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ETHNOCOGNITIVE APPROACH AND LINGUISTIC MATERIAL SELECTING IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE

Zheleznyakova Elena Alekseevna (a)*, Lapteva Maria Leonidovna (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) The Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, 48, Moika Emb., St. Petersburg, 191186, Russia,
elenazheleznyakova@yandex.ru

(b) Astrakhan State University, 20a, Tatishcheva str., Astrakhan, Russia, hohlina2004@yandex.ru

Abstract

This article describes the basic principles of the selection of language material intending to organize an active process of teaching the Russian language as non-native within the framework of a new, ethno-cognitive approach. Particular attention is paid to taking into account the psychophysiological mechanisms of speech production involved in the process of mastering the language, and the specifics of the Russian language in comparison with the native language of students. The focus of the study is the factors that determine the development of students' skills in understanding authentic texts of different contents and types in a foreign language. It is noted that the formation of listening and reading skills requires the construction of cognitive strategies. In this regard, methodological recommendations for working with texts that are perceived both visually and by ear are offered. The strategic tasks of the teacher also include the search for optimal structures for presenting grammatical material. The grammatical material will also draw attention to the formal properties of a particular construction. The study analyzed the main problems of the cognitive level that teachers face in the process of teaching the Russian language as non-native. As a result of the study, basic principles were developed based on which the selection of language material should be carried out. We have proposed specific techniques for preparing students for the perception of texts and completing assignments in a language that is not their native language.

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Keywords: Ethno-cognitive approach, teaching, Russian, linguistic materials.



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1. Introduction

Modern linguodidactics has developed various approaches to teaching the Russian language as non-native, which satisfies the social order to increase the language proficiency of migrants and other categories of foreign citizens residing in the Russian Federation.

In each of the implemented approaches, key positions have identified that work most effectively in a foreign audience. So, the communicative-cognitive approach is aimed at the formation of students' communicative-cognitive competencies in all types of speech activity. This process involves taking into account the multiplicity of intelligence and epistemological styles of students, the development of their linguistic personality, and the space of accumulated knowledge (Ignatova & Vinogradov, 2006; Mayboroda, 2016; Vovk, 2007). The main conceptual provisions of the cognitive-activity approach come down to several principles are interdisciplinarity, a level approach to studying the functioning of the language, modeling the activity-related nature of foreign-language intercultural communication, developing a picture of the world, educating a multicultural linguistic personality (Andronkina, 2009). At the center of the cognitive-communicative-activity approach are knowledge and mechanisms that provide the process of cognition and the formation of skills and elementary skills with their subsequent implementation in the communication process (Karabutova & Kolchintseva, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

The process of understanding the picture of the world seems rather complicated. A linguistic person sometimes does not notice the cultural model of the world, reflected in his native language. At the same time, "a model of the world embodied in a foreign culture can be seen through the prism of a non-native language if you can choose the appropriate "key" for it" (Frumkina, 2001). Understanding this model is necessary for the formation of a secondary linguistic personality (Lapteva & Zhelezniakova, 2019). In this regard, the problem arises of developing new principles for the selection of language material that satisfy the process of teaching the Russian language with an ethno-cognitive approach.

3. Research Questions

Our proposed ethno-cognitive approach to teaching Russian as a non-native language is based on activating the mechanisms of the student's linguistic mentality. This method allows the student relying on their linguistic and cultural experience in mastering a "foreign" language. The process of personal knowledge of the language will be built more efficiently if culture incorporates those components of psychology that can be called conventional either for everyone or for the majority of members of a given linguistic and cultural community (Pimenova, 2006). At the same time, the language itself acts as a part of the culture, and its instrument, and a universal means of assimilating culture, and its mode of existence, and a factor in shaping the picture of the world (Shepetilova, 2003; Solovyanova, 2003). Researchers in the field of culture has long proved that, even though the individual is unique from a biological and psychological point of view, he belongs to "his" culture. It is in a native culture that an individual masters explicit and implicit models characteristic of a given culture, as well as patterns on which the system is based (Vezhbitskaya, 2001).

