

AIMS AND CONTENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN UKRAINE IN THE 1950s-1990s

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Abstract: *The author considers English for Specific Purposes methodology as a counterpart of general foreign language teaching methods. High school students may achieve significant results in communicative competence development, which is not the case for ESP, since it has never been a part of a high school curriculum. The reason for the gap between the target situation needs and the existing proficiency of learners is the absence of generally accepted criteria in content, methodology, course organization, assessment, and learning outcomes with reference to international standards. Language education is being considered as the study of social and pedagogical phenomenon which has a practical value. Though the subject of research was not new for Ukrainian scholarly circles, it lacked a special systematic pedagogical study. The above problem requires a special analysis of the experience of Ukrainian schools in foreign language teaching in the second half of the XX century in order to specify the modern conditions of the Ukrainian system of learning a foreign language and to mark its prospects.*

Key words: *Ukrainian secondary education, language education, chronology of foreign language teaching, foreign language competence*

1. INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes has been always considered an integral part of a general methodology of a foreign language teaching. ESP presumes learning English as a foreign language regarding specific vocation, subject or purpose. The teaching of English for Specific Purposes has been seen as a separate activity within English language teaching. A sufficient level of students' communicative competence lays a solid background for successful acquiring different language skills applicable to a specific professional area.

Ukraine's search for its own ways of upgrading the old post-socialist system of school foreign language education should be recognized as difficult and controversial and more marked as being under the influence of European and world globalization processes. With the implementation of the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" in Ukrainian schools, the requirements for the level of foreign language competence among high school graduates and for the ability to use the studied language as a means of communication have increased significantly.

Language education is considered as the study of social and pedagogical phenomenon, aimed at the study, preservation and reproduction of national achievements in education of an individual, as well as the openness of the education system and its integration into the world educational continuum. The term 'language education' has a practical direction,

the use of which provides for the development of oral and written speech, shaping a communicative competence and the most accurately reflecting the purpose and nature of modern language teaching.

2. TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN UKRAINIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Secondary schools of different countries demonstrate the features of the socio-economic development of the country, the uniqueness of its cultural and historical traditions. Since Ukraine searches for the ways of improving the quality of language training in secondary schools and colleges, it lacks a systematic pedagogical study of a foreign theory and practice of FLT. The above mentioned problem requires understanding of the experience of Ukrainian schools in the second half of XX century for the specification of modern conditions of the Ukrainian system for learning a foreign language.

One should acknowledge a poor level of language competence that high school graduates of Ukraine have, which in no way fits the requirements of the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”. We believe that such a state is caused by a number of contradictions between: the objectives of foreign language teaching and the actual level of achievement of high school graduates, the constant growth of quality requirements education of students with a very wide range of individual characteristics, and inadequate use of educational technology in the educational process, the need to develop a culturally competent high school student’s personality is determined by the new socio-economic conditions, and the lack of relevant scientific and theoretical research focused on the process; the need to develop a positive motivation to learn languages and skills of self-control and the unwillingness of teachers to implement adequate language skills of students in secondary schools.

The reason for the gap between the target situation (employment market) needs and the existing proficiency of learners is the absence of generally accepted criteria in content, methodology, course organization, assessment, and learning outcomes with reference to international standards.

It is impossible to overestimate the role of research on the history of Soviet pedagogy and methodology. Structural and critical study of the experience gained in this area can be an important source for determining the strategy of foreign language education development in modern schools of Ukraine.

According to the modern Ukrainian historian of pedagogy Olha Sukhomlynska, the problem of some phenomenon chronology, that determines periods, is one of the most difficult, complex and multileveled problems of scientific knowledge. It requires knowledge of the object of study, the allied sciences, advanced scientific outlook on those who take this difficult case.

In Soviet times, the problem of chronology got solved quite easily: a development and chronology of the history of the communist party of the Soviet Union was entrusted to a particular cohort of scientists, and all the sciences, at least, humanities, were coordinated, aligned its chronology to the generally appointed one (Sukhomlynska 2003: 32).

The matter of chronology in science arises when there is a crisis, when the arguments fall off and the principles become flimsy. This happens when research field is opened and updated, notably source base is expanding, offering a series of ‘white spots’, established

views and positions are reviewed and reassessed, changing the scientific discourse (Sukhomlynska 2003: 48).

