

Finding Effective Ways to Teach Foreign Languages

Myroslava Fabian [†], Nataliya Shtefanyuk [†], Iryna Budz ^{††}
Olha Smutchenko ^{†††}, Halyna Drapak ^{††††}, Hanna Leshchenko ^{†††††}

maxnik8888@gmail.com

[†] Department of English Philology, Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine

[†] Department of English Philology, Uzhhorod National University, Ukraine

^{††} Department of Romano-Germanic Philology, Academician Stepan Demianchuk International University of Economics and Humanities, Ukraine

^{†††} Department Theory and Methodology of Pre-School and Primary Education, Kherson State University, Ukraine

^{††††} Department of Foreign Languages, Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ukraine

^{†††††} Applied Linguistics and Translation Department, Cherkasy State Technological University, Ukraine

Summary

The article is devoted to the consideration of the methodological and general theoretical foundations of a rational methodology for teaching foreign language communicative competence of students of a non-linguistic university. The analysis of the vectors of research of problems of increasing the efficiency of the process of mastering foreign language communicative competence of non-linguistic students is presented. As a methodological basis for a rational methodology for teaching a foreign language communicative competence, the key aspects of the philosophy of rationality are considered, the basic principles of a rational methodology are formulated, linguo-didactic means of its implementation are determined, indicators of rationality are identified.

Key words: *foreign language communicative competence, foreign languages, indicators of rationality.*

1. Introduction

The transformation of the Ukrainian society according to an innovative scenario requires the training of highly qualified personnel capable of generating new knowledge and creating innovative world-class technologies, which immediately influenced the status of the “Foreign language” discipline in non-linguistic educational organizations since proficiency in a foreign language allows students to operate with information obtained from the foreign-language sources, expands the professional range of a specialist of any profile. There came an understanding that a modern student of a non-linguistic university (future engineer, economist, lawyer, and other specialists) needs to master a foreign language communicative competence that allows them to carry out professional activities in new conditions. Mastering a foreign language in a non-linguistic university is currently considered as an obligatory component of the professional training of a specialist of any profile, and possession of a

foreign language communicative competence is one of the components of professional competence.

The problem of finding ways to improve the quality of foreign language proficiency by non-linguistic students is not a new one. There are many theses, monographs, articles devoted to the problems of teaching foreign languages to students of non-linguistic specialties in the competence paradigm.

However, the problems associated with teaching foreign language communicative competence of non-linguistic students in groups with different levels of language training, numbering more than 25 people, still cannot be considered finally solved.

The different initial levels of foreign language proficiency among graduate applicants entering universities, overloaded curriculum, priority, and dominance of special disciplines, a limited number of hours allotted by the educational standard for learning a foreign language, lack of textbooks adequate for difficult learning conditions complicate the solution of methodological problems associated with improving the quality of students’ language training.

All of the aforementioned information testifies to the exceptional urgency of the problem of rationalizing the process of mastering foreign language communicative competence by non-linguistic students in the given conditions of teaching a foreign language. It is possible to rationalize this process, in our opinion, by using a rational methodology for teaching foreign language communicative competence of students of non-linguistic specialties, which makes it possible to bring the level of students’ language training in line with the requirements of state educational standards of higher education and an exemplary program in foreign languages for non-linguistic universities and faculties.

Thus, the relevance of the article is preconditioned by a number of factors, the most significant of which are the following:

- the growing need for highly qualified specialists of a new generation who speak foreign languages;
- the low level of language training of applicants entering the first year of non-linguistic universities;
- multi-level knowledge of foreign language communicative competence by students;
- lack of textbooks that provide educational and methodological autonomy of students in mastering foreign language communicative competence.

