

Developing the Multicultural Personality of a Senior High School Student in the Process of Foreign Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the research problem is determined by intensification of integration processes in all spheres of life, which results in broadening international cooperation and cultural interaction between different nations and countries. The modern contradictory and heterogeneous world requires serious rethinking of the existing traditions of the educational process with the view of its multicultural integration and intensification. In this regard the role of a foreign language as a means of cross-cultural communication is increasing. The purpose of the article is to study the problems of formation of the multicultural personality of senior pupils at foreign language lessons. The leading research approach to this problem is a multicultural approach which allows to define such interconnected cultural components as ethnocultural, nationwide, and international ones in the educational content. The analysis of the French language textbook was conducted to reveal what potential it has for development of a multicultural personality. The effectiveness of the impact of the dialogue of cultures on cognitive, affective and activity components at foreign language lessons is shown. The present paper can be of use to foreign language teachers, classroom teachers, and students of the Linguistics faculties.

KEYWORDS

In-service science teachers, technology supported teaching, ICT, teacher professional development program, mixed methods research

ARTICLE HISTORY

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Introduction

Different aspects of multicultural education are highlighted in modern science: pedagogical conditions for formation of a multicultural identity of a senior pupil (Batarchuk, 2006), positive cooperation of national-civil and ethnic identities (Drobizheva, 2008), technology of pedagogical possibilities of ethnic

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culture in multicultural education of students (Kuznetsov et al., 2008), developing the culture of international dialogue (Lebedeva, 2007; Khairullin, 2009), ethno-pedagogical factors of multicultural education (Palatkina, 2003), psychological and pedagogical basis for development of multicultural behavior of secondary school students in a multicultural region (Potapova, 2012). The comparative study of the concepts and realities of the multicultural education is presented in the works by A.N. Dzhurinskiy (2008), multicultural education is described by V.P. Sedorov (2003), multicultural education and upbringing is studied by E.V. Shadrina (2011), multicultural approach to training and education of schoolchildren is applied by A.V. Shafikova (1999). Some of these researchers approach this problem in the context of foreign language learning (Gal'skova 2004; Elukhina 2002; Maslovets, 2009; Siraeva, 2009). The literature review has shown that the problem does not receive sufficient attention in the field of foreign language education.

Literature Review

The importance of the research

Globalization processes taking place in the modern world require, on the one hand, Russia's integration into the world community and, on the other, preservation of its national identity. We should be aware that the cost of integration of Russia with other foreign countries must not lead to its assimilation and rejection of its own culture. In this regard the Russian pedagogical theory and practice pays special attention to the fact that the younger generation should adopt the cultural component of the educational content and it is necessary to organize the dialogue of cultures at foreign language lessons. One of the components of foreign language communicative competence in the program of a foreign language education is the sociocultural component, which includes, firstly, familiarizing students with the cultural traditions and realities of the foreign language countries within the framework of communicative topics and situations and, secondly, the ability to represent their country and its culture in the foreign language cross-cultural communication. If schoolchildren possess a well-formed Russian civil identity and skills of cross-cultural competence it facilitates understanding of other cultures and peoples, helps to reconcile conflicts, and serves as a basis for international and inter-ethnic dialogue with the citizens in their own state and beyond.

History of multicultural education and its essence

Multicultural education has a relatively recent history. It has grown in importance due to the necessity of inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation, as well as the growing movement of ethnic and racial minorities for their rights in multi-ethnic regions and countries (Dzhurinsky, 2008). The concept of "multicultural education" originated in the US in the 30s of XX century. In Russia, this problem was explored by the scientific team of V.V. Makeev, Z.A. Malkova, and L.L. Suprunova (1999). In 2010 there was a new project of the Concept of Multicultural Education in the Russian Federation (2010), where it is associated with developing the Russian identity, and, in this regard, the educational system is aimed at translating the ethno-cultural heritage and national cultures of peoples of Russia in terms of a broad all-Russian and

international cultural-civilization context. In accordance with the Federal State Educational Standards for Secondary (full) education, school leavers should possess the worldview, based on the dialogue of cultures, tolerant consciousness and behavior in a multicultural world.

