

TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF US SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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The development of current education system worldwide is characterized by intense and thorough transformations encouraged not only by social and economic development, but also by a tendency to integration, prompted by internationalization and globalization of education system in general. Innovations, implemented in accordance with the program of modernization of education are not limited to this or that individual aspect, but touch upon all education issues. Among them multiculturalism in education that has an important function of ethnic and racial equality development. Multicultural education creates equal opportunities for all ethnic groups and attaches youth to cultural and moral values of other countries and peoples.

Globalization processes in education draw our attention to the educational policies of different countries, especially most advanced ones. In this regard the United States as one of the most developed countries in the world serve a perfect example of successful realization of educational reforms. The article deals with basic principles and innovations that provide for the successful training of foreign language teachers who are to work in the multicultural environment of the US schools.

The study is relevant due to the significance of modernization of education that defines certain conditions of students' and teachers' training education.

Among others the article highlights the role of culture in foreign language learning. Culture helps to create multi-sided personality of a student, reveals his/her identity, contributes to students' engagement in the learning process and improves academic performance of students, including those from recent immigrant families. The authors analyze multilingual and multicultural programs implemented in the US schools and devise a list of challenges that the teacher can face in a multicultural class.

The research data collected with the help of traditional research methods, such analysis, synthesis and interpretation of theoretical and empirical material allowed the authors to come to a number of conclusions. One of them is the importance of multicultural education in foreign language teaching. The authors analyze students' performance in the subject, outline the model of a successful multicultural class teacher of the XXI century and provide recommendations to improve students' academic performance in a multicultural class.

The experience of the United States in multilingual education is really valuable and on careful consideration can be applied in Russia and worldwide to successfully teach foreign languages to students in a multicultural class.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, continuous teacher education, culture, migration, teacher of the XXI century

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the modernization of the content standards of education is becoming the priority area in the development of the education system. Its major aim is to create equal opportunities for students regardless of their personal characteristics.

This problem is relevant due to the importance of modernization processes that establish the specific conditions for students' competence development, because these students are the future teachers.

Being at the present stage of its development the US multilingual educational policy owes a great deal to *No Child Left Behind Act* issued in December 2001. The reasons for social and political approval of this Act were caused by the following:

- The students of ethnic minorities had lower academic results, especially in English;
- There was a high level of uneducated or half-educated Latin Americans;
- There was a necessity to raise academic results of the linguistic minority students;
- There were many multilingual programs with different teaching approaches of a low quality;
- In most cases multilingual education was carried out on temporary and compensatory basis;
- There was a lack of skilled professionals in the sphere of multilingual education;
- One of the reasons was an importance to mark the position of the English language in the elementary school for the students to succeed in studies, work and society;
- The necessity to monitor the linguistic minority students' academic results in pursuing the objective;
- The fear of ethnic segregation, national disagreement and social division aimed on preservation of immigrant languages. The need for integration and assimilation.

No Child Left Behind Act claimed annual testing of LEP students on the level of English proficiency. Such testing designed the study of common English including all the peculiarities of its units. For instance, in the State of New York in order to check the level of English proficiency schools tested students by means of the following tests: *Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R)* and *English as a Second Language Test* – for advanced and intermediate students. Annual testing required the rise of learning results.

However, NCLB Act didn't answer to all expectations of the government. So, in 2015 *The Every Student Succeeds Act* was signed, replacing the previous one. It is considered to be more flexible to students' assessment and gives more freedom to schools and states to choose educational policy of their own. The main gap in NCLB Act (as the lawmakers consider) was too much testing during the school time. The ESS Act doesn't exclude assessment at all, but breaks annual testing into three or four smaller tests [1].

2. BACKGROUND

One of the key issues of multilingual and multicultural education is the correlation of language, culture and communication in the context of globalization. Scientists come to the conclusion that such bonds as mobility, cultural dominance and growing diversity contradict modern basic regulations in multicultural education that is in practice in the US. Claire Kramsch (2014) argues that nowadays the mobility of semiotic systems challenges the traditional concept of a modern language training. The modern language training means training in useful knowledge and skills acquisition. However there is a reconsideration of priorities due to the globalization processes in speech. Kramsch speaks about such concepts as language purity, accuracy, correlation of language units and the spheres of their usage that change much in time. It is useless to memorize the basic clichés when learning the language, it is important to study the national culture and language development with the course of time [2].

