

DOI: 10.24412/2470-1262-2022-3-84-89

УДК (UDC) 37.013

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***For citation: Bekasova Ekaterina Yu., (2022).
On Educational and Pedagogic Potential
of Foreign-Language Education:
Historical Analysis.
Cross-Cultural Studies: Education and Science,
Vol. 7, Issue 3 (2022), pp. 84-89 (in USA)***

Manuscript received 19/10/2022

Accepted for publication: 20/11/2022

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

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ON EDUCATIONAL AND PEDAGOGIC POTENTIAL OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE EDUCATION: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Abstract:

This article analyses the formation and development of foreign language education in Russia. The concepts of foreign language education and foreign language learning are not identical. The result of foreign language education is the formation of a linguistic personality who knows the language, the history, traditions and culture of the people. The system of foreign language education was constantly transforming, reflecting the political and economic needs of the Russian state. The main periods of foreign language education development in the 19th to early 20th century are considered, including the civic-educational, general educational and culturological periods. The civic-educational period - the main goal of gymnasium education was to educate and foster patriotism and active civic and creative attitudes in students. The general education period - the main goal of gymnasium education was to promote the mental, spiritual and cultural development of their students, fostering in them a sense of patriotism, love for their homeland and a morality and strength of character. The culturological period - the main goal of gymnasium education was to contribute to the general education of students by developing mental abilities and practical language proficiency. Different types of upper secondary (gymnasium) education, as well as the educational and disciplinary scope of foreign language education in pre-revolutionary Russia are discussed.

Keywords: foreign language education, foreign language learning, cultural and moral formation of personality of gymnasium school graduates

Introduction

Without doubt, one of the most effective ways to overcome cultural and ethnic differences, and isolation and misunderstanding between peoples is to learn each other's languages. Therefore, foreign language learning is the foundation and the basis for understanding at an international level.

It is important to note that the concepts of foreign language education and foreign language learning are not identical, because the result of foreign language education is not only and not so much learning phonetics, grammar, vocabulary or stylistics of a foreign language. The result of foreign language education is the formation of a linguistic personality who knows not only the language, but also the cultural code of the foreign language, i.e., the history, traditions and culture of the people [5; 4].

Theory

Analysis of the works of M. N. Vetchinova, Ye. A. Kovaleva, G. N. Kozlova, Yu. A. Leksina, Ye. G. Popova, M. V. Savin and others show that foreign language education in Russia has a long, rich and very successful history. The system of foreign language education was constantly transforming, reflecting the political and economic needs of the Russian state. Perhaps no other academic subject was so strongly connected with the political and economic situation of its time [1; 2; 6].

The history of foreign language education has its roots in the educational reforms of the early 19th century when the Charter of Gymnasiums and Progymnasiums was adopted in 1804. Researchers in the field identify the following main periods in the development of foreign language education in Russia:

The civic-educational period (1860s)

This period of foreign language education coincides with the education reforms, which were the most important and integral part of Alexander II's reforms aimed at overcoming Russia's socio-economic weaknesses and weaknesses in socio-cultural development—something that was impossible when its citizens had no knowledge of foreign languages.

The main goal of gymnasium education at that time was to educate and foster patriotism and active civic and creative attitudes in students. Teachers of that time believed that the objectives of education and formation of identity could be successfully achieved through getting students acquainted with classical literature. Therefore, classical languages (Latin and Greek) formed an essential part of the curriculum of lyceums and gymnasiums.

While studying grammar and the lexical and grammatical means employed by the author to express their thoughts, students were taught to exercise a thoughtful approach to world literature, comprehending not only the culture of ancient peoples, but also developing their own view of the world and the processes that take place in it.

Educational potential involved exposure to the high spirituality of ancient and European cultures. "The assimilation of classical cultural heritage consisted not only in perceiving it in order to obtain cognitive information about the history and life of ancient peoples, their philosophy and their art, but also in critical reinterpretation and creative analysis of the ways of life of the ancient Greeks and Romans through the prism of personal understanding. Foreign culture as a system of spiritual values of other peoples influenced the process of formation, enrichment and perfection of a person's spiritual world, the development and formation of their individuality.