V.S. Bezrukova (2000) defines multicultural education as education aimed at developing the ability to communicate and to tolerate people of different nationalities, races and religions, including knowledge of their culture and traditions.

The role of the mother tongue and a foreign language in developing a multi-language multicultural personality

The integration of the Russian and world cultural and information space and increasing development of mass communication make the following factors indispensable characteristics of high-quality education: using the mother tongue which is becoming an active mediator and effective catalyst in the dialogue of cultures as the language of education, strengthening the role of the Russian language, and comprehensive learning of foreign languages.

Learning a foreign language as a means of cultural communication which is recognized in the modern civilized world allows you to turn the process of mastering a foreign language and culture into the didactic polylogue of cultures.

Developing a multi-language multicultural personality is one of the main aspects of development of the multicultural education space, as a multi-language multicultural personality is understood as an individual possessing advanced linguistic consciousness. Therefore, implementation of several languages into the educational process of the secondary school is certainly a significant step to accomplish the set tasks.

The multicultural education denies development of a person out of the national culture and at the same time encourages development of a multicultural personality as the focus and intersection of several cultures.

The multicultural education focuses on such relationship between cultures when one of them is dominant. In the Russian society the Russian culture is accepted as the dominant one, and its basis is the Russian language which is recognized as the official language by law. But the dominance of one of the cultures does not mean its exclusiveness; in accordance with the ideology of multiculturalism other cultures are recognized as authentic, unique, and inherently valued (Potapova, 2012).

The multicultural personality is defined as a new type of personality who accepts life images which are different from one's own; such personality is psychologically and socially ready to accept different cultural realities (Palatkina, 2003). The multicultural personality recognizes the unity of the human kind and human values and accepts the main differences which people of different cultures have.

Within the framework of this study the multicultural personality is understood as a personality possessing an ethnic identity and having a positive attitude to their own ethnic group and other nations; who respects the rights of people and behaves in accordance with ethic and moral standards, being able to correlate universal and national interests.

The components of the multicultural personality

The analysis of the psychological and pedagogical literature helped us identify the following components of the multicultural personality:

a cognitive component influencing the development of ethnic identity, ethnic stereotypes, and autostereotypes;

an affective component influencing the development of ethnic attitudes and manifesting itself in the way one treats both one's own culture and other ethnic cultures;

a behavior component influencing development of ethnic tolerance.

L.M. Drobizheva (2008) defines the notion of ethnic identity as individuals' consciousness based on their understanding of their own nationality, language, culture, history, territory, interests, emotional attitude towards them and, under certain conditions, willingness to act for the sake of these ideas. The content of the cognitive component is represented by heterostereotypes manifested in one's understanding of other ethnic groups, and autostereotypes manifested in one's understanding of one's own ethnic group. A multicultural personality has multicultural self-awareness treated as a person's self-identity having the highest level of positive conscious attitude to cultures of different nations, preserving and developing one's own ethnic identification at the same time (Batarchuk, 2006).

Ethnic attitudes establish an attitude towards a phenomenon (e.g. traditions) or an object (language, material culture). Ethnic attitudes include an affective component of a multicultural personality of senior pupils and are characterized by their attitude to a different ethnic culture, or their attitude to their own ethnic culture.

Multicultural behavior is shaped in the process of interethnic cooperation, that is, certain relationships between members of different ethnic cultures when they share their experiences, spiritual values, thoughts and feelings. The behavior component of a multicultural personality of a senior pupil is expressed as ethnic tolerance manifested in the way of an individual behaves in relation to other ethnic nationalities.

In today's multicultural world ethnic tolerance must be consciously developed as it helps to successfully interact with different cultures avoiding conflicts, and to adapt to the new social ethno-cultural realities.

We can conclude from the above that a multicultural personality having cognitive, affective and behavior components can go beyond one's own ethnic identity, ethnic attitudes and ethnic tolerance in the process of communication with other ethnic representatives and, at the same time, a multicultural personality has one's own ethnic characteristics, demonstrating multicultural behavior.

Aim of the Study

- 1) Studying regulatory documents and scientific literature on the researched issue;
- 2) Revealing possible ways of using the content of a foreign language textbook in the system of multicultural education;

3) using the revealed potential to organize the dialogue of cultures at the French language lessons.