First of all, a teacher who works within the framework of an ethnocognitive approach is aimed at developing students' understanding skills, which play a crucial role in the process of interaction of information that a student receives when reading or listening, and his background knowledge and experience. Understanding depends on many factors. Such factors are the student's knowledge of the world, knowledge of the topic, knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of the language being studied, and the significance of contextual guesswork are not ruled out. Knowledge of the world is the core of the world's cognitive model in the mind of the student. When students begin to study the text, they always have a particular set of expectations for this text, which is based on the structures of previously acquired knowledge. For example, students listen to a dialogue between a mother and a child who received a poor grade at school. If the students find the situation, they are preparing to hear questions about the reasons for the situation. Some types of discourse are easily predictable. In particular, the dialogue between the seller and the buyer in the pharmacy is an easily recognizable life situation. In other cases, students can use the hints so that they have the opportunity to put forward their hypotheses regarding discourse. Similarly, an understanding of the content of a text occurs while reading when students rely on their knowledge of the structure of the discourse of written texts, for example, advertising, writing, newspaper, or magazine articles. Correspondingly, the educational text for different phones should be characterized by cognitive features that provide an accurate perception of the Russian (foreign to students) picture of the world (Lysakova & Zheleznyakova, 2018).

When choosing language material, we took into account which psychophysiological mechanisms of speech production are involved in the process of mastering the language. At the same time, we take into account the specificity of the Russian language in comparison with the native language of students, i.e., what basic structures of linguistic consciousness will be based on new grammatical constructions and speech patterns.

Therefore, turning to the bilingual audience to work with the text, the teacher should find answers to several vital questions, which, according to Shales (1995), concern several aspects:

(a) Text content:

- Whether the text will appeal to this particular group of trainees;
- Does it contain elements that allow correlating the content with their own experience, and unknown elements that can activate the cognitive process, making students interested;
- Whether the text is "neutral" or helps students learn more about the culture of the country of the language being studied and the difference between "their own" and "foreign" cultures;
- Does the level of students' language training correspond to the linguistic level of the text, that is, will students be required to work at a higher level compared to their perceptual abilities.

(b) Text type:

- Whether students are familiar with the discursive structure of the text so that they can apply the knowledge and skills acquired by them in the process of learning their native language;
- Whether the text is suitable for the types of skills and communication strategies that need to be developed (for global, selective, detailed understanding, drawing up opinions, expressing one's attitude to what one has read/heard);
 - The degree of authenticity of the text (Faerch, 1986; Shales, 1995).

The original texts can be divided into two broad groups based on what grammatical functions they perform and what didactic qualities they possess.

1. Texts are regulating interaction within the framework of different sociocultural life and related to the daily life of international society. These texts are ads, advertisements, menus, price lists, recipes, weather forecasts, posters. Such texts stimulate comparisons of differences that are observed between the two cultures in the types of texts under consideration. For example, students of primary school age, most likely, will perceive with interest a game in which, being within the limits of their sociocultural situation, they can try on themselves a "strange world." There is no doubt that students, on the instructions of the teacher, will choose a toy for themselves in the children's goods store, where only Russian manufacturers are represented.

2. Texts that provide direct information about the cultural space of the ethnic group whose language is being studied. Such texts are news, guides, interviews, television reports, radio programs. These texts show students that they need to master a large amount of cultural knowledge (situations, facts, figures) in order to increase the level of awareness of perception and understanding. It is known that the interpretation of texts intended initially for native speakers is based on an event context and accumulated cultural experience. These texts can be interpreted differently by students of the Russian language as non-native, based on personal experience and other cultural settings. In this case, it is necessary to carefully think over the system of pretext tasks aimed at preparing students for reading / listening. Careful preparation will help ensure a better perception of texts provided with relevant ethnocultural information. The emphasis should be on an extensive list of tasks that can encourage subjective reactions: "Does this text tell me something that I did not know before?" "Do I agree with ...?", "I would do the same as and ...?", "What feelings does the reading/hearing I have?" and other questions.