As a subject of study we selected periods of foreign language training of schoolchildren in Ukraine in the second half of the twentieth century, as far as in historical and educational science the need of new approaches to chronology of the stages of learning a foreign language arises, but also to establish the continuity and quality differences between them, taking into account the difficulties and reform of foreign language training students in different social conditions.

The period of 1949-1959 years is associated with the adoption of the law on compulsory seven-year education. This stage of the Soviet period is interesting by political priority of the state to the study of foreign languages. The idea and politicization are the factors that hindered the reform of education. However, the content of education was determined by the social order, associated with social transformation and long-term based on a single ideology and therefore regarded as an instrument of class struggle, that negatively affected the humanistic formation function.

Of the three factors of the educational process the content of education is in the first place, where clear requirements imposed ideological (humanities cycle) and scientific (natural and mathematical) orientation. A teacher as a curriculum repeater is in the second place, a transmitter of ideas. Student was in the last place, having to learn the course material with variations and comments. An adaptive reproductive model of education was created where the content took a prominent place (Hulypa 2007: 30).

Foreign language acquisition during this period was clearly regulated by the Ministry of Education of the USSR. School programs, taken in 1949, emphasize general educational value importance of foreign language acquisition. The development objectives of speech were reduced mainly to the demand for "laying the foundation of mastering spoken language". However, this requirement was not supported by all the stuff of the program. The program was overloaded with grammatical material; grammar teaching was often abstract and was divorced from the practical needs of mastering a foreign language. One should admit that extra theorization and translated forms increasing resulted in the domination of a mother tongue in foreign language classes. Thus, the most important task of foreign language acquisition, according to the 1949-1953 programs was to teach students reading and expressing their opinions on specific topics in foreign language.

World War II made a significant impact on the development of methods of foreign language acquisition in the U.S. and other countries. Post-war countries needed people who were fluent in foreign languages. There audio-lingual and audiovisual methods appeared. However, in Ukrainian schools they were almost unused. The basic method of study in high school was a comparative method.

The foreign language learning in schools in the late 1950s based on a comparative method, the essence according to B.Belyayeva, was that "students had to decipher foreign language texts ... or encrypt their thoughts (expressed by means of the native language), constructing sentences in a foreign language". As a result of this linguization students gained only lexical and grammatical knowledge, but almost did not learn the language (Kitaigorodskaya 1982: 248). This caused discontent on the part of teachers and parents community as well as debates in press and scientific and educational institutions. During this period, psychologists, didactics and methodologists took an active part in the scientific rationale and implementation of a new, conscious and practical method of

foreign language acquisition. There were studies and discussions in scientific journals and collections of important psychological and methodological problems associated with finding ways to improve foreign language acquisition.

The beginning of the 1960s is closely associated with the preparation of school reform and reorientation of the objectives of foreign language acquisition, as well as finding ways to improve the teaching of foreign languages. As a result of a content reforming of secondary education in the early 1960s its priorities were identified, distinguished by a high degree of idea: the formation of the materialist worldview, and high communist morality, inculcating strong knowledge. High school was called Secondary School. Scientific and methodological developments had a pragmatic and a Soviet, non-national orientation (Kitaigorodskaya 1982: 64).

Foreign language was legalized as a compulsory school subject; target setting was to form receptive skills, to teach reading techniques on the basis of sound-letter relations (Hulya 2007: 250). During this period method of situational language teaching (situational approach to foreign language teaching) developed, whose aim was to study the practical use of language structures in four major types of speech activities: speaking, reading, writing, listening. The recorded speech was to be analyzed with the aim of selecting those language units which are characteristic of spoken language and are necessary to cover the most frequently used situations. During this period the basic goals of foreign language acquisition were formulated.

In 1960 program foreign language emphasized that oral speech and reading ought to be developed as equal types of speech activities, as they are equally important for practical language acquisition (Sukhomlynska 2003: 10). Analyzing this curriculum we come to a conclusion about the development of students' skills of oral language and reading without a dictionary, the ability to use language as a medium of communication.

The decree of the Soviet Council of Ministers "Improving foreign language acquisition" on May 27, 1961, exposed serious weaknesses in teaching foreign languages and outlining important events radically improve learning foreign languages in our country. This resolution called for a radically new target instruction learning a foreign language in secondary and high schools, which was aimed at the practical mastery of foreign languages (Sukhomlynska 2003: 45).

In 1967, an attempt was made to create a new program for foreign languages, based on a scientific foundation on practical requirements. This stage can be regarded as the beginning of profound changes in the aims and methods of language learning compared to other phases of the study, especially regarding the relations between different levels of educational phenomena.

