students’ competency characteristics; (7) shift of accents from teaching activities to those connected with FL acquisition by providing an access to a real social and cultural setting.

Those findings testify to the fact that the XXI century theorists approach the FL learner’s personal identity not only as the product and concrete socio-culture medium, but also as the subject of professional communication. The crucial point in transforming the linguistic personality of a University student (with regards to a particular specialty) is the need to emphasize a number of vitally essential competencies for successful performance in everyday, business and professional situations of intercultural interaction which the learner will be involved in. It is important to mention that competency has come to the educational sphere from human resource management. Stoof et al. (2002) have proposed competency should be defined by how it fits into existing organizational processes. With this definition competency has an underlying behavioral characteristic that can result in effective individual performance focusing on personal characteristics, and might as well be aimed at obtaining efficient production results.

2.3. Technological approach

The observations obtained are supported by Evdokimova (2007) who stresses the importance of creating a socio-cultural extra-linguistic setting by means of cognitive reflexive tasks for FL learners. Didactic principles of shaping PLP may imply the acquaintance with the rules of communication in international communities and their virtual representations. Alongside with the free Internet access, the study discusses the use of both established self-education programmes and a variety of media texts – written, oral, visual, audio-visual. The reported research discusses creating and updating professionally-significant products in the form of banks of information – dictionaries, tables, charts, computer presentations, integrated into a single learning process. With this in mind, the
researcher formulates interdependent didactic principles of: (1) using software and hardware training relevant to students’ abilities; (2) dynamic visualization, or clarity of speech actions, through information and computer technologies; (3) unanimity of personality-active, communicative and cognitive orientation of training; (4) unanimity of pragmatic, developing and educating orientation of FL training; (5) unanimity of professional, cultural and linguistic orientation in training; (6) taking into account personality characteristics, incorporating education, training and development.

2.4. Multicultural approach

Khalyapina (2006) extends a PLP model by adding to it a global, multicultural appeal, inasmuch as the given interpretation contains the following competencies: 1) multi-conceptual – allowing to navigate in different conceptual spheres of various cultures; 2) multi-lingual – making it possible to use FL as the language of global communication; 3) communication and technology – providing for the use of the Internet to communicate with people of different nationalities. The author formulates didactic principles of forming a multicultural linguistic personality that has come to be in great demand in the multi-lingual educational environment. They are: a) cognition and awareness of conceptual spheres of different cultures; b) integration of training and real communication with the multi-cultural world; c) global awareness and singularity of the individual; d) problem-based cognition; and e) autonomy and self-determination of the individual.

2.5. Linguistic intelligence approach

Based on the previous fruitful ideas is an attempt made by Bulankina and Polyankina (2011) to design a model of a “multicultural linguistic personality” with an emphasis on the development of information culture and a network image of the world. It is assumed that the result of cross-cultural communication is determined by individuals’ underlying attributes, such as adaptability to multi-lingual educational environment, their FL status, which forms individual role repertoire and is reflected in speech, in communicative strategies of behavior. The main emphasis in the construction of the identity is by right placed on individual linguistic intelligence, i.e. students must self-develop the ability to deal with individual problems of social communication basing on their own intellectual optimal strategy. Similar conclusions are made by Keijzer (2002) who approaches intelligence behavior from the angle of internal modeling. In fact, model-based representation is oriented toward the achievement of future goals. As a result, intelligent behavior is a phenomenon that arises out of a large collection of small-scaled organism-environment interactions that bring it into the domain of self-organization.

Thus, the results gained from the descriptive analysis reveal a certain logic that arises from the interrelation between the dynamics of the “linguistic personality” and the principles allowing for its transformation. The points considered in the current study show the rightness of the initial premise that uncovering individual meanings is impossible without feedback, which is based on Internet cross-cultural dialogues conducted by the PLP.

It turns out that speech and mental activities are one of the modes of cognition that build the top of the iceberg, at the bottom of which there are cognitive abilities of the FL learner. On the assumption of the gradual conceptualization of reality expressed through an FL in students’ minds, the process of learning becomes a process of discovery, research and experiment.