The difficulty of the text is an important characteristic when choosing a text to work in an audience with students for whom the Russian language is not native. Evaluating the texts and grading them, the teachers take into account the students' acquaintance with this type of text, with its theme, with the main sociocultural and sociolinguistic characteristics, the information richness of the text, the implicit or explicit form of the information presented, linguistic complexity (the number of new words and grammatical structures), text organization (clarity and coherence, clarity, consistency, and sequence of events or reasoning), the length and style of the text and other factors.

In our opinion, it is also essential to keep in mind the conceptual complexity of the text, which can be evaluated on a scale from familiar to unfamiliar, personal to impersonal, concrete to abstract, direct to indirect. At the same time, the cognitive complexity of students is of great importance, which is understood as the individual degree of differentiation of consciousness, which determines the characteristics of the classification and categorization of various life events. We believe that the diagnosis of cognitive complexity should be carried out along with other entrance tests in the distribution of students to groups during training.

We list the essential characteristics that will affect the accessibility of text perceived by ear: the degree of predictability, number of speakers, speaking speed, voice recognition, variety of pronunciation, quality of articulation, style of speech interaction, communicative noise, technical noise (Schukin, 2003).

Building listening and reading skills require building cognitive strategies for working with texts. Such strategies are driven by goals set for reading or listening. In particular, the effectiveness of developing speaking skills depends on what type of understanding should be activated: general, selective, or complete.

The attention of students is attracted to the so-called "useful tips." Such hints can be various kinds of visual aids, anthropogenic and toponymic units, foreign words, words phonetically similar to words from the students' native language, words with a high rate of occurrence in the text, numbers that indicate dates, time, and quantity. In the process of reading, students have the opportunity to refer to the content of the text repeatedly, so these strategies are applicable specifically to reading texts and not to listen to them. However, the teacher must provide the student with the same opportunities in listening. The purpose of listening is not just to check the understanding of the text, but to teach it to understand. If it is essential for the teacher to realize the potential of the applied cognitive strategies, he will certainly discuss with students the problems that arise when listening or reading. The teacher in the discussion process may suggest ways to resolve difficulties. The tasks that contain the instructions are less complicated than those that offer the student to cope with the text with little or no help. Listening to or reading a text aimed at general coverage of the content is also more comfortable than highlighting the details. In contrast, assignments requiring a language response are more complex than those requiring a non-linguistic answer. For example, correlate pictures with text or tick the correct answer.

If texts can be selected and adapted to meet the requirements, then there is practical use in differentiating the tasks that accompany the text.

We give an example of a differentiated approach to listening to texts. In the lesson, students get acquainted with the list of products that a daughter should buy in the store. After reading the list of words, students listen to the dialogue in the grocery store and (a) tick off the products on the sheet of paper as they are purchased, (b) in the absence of the necessary product, note what was bought in return. Some students may not be familiar with the list of products before listening to the dialogue, but write down what was purchased in order to restore this list. Students can then listen to the second dialogue, in which the girl returns from the store, unpacks the purchases, while her parents comment on the purchased. This method makes it possible for students to check their answers once again, as well as perform an additional task: (a) note the reaction of parents to alternative purchases by simply ticking "satisfied / not satisfied" (guesses based on intonation can also find other confirmations), (b) pay attention to the reaction of the parents and the reason for such a reaction (for example, some products do not correspond to the taste of the parents, they do not like them).

Students can then compare their answers by working in pairs or small groups. Everyone must complete the main task, and those who have completed more complicated tasks should share additional information with others. Low-level students only mark the correct answers. Pupils at a higher level require knowledge of specific content. Students at the highest level need to write down the correct answers. Realizing the idea of discussing materials and assignments requires courage and initiative on the part of the teacher, who is accustomed to presenting and using a single text with the usual set of exercises for the entire class.