2. Theoretical Consideration

The context of the future professional activity of students, on which it is advisable to orient the language training of non-linguistic students, is the key concept of professionally oriented teaching of a foreign language. In this regard, the concept of contextual learning has become widespread. Contextual learning is a system of didactic forms, methods, and means of modeling the subject and social content of the future professional activity of a specialist and their assimilation of abstract knowledge as the sign systems is superimposed on the canvas of this activity. At the same time, teaching acts as a form of personal activity that ensures the education of the necessary subject-specific, professional, and social qualities of a specialist's personality. As in traditional teaching, educational material is presented in the form of educational texts as sign systems containing information that needs to be assimilated. But behind this information, accompanied by educational tasks, problem situations, and tasks, the real contours of the professional future are visible. This fills the learning process with personal meaning, creates opportunities for goal-setting and goal-fulfillment, the movement of activity from the past through the present to the future.

Contextual teaching and professionally-oriented teaching of a foreign language are quite similar in their essence concepts since both provide for the formation of foreign language communicative competencies in students in specific professional, business, scientific fields, taking into account the characteristics of future professional activities. Professionally-oriented learning involves the formation of non-linguistic students of the ability to communicate in a foreign language in specific professional, business, scientific spheres, and situations, taking into account the peculiarities of professional thinking when organizing motivational-incentive and orientational research activities, that is, it is assumed that when teaching professionally-oriented foreign language communication, all components of foreign language communicative competence are formed in the context of professional speech activity. Thus, one of the priority vectors in the

study of the problems of teaching a foreign language in universities of a non-linguistic profile is professionally oriented teaching of a foreign language. Suffice it to mention that in the last 10 years, research has been carried out on solving the problems of professionally oriented teaching of students of non-linguistic universities on the basis of a competency-based approach, the results of which are used in scientific and methodological research as a methodological basis and a theoretical basis. Another vector of research into the problems of teaching a foreign language in a non-linguistic university is the direction under the general name "dialogue of cultures" and a private branch of this direction, among which the most significant, in our opinion, is the formation of intercultural communicative competence.

The author examines the process of formation of the competence in question from the point of view of the cognitive-activity approach, which is a complex educational process, which is carried out on the basis of an integral methodical-philological model and involves "the selection of theoretical material reflecting modern trends in language and language policy; the analysis of intercultural universals and oppositions; the implementation of educational and practical activities focused on the accentuation and development of cultural differences reflected in certain fragments of the picture of the world".

This approach makes it possible to form a qualitatively new linguistic personality with the ability to carry out pragmatically effective communication with representatives of other cultures. This ability as a quality of a linguistic personality provides an advantage for a university graduate in the competitive struggle in the labor market contributes to their career growth and ultimately will determine their life success. The advantages of such a specialist lie in the ability to adapt to new information means, to use new information technologies for receiving and processing information flows in various languages. In didactic terms, the author minimizes monotonous training exercises, uses them only as an auxiliary teaching tool, and proposes to move from the tasks of mastering the material at a basic, perceptual level to comprehending the material at a higher, conceptual, level that presupposes representation in the form of cognitive schemes, frames, and prototypes, where the zoning of fragments of the picture of the world is carried out taking into account their qualitative differences in different cultures [4-7].

We believe that the innovative concept must be introduced into the practice of teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic universities, not only at the advanced stage of training but also at the initial stage, since, as we think, the earlier the transition from the tasks of mastering the material to understanding it at the highest, conceptual level takes place, the sooner a non-linguist student becomes a linguistically interesting person. An equally

promising area is the interdisciplinary paradigm of teaching foreign languages. The implementation of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching a foreign language ensures the formation of integrative competencies of students of a multi-disciplinary university. At the same time, the special role is played by the linguistic computer competence, the possession of which is one of the most important professional qualities of a specialist. One of the conceptual vectors for the development of methods of teaching foreign languages, from our point of view, is modeling. Modeling in teaching is considered in two aspects: modeling the content that must be assimilated by students, and modeling as a teaching tool, including educational actions and techniques that students use in the process of mastering the material.

In pedagogical science, modeling is successfully used to solve a number of didactic problems:

- optimization of the structure of educational material;
- improving the planning of the educational process;
- management of cognitive activity;
- management of the educational and cognitive process;
- diagnostics, forecasting, training design [1].

