TEACHING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN POLYCONFESSIONAL CLASSES WITH THE USE OF INTEGRATING TOOLS

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Abstract

This article is a summary of the theoretical and practical results of a large-scale scientific study of the problem of joint education of foreign students with non-native Russian language and Russian native speakers in comprehensive Russian schools. The study highlights the main stages in overcoming the difficulties of assimilation of migrant children among Russian schoolchildren in Russian schools. The paper analyses the effectiveness of attempts made by methodologists and teachers to overcome co-educational shortcomings. Traditionally these problems are solved within a differentiating methodology. By contrast, our research proposes an integrative way to solve the above-mentioned problems. An integrative approach is a dominant innovative feature of the work.

The authors of the study singled out a set of principles for teaching the Russian language. Extensive research has shown that these principles unite a multilevel and multilingual team of schoolchildren in the general educational process and create a generalizing concept for teaching Russian to multinational and polyconfessional classes, including the use of specially-developed original multimedia tools, whose educational functions and structure are described in detail in the study. The article offers the results of approbation of the proposed concept and teaching tools in Russian comprehensive general education schools.

Keywords: non-native, concept, learning, multinational, class

1. Introduction

Recent evidence suggests that modern world community lives in the conditions of a dynamic migration flow, forming a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual world social space. The consequence of this was a change in the strategies for the development of the social, economic, political and spiritual spheres of human life. Qualitatively new paradigms have been laid out in the

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sphere of public education. These new paradigms are instrumental for the formation and upbringing of the personality of the future, able to successfully live, work and communicate in a multinational world.

The past decade in Russia has seen an intensive influx of migrants from neighbouring foreign countries, as well as the share of internal migration (from the North Caucasus republics, etc.). As a result, these trends formed not only a multinational and polyconfessional society of the country's large megalopolises - the region's capitals - but also the multinational and polyconfessional environment in Russian schools. In some cases, the student body of children with the poor Russian language includes up to 40%. These students are called inophones or migrant children [1].

Traditionally, in a new place, migrant children try to lead a habitual way of life, stemming from their past and simultaneously adjusting themselves to their migrant reality. They use the spiritual experience and behavioural norms of their motherland people. From the very first attempts to adapt to the new situation, migrant children are deprived by the usual social environment and social roles. This approach to life in Russia results in a 'cultural shock' while facing Russian reality, where the norms of life and values that are habitual to immigrant children lose their significance. In addition, a different religion of a family can be an obstacle in adapting to a new environment, including a school environment while studying a new language of communication. Religious contradictions affect the development of the worldview of the child, forming behaviour that corresponds to certain dogmas and beliefs. And the desire to preserve one's religion only aggravates the situation of such children in a different ethno-cultural environment, especially in school. Regular in the current situation was the widespread low rate of progress of migrant children, caused, to an equal degree, by insufficient knowledge of the language of communication, and by shortcomings in the development of their intellectual sphere (thinking, logic, imagination) [2].

The imminent educational crisis contributed to the emergence of a new educational paradigm based on the idea of the need to take into account the ongoing ethnic processes in the formation and upbringing of an individual who is able to live and work in a multinational and multi-confessional society [3]. At the same time, teaching Russian as a key subject for mastering other disciplines has become one of the priority tasks of modern methods.

The history of overcoming the difficulties of teaching foreign children in Russian schools began in 2000, when the Moscow Committee of Education issued an order providing for the opening of groups for the study of Russian as a foreign language (RFL), functioning with a teaching load of two hours a week, which gave rise to the practice of conducting additional RFL classes for migrant children [4]. The rest of the country followed the example of the capital district. Over time, practice has shown that additional classes with migrant children are not enough to achieve their level of language proficiency, allowing them to learn the subject on an equal basis with native speakers. Undoubtedly, such classes are necessary for foreign-speaking students, but the problem remains - 'isolation' of

such students from the general educational process in common with native speakers in traditional lessons.

One of the priority areas of research has also been the development and introduction of new teaching aids for foreign students: educational programs and educational-methodical complexes for Russian as RFL, as well as teaching aids for additional education for migrant children [5-11] and guidelines for teachers [12]. In most Russian schools, these tools are currently used during additional sessions of RFL with migrant children, as well as a differentiated approach to traditional lessons with native speakers. It is important to note that traditional classes in multinational classes take place using the training tools recommended by Federal Educational Standards, but do not meet the needs of multilevel and multinational students.

