

Methodological Approaches and Pedagogical Conditions of the Educational Autonomy Formation in Students - Natives of Yakutia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to present the results of the authors' study on the justification of the creation of the theoretical concept of formation of educational independence of students in a non-language educational establishment by means of a foreign language. Experimental research work is organized on the basis of the Federal University located in the North-East of Russia. This study was conducted in accordance with the main directions of Russian methods of teaching foreign languages in non-language high schools at the present stage of development of society: focus on international requirements and standards in the field of higher education; lifelong learning; professional orientation of the foreign language learning content; changes in the correlation between the classroom and students' autonomous work; differentiation and individualization in teaching foreign languages. Analysis of the works by foreign researchers regarding academic autonomy, academic independence and self-study confirms the relevance of the formation of educational independence of students of non-language high schools through a foreign language. The development of educational independence of students - natives of Yakutia provides for the implementation of the aggregated theoretical propositions in foreign language learning, related to the humanistic paradigm of education, close interrelation of activities and of the formation of the individual personality, taking into account the specific features of this category of students to reduce the difficulties in learning a foreign language at a high school.

KEYWORDS

students - natives of Yakutia, learning independence, foreign language, education, teaching staff employer-sponsored education, teacher qualification requirements, organizational and pedagogical preconditions for teaching staff training, teacher training management.

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Introduction

The main directions of the development of foreign language teaching methods in universities are: focus on international requirements and standards in the field of higher education; lifelong learning; professional orientation of the foreign language learning content; changes in the correlation between the classroom and independent work of students; differentiation and individualization in teaching foreign languages (Solovova 2013; Ter-Minasova 2015).

Analysis of international experience in issues relating to academic autonomy, academic independence and self-learning (Benson, 2007; Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Holec, 1985; Knowles, 1975; Little, 1995; Voller, 1997) confirms the relevance of the study of formation of students' educational independence by means of a foreign language.



Dutch scientist G.Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001) believes that our perception of reality is a kind of predestination. This perception is typical for the representatives of one nation / region and different from others. Despite the fact that the reality has changed, and activities typical of a certain group of people may be lost, genetic gestalt was kept. There were traditions and customs influencing the forms and methods of education, methods of communication and specific differences of cultural identity were stored, which is important for the present-day reality in building vectors of cultural interaction. We conclude that in the Western countries with a predominance of individualism, independence, autonomy, personal active participation is more important; and in the Eastern countries, which are characterized by a high level of collectivism, a considerable attention is given to the rules and regulations governing social relationships with a large number of mutual obligations that is considered as a factor preventing the establishment of autonomy. However, collectivism can contribute to the development of interdependence, that is, collective autonomy. This paradigm is of particular interest for our study, because students- natives of Yakutia belong rather to the eastern mental group, while being members of the Russian nation, located at the crossroads of East and West.

Goals and methods

The purpose of this work is to present the results of research of constructing theoretical concept of formation of students' educational independence at a non-language high school by means of a foreign language.

The transformations in all spheres of society, changing its views on the role of a language in the people's life determine the effectiveness of a particular method of learning.

Community language learning, (CLL) is related to non-traditional methods of teaching a foreign language (Curran, 1976). Our interest in the specified method is due to the fact that its use allows for verbal communication almost in any subject with minimum levels of anxiety and discomfort characteristic of students – natives of Yakutia, in particular. The next crucial aspect for our use of this method in the classroom of English lies in the group organization of educational process that is habitual and common for students-northerners. Another important aspect of using CLL for our research is to encourage students' self-employment as the leading role in the class is assigned namely to them.

Another method of interest to us is an audiovisual method (Gougenheim et al, 1956). Interest in this method is explained by image sensitivity of reality around them by students-northerners. The special features of the national character of students – natives of Yakutia is related their genetically formed high adaptability to the challenges and perseverance in overcoming them, and audio-visual method of teaching a foreign language requires time-consuming exercises, both during class work and extracurricular (self) activities through technical means.

The Silent Way method is aimed at training students' conscious attitude to the study of the discipline and enhancing their creativity (Gattegno, 1972). The attractiveness of this method for us lies in the fact that the initiative should come from students, and in our case, the students do not manifest different personal activity and prefer to work in a group. In addition, the teacher does not provide ready-made patterns of speech / answers to questions, providing students opportunities to discover and explore a language independently at the expense of their personal abilities. Education in silence promotes active mental activity of students, their concentration when performing tasks with a variety of models and visual aids that is also valuable for the group of students under study.

The presented directions of development of domestic and foreign methods of

The system approach (Blauberg, 1997) is the initial methodological basis for our study. Its tasks in our research are to reveal the integrity of the research object, to define strategies of interaction between its components, to combine them into a single theoretical system, to provide interconnection of the formation of students' educational independence and the use of more opportunities for foreign-language teaching in non-language high school, cooperation and integrity between these processes, the interdependence of which is reflected when setting the objectives, defining tasks, content and results of the process under study.