As a result the PLP enables FL learners to construct their own identities in an FL professional environment via: manipulating conceptual spheres of various cultures under the influence of reflection and professional contexts; actualizing valuable meanings in decoding information in their speech and mental activities; playing various socio-communicative roles; realizing their universal entity as a cultural and historical unity; shaping a network image of the world and developing their information culture.

Simultaneously, the process of professional language training becomes much more successful when mental structures are not forced on students – the latter create their own schemes / models in their minds, reasoning from the need for communication and self-expression. Suffice it to say that the PLP is expanding its subject base thanks to “extra-subject”, personal qualities contributing to the autonomous development of language intelligence and self-organization, which characterize the future specialist as a linguistic and socio-psychological personality taken together.
However, beyond those issues some uncertainty remains as to the PLP mental ability to combine interdisciplinary knowledge areas coming from different theories. Establishing links between natural sciences and the humanities, analyzing relationships of cause and effect in a particular production situation is crucial for will-be specialists involved in the industrial process. For example, if undergraduate-technologists take a course in “Economics and innovation management”, the content of the thematic material in the classroom is supposed to be presented in the form of discrete module cycles: English for Economists, Management, Investment Analysis, Marketing and Law. This new principle largely manifests itself in CLIL – content and language integrated learning (Coyle, Hood, Marsh, 2011), and should be paid attention to in the following section of this study.

3. Discussion of the research outcomes

Approved didactic principles give us grounds to reconsider the model of professional linguistic personality. Overall, the recognition of the validity of the above statements enables us to develop new qualities to be invested in the productive force of the University graduate. In our opinion, the set of principles contributing to the development of the PLP includes:

1. The principle of professional expediency, which provides selection of the content, methods, technologies and forms of FL language training, enables us to consider the peculiarities of the career to be taken up, in order to form aggregate socially relevant competencies for the PLP to perform social roles ascribed to it by the future profession. It must be emphasized that in the course of cross-cultural communication, serving as a mechanism for the PLP development, an FL is catering for the culture that most clearly manifests itself against the background of the linguistic landscape. That means that a communicatively adequate set of language units used in students’ cognitive activity should be motivated by the cultural characteristics of a particular professional context.

2. The principle of interdisciplinary coordination. Following this principle suggests the proper combination of themes pertaining to different disciplines, so as to form a holistic perception of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world in students’ minds. In keeping with the logic of the interdisciplinary approach, a series of FL classes will be devoted to the discussion of sociological and legal issues, insofar as the structure of the course organically includes adequate modules. For economists they might as well incorporate: state investment policy, science-tech market, evaluation of the effectiveness of innovative objects and others embracing different spheres of FL communication. The student interprets scientific pictures of the world in the context of national and world cultures, which creates optimal conditions for constructing interdisciplinary professional knowledge.

3. The principle of motivated training and creation of a stable system of value orientations. Language acquisition happens to be ineffective without considering the interests of individuals and exercising a well-directed impact on the motivational-incentive sphere of their performance, which determines verbal behavior. Therefore, within the framework of subject-subject and subject-object relationships it is appropriate to use active methods, involving everyone, even lower-level learners in the process of FL learning. Active teaching methods are based on an inward impulse to autonomous practical and mental activities, without which there can be no progress. In addition, the principle above plays a certain role in establishing trust contacts between the group members and making them more tolerant of each other.

4. The dialogical and interactivity principle. The term “interactive” means the ability to interact or have a conversation or dialogue with anyone (man) or something (computer). The teacher’s task as one of the sources of information is to provide favourable conditions for students’ initiative, develop leadership ability. When using interactive methods, the student increments new knowledge as a result of positive interaction / discourse with the other participants in the communication and this is the advantage over traditional forms of FL training.