The problem of teaching the Russian language to migrant children has become a subject of numerous studies. Thus, the results of methodologists and teachers' research have shown that popular innovative means of the organization of the educational process when learning the Russian language in the multireligious (multicultural) environment can be as follows:

- training projects based on the principle of training in cooperation, the activation of students' joint activities [13];
- concentrated learning technology, which involves the thematic 'immersion in the subject' [14];
- technology of pedagogical workshops, which allows each student to acquire new learning experience [15].

The researchers developed an algorithm for teaching the Russian language to migrant children, consisting of four consecutive stages, as well as a targeted training toolkit for their education [16].

According to researchers, the set of the following activities can be an integrative form of the organization of teaching the Russian language to migrant children: 1) projects in the sphere of linguoculturology, 2) class/school communicative games, 3) polite behaviour contests that allow appealing to the native culture of migrant children, 4) a school linguo-regional journal that allows demonstrating the mutual influence of various national cultures and the Russian language, etc. [17]. This approach makes it possible to use a special method of creation of educational events that is relevant exactly in the multi-religious school environment and contributes to the emergence of an open communication situation.

Nevertheless, despite numerous experimental studies of this issue, a number of problems related to the development of the content of the subject 'Russian Language' in multinational classes have not been resolved until now. Primarily, the root of the problem is the organization of classes of the Russian language conducted jointly with native speakers.

2. Methods

In our opinion, one of the possible and effective solutions may be **an integrating approach** to the teaching of the Russian language, by which we mean the construction of an educational process in accordance with the principles that facilitate the welding, the unification of a multilevel and multinational contingent of schoolchildren, 'careful' filling in the knowledge gaps and improving the knowledge of the language of communication among weak students.

The following is the description of theoretical comprehension principles that form the basis of the concept of education proposed in this study. Basically, we proceeded from the general needs of two groups of students (migrant children and native speakers). The list of principles is as follows.

2.1. The principle of communication

The need for communication in Russian is equally present both in migrant children and native speakers of Russian. While immigrant children need to practice their communication skills in Russian and learn the norms of speech behaviour in various communicative situations, Russian native speakers suffer from the lack of communicatively-oriented exercises [18].

2.2. The principle of dialogue of cultures

Is designed to provide a communicative process of meeting, interaction of several cultures (Russian and foreign). This leads to the awareness of the similarity and difference of these cultures, deep knowledge of the native culture and penetration into the foreign one [19].

2.3. The principle of functional (practical) explanation of grammatical material

This principal involves the presentation of educational material, according to the pattern 'from function to form' and promotes a better understanding by students of the specifics of the studied linguistic phenomena, the features of their functioning in speech, and, therefore, the maintenance of interest in the subject [20].

2.4. The principle of visualization of linguistic phenomena

This principle is new in the methodology of teaching the Russian language. It is based on the formation of the concept of the phenomenon being studied through a specific visual or sound (or visual-sound) image that reveals the essence of the linguistic phenomenon, its functioning in speech. Reliance on a specific and vivid image when studying a particular grammatical phenomenon helps make the studied material more accessible and memorable for both groups of students [21]. The term 'visualization' can be broadly described as *a process the application of multimedia technology, which offers the opportunity to simultaneously present information of all types: sound, graphics, image, animation, video, and text* [22]. Consequently, this information reflects in the minds of students in the form of a specific-object associative image reflecting specificity, role, functions of the studied abstract language concept, phenomenon, rule.

2.5. The principle of individualization of the learning process

Is the basic principle of building learning in any classroom, since all students differ in different levels of language competencies. In a multinational audience, individualization, on the one hand, is designed to fill gaps in the knowledge of migrant children, and on the other, serves as a means of maintaining interest in the subject of native speakers [23].

With the support of the selected principles of teaching on the basis of modern multimedia technologies, we developed special integrating teaching aids - multimedia teaching aids [24-26] and also proposed and successfully implemented on their basis the concept of teaching the Russian language in multinational classes.