Note some features of the development of listening skills. To improve students' understanding of living natural speech, it is necessary to introduce them to authentic texts in accordance with the plan. It seems to us that at the initial stage of learning the Russian language, it is worth listening to small fragments of text, the linguistic and cognitive content of which would correspond to the level of students. Students should be prepared for the perception of the text in several ways:

1) activation of knowledge about a particular discourse by communicating which text will be listened to;

2) providing the necessary background information about the content of the text (for example, "You listen to the dialogue between two friends who accidentally met");

3) listening to the text in a shortened, simplified or slow-motion version of the recording;

4) a conversation on drawings, reproductions, photographs, which create certain expectations about speakers or events depicted in the text;

5) the provision of key (supporting) words and expressions. Students can use words to make assumptions about who or what meaning of the text;

6) discussion of the topic of the text;

7) reading annotations (summaries) of the text. As an option of this method of preparing students for the perception of the text, a student can offer them a group of sentences arranged in the wrong order. In the process of listening, a student should restore the correct order;

8) filling in the gaps in the decoding of the recorded text.

As a rule, international students have difficulty listening to numbers. Therefore, it is often proposed to listen to texts saturated with statistical data as tasks for developing listening skills. So, students are informed that they must listen to a text that requires an understanding of the numbers and write down data on the population (or founding dates) of the ten largest cities in Russia. First, students record their own assumptions about the population of each of the ten cities. In particular, they can be based on residual knowledge from a course in Russian history or geography. Students can work in groups of three to four people, share their assumptions, and come to an agreed set of numbers, which is written on the board. In listening to the text, real data are recorded in a notebook, compared with data on the board. The team with the highest number of matches wins.

The ethnocognitive approach to teaching Russian as a second language, of course, requires special attention to the selection of grammatical material. First of all, starting to learn grammar, the teacher should find answers to the following questions:

- Whether grammatical forms are presented following the need to perform a communicative task;
- Do the examples reflect the natural use of language in communication;
- Whether the formal and semantic aspects are clearly distinguished so that the student can establish a correspondence between form and meaning in this context;
- Do the examples accurately illustrate the grammatical phenomenon, is there a place for conceptual significance;
- Are differences in work style and student abilities are taken into account?
- Whether the work is based on the cognitive abilities of students;

- Does the type of cognitive assistance correlate with the degree of difficulty of a particular grammatical material;
- Whether the rules and explanations to them are sufficiently short and straightforward, at the same time do they fully reflect the specifics of the grammar of the Russian language;
- Whether some diagrams and tables represent the grammatical phenomenon to students, taking into account the form and function.

For example, the functional range of imperative forms that indicate the action prompted by the speaker to perform has its characteristics. In some types of use, the forms of imperative express the importance of imperative mood. In other types, the forms of the imperative do not preserve the primary modal meaning and are functionally synonymous with the indicative or subjunctive mood. For instance: "Wherever you look, blooming gardens are everywhere! Be late for five minutes – you will not be able to enter." Since such and similar constructions actively function precisely in colloquial speech, their study must be included in the content of grammatical phenomena. Although the conceptual aspect of their perception by students of the Russian language as non-native, it will undoubtedly be challenging.

The strategic tasks of the teacher include the search for optimal structures for presenting grammatical material. The grammatical material helps, first of all, to understand the communicative significance of a particular construction. Also, grammatical material attracts the attention of students to its formal properties. An important role is played by exercises that contribute to the spontaneous use of grammatical forms that allow moving from a template or pattern to the automatic use of structures. At an advanced level, these are exercises that reveal the specifics of the grammatical system of the Russian language.

An essential place in the study of a non-native language is given to the development of ontological (universal) categories, such as time, space, cause, effect, change, movement, quantity, quality. Their perception and reflection in the language also have specifics. Various methods of objectification, in particular, the category of time included in the general concepts of the threshold level of knowledge of the Russian language, make it one of the most difficult to master. For clarity, let us imagine only the basic set of linguistic means of expressing a designated category.

I. Whatever time:

1. The time interval (minute, half-hour, hour, day, night, day, week, month, year), names of days of the week, names of months, names of seasons, parts of the day, holidays.
2. The exact time (today, yesterday, tomorrow, that day (month, year), last week).
3. Date (What date is it today? When? / What date?).
4. Time measurement (What time is it now? What time is it?).
5. Duration, duration (How long?)

