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Short Communication

Foreign Languages Training in Ukraine: Is teacher training having enough?

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Abstract

To ensure effective educational activity, it is necessary to take into account the common European and national tendencies of social development. These factors form the basis for modifications in educational pathways nowadays. This article presents the main modern priorities in the training system of trainee teachers. It has been proven that the use of foreign languages in the training system of trainee teachers helps them to accumulate considerable educational and potential development in the level of general and professional culture. It also affects their thinking culture, and subsequent communication with the globalized information-technological society. It provides them the skills to find their own place in the context of general and specific growth within the modern of many cultures.

Keywords: Foreign Language, Professional Training System, Trainee Teachers, Ukraine.

Short Communication

Foreign language is important to both teaching and learning globally. “*Foreign language learning and teaching refer to the teaching or learning of a non native language outside of the environment where it is commonly spoken*” (Moeller, & Catalano, 2015, p. 327). The Modern tendencies seen in the popularization of foreign languages, alongside with their studying peculiarities offer new claims to professional graduate training in education.

The most meaningful ones include; deep professional knowledge, effectively application of information, sociability, readiness for self-perfection and creativity. Modern specialists’ competitiveness depends not only on the high qualification in their professional circles, but also on their readiness to solve professional tasks under the conditions of foreign language communication. Since the academic discipline - “*foreign language*” is either integrated or interdisciplinary according to its purpose and its subject matter respectively, it has to promote students’ educational outlook. It also widens trainee specialists’ personal socialization and their

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preparation for life under the conditions of multinational and multicultural spheres (Kitaigorodskaia, 1986).

Currently, foreign language communication has become an essential component of specialists' future professional job. However, the potential of foreign language in the training system of future teachers has not been studied sufficiently among the Ukrainian people. So, the aim of this article is to enlighten the importance of foreign languages as a channel to attract the Ukrainian people to civilized progress. It also discusses the possible benefits of foreign languages in teacher education in Ukraine.

Teachers' training in domestic higher educational establishments is performed in accordance with current educational qualifying requirements and foreign language specialists training curricula. As it is known, the aim of foreign language learning in higher educational pedagogical establishments is to enable trainee teachers attain the level of language proficiency sufficient for practical foreign language usage in their future professional work (Nikolaieva, 2002).

An analysis of the Ukrainian higher educational establishments for teacher training shows that they customarily provide courses in foreign languages either in one specialty [*Bachelor*] or in joined specialties [*Master*]. The structure of higher educational establishments includes: Departments offering courses in intensive foreign languages learning, Faculty of the English language, Faculty of the German language, Faculty of the French language, Faculty of the Spanish language, Faculty of Postgraduate training, Preparatory Department, etc. The departments of Pedagogy, Psychology and Foreign Language Teaching Methodology often provide psychological, pedagogical, methodological and practical training for trainee foreign language teachers according to the requirements stated in the National Standards for Pedagogical Education. Postgraduate advanced professional education for foreign language teachers' training involves a lifelong professional training. Such training involves deepening, widening and renewing of professional knowledge and skills on the grounds of earlier obtained professional training and personal practical experience.

Also, the level of graduates' professional training corresponds to the requirements of the State Standards. Specialists in foreign languages are trained for the following educational levels: primary education, basic and complete general secondary education, and basic and complete higher education. Graduates of higher educational establishments are respectively awarded qualifications of primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, and after obtaining the Master's degree – higher educational establishment teachers.

Taking into account the necessity to prepare foreign language teachers to work at basic ungraded secondary schools and to ensure their competitiveness at the labor market, some higher educational establishments provide trainee teachers' training in dual specialties. Specialties are integrated, taking into consideration the affinity of areas of study. This consideration is reflected in the content of academic disciplines, kinds of pedagogical activities in the secondary school, and out-of-school educational institutions. Others include; the amount of time devoted to studying of the corresponding academic disciplines such as: Language and Literature [two foreign languages], Foreign Language and Practical Psychology and Foreign Language and Ukrainian [Language and Literature].

Professional training in higher educational establishments is directed to the arrangement of preconditions, under which students can acquire theoretical knowledge on the specialty "*foreign language*" and develop practical skills necessary for future professional skills in teaching their chosen foreign language. The content of the professional training is therefore determined by:

- *Fundamental academic disciplines of the specialty: Introduction to Linguistics, Introduction to Literary Criticism, General Linguistics, Latin, History of Languages, History of Foreign Literature, Basics of Computer Studies, etc.;*

- *Academic disciplines for professional training: Theoretical Grammar, Theoretical Phonetics, Lexicology, Stylistics, Theory and Practice of Translation, Linguistic and Cultural Studies, History, Geography, Culture of the Country, Practice of Oral and Written Speech, etc.;*

- *Academic disciplines on the methods of the corresponding foreign language teaching: Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools, Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching in High School, etc.*

One of the orientations of most foreign language programs in higher educational establishments is to direct training towards students' specialty and their future professional work (Bakaieva, Borysenko, & Zuienko, 2005). In accordance with the radical changes which are taking

place in the national higher educational system of Ukraine, foreign language curricula have been adapted develop students' professional language competence ([Kharkiv Humanitarian Pedagogical Academy, 2015](#)).