Using learner- and activity-centered approach in our study has the task of finding ways to optimize and improve the performance of students' independent work of non-language specialties through a foreign language. This approach is seen as strategic in the context of humanization in higher education system (Antsiferova, 1981) and calls for a qualitatively new process of interaction between the subjects of the educational process in a non-language high school.

The main purpose of the application of the competency-based approach to learning a foreign language in our study is the need for modernization of current higher education. Competence-based approach to the educational process at a high school opens new opportunities to train students for the practice of independent expansion of communication in a foreign language, implementation of productive communicative activities and updating personal resources (Zimnyaya, 2006).

According to the communicative approach, the development of educational autonomy by means of a foreign language should take place in situations of interaction of subjects of educational process modeling specific professional activity of students at a non-language high school (Passow, 1991). Practical implementation of the communicative approach in our study takes into consideration the current regional situation, i.e. the construction of the language environment, which will allow students to get their own final result, which is important for northerners.

From the perspective of ethno-cultural approach to the educational process the formation of educational independence should take place taking into account the ethnic and cultural heritage characteristic of a particular region and the country as a whole, for the education of the individual, which has developed ethnic self-awareness, tolerance, the developed ability to inter-ethnic and cross-cultural communication. The use of this approach is aimed at raising students' civic and patriotic consciousness, respect for the ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of the region and of the country, their cultures (Karpushina 2012).

Results and discussion

Achieving the goal of our study on the basis of the above designated approaches becomes possible in the implementation of pedagogical conditions of formation of students' educational self-support in the process of learning a foreign language at a non-language high school.

A teacher forming the student's ethnic self-awareness should consider the possibility of two opposite approaches to education in the national mainstream: 1. nihilistic, i.e. denial and non-recognition of their nationality and culture; 2. chauvinistic, i.e. the recognition of only their national priorities and reducing the value of other nationalities.

In this regard, we believe that one of the perspective directions of domestic foreign language education is the development of effective models of educational systems that take into account both the peculiarities of national republics and the needs of a modern multicultural society, science and industry on a larger scale.

One of the main factors determining the development of ethnic identity is retention and completeness of the existence of national traditions in a multi-



2016, Nikolaeva, 2016; Mikhailov, 2015). The indigenous people of Yakutia preserved the basic moral and spiritual values and priorities: tribal solidarity; cooperation and mutual assistance between neighbors; tolerant attitude towards others; unselfishness and hospitality; the importance of a good example for young people; modest behavior; large families and affection to the children; veneration of the mother; strict system of physical education; respect for their small motherland, the closeness to nature; respect for labor, attracting to it from an early age. Active development of natural resources and raw materials of the Republic, the closeness to the international market outlet, the presence of joint enterprises with foreign partners in the region, opportunities for career growth determine the demand for an expert willing and able to solve professional problems by means of a foreign language on the regional labor market. Thus, the educational order in the region dictates and encourages students – natives of Yakutia to consider a foreign language in the pragmatic aspect of its study.

The need to consider the peculiarities of the student age group of trainees in our study (Kon, 1989) updates the choice of forms, methods and ways of work related to a foreign language learning with students of non-language specialties to form their educational autonomy through the subject studied. In this regard, we consider it necessary to describe the category of students under analysis – complexities and adaptation. Challenges specific to the number of students from amongst indigenous peoples of Yakutia in the study of a foreign language in an adjustment period, in particular, to training conditions in high school, and a new, unfamiliar situation / circumstances are suggested to be reduced by creating a foreign language environment. One of the main objectives of its organization is to create a comfortable, supportive environment that enables providing pedagogical support to bachelors and masters of the type studied, differing with serious challenges in the adaptation period of studentship.

Bachelors experience serious difficulties in changing the educational institution. Sufficiently large contingent enrolled in the first course includes students from the number of rural secondary schools and gymnasiums, which means that they have additional difficulties in adapting to a new social medium. In addition, the northerners experience psychological distress when communicating a language not native for them, as a consequence, the language barrier prevents active communication in the classroom, which is an additional stressor and provokes an increase in anxiety, stress and mental tension during training. They are also associated with the students' fear of being unable to cope with the requirements proposed by higher education institutions, with increasing responsibility for their own results of activities, the intensification of the educational process, etc.

With regard to masters we note that the opening of magistracy is a relatively new phenomenon in the region. This category of students changes their educational level, and therefore, the form and approaches to learning. In particular, the masters' educational programs involve a strong focus on the outside of class (independent) work. The current methodological reality shows that masters' training takes place in the evening, and a master is forced to adapt his/her study to a different time mode compared with training at the bachelor's degree program. Moreover, for economic reasons, a significant number of students of this educational stage combine employment, often the first in their life, and study at the master courses, which imposes an additional burden on students and is yet an additional stressor for them. In general, common for students-northerners of both stages of the educational process at the university is a difficult adjustment period to new conditions, characterized by the passive behaviour as regards communication, by depression, mental activity inertia, low demand in the manifestation of personal identity, uncertainty in unfamiliar circumstances isolated by the communication environment.