Research questions

The overarching research question of this study was as follows:

How can we prevent national conflicts? What must a teacher of foreign language do to learn his students to avoid xenophobia, cultural shock, and prejudice against other ethnic groups, to minimize difficulties in intercultural communication?

Method

A variety of methods complementing each other was used to test the hypothesis:

- theoretical methods: analysis and synthesis of regulatory documents; studying psychological and educational, scientific and methodological, philosophical, sociological literature; content analysis of the French language textbook.

- empirical methods: studying the foreign language learning process at school; conversations with teachers and pupils; pedagogical experiment; qualitative and quantitative analysis of the experiment results.

The analysis of theoretical literature and teaching experience concerning the problem has shown that formation of the multicultural competence at foreign language lessons at school is of a quite sporadic character. It led the authors to formulate the hypothesis of the research: the effectiveness of the multicultural education increases if it is found out how the content of a foreign language textbook can be used for organizing the dialogue of cultures at foreign language lessons at secondary school, e.g. what potential it has for the multicultural education.

Results and Discussions

Research premises

8 «A» form of secondary school №60 (Kirov), 2014/15 academic year.

Stages of the research

The research consisted of three stages:

At the first stage – the search-and-theoretical stage – understanding and stating of the research problems took place; the goals, hypothesis, and objectives of the study were defined; the research plan was made; the criteria and indicators of multicultural competence of students were identified.

At the second experimental stage we carried out the content analysis of the French textbook “French as a second foreign language. We talk and discuss” for 8th graders by V.N. Shatskikh, O.V. Kuznetsova, and I.N. Kuznetsova (2007) in order to identify possibilities of its use in the multicultural education. Lesson notes were made taking into consideration the results of the content analysis and the revealed multicultural possibilities of the textbook. The pedagogical experiment including the dialogue of cultures was conducted, its results were analyzed.

The third stage is generalizing the findings of the study. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results and their theoretical justification were made. The results of the experiment were systematized and generalized; the major research conclusions were drawn.

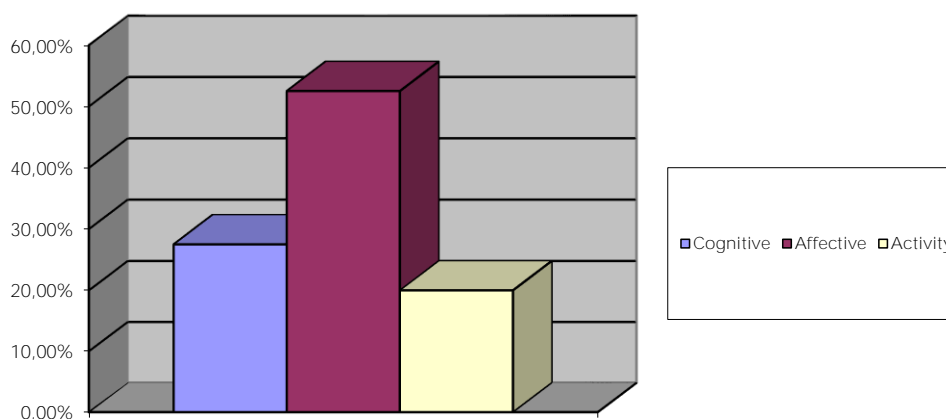
The analysis was carried out to reveal how the textbook “French as a second foreign language. We talk and discuss” for 8th graders by V.N. Shatskikh, O.V. Kuznetsova, and I.N. Kuznetsova (2007) can contribute to development of the multicultural personality of a high school student. The textbook content meets the modern requirements for the French language proficiency.

The main goal of the course is to further develop the communicative and cross-cultural competence. The textbook includes topics and issues about the life and culture of the country of the studied language, aimed at forming a true-to-life idea of France and the people living there. The textbook introduces the French culture, as well the peculiarities of everyday life to students. It explains the choice of training texts and exercises which are characterized by a great diversity. The emphasis is put on the comparison of the French and Russian cultures, which is important to develop a multicultural personality of a senior pupil.