The State National Program, "Education" [Ukraine in XXIst century] stipulates the formation of national language personality that possesses the gift of eloquence – oral and written, who can speak fluently and choose language units in accordance with the purpose of communication. This shall be done on the stages of the speech perception and production in different spheres, forms and styles of speech to ensure the development of an overall speech competence ([The National program, 1994](#)).

In the context of this paper, competence is operationally used as 'linguistic competence', which includes; the knowledge of language, or lexical material in particular, as well as speech skills necessary for training future teachers. Linguistic competence is very crucial for teacher training in Ukraine. Following Ukraine's membership into the Council of Europe, it is vital that the Ukrainian educational standards have to be consistent with the Common European Educational Standards. The Council of Europe suggests and actively promotes the conception of European education based on the idea of "*the Common European Home*". Its ideologists claim that Europe is a society with common spiritual roots and values. Consequently, European outlook has to be based on the knowledge of European heritage and common historical development during two thousand years ([Malcolm, 1989](#)).

Language is considered to be the leading instrument for the consolidation of nations. As for the general approaches to the language problem in Europe, the strategic orientation of the language policy on the continent is multilingualism ([Fiedler, 2010](#)). In prospect, it suggests that every European citizen should know three and more languages. Under these conditions, both foreign language teachers and the academic discipline of training such professionals should be in the foreground in all types of educational institutions in Ukraine.

The European style of language education supposes two types of the language competence; linguistic and communicative skills. As it is known, linguistics is a science that studies languages. Linguistic competence is an ability to produce grammatically accurate forms and syntactic structures, as well as to understand vocabulary frames and use them the same way as they are used by native speakers. Linguistic competence is the main constituent part of communicative competence, as communication is impossible without knowledge of words and grammar rules ([Rowe, & Levine, 2015](#)).

Training future teachers in Ukraine should also focus on the notion of "*personal communicative competence*." This will aid their ability to use the language fluently and naturally in the course of their future professional communication. Thus, it will help them to convey and share ideas in accordance with authentic communicative situation. Such forms of training will positively influence their communicative content line, which is based on speech activity like listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. All these types of speech activity are equally valuable and important in the process of future teachers' training in Ukraine.

Another area of need is training on foreign language translation for trainee teachers. Translation is one of the significant means to develop the culture of professional communication. Language translation can be demanding, as it demands a translator to choose appropriately, words or a syntactic structure to convey the idea in Ukrainian or in a foreign language. As foreign language is closely related to modern life, foreign language teachers in Ukraine have to prepare students [i.e. trainee teachers], not only in terms of vocabulary and grammar, but also teach them to use foreign languages in practical ways such as; technology (working on a computer), science (writing articles or monographs), personal and other professional domains. The analysis of the scientific and pedagogical literature, personal experience and senior teachers' experiences proves the necessity to train trainee specialists in foreign languages. It is claimed that, the aim of the education is not just the knowledge of a foreign language, but the ability to use it ([Bakhtin, 1979](#); [Kharkiv Humanitarian Pedagogical Academy, 2015](#); [Nikolaieva, 2002](#); [Passov, 1998](#)).

Consequently, the national standards for foreign languages teaching and learning incorporate such modern approaches and methods into teaching. These standards encourage conditions for educational humanization, which leads trainee teachers to encounter intercultural interaction. In that context, there appears a potential challenge of creating a multicultural personality. In response, it is high time teacher training institutions in Ukraine train future teachers who can

capture and understand cultural peculiarities of other nations. This is the premise for successful interaction and mutual penetration of different cultures as learning and teaching goes on.

In addition, trainee teachers in the field of foreign languages will need to interpret education from the position of both scientific and cultural reciprocities. These fundamental ideas describing the dialogue of cultures were advanced by Bakhtin (1979), and Bibler (1990). According to Passov (1998), the concept of integrated learning among corresponding countries of different languages and cultures forms an important instrument for generalizing the reality cognition of intercultural communication and interaction. In effect, the art of mastering foreign languages as an inseparable part of teachers' contact with foreign cultures builds a confident learning perception.

In conclusion, foreign languages training in Ukraine is very important to promote the development of Ukraine in the global community. Teacher training institutions need to prepare students to ensure their harmonious interaction with the globalized information-technological society.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares the work has no conflicts of interest.

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