It is known that the practical value of any model, including in pedagogical research, is mainly determined by its adequacy to the studied aspects of the object, as well as by how correctly the basic principles of modeling are taken into account at the stages of building a model – visibility (expressiveness of the model – constructive, pictorial, sign, symbolic), certainty (clearly highlighting certain aspects of the study), objectivity (reliance on scientific theory, its laws, principles, and methods), which largely determine both the possibility and type of the model and its functions in educational research [2-4].

A vocational education model should include the following components:

- objective, which involves the definition of a block of goals and objectives of teaching a foreign language at non-linguistic faculties of universities;
- motivational, which is associated with the presence of the need to master a foreign language, the desire to improve it, apply it in practice;
- meaningful, which involves the selection of the content of educational material;
- procedural, which provides for the choice of methods, forms, and means of teaching;
- the control and evaluation component is associated with a periodic check of the course of the pedagogical process and the assessment of its results.

In addition, modeling in teaching ensures a full and lasting mastery by students of the methods of cognition and methods of independent educational cognitive activity. Modeling allows one to abandon the

explanatory-contemplative type of the educational process and move on to an active, creative learning process. According to the degree of reflection of reality, the models can be cognitive and pragmatic, depending on the composition, structure, depending on time – static and dynamic. Cognitive models are a form of representation and organization of knowledge, a means of acquiring new knowledge. The pragmatic model is a means of organizing practical actions, a way of presenting activity and its results.

Key positions are acquired by the design and implementation of productive learning and language environments, productive linguo-didactic technologies, allowing one to ensure the systematic organization of a highly productive educational process of an innovative nature [7-9].

This pedagogical concept, according to its authors, allows: to ensure a change in the mutual positions of teachers and students; to use a flexible, highly effective assessment system (point-rating, cumulative, etc.); to expand the structuring of training content; to select qualitatively adequate methods and techniques for mastering a foreign language, as well as means and forms of education; to provide individualization of training; create the most favorable conditions for the development of the student's personality through the variability and flexibility of the training content; to adapt the linguo-didactic system to the individual needs of the student and the level of his basic language training (ibid.). An intensively developing direction in the methodology is information and communication technologies (ICT), which, as widely known, have a high linguo-didactic potential and are characterized by multi-functionality. In a short period of time, ICTs have been improved and updated. Just ten years ago, computer-supported programs for teaching various aspects of a foreign language in a non-linguistic university were developed and introduced into the practice of teaching foreign languages.

Among the linguo-didactic functions of informational and communicative technologies, the following can be distinguished:

- multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism of Internet resources;
- multi-level informational Internet resources;
- a variety of functional types of Internet resources;
- multi-media resources;
- hypertext structure of documents;
- the ability to create a personal user zone;
- the ability to organize synchronous and asynchronous communication;
- the possibility of automating the processes of informational methodological support and organization of management of educational activities of students, its control;

- building of an individual educational trajectory by students;
- implementation of pedagogical teaching technology in cooperation;
- development of skills of independent educational activity.

As can be seen from a brief analysis of the directions for finding effective ways of teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic universities, its range is wide enough, and it is almost impossible to give preference to any one of them because each has an idea that deserves attention. It has been found that in the considered directions there was no one connected with the idea of “ratio”, to which we turned due to the following circumstances. Firstly, in the current conditions of teaching a foreign language in non-linguistic universities, the traditional method is not effective enough. Secondly, not all methodological innovations introduced into teaching practice provide high results. Thirdly, the implementation of the idea of “ratio” in teaching foreign language communicative competence in universities of a non-linguistic profile, as far as we know, has not been undertaken.

3. Conclusions

Problems of increasing the efficiency of the process of mastering foreign language communicative competence by students of non-linguistic universities are intensively investigated in several directions, including contextual and professionally oriented teaching of a foreign language; learning in the dialogue of cultures; an interdisciplinary paradigm of teaching foreign languages; a productive approach to teaching foreign languages; modeling in teaching foreign languages; informational and communicative technologies for teaching foreign languages; the concept of self-study of foreign languages; there is a tendency for a multi-paradigmatic approach to learning.

The methodological basis of the rational methodology is the philosophical doctrine of rationality, the main concepts of which are rationality, cognitivity, and productivity.