The textbook content is sufficient to fully reflect the realities of the modern world: students are given an opportunity to learn about some of the French national holidays, French cuisine, favourite sports, preferences in clothes, leisure activities, peculiarities in family relations, and the most favorite travel routes. The textbook also reflects present day school life problems. All these give students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the foreign culture and to integrate into the culture of other nations.

The analysis of nine topics of the textbook “French as a second foreign language. We talk and discuss” by V.N. Shatskikh, O.V. Kuznetsova, and I.N. Kuznetsova (2007) aimed at development of the multicultural personality of a senior pupil was carried out and it revealed 28 training texts and 52 exercises and assignments reflecting the dialogue of the French and Russian cultures and cultures of other nationalities. The texts, exercises and assignments are divided into three main components: the cognitive one (text and exercise content includes language and culture specific information); the emotional component (assignments allowing the student to look at the world with the eyes of the French student and express their attitude to Russian and French culture achievements); the activity (behavioral) component including exercises and tasks developing skills and abilities to communicate in specific socio-cultural communicative situations.

The content analysis of the textbook revealed that the cognitive component accounts for 27, 5% of the educational material (22 assignments); affective one constitutes 52.5% (42 assignments); activity – 20% (16 assignments).



Picture 1. Chart showing the proportion of each component of a multicultural personality in the French language textbook

The diagram shows that in the process of multicultural education one should pay more attention to the cognitive component, that is, forming cognitive interests of students; and to the activity component, in other words, developing a conscious, active, multicultural personality. It involves use of modern educational technologies and active methods of teaching at foreign language lessons .

The textbook material is divided into nine topics, each of which contains texts, exercises and assignments in line with the strategy of the multicultural education. The dialogue of cultures is presented in all educational topics:

1. Topic «A l'école, comme à l'école» – «At school as at school» – Russian and French education systems are compared.

2. Topic «Comment occupez-vous vos loisirs?» – «What do you do in your spare time?» – it reflects leisure time traditions of French and Russian high school students.

3. Topic «Comment ça va en famille?» – «How's your family?» – it is devoted to the generation gap problem both in Russia and in France.

4. Topic «Tout le monde aime les fêtes, et vous?» – «Everybody likes holidays. How about you?» – the main French and Russian holidays are contrasted and compared .

5. Topic «Manger pour vivre et non pas vivre pour manger» – «Eat to live or live to eat», – peculiarities of the Russian and French cuisines are described.

6. Topic «Des goûts et des couleurs on ne discute pas» – «Tastes differ» – it make students think whether Russian and French teenagers have the same fashion and clothes tastes and preferences.

7. Topic «Est-il facile d'être en forme?» – «Is it easy to be fit?» – it compares the most popular sports among Russian and French high school students.

8. Topic «Pour chaque oiseau son nid est beau» – «Every bird likes its own nest» – it describes attitudes of French and Russian senior pupils to their motherland.

9. Topic «Tout le monde aime les voyages» – «Everybody likes travelling» – it represents a sightseeing tour around famous places in Russia, France and other countries.

Thus, the textbook helps to solve problems of multicultural education and foster development of the multicultural personality able to behave properly in a multinational and multicultural environment, respecting their own and other cultures. The foreign language teacher acts as an intermediary between cultures.

The disadvantage of the textbook is that it lacks information about cultures of other (apart Russia and France) countries. The teacher is recommended to compare the cultures of Russia and other various countries to develop the Russian civil identity of students. So the teachers should be creative in their choice and use of additional materials offering problematic situations to encourage the dialogue of cultures.

The French language lessons were conducted during the experiment on development of the multicultural personality of the senior pupils. Here is a part of one of them, its topic is “Bonjour, la France!”.

The goal of the lesson was to organize the learning activities of high school students to study the French culture which can promote their integration into the culture of the French people and solidify their knowledge on the subject.

The pedagogical task was to inspire high school students to respect the state symbols of France and Russia comparing linguo-cultural phenomena.

The content of the lesson: the students were given new information about the language about the country of the studied language in the form of a presentation commented by the teacher, then they were offered to do various question-form tasks. Accuracy and speed of the responses were assessed.