Given the above, we propose to remove the difficulties specific to students – natives of Yakutia during a foreign language learning in an adjustment period, using coping strategies (Amirkhan, 1990; Carveretal, 1989; Lazarus, 1966;

strategies as part of our research is aimed at easier and painless acquiring of educational material in a foreign language, encouraging initiative, creativity, independent actions of learners. We offer to use them as an active part of the overall adaptation of students in the modern world: to the new situation, to new conditions, including self-learning activities in the course of learning a foreign language. We believe that those are the most adaptable of them that are focused on solving the problem indirectly. The emphasis, rather than avoidance in solving the problem, activity has a positive impact on its effectiveness (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Today, this range of problems is studied in Russia as an example of different types of activities - educational, professional ones, relations between parents and children (Isayeva, 2010; Kobozev 2011; Shepeleva, 2008). We believe that the problem-focused coping strategies are associated with greater efficiency of human activities, in this case, the process of formation of educational autonomy based on the correlation of student activity and efficiency with which the challenges are addressed. And because the problem-oriented copings are more effective in controlled situations, then we consider their use as an effective way of solving various problems with the pedagogical support of university teachers. Attractive for us is the fact that in the case of coping strategies the student can make mistakes, which is characteristic of students' educational activity, but in any case the student actions are controlled by the aim of bringing to reality.

The leading language of communication among students – natives of the region is Yakut. The objective factor that we should consider in our study is that the overwhelming majority of the student contingent of Yakutia is comprised of native-Russian bilinguals. Since the language of learning in Russian high schools is Russian, for the effective organization of educational process in a foreign language it is important to determine how well-bilingual students own codes of the Yakut and the Russian language systems, a capacity to switch to effective verbal communication depending on the situation of speech communication, as well as the degree of influence of the native language on the process of mastering a foreign language (Byram, 2011; Real & Lambert, 1962; Zalevskaya, 2009).

Historically, the richest in terms of natural and raw resources northern republic has long attracted a large number of people of different nationalities. In Yakutia, with a relatively small total population more than a hundred nationalities are permanently residing. Formalized functioning of the two official languages promoted the establishment of the situation, when natural Yakut-Russian bilingualism prevails in the region, whereby linguistic communication takes place without intermediaries and generates a positive inter-ethnic and international relations.

Our long-term practical experience proves that Yakut-Russian bilinguals are prone to natural effects of the native language as the main means and ways not only communication, but also the cognition of human environment. Native language provides students with a ready-made system of knowledge for understanding a foreign language. When learning a foreign language a student inevitably compares it with the native one, highlights what is similar to the native language in the target language. Availability of diphthongs in the English and in the Yakut languages, similar intonation sentence pattern, the presence of long and short sounds facilitates to some extent acquiring a foreign language and creates a positive motivation. However, a student can ignore the effects that are not only specific to the English language, but do not exist in the Yakut language. For example, there are 8 of cases of nouns in the Yakut language, which is different from English. A proper understanding of the target language is achieved with adequate understanding of the systemic differences.

The emergence of natural bilingualism in Yakutia promoted linguistic environment, communication time uncontrolled by the timeframe, natural communication situations, a great speech practice; all of these conditions do not exist in respect of a foreign language, but the education process of learning a



phenomena. A special place and role is given to the educator - the teacher of a foreign language. The teacher predicts the possible difficulties of each type of foreign language speech activities in advance, monitors students' individual characteristics and the likely difficulties in their development and reports them to students. The teacher also draws attention to the peculiarities of students' temperament, different types of memory, the ability of perception, attention, speech performance, rigidity, emotional anxiety / inhibition, the rate of neuro-cognitive reactions, students' activity and the meaningfulness of his actions.

Conclusion

Formation of educational self-support of students at non-language high schools by means of a foreign language provides for the implementation of a series of theoretical provisions in foreign language education related to the humanistic paradigm of education, close interrelation of activity and formation of an individual personality, the complex of ideas of competence-based, system, learner- and activity-based, communicative and ethno-cultural approaches and pedagogical conditions: 1. organization of foreign language teaching based on the experience of the regional education system in educating the younger generation to carry out educational order by the Republic for training competitive specialists from the local staff; 2. the establishment of foreign-language media based on coping strategies that take into account the relationship of students independent educational activity and determination of personal activity, initiative, self-support, revealing the creative possibilities of students by means of a foreign language; 3. the implementation of means of methodical maintenance of students' educational independence in the process of foreign language learning, taking into account the existing natural native-Russian bilingualism in a multicultural region.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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