The rationality of the methodology for teaching foreign language communicative competence presupposes both the effectiveness, and expediency, and effectiveness, and the efficiency and purposefulness of the teaching actions of the teacher and the educational actions of students, as well as the individual trajectory of self-learning of students. The cognitivity of a rational methodology provides the implementation of cognitive-cognitive mechanisms of various levels. The productivity of a rational methodology ensures the achievement of the goal of learning – the

formation of a foreign language communicative competence – by rational methods of teaching and self-study.

Rationality is a strategy of expediency as a means of optimizing the processes of learning/teaching/mastering a foreign language communicative competence in given conditions. Rationality in the methodology of teaching foreign languages can be achieved by using both rational and irrational teaching methods from a philosophical standpoint [10].

Conceptual categories of rational methodology are normativity, which serves as the basis of rationality based on reflexive comprehension and acceptance of the norm, cognitivity, determining rationality, providing the individual’s mental activity, the actualization of conscious forms and methods of organizing activities and productivity, relevant focus on achieving a result, but taking into account the most rational methods of activity.

The need to develop and implement a rational methodology for teaching a foreign language to non-linguistic students is preconditioned by the partial inexpediency of the predominantly used organization and methodology of teaching foreign languages in non-linguistic universities, overloaded curriculum, the limited number of hours allotted by the educational standard for studying a foreign language, different levels of language training of students, unreasonable the multitude of language groups.

The basic provisions of the rational methodology of teaching a foreign language to non-linguistic students are special principles that ensure the implementation of the expediency strategy, which include:

- the principle of a rational combination of classroom training with self-study;
- the principle of rationalizing the educational autonomy of students;
- the principle of taking into account the multi-level language training of students;
- the principle of accounting for the number of students in academic groups;
- the principle of the rational correlation of the components of the content of education with the structure of foreign language communicative competence.

Indicators of rational methodology as indicators of achieving the effectiveness and feasibility of teaching foreign language communicative competence of non-linguistic students are differentiated depending on the roles of participants in the educational process and also demonstrate the degree of implementation of special principles of rational methodology.

The indicators of the rational methodology include the following ones:

- indicators of the rationality of students’ learning actions: objective self-control and reflection, the degree of cognitive activity in mastering a foreign language

communicative competence, the degree of productivity of self-study with the help of an electronic textbook;
 - indicators of the rationality of the teaching actions of the teacher: the cost-effectiveness of training actions that ensure the rational use of classroom time, a variable sequence of training actions that ensure the achievement of the training goal with the least time and energy costs - mastering of foreign language communicative competence by students, error-free diagnostics of the level of students' knowledge of foreign language communicative competence, divergent control of the process of mastering by students of foreign language communicative competence.

References

- [1] Allwood, J. Feedback in second language acquisition. Gothenburg Papers in Theoretical Linguistics. 1992, pp. 1-35.
- [2] Anderson, T. Theory and Practice of Online Learning. Athabaska University, 2004, 421p.
- [3] Audi, R. The Architecture of Reason: The Structure and Substance of Rationality. Oxford University Press, 2001. 304 p.
- [4] Bax, S. Rethinking methodology? The role of context: 19th Annual EA Education Conference. 2006.
- [5] Bax, S. The end of CLT: a context approach to language teaching. English Language Teaching Journal. 2003, №57(3), pp.278- 287.
- [6] Bedke, M.S. Practical Reasons, Practical Rationality, Practical Wisdom. Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, 2008, 11 (1), pp. 85 - 111.
- [7] Douglas, B.H. Communicative competence. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 102 p.
- [8] Ellis, N.C. Cognitive perspectives on second language acquisition: The associative cognitive CREED. AILA Review, 2006, №1., pp. 100-121.
- [9] Hashamdar, M. Rationality and Rational Learner in Second Language Acquisition. European Journal of Scientific Research, 2010, Vol.41, №4, pp. 482-489.
- [10] Holec, H. Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning. Oxford: Pergamon, 1981, 87 p.
- [11] Little, D. Language learner autonomy and the European Language Portfolio: Two L2 English examples. Language Teaching, 2009, №42, pp. 222-233.