At the "goal-setting" stage of the lesson the "appeal-to-student-life-experience" technique was applied to enhance the students' attention and motivate them to learn about the French cultural peculiarities. The students were given the topic of the lesson “Bonjour, la France!” (Hello, France!) and explained the objectives of the lesson.

At the “main moment” stage students were asked a question, “What comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘France’” eliciting the following associations: Eiffel Tower, high-fashion, Paris.

After that the students were given a wit task: to choose pictures showing the flag, coat of arms, symbols, and words of the French national anthem among the offered state symbols of other countries. The students hesitated when choosing the coat of arms of France. Their opinions were different:

- France doesn't have their coat of arms!

- there is no coat of arms as it is associated with the monarchy and kings against whom the people of France fought for a long time; but there is an unofficial emblem used by French people.

So senior students got interested in the topic, they were involved into the discussion and motivated to solve the tasks set.

The students were shown a Power Point presentation to refine the knowledge they had about the French state symbols and compare them with the state symbols of Russia. With its help the students:

identified colours of the national flags of France and Russia, compared them and learned the meaning of these colours;

studied the origin of the coat of arms and symbol of France and compared them with the Russian coat of arms;

solidified their knowledge of the French and Russian anthem;

got acquainted with the peculiarities of the French and Russian cuisines;

found out the differences and similarities of the Russian and French holidays.

In the course of the educational activities interest in the French language and the language was raised; the ability to compare and draw necessary conclusions was developed; initiative was motivated. All students participated in the educational debates and discussions.

The competitive game “noughts-and-crosses” was held between two teams to solidify the knowledge. At the stage of reflection, the students said that they had enriched their knowledge of the culture of France and its state symbols, and consolidated their knowledge of the Russian state symbols.

The qualitative analysis of the responses received from the students and the assessment marks makes it possible to conclude that the country study material and organization of the dialogue of cultures contributes to development of the multicultural personality of students.

Conclusion

The idea of multiculturalism has been described in the scientific literature with different names: “polycultural” (Bezrukova, 2000; Siraeva, 2009; Shadrina, 2011), “multicultural” (Batarchuk, 2006; Drobizheva, 2008; Kuznetsov et al., 2008; Palatkina, 2003; Potapova, 2012), “many-cultural” and “cross-cultural” (Baryshnikov, 2012; Elukhina, 2002) which are synonyms, in our opinion. When describing the essence of the multicultural education the researchers insist on equal significance of different cultures. In the multicultural education one of the cultures is recognized as dominant, while all the others are treated as unique. The presence of the dominant culture influences the selection of such indicators of the multicultural personality as ethnic identity and ethnic tolerance. Psychological and pedagogical literature most often highlights aspects of multicultural education in a multi-ethnic society. We consider that the problems of development of the multicultural personality has not been solved yet, especially, in the regions with mono-ethnic composition of their population as the students of the titular nation are often indifferent to their national culture, and ethnic minorities are losing their cultural and linguistic identity and are getting assimilated with the titular nation. The solution of this problem is connected with restoration of ethno-cultural and ethno-social functions of the school.

The multicultural education is defined as a methodological basis to develop the multicultural personality of senior schoolchildren. The multicultural

personality is characterized by multicultural awareness and multicultural behavior. Behavior determinants of the multicultural personality are ethnic identity, ethnic tolerance, and ethnic attitudes. The analysis of the textbook “French as a second foreign language. We talk and discuss” for 8th graders by V.N. Shatskikh, O.V. Kuznetsova, and I.N. Kuznetsova (2007) and the conducted lessons allow us to make the conclusion that the dialogue of the French and Russian cultures at foreign language lessons contributes to the process of acquaintance of Russian schoolchildren with the cultural values and traditions of Russia and France, development of tolerant attitude to people of other nationalities and is a means of development of the multicultural personality of a senior pupil. The textbook has the materials on topical problems concerning both the Russian and French senior students.

Recommendations

The results of the present paper will be of interest to foreign language teachers and students studying at linguistic faculties. We recommend them analyze the content of a foreign language textbook and use it for organizing the dialogue of cultures at foreign language lessons at secondary school because it has a large potential for development of the multicultural personality of students. The textbooks reflect present day school life problems and give students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the foreign culture and to integrate into the culture of other nations.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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