II. Relative time

1. The temporary order (beginning, end, completeness of the action, the order of the action: first, then, then, earlier, later, already, again, soon).
2. The time relative to the present moment (relevance to the present, past, future: the corresponding tense forms of verbs).

3. The time of one action, event relative to the time of another action, event (simultaneity, precedence, following: earlier than; after, at the same time, further).

4. The time relative to the set time (timeliness, lead time untimely time: on time, earlier, later, with delay, with delay).

5. Frequency, repeatability (often, rarely, sometimes, always, usually, annually).

6. Unit of action (once, once).

7. Intermittent action (not always, with a break).

8. Continuity of action (always, all the time, without stopping, around the clock).

9. Limited time (not always, not all the time, for an hour, until the fall).

Because language acquisition is carried out in a non-linear way, a linear representation of grammatical material constitutes a methodological problem. Students gradually form an idea of the grammatical system of the Russian language. Each time they check the accuracy of using specific language structures and receive feedback from their assumptions. So, mastery of the system goes through a gradual process of development and modification of the language. The following features of students should be considered. Some students better absorb the material, independently working on it by the inductive method. Other students prefer to learn the rules first and then put them into practice. There is a need for an approach that would allow the presentation of language material depending on the working style of students and specific grammatical material. For example, if a rule contains a large number of exceptions, it would be more efficient to introduce it in order to avoid contentious situations and disappointment of students after they start to make many mistakes.

This remark concerns a specified complexity, which in Russian is represented by the education of a comparative degree of specific names of adjectives. Students must memorize a whole list of words that have non-standard grammatical forms: close – closer, high – higher, smooth – smoother, farther – farther, hot – hotter, sonorous – louder, strong – tighter, narrower – narrower, thicker – thicker, sweet – sweeter and many others. The development of such forms can take place in the process of completing tasks to solve the problem. So, student should first read sentences with similar forms of words, that is, turn to primary perception and understanding. Then fill in the blanks or mark the correct answers in the list of proposed ones. For example, the following suggestions may be offered. The family has three children: two brothers and a sister. Sister is younger than Nikita, but older than Victor. Nikita is taller and stronger than Victor. But Viktor has a louder voice than his brother and sister. Questions: What is the name of the youngest child in the family? Victor below Nikita? Does sister have a clear voice?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to consider the linguistic foundations of an ethnocognitive approach to teaching Russian in a bilingual audience and to develop principles for selecting language material for reading, listening, and grammar.

5. Research Methods

In the course of the work, general scientific methods of theoretical research were used, involving the description, generalization, comparison, and classification of the material. Theoretical methods have also been applied for analyzing data from cognitive science, cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, methodological literature, educational programs, and standards for teaching Russian as a foreign language and non-native. A special place is occupied by the method of modeling language material for methodological purposes.

6. Findings

In the study, the leading cognitive issues encountered in the process of teaching the Russian language as non-native were analyzed. As a result of the study, basic principles were developed based on which the selection of language material for teaching the language in groups with international students should be carried out. Such principles are taking into account the style of work and abilities of schoolchildren, the conceptual significance of grammatical material, the authenticity of texts, a demonstration of the development and modification of the language system, and other principles. We have proposed specific techniques for preparing students for the perception of texts and completing assignments in a language that is not their native language.

7. Conclusion

Organization of classes within the framework of an ethnocognitive approach involves:

- Stimulation of genuine communication in natural communication situations, allowing students learning linguistic structures and putting them into practice;
- The use of various forms of student interaction during the lesson (to work in pairs, in small and large groups, avoiding unnatural communication exclusively in the pair "teacher-student");
- Collecting and combining language data containing genuine and relevant information for international students;
- The choice of the problem-search (at least partially-search) method of work, the search for problem tasks, during which solutions will be found.

Thus, the ethno-cognitive approach to the study of the Russian language as non-native implies the activation of all cognitive processes of students and the simultaneous consideration of their nationally specific features. The article examined the basic principles of selecting language material for organizing work on the development of understanding, listening, and reading skills, as well as mastering the grammatical structure of Russian speech.

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