Familiarising students with high classical culture and spirituality and educating them on classical examples of true patriotism and morality promoted the growth of consciousness in students and fostered internationalism and a sense of belonging to world history, literary and artistic heritage, which, in turn, gave the opportunity to join the origins of world civilisation and culture, and feel oneself a part of the world's whole" [1, p.178].

The study of Latin was especially important, since reading texts of a cultural nature and studying the grammatical phenomena of the Latin language in depth lay a solid foundation for mastering new foreign languages.

The general education period (1870s–90s). This period covers the 1870s to 1890s.

The educational value of studying classical and modern foreign languages lay in familiarising students with the most important literary works of classic and modern European authors.

The in-depth study of foreign languages was perceived as a means of providing general education to students for the following reasons:

Firstly, due to the recognition of the important role of classical and modern foreign languages in general education as a means of comprehending the culture of other peoples;

Secondly, due to the necessity of acquiring new knowledge in further education and self-education;

Thirdly, due to the needs of the country's economic development, when growing industry and commerce demanded specialists with knowledge of foreign languages.

Foreign language education in lyceums and gymnasiums was aimed at achieving the main goal of the curriculum—providing students with a general education, without which the economic and political development of Russia during this period would be impossible.

Despite the differences in the educational goals of different schools and the population of their students, common to them was that they sought to promote the mental, spiritual and cultural development of their students, fostering in them a sense of patriotism, love for their homeland and a morality and strength of character.

The study of classical and modern foreign languages was allocated an important role in achieving this goal.

Lyceum curricula included Latin, Greek, French, German (for students who excelled in French), and English (only for those students who excelled in all disciplines).

The curricula of classical gymnasiums included Latin, Greek, French and German (two classical languages);

The curricula of semi-classical gymnasiums included Latin, German and French (one classical language);

In non-classical gymnasiums, classical languages were not studied at all, but more time was given to German and French;

The curricula of private and girls' gymnasiums included Latin as an optional subject and French or German (at the parents' choice).

At that time, foreign language teaching was based on the study of grammar, which was seen as a field of science, like logic, so the purpose of learning a foreign language in secondary school was viewed as the development of logical thinking with the help of grammatical exercises.

Grammar was studied not only for better understanding of texts, but also as a “mental exercise”. Not just translation, but analysis of classical literature were meant to foster intellectual development as well as general and humanities/philological culture in students.

The reading texts were excerpts from the works of famous Roman and Greek authors. “Reading classical literary works contributed to educating youth to be compassionate, spiritual and emotionally rich personalities. The works of Virgil, Titus Livius, Ovid, Xenophon, Homer, Cicero and other writers, philosophers and political figures contributed to the intellectual and aesthetic development of gymnasium students, as the texts studied were true masterpieces of ancient literature. All of them were examples of high moral standards, intelligence and courage. Literary monuments of ancient authors served as sources of knowledge of the values, principles, traditions, rituals, written and unwritten rules, habits and norms of behaviour of ancient peoples and their way of thinking, which certainly contributed to developing in students their own view of the world, in turn leading to their spiritual growth” [1, p.176].

The culturological period (late 1890s to early 20th century). This marked a radical turn in the development of foreign language education and was marked by a strong influence of Western European methodological ideas, which opened up remarkable new prospects for the creation of new methods of teaching and education.

The study of the culture and spiritual life of other peoples had become a priority of foreign language education in Russia. Classical and modern languages were seen as a means of comprehending other cultures, influencing the cultural development of students. The Programme of 1890 stressed the general educational value of modern foreign languages and formulated the objective of teaching them: to contribute to the general education of students by developing their mental abilities. The Programme envisioned that by the end of their time at the gymnasium, students would be able to use the scientific and literary works of German and French scholars and writers, both to broaden their general education and to study their chosen fields of science.

Interestingly, the foreign language curricula of girls' gymnasiums and private schools were more forward-looking as, taking the curricula of boys' gymnasiums as the basis, they added practical mastery of modern foreign languages to the list of educational objectives.