The 1960s became an important stage in the development of the psychology of learning foreign languages. At that time psychologists of Ukraine and Russia took an active part in the scientific justification and implementation of a new, conscious and practical method of teaching foreign languages. There were studies and discussions in scientific journals and collections of important psychological and methodological problems associated with finding ways to improve foreign language acquisition (Vetokhov 1999: 140).

In the history of linguistics, the beginning of the 1970s was associated with the emergence of fundamentally new methods of foreign language acquisition and a large number of research papers on communicative linguistics that gave rise to communicative direction in a foreign language acquisition. This meant a completely new stage in

learning a practical language. The communicative approach is the core of a new scientific direction, a new scientific paradigm (Vetokhov 1999: 133).

The period of the 1970s - 1980s was distinct with research that discovered and explained the source of inefficiency which was officially recognized in the previous decade a practical method of teaching foreign languages, contributed substantiation of new methodological approaches - communicative and self-functioned, and opened a way for the improvement methods of foreign language acquisition.

The reforming of the instructional content of the curriculum of the 1970s was the most serious, thoughtful and deliberate step compared to other phases of the instructional content of secondary education, especially for the combination of developmental and reproductive functions of education, and in some subject areas more attention was paid to developmental functions (while maintaining material approaches to the selection of instructional content). But in general, the instructional content reflects approaches that can be classified as didactic encyclopedic having a twofold goal of teaching foreign languages:

- to develop individual psychological qualities of the student's personality — phonemic hearing intonation, articulation flexibility of the device, memory, flexibility of verbal thought;
- to develop learning skills so as to work independently, to logically express opinions and to enhance general skills.

In the 1970s-80s the emergence of scientific works on communicative linguistics (N.Chomsky, D.Uilkinson) gave rise to communicative direction in learning a foreign language, which meant a completely new stage in learning practical language acquisition. In domestic methodology this method is called communicative activity (E.Passov, S.Shatilov, G.Rohova). Educational goals predicted enrichment of the spiritual world of the individual, a better knowledge of the culture of the country whose language is learned. The educational goal meant the formation of positive character qualities of a learner, such as kindness, humanity, reciprocity, respect for the rights, work, love of one's country, etc.

As known, communicative approach of foreign language acquisition originated in the 1970s as a result of the Council of Europe experts. Since then, this approach is widespread throughout the world and has become one of the main methods of foreign language teaching. It should be noted that the development of theory-based communicative approach to teaching foreign languages in the Soviet Union is 10 years behind compared to Europe and the USA.

In 1980s , the development of the methodical school led by Efim Passov distinguished in the history of the Soviet language pedagogy. His research "The communicative method of teaching foreign language speaking" (1985), "Fundamentals of communicative methods of teaching foreign language communication" (1989) laid the foundations for a new paradigm in teaching foreign languages in the post-Soviet countries. According to this author, teachers should train students to participate in the process of foreign language communication in a foreign language. His approach defines the essence of communicative teaching, where the teaching process is a model of the communication process. A communication skill is no longer only a declaration and becomes a core and an explanatory principle of construction of the learning process. Nowadays, promoting basic communicative approach is a necessity of teaching practices because, firstly, a communicative methodology is a goal of a communication teaching, and secondly,

because communicative direction is enriched by new researches that should be available for practicing teachers.

Thus, the research of the 1970s discovered and explained the sources of inefficiency officially recognized as a deliberate and practical method of teaching foreign languages, contributed to substantiation of new methodological approaches — communicative and self-functioned, and gave way to improved methods of foreign language acquisition.

The activity of scientists, teachers according to improvement of instructional content of secondary education was in the 1970s - 1980s: program refined, interdisciplinary communication justified, the concept of ideological and moral character concretized. Particular attention is paid to the developing of education functions. The beginning of the 1980s was marked by the development of new concepts of general secondary education (their authors - scientists of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and initiative group "INEC"), that became "a bridge between the traditional Soviet school, and the new situation of education progress in post-Soviet countries" (Sukhomlynska 2003: 161).