Scientists are interested in the contents of a studied language as well. It is evident that the basis of the content standards of education in a multilingual class includes the study of language and culture. The main problem is the correlation and intercrossing of these two fundamental concepts. In most US schools and universities, that focus on multilingual education, language learning is based on studying grammatical structures or topics accompanied by memorizing of the active vocabulary. Such teaching method has nothing to do with a successful knowledge and skills acquisition as a child won't have any opportunity to adjust to the new environment and to choose the right vocabulary for it [3].

Throughout a long period of time the most relevant issue was the influence of multilingualism on a person. There is no doubt that knowledge of several foreign languages carries only positive aspects. The correlation of multilingualism and the process of thinking is a disputable matter. It is interesting whether the second and further language acquisition has a negative or slowing down influence on the improvement of the first language command. The problem to be studied is whether the multilingualism leads to the state when knowledge and skills in both languages cannot be completely developed and

whether the acquisition of several language systems influences the common cognitive development when a bilingual person is less developed than a monolingual peer, Pomortseva argues [4].

The first person to study the influence of multilingualism on a mental development of a child was Epstein (1915), the follower of the association psychology school. There are three periods in the history of investigation of this problem:

1. The period of negative results introduced in the research of the American linguists of the twentieth. Epstein defined thinking as an association between ideas and words. He considered that the knowledge of one language prevents the learning of other languages, as various intersectional word associations lead to a language barrier and prevent the spontaneous phrasing. However, Epstein and a group of scientists concluded that a person can have balanced mental and speech development.

2. In 1935 Vygotsky advanced a theory about a positive influence of multilingualism on thinking and development level of a human being. One of the aspects of this positive influence was the capability to express one idea in several languages that gives a child the opportunity to have a look at his/her language as at one definite system among many others. It leads to a particular awareness of his/her linguistic operations.

3. Continuing the investigation of the interinfluence of multilingualism and thinking, scientists (Cummins, Skutnabb-Kangas) attempted at revealing the conditions under which the multilingual learning environment has a positive influence on speech and cognitive development of a child.

Claire Kramsch and Michael Byram studied the problem of multilingual education as well. The efficiency of multilingual education is doubtless as its aim is not only the language learning but the study of culture and intercultural relations. Byram advanced a theory about a multilingual communicative competence which means to be able to use speech units on a particular topic supported by personal experience and the knowledge of society and history. The works of Kramsch were devoted to the influence of culture on language learning. She proposed a theory about an analytical competence (a symbolic competence), which implies the skill of a teacher to combine language with culture that is grammar and style, word stock and connotation, teacher's erudition and the ability to express one's point of view as an organic unity. It is important for students to understand that language acquisition implies not only information awareness but logical reasoning and the combination of the above mentioned notions as well.

2 MODERN MULTICULTURAL CHALLENGES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

2.1 Multicultural education and public schools – points of contact

Multicultural education is an algorithm of teacher's actions accompanied by strategies and teaching material in the process of education that serves to help teachers to cope with students of different social, racial and ethnic identity. It provides students with knowledge about the history, culture, and contribution of diverse groups [5].

Christine Bennett understands multicultural education as "an integrated approach to teaching which comprises equity between students of different ethnic minorities at schools and other educational institutions; curriculum modernization and multicultural competence development" [6].

B. Agataeva says that multicultural education is "education that gives all ethnic minorities equal opportunities to realize their cultural needs; introduces youth to cultural and moral values of other countries and nations. The dialogue and culture correlation principle is realized in multicultural school environment to the full extent. It forms a multicultural personality that recognizes cultural pluralism [7].

The main aim of multilingual education is the development of an intellectual, social and personal level of all students and their high potential. High academic standards and achievements are realized by means of corresponding innovative approaches. However, it depends on the knowledge of a teacher, his/her attitude and behaviour, whether he/she gives equal opportunities to all students during the process of learning and helps students become more multiculturally-conscious (i.e. helps them understand different systems of acquisition, evaluation and etc.)