Positive interaction is the fundamental principle of interactive (collective) learning methods, the meaning of which is to achieve the results by communal efforts of the team, with individual accountability and responsibility of each member of the team. Business discussions and role playing are vehicles for a higher degree of transferability of knowledge and performance experience from academic to real-life situations. They allow students to get out of their usual role of an observer, assume responsibility both for themselves and joint efforts of others in order to achieve results.
5. The principle of creative self-realization presupposes maximum focus on creativity in FL performance. In the traditional sense critical thinking is related to the logical, analytical thinking and has an evaluative character, while the category of creativity is defined in terms of willingness to master large volumes of systematized knowledge, and ease of association. Creativity means the ability to a) quickly and freely switch the train of thought from one direction to the reverse, b) cause images in the mind and create new combinations out of them, c) transfer functions from one object to another, roll up operations, generalize and discard the inessential. Productive activity is built with the help of modern multimedia that enable students to gain experience in speech and mental activities and create unique culturally significant results.

6. The principle of focus on conceptual spheres of different cultures. Science has established that the linguistic personality acts in a conceptual space – historical elements of human life organized and engrained in a set of semiotic spheres, representing the infinite set of units. These units make up our knowledge and rules of application of this knowledge, as well as regulations that ensure the existence of humans in society. Apparently, there is a move towards experiential learning where students develop awareness of new concepts through active participation in extra-linguistic tasks.

The description of knowledge structure, according to the cultural needs of the individual to communicate internationally is directly concerned with operating concepts. The formation of the individual linguistic intelligence is aimed at understanding and interpreting authentic texts of different genres and is directly dependent on the person’s ability to establish relationships between different meanings of cultural concepts. Strategies of developing linguistic intelligence involve performing a comparative benchmarking of conceptual systems of different cultures.

7. The principle of forming a network image of the world. Unlike the conceptual picture of the world, the network picture of the world is based on information, rather than knowledge. Since virtual education as a self-organizing model has an unlimited number of degrees of freedom and doesn’t set a clear direction of movement, each student is self-developing in an open educational space of the Internet with respect to their individual essence. Such an information-cognitive autonomy characterizes a special quality of the PLP, which is embodied in intellectual abilities and skills, aspirations and valuable attitudes of the individuals, their readiness for autonomy, generalization of the information, formation of methodological knowledge, self-correction and control.

8. The principle of dynamic visualization recreated by means of informational technologies. Internet resources (thanks to their didactic properties) not only enrich the content fabric of a FL course, but also activate several sensory channels of the consumers, increasing their perception of new material and optimizing the educational process. Upon the whole, the principle of visualization is one of the leading didactic principles. The need to implement it in the professional language training is motivated by the dialectics of transition from sensory perception to abstract thinking in the process of cognition. The principle under discussion may be treated as a specially arranged display of linguistic and extra-linguistic content to be better understood, acquired and used by each PLP in their mental and speech activities.

It can be assumed that the above principles may well comply with a set of requirements that we have worked out for the development of the PLP, namely:

- select the thesaurus of the PLP, basing on the cultural characteristics of a particular professional environment;
- strengthen various areas of FL communication during the construction of interdisciplinary knowledge;
- establish links between different meanings of concepts while describing the structure of knowledge, compare conceptual systems of different cultures;
- exercise an impact on the emotional and incentive-motivational realm of the personality, evaluating its pre-experience, achievements and the “zone of proximal development”;
- use interactive teaching methods in order to foster leadership, initiative and responsibility;
- organize speech and mental activities as a creative process that promotes the reproduction of the unique culturally significant products;
- improve the perception of educational material at the expense of didactic computer characteristics, including its inherent property of visualization that allows to shape both the language and network pictures of the world.
4. Conclusion

This study is an attempt to formulate a set of principles that provide for the development of a number of new qualities of the PLP. Our results show that the essence and structure of professional language training have undergone considerable changes. In our opinion, its current characteristics are those of information culture and reflection, individual linguistic intelligence, ability to establish relationships between the meanings of concepts, critical (analytical) thinking and tolerance in conducting frictionless intercultural interaction, empathic understanding of behavioral rules and world outlooks of business associates from other countries.

In summarizing the set of requirements for the new type of the PLP model, it should be emphasized that both the principles and requirements are all closely linked and form a single system, designed to ensure the achievement of learning goals, which FL teachers are guided by in their work. With the help of this system it becomes possible to build a methodological basis of projecting essential features of modern society and enhance its socio-cultural and scientific potential.

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