The concept is based on three main types of educational activities: collective work, individual work (which also includes the control of learning) and the curriculum as a form that integrates the independent, collective work of schoolchildren and control. Each type of educational activity uses special multimedia tools: 1) for classroom collective work - multimedia lessons; 2) for individual work and the control of students' knowledge – variable learning tasks, as well as additional reference and information materials (interactive tables, animated illustrations, electronic training dictionaries and encyclopaedical articles); 3) for the project activity - creative tasks.

Considering the specifics of some multimedia learning tools:

I. *Multimedia lessons* are "complete, plot-organized interactive learning environments that simulate the real learning process in a class-based learning system" [27]. These lessons are based on a learning problem that is solved by team of real school students along with a virtual class - teaching agents (teacher and students). The whole problem solving discussion is accompanied by animation, video, sound, text, visual interactive illustrations (visualization of linguistic phenomena), which facilitates the realization of the principle of functional training.

II. *Variable learning tasks* are designed in addition to multimedia lessons for each academic topic and are intended to serve as a training material for homework or self-study in the classroom. Each task includes: 1) audio of text elements of tasks; 2) assistance with the task (calling help, tips, mnemonic support); 3) presentation of a ready answer, etc. The main feature of interactive

tasks is their variability, i.e. an easy option designed for students who find it difficult to master the topic and a difficult option for successful students.

III. *Creative tasks*, as well as *variable* tasks, are designed in addition to multimedia lessons and represent tasks for students of a creative or research nature aimed at developing the speech and communication skills of schoolchildren: to tell/explain the rule, write an argumentative essay/story, answer the problem questions, e.g. 'how?', 'why?', etc. Each creative task provides both independent and group project activities of students and involves the step-by-step implementation of a number of tasks on the way to achieve the main goal.

3. Results

The following part of this paper moves on to describe in greater detail the implementation of the discussed training concept using the proposed multimedia tools. This stage was carried out in the October-December 2012 and September-November 2013 in two 6th grades, containing multinational contingent. The activity was conducted in two general education establishments: 1) the municipal comprehensive general secondary education school No 30 in the city of Penza, 2) the state comprehensive general education school No 450 in the city of Moscow. Experimental training consisted of parallel training of two classes. The lessons covered certain topics from the section 'Lexicology. Phraseology'. While one of the classes studied these topics using traditional teaching aids recommended by Federal State Educational Standards, the other was studying with the help of special multimedia tools. The total number of students involved in the experiment was 117, including 46 inophones.

In our study, the effectiveness of the developed tools and the proposed concept of teaching were described with the help of indicators of pupils of two parallel classes. The indicators were based on the following main criteria:

- the volume of active vocabulary of schoolchildren;
- the level of readiness for spontaneous communication;
- the completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to topics;
- the level of attention development, logic, critical thinking, imagination;
- the degree of culture awareness competence development.

Verification of the results for each of the criteria during the three months of training was carried out by means of a block of tasks in complex assessment, diagnosing and final control works, as well as through surveys.

The volume of active vocabulary of schoolchildren was checked by a block of tasks of a lexical nature: 1) to choose synonyms/antonyms for words; 2) to give an interpretation of words; 3) to identify unfamiliar, obscure words in the text, etc. The level of readiness for spontaneous communication of each student was determined during interviews, conversations and discussions in team exercises with native speakers, i.e. the teacher noted the level of activity of the student in general discussions, as well as the number of clearly formulated answers.

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	Training period and results								
Criteria	the 1 st month		the 2 nd month		the 3 rd month		Final average score		
	Α	B	Α	B	Α	B	Α	В	
The volume of active vocabulary of schoolchildren	29	35	32	73	43	95	34.6	67.6	
The level of readiness for spontaneous communication	22	37	26	79	28	96	25.3	70.6	
The completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to topics	32	39	45	73	48	98	41.6	70	
The level of attention development, logic, critical thinking, imagination	25	36	34	68	37	95	32	66.3	
The degree of culture awareness competence development	28	38	37	72	41	94	35.3	68	
The average total value by all criteria	27.2	37	34.8	73	39.4	95.6	33.8	68.5	

Table 1. The results of test and interviews of inophone students (21 students) the 6 th
forms of the municipal comprehensive general secondary education school No. 30 in the
city of Penza (the average score of the group), 2013.

Table 2. The results of test and interviews of Russian native speaker students (34 students) the 6^{th} forms of the municipal comprehensive general secondary education school No. 30 in the city of Penza (the average score of the group), 2013.