2.2 American School Population – a Multicultural Mosaic

There are nearly million students from different countries of the world and study at US schools nowadays. In 2003 their amount was equal to 10.5% among all the students taking K-12 academic course, this segment of education was the fastest growing one in the US. The highest percentage of students who had changed their ethnic affiliation was in the 7-12-th grades, where the number of foreign students increased by 70% from 1992 to 2002. Some researches put forward an assumption that the percentage of US students whose native language is not English will amount to 40% by 2050. Though Spanish is the ancestor language of the most English-speaking citizens (approx. 80%), more than 350 different native languages were revealed in school districts all over the country [8].

According to *The Modern Language Association* data the number of US college and university students studying foreign languages has never been greater than now [8].

Nowadays the most wide spread language among American students is Spanish followed by French, German, Japanese, Chinese and Italian. Such rare or exotic (if the expression can be tolerated) languages as the American Sign Language, Arabic and biblical Hebrew are becoming more and more popular than years ago.

However, in spite of a foreign language study propaganda, this aspect of teaching and learning activities hasn't got enough nation-wide development in the US yet. Only seven of fifty states included foreign languages in the compulsory curriculum for students aged 6 to 12.

2.3 Who Succeeds When No Child Is Left Behind?

In 2001 in order to support foreign language learning the US government adopted a legislative act referred to as *No Child Left Behind Act*.

No Child Left Behind Act was aimed to raise the level of academic progress among children belonging to ethnic minorities. One of the measures to improve education was to conduct at state schools annual examinations equal for all students and the compulsory assessment for teachers as well.

On the way to the education modernization one may face some difficulties. These difficulties were discussed by Chubb and Moe in one of their articles. They came to the conclusion that it would be difficult to change the existing "unhealthy system", because the US secondary education system had never been reformed. In their opinion, the reorganization of the means of public control such as the legislative authority, an electoral cabinet and the system of teachers' employment are irrelevant to the efficient education. Another researcher, Binder, considered that easing some regulations and requirements would not lead to fundamental changes because of a close relation of different branches of educative policy such as financing, staff certification, teachers' continuing professional development and etc. It is impossible to reorganize one sphere without the reorganization of others. Binder concluded that such reorganization would acquire much more changes in schools' management than one could imagine [9].

To some extent NCLB Act prevented the development of school potential in the achieving of the appropriate annual progress and realizing of goals set by the act, because the students who didn't master the language. One of the major aims of schools with a big number of linguistic minority students is to help them achieve high level of English proficiency. It may be unattainable for such schools because usually students are not able to successfully complete the multilingual academic programme. This fact slows down the whole process of education and in less desirable circumstances students continue studying in their mother tongue.

Thus, in 2015 the President of the United States, Barak Obama, signed *Every Student Succeeds Act*, replacing NCLB Act. It gives more opportunities to states and schools to choose the language policy and softens annual assessment regulations at multilingual and multicultural schools. The lawmakers consider annual testing to be very complicated, thus, interfering with successful language programme acquisition.

2.4 New Programmes – Old Challenges

Multilingual academic programmes let students study in both languages: English and their mother tongue to the same extent. *English as a Second Language* programme implies mostly studying in English till the moment their knowledge advances considerably. In order to participate in academic activities with the whole class students take a preparatory training course (a part-time academic day). *English Language Immersion Programmes* are frequently used, but as a rule stay useless for the English language learners. These language immersion programmes imply classroom activities for non-English speakers only in English. They are widely-spread in such states as Massachusetts, California and Arizona [10].

Another important research in the history of the US multilingual education, that was being held over a period of 8 years, is the Ramirez research. There were three different multilingual programmes under study: Language immersion, Early Exit Bilingual Education (using mother tongue in the basic course) and Late Exit Bilingual Education (10% of English vocabulary is actively used in the nursery school and further education is held in the English class.)

During the period of the investigation the academic progress of more than 2300 Spanish-speaking preschoolers and school students were under the analysis in New York, New Jersey, Florida and Texas.

Investigation results differed from each other depending on the program of education. There were no significant differences up to the third grade. To the sixth grade those students who were taught according to *the Late Exit Bilingual Education Programme* showed better results in Mathematics, English, and Reading in English than the participants of other programmes. Ramirez concluded that elementary education given in mother tongue didn't prevent students from the English language learning, on the contrary, it helped them be up with their agemates in English, Mathematics and Reading [3].