Another effective method which has radically changed approaches to teaching foreign languages since 1980s, was suggested by a Russian psychologist Irina Zimnyaya. It was a new scientific methodological approach, called self-functioned. A fundamentally new method of learning a foreign language can be viewed through the prism of verbal behavior reorientation training of a student, the need to take into account his/her abilities, interests, and motives for learning. "... Self-functioned approach to learning, formulated by the mid 1980s, has been developed primarily as a subject-oriented organization and management of teacher training activities of a student in solving specially organized tasks of different complexity and problems. These problems are not only developing a substantive and a communicative competence of a student, and him as a person. ..." (Zimnyaya 1985: 244).

The second component of language learning Irina Zimnyaya explained in her works relates to the study of speech activity. For example, in the article "Psychological characteristics of both types of speech activity listening and speaking", she proves the existence of speech, listening and speaking as its types, and not identical terms of 'language' and 'speech activity'. According to the scholar, "speech activity as a process of human interaction with other people is the realization of social and communicative human activity, while language ... is a means of verbal communication". The main psychological task of teaching is to "teach a foreign language by means of implementation" (Vetokhov 1999: 143). This is the activity approach to learning. "... The personality component and self-functioned approach assumes that in the process of teaching, the aspects that need to be taken into account are nationality, gender and age, individuality — psychological status characteristics of a student. This record is realized through the content and learning activities, through the nature of communication with a student. Questions, remarks, tasks addressed to a student by means of self-functioned approach stimulate their personal, intellectual activity, support and direct their learning activity..." (Zimnyaya 1985: 245).

In 1988, based on Lev Vygotsky's and Alexei Leontiev's works in the Soviet didactic foundations of a self-functioned approach based on the principles of equality of educational teachers and students cooperation in general, were didactically organized by both teachers and students. The practical goal of a lesson is formulated for each student or group of students. Educative, learning and developing goals are in formation multi-faceted development of an individual, harmonious, socially active person through the

enhancement of their internal resources. For psychologists, teachers, methodologist there is an obvious need for more intensive use of creative and intellectual potentials of students. His thesis that “the acquisition of language can provide a paradigm for the entire problem of the relation between learning and development” (Vygotsky 1988: 427) pushed ahead many language learning theories. These principles became the basis for individualization and differentiation of instruction.

At the same time Western methods of teaching foreign languages included three methodological perspectives, humanistic and psycho suggestive methods as more meaningful. A. Maslow, K. Rogers, R. Hreh and R. Bendler, I. Sapir are the scientists of psychological and pedagogical foundations; L. Vygotsky, A. Leontiev, S. Rubinshtein, B. Ananiev created the concept of humanistic education. Methods of teaching foreign languages were enriched by the work of H. Gardner, D. Hilford.

During 1990s new horizons of science and man opened up through the study of foreign languages. It is the conclusion of school reform. A high degree of confidence of a personality, group, teacher, each other relationship, psychological and emotional comfort in classes, creative activity, and intellectual search is a complete description of activities in line with the atmosphere of these strategies. All these learning objectives are implemented in the classroom for maximum effect, creating a piece of academic communication with high efficiency studies. Yet, it should be noted that in practice the mass training data strategies are not common. Most likely, it is rather our future than the present.

The 1990s were distinguished by the changes in socio-political and economic system of Ukraine. There was a reform of the national education system, which began immediately after the declaration of independence, provided for bringing the system into compliance with the new socio-economic goals, the realities of life, especially the needs of the state, its development in accordance with the Constitution of Ukraine and the Law on Education, providing of the national character and at the same time competitiveness of Ukrainian education in the world market. Back in the early 90s there was a paradigm shift in the public consciousness, a rethinking of values, awareness of the priority of human and national values.

The 2000/01 year was considered the end of this stage, as a need to master at least one foreign language was becoming urgent in Ukraine at the turn of the century. According to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On changes to new content of secondary schools, structure, and the 12- year study” dated 16.11.2000 , № 1717, the changes to the new structure of European education began, which required the revision of content and objectives of training and the role of teacher and student in the learning process (Hulypa 2007: 151).

3. CONCLUSION

Ukraine cannot stand aside from the general integrative tendencies in the education process in Europe. Recognition of the merits of integration into European education environment and making our educational standards correspond to the European ones, will facilitate Ukrainian and European cultural integration, and open broader professional and academic career horizons for school leavers and college graduates. The development of language education can be observed in the time-space dimension to reveal the impact of major trends in the evolution of society in the direction of a foreign language acquisition

and to suggest that any component of the educational system (structural, semantic) takes a decision because of a certain historical moment of time, in certain socio-political conditions in the interactive dimensions, which lets us generalize the data of theoretical research and practice.

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