		Trai	Final					
Criteria	the 1 st month			e 2 nd onth		e 3 rd nth	average score	
		В	Α	В	Α	В	Α	В
The volume of active vocabulary of schoolchildren	43	54	52	84	60	98	51.6	78.6
The level of readiness for spontaneous communication	37	48	39	91	41	99	39	79.3
The completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to topics	33	45	53	94	67	98	51	79
The level of attention development, logic, critical thinking, imagination	37	42	42	87	45	97	41.3	75.3
The degree of culture awareness competence development	35	41	40	82	43	98	39.3	73.6
The average total value by all criteria	37	46	45.2	87.6	51.2	98	44.4	77.2

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	Training period and results								
Criteria	the 1 st month		the 2 nd month		the 3 rd month		Final average score		
	Α	В	Α	B	Α	B	Α	В	
The volume of active									
vocabulary of	25	37	29	71	38	93	30.6	67	
schoolchildren									
The level of readiness for									
spontaneous	20	35	23	80	30	98	24.3	71	
communication									
The completeness of									
knowledge, skills, exposure	30	38	40	75	47	99	39	70.6	
to topics									
The level of attention									
development, logic, critical	26	39	29	69	39	94	31.3	67.3	
thinking, imagination									
The degree of culture									
awareness competence	29	36	34	73	40	96	34.3	68.3	
development									
The average total value by	26	37	31	73.6	38.8	96	31.9	68.8	
all criteria	20	51	51	75.0	50.0	70	51.7	00.0	

Table 3. The results of test and interviews of inophone students (25 students) the 6th forms of comprehensive general education school No. 450 in Moscow, 2012.

Table 4. The results of test and interviews of Russian native speaker students (34	
students) the 6 th comprehensive general education school No. 450 in Moscow, 2012	2.

	Training period and results							
Criteria	the 1 st month		the 2 nd month		the 3 rd month		Final average score	
	Α	В	Α	В	Α	В	Α	В
The volume of active vocabulary of schoolchildren	48	56	50	89	62	97	53.3	80.6
The level of readiness for spontaneous communication	35	50	37	92	40	98	37.3	80
The completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to topics	37	55	51	96	65	99	51	83.3
The level of attention development, logic, critical thinking, imagination	34	44	43	89	47	98	41.3	77
The degree of culture awareness competence development	36	43	39	88	42	96	39	75.6
The average total value by all criteria	38	49.6	44	90.8	51.2	97.6	44.4	79.3

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Then the results were differentiated into groups (immigrants and native speakers). The level of development of attention, logic, critical thinking and imagination was determined by a block of special electronic tasks that diagnose the general intellectual development of schoolchildren on the material of the subject 'Russian'. The degree of development of culture awareness competence was determined both during conversations focused on dialogue of cultures, during joint lessons with native speakers, and during special cultural-oriented tasks of control works.

The results of the interviews and each block of tasks were evaluated within a score-rating system, where the maximum score was 100 and the minimum score was 30.

Tables 1-4 show the results (average arithmetic score for the group) for each of the selected criteria of immigrant pupils and native speakers of parallel classes of Penza and Moscow schools for the entire period of study. One class (group A) - studied the topics using traditional means, the other (group B) using multimedia. For simplicity of calculations, the average values of the groups for each of the criteria were rounded to integers.

4. Discussion

What stands out in the tables, as well as in the graph of the final comparative indicators for the entire period of study (see Figure 1), is that the indices of the students in group A (who studied the material using standard teaching aids) and B (who studied the material using the proposed model of teaching and multimedia tools) are significantly different in favour of the latter. The results of the first month of training demonstrate the high effectiveness of the proposed concept of education and innovative means.

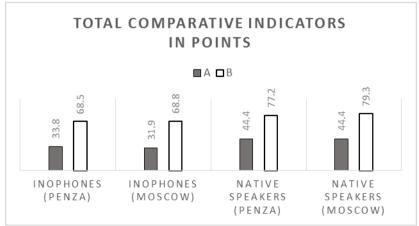


Figure 1. Total comparative indicators of student groups.