Portees and Rumbaut, the researches in the sphere of Social and Education Sciences, argue that migrant students who keep the knowledge of two languages and stay in touch with native culture are academically more successful and socially adapted than their agemates who move towards only the English language learning.

Such scientists as Swain, Lapkin and Genesee as well as California State Department of Education studied and analyzed *the Immersion Bilingual Education Programme*. The results of their investigations are still relevant. They are reflected in the works of Swain and Johnson, Jones, Lauren, de Courcy, a group of scientists in Johnstone and others [11].

The analysis proved that *the Immersion Bilingual Education Programme* students managed to raise their competence in both languages. However, being bilingual does not necessarily mean only functional usage of two languages. The negative aspect of this program is that lots of students speak English only at school and do not do it at home. They are quite competent in English but do not try to speak English in society. We explain that fact by the absence of spontaneity and natural communication in the second language as well as the lack of cultural opportunities of active and meaningful usage of the second language. Theoretically, *the Immersion Bilingual Education Programme* is aimed not only to educate bilinguals but to enlarge the cultural horizons of students and to introduce them to the second language culture and values.

Another programme controlled by the government by means of local educational institutions or centres providing educational services is *The Migrant Education Programme* that includes approximately 45000 migrant students among a number of students attending public schools that amounts to one million people. *The Migrant Education Programme* aims to help overcome difficulties dealing with move house, cultural or language barrier, social isolation and others. This work let them succeed in studies and even find a job in the future.

Educational grants upon this programme are given not to every migrant student but to those defined as "a migratory child" according to the academic programme regulations.

3 EFFICIENT TEACHER EDUCATION AS A CONTRIBUTION TO EFFECTIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

When analyzing the factors contributing to the modernization of the US education one cannot ignore the problem of academic staff training activities because the changes in the education policy of the country put forward strict training requirements.

3.1 Theoretical and Methodological Component

The first and the most important factor of the modernization of the education is globalization that is connected with the transition to information-oriented society. The comprehension of that led to the beginning of the US school education reformation processes and the development of new education standards. The government was made to pay attention to the teachers' training system in general.

As Pomortseva considers, students' success depends on the level of proficiency of the teacher who works in a multicultural class. Sometimes minority students' knowledge is not faithfully assessed because of their racial and ethnic identity [12]. In many public schools there is lack of qualified teachers certified to work with migrant students or those who are of the same community origin.

In order to help teachers one of the solutions of this problem is to hire assistants majoring in primary school, who are able to speak several languages. Such specialists can translate, choose the material for teaching and sometimes help teachers with grading. Assistants can also play the role of intermediaries between a teacher and parents who are not able to cope with their children.

On the one hand, it is very good that students have an opportunity to study in their mother tongue during the process of the English language learning. On the other hand, assistants speak English only to explain something as this is the school requirement due to the English language dominance and status. Another negative point is that native language is used to control the discipline which means that the functions of language do not reveal themselves to the full extent. The status of the native language is broken if to compare the responsibilities of highly qualified teachers of public schools who teach in one language and the responsibilities of bilingual assistants [3].

The second solution is the adaptation (assimilation) of the teacher's language to the students' level of language proficiency (Scaffolding language). Studying at comprehensive public schools bilinguals face the requirement to be able to quickly function in English (the second language for migrant children). At the same time they study general subjects and learn the language. Besides, they learn different styles of speech, formal and informal ones. In most cases the level of the second language proficiency is not high enough to determine complete acquisition of school subjects by these children. The most important factor here is the interrelation between a teacher and a student, the way teachers help listeners and the language that they use when explaining the material. The founder of this wide-spread in the US schools teaching method is Vygotsky.

US teachers gain the experience of migrant students teaching through *The Binational Migrant Education Programme (BMEP)*. It conveys several programmes in itself. They are: *The Binational Transfer Document*, *The Binational Teacher Exchange*. The exchange programme involves more than 2000 teachers per one year. Primarily, BMEP involves only Southern states, which border on Mexico. The programme helps teachers understand the live of migrant students, study their culture, learn new teaching methods, and provides textbooks for relative subjects, existing in the curriculum of Mexican schools. It was indicated that the BMEP raised the level of teachers' proficiency that followed by the high level of academic progress of migrant students [13].