From this data, we can see that according to the results of control assessment of foreign students, it is noticeable that all children of immigrants differ from native speakers by lower average performance indicators for each of the selected criteria. Nevertheless, during training, the indices of group B among inophones increased markedly in contrast to group A indices. On average, upon completion of the experiment, group B students reached the level of estimates of almost 70 points out of 100 in both Moscow and Penza schools. Their average total score increased by 2.5 times compared to the first month of training. By contrast, inophones of group A showed less noticeable progress, having increased their average total score by all criteria only by 1.4 times.

Of much importance to us were the results of the criteria 'the level of readiness for spontaneous communication' and 'completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to topics'. They ensured the ability of foreigners to participate fully in classes in the Russian language with native speakers, and guaranteed their inclusion in the overall learning process. The experiment showed that Group B's inophones were twice as active and communicatively advanced, comparing with their earlier levels, already during the second month of training. By the third month, group B's inophones had reached 96 (in Penza) and 98 (in Moscow) scores out of 100 on the level of readiness for spontaneous communication, which equalized them in this criterion with native speakers. Similar progressive results were also observed according to the criterion 'completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to topics'.

The native speakers of the experimental language model (group B) also showed significantly more progressive results compared with the students of the language of group A. Despite the optimal starting parameters of the native speakers of both groups by many criteria, significant improvement in the results was observed only in one of the groups, namely in the experimental group B. Consequently, by the third month of study, the average total score for all criteria for B language speakers in both Moscow and Penza schools was 97-98 points out of 100. While the maximum score for the average total score of the students of the language of group A was only 51 points out of 100.

What strikes as important is that the native speakers as well as the firstmonth inophones were marked by a relatively low level of readiness for spontaneous communication: the students showed low interest in discussing problematic issues, stiffness and shyness during the discussions, had difficulty in formulating and clearly articulating their own thoughts. By the end of the second month of training, the indicators of the native speakers from group B in both schools reached 91-92 points out of 100 on this criterion. The 'completeness of knowledge, skills, exposure to themes' for the B-group native speakers was marked by average scores of 94-96. Note that the average indicators of the native speakers of group A in terms of the level of readiness for communication at the end of the third month did not exceed 41 points out of 100, and the completeness of knowledge was estimated at a maximum of 67 points.

5. Conclusions

The increased scale of internal and external migration of the population, which served as the basis for the formation of multinational and multiconfessional groups in major megacities of Russia, as well as in comprehensive general education schools, has actualized the studies of adapting the foreign cultural contingent to the students of the indigenous nation, including the teaching of the Russian language.

A different religion can be an obstacle in adapting to new environment in a migratory situation, including learning a new language of communication. Religious contradictions affect the development of the child's world outlook, and the desire to preserve one's religion only exacerbates the situation of such children in another ethno-cultural environment, especially at school.

The analysis of the methods and tools used to train migrant children in Russian schools showed the absence of theoretically proven models of integrative learning, as well as the concepts of teaching the Russian language to immigrants in conjunction with native speakers.

Five key principles should be adopted to the concept of joint learning of multinational student contingent: 1) communicatively directed learning, 2) the dialogue of cultures, 3) functional explanation of the material, 4) visualization of linguistic phenomena, 5) individualization of training. Complex implementation of the selected principles becomes possible with the use of special multimedia tools for training.

With the support of the selected principles based on modern multimedia technologies, the authors of the study created and described the concept of teaching Russian in multinational classes, based on three main types of educational activities: 1) classroom collective work (using multimedia lessons); individual work and knowledge control (using variable electronic tasks, as well as additional electronic tools and information materials); 2) educational projects (realized during the completion of creative electronic tasks).

The results of the experimental approbation of the integrating tools concept developed by the authors testify to its effectiveness, as it contributes to the expansion of the active vocabulary, the steady acquisition of students' knowledge, the acquisition of necessary communicative and speech skills and abilities, the development of logic, attention, critical thinking, imagination, the formation of the main types of key competencies of schoolchildren (culture awareness competence, linguistic, linguistic, communicative, information), overcoming significant differences in the level of command of the language of communication between schoolchildren and, as a result, consolidation, integration of a multinational team during a single educational process.

The concept of teaching the Russian language, proposed in the study, as well as integrating multimedia tools developed by the authors of the research, are universal and can be used both in the teaching of multinational classes of the main school in any regions of Russia, and during individual, additional or home schooling for schoolchildren of all nationalities and confessions, for whom the Russian language may be native or second, or non-native.

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