3.2 Goal-setting Component

The demographic situation in the country had a huge impact on the teachers' training education, this factor can be emphasized as the second one. The problem of multiculturalism is becoming one of the central ones. The US Department of Education was bound to reconsider *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act* choosing the new ways of its development:

- to expand access to education for migrant children, disabled children, ethnic minorities and rural men;
- to improve academic programmes for children whose native language is not English.

All the above mentioned caused reconsideration and improvement of teachers' training programmes [3].

In 2014 The National Council on Teacher Quality carried out an inspection of teachers' training education programmes. 2400 bachelor and master degree programmes on Education science in 1200 educational institutions were under the analyses.

Dallas Baptist University, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University, Ohio State University, University of Dayton and Louisiana Northwestern University are at the top of the list of universities training elementary school teachers.

Western Governors University, Lipscomb University and Fort Hays State University are at the top among those training secondary school teachers.

Among the universities that provide efficient elementary, secondary and high school teachers' training are Ohio State University, Miami University (Oxford master degree programme) and Lipscomb University [14].

3.3 Motivation Component

The third factor is a great amount of university associations taking part in the formation of professional standards of specialists' training in higher education establishments of the country. Besides that, they deal with particular academic subjects, the development of students and the revealing of their personal peculiarities. These associations take part in the analysis and development of qualifications and competences for teachers of different subjects depending on the students' age.

For example, The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) deals with foreign languages teachers of all level of proficiency. This association helps teachers to improve their knowledge by promoting scientific works that impacts the development of language teaching and learning, ensure teachers that their profession reflects racial, language and ethnic diversity of the society.

As for the TESOL International association, which is focused only on the teachers of English as the second language, it provides members with teaching material, and gives the opportunity to exchange the experience with other members. Every teacher is to attend professional development courses to advance their knowledge.

3.4 Content Component

A distinctive characteristic feature of the American system of higher education that influences teachers' training is the conception of an entrepreneurial university based on the student's choice of the educational programme. The complete definition of this notion still doesn't exist. Most scientists just give the description of its main functions and characteristics. Ropke, for instance, gives the following definition of an entrepreneurial university:

- The university has to demonstrate entrepreneurial behaviour as an organization;
- University members – teachers, students, employees – must be entrepreneurs ;
- Cooperation between the university and environment must lead to a structural conjugacy of the university and region.

It contributes to the attraction of more literate and competent students [3].

4 CONCLUSION

The present-day world with its complex geopolitical organization, the disregard for some interests of minor nations and ethnic groups, and intolerance may lead to the destruction of different cultures, ethnic minorities and civilizations. Tolerance is one of the main components of co-existence. The formation of tolerance plays an important role in our life to prevent prejudices, and a teacher being an intermediary between different social and cultural groups is responsible for the creation of a tolerant personality ready for national self-definition.

Having analyzed the American experience in the formation of teaching we can emphasize several principles of a successful teaching based on culture:

- A successful result expectation principle. Students must be able to understand and foresee the expected result. A teacher in his/her turn motivates students to study, focusing the attention on the important role of education in the multicultural and multipolar world.
- A cultural competence perfection principle. If the education process is organized correctly, students will continue to develop their competences basing on the given knowledge in the sphere of cultural interrelation. Many migrant students associate school with the place where they have to restrain themselves because in lots of American schools the attitude towards the representative of ethnic minorities is apprehensive. According to Sabirova a teacher must be able to use the peculiarities of a child's native culture as a teaching tool. Thus, an academic curriculum is formed in accordance with students' knowledge and cultural experience [15].
- Critical thinking principle. Students must be able to critically analyze the social and cultural situation. This ability will help them straddle the fence especially in the case of intercultural and interethnic collisions.

As our research has shown, teachers' proficiency plays an important role in language acquisition. A teacher must be well educated and be ready to improve his/her knowledge in subject. It's important to be acquainted with the culture of the minority students and keep in touch with students' parents.

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