Therefore, along with the ability to read foreign books, the objective was set to develop practical language proficiency in students. "The main activity during lessons was reading and translating texts, for which purpose iconic texts were used, as well as original fiction books such as La Fontaine's fables, Fénelon's Adventures of Telemachus, and later works of T. Kleist, C. Dickens, A. Franz, F. Schiller and many others" [1, p. 179]. Teachers of that time believed that reading fiction was a good start for getting acquainted with the culture of another people, which was an important way to combine reading and speaking, and develop thinking. It was believed that regular translation developed diligence and the ability to work independently. Therefore, the spiritual development of a gymnasium student took place through the cognitive, developmental, pedagogical and social aspects of a foreign language culture. All that contributed to personal and moral development and readiness for communication with the cultures of other peoples and countries.

Educational objectives were achieved through the educational and disciplinary effects of classical literature, something that could contribute to the spiritual development of students: the desire to reveal the content, analyse the author's main ideas, comprehend the characters and their mindset, and identify moral ideals.

By and large, it can be concluded that the main components of foreign language education in Russia in the second half of the 19th century to the early 20th century were: 1) teaching, 2) disciplinary, 3) developmental and 4) culturological.

Methods of foreign language education were developed, which were innovative and revolutionary for that time. Thus, the so-called "natural" method (also called intuitive, real, visual or American method), in which the mastery of spoken language was seen as the main goal of education, became widespread. Proponents of this method focused on the initial stage of teaching, which involved teaching everyday language solely for practical purposes.

The natural method is based on the following main principles: using visual aids, prohibiting students from using their native language during lessons unless absolutely necessary, limiting grammar studies and reading as much fiction in the foreign language as possible. There was a special focus on creating an artificial language environment and using visual teaching aids, such as themed pictures and illustrations, collections of postcards, and collapsible pictures, which contributed not only to enriching vocabulary, but also to obtaining information of a cultural nature.

The process of teaching foreign languages drew the active attention of leading psychologists of that time. The use of visualisation as an aid in the study of foreign languages was explored by American psychologist W. H. Kilpatrick, Russian psychologist A. P. Nechaev, researchers from the psychological laboratory of the University of Göttingen led by Professor G. Müller, French scientists V. Henri, T. Ribot and A. Binet, and German researcher A. Kussmaul.

In Russian gymnasiums and lyceums, foreign language education was organised in a variety of both curricular and extracurricular forms, including foreign language evenings, where students reported on what they had read, presented short essays, spoke on free topics and played games of various themes.

Students of gymnasiums and lyceums learned many poems and songs by heart in the foreign language they were studying. A common form of education was the organisation of literary and musical evenings. Art and literature contributed to the formation of a well-rounded personality in students, development of thinking skills, conception memory and creative imagination. The students staged performances in the foreign language they studied, which allowed them to dive into the world of theatre—into the realm of emotion. All that not only contributed to the acquisition of speaking skills, but also developed a sense of beauty and aesthetic and artistic tastes, influenced ethical behaviour and, in addition, contributed to the discovery and realisation of abilities such as acting, singing and recitation.

Educational tours to the countries of the foreign language they studied also played an important role in familiarising students with the culture surrounding the foreign language. Tours to France, Austria-Hungary, Germany, England, Italy, Switzerland and other European countries were an important component of foreign language education. Such tours provided direct access to the cultural treasures of the countries of the foreign languages studied.

Students enjoyed the aesthetic pleasure as they were able to see for themselves historical sites, feel closer to the national heritage of the people and immerse themselves in the language environment, which, in turn, expanded their outlook, gave new knowledge and increased motivation for further study of the language. Moreover, the tours promoted mutual understanding between peoples, which was a self-evident result of foreign language education. Non-traditional forms of foreign language education were implemented, among which we can note the organisation of additional practical foreign language classes with native speakers.

Without doubt, the success of learning depended largely on the teacher's personality: on their ability to properly organise the learning process. Foreign language teachers were also exponents of the relevant cultures, fostering in students respect for those cultures and languages, and thereby a desire for getting more relevant cultural and linguistic knowledge.

Most teachers of that time acquired their education in gymnasiums or universities, underwent practical training abroad, had excellent knowledge of foreign languages and found time for research. There were many foreign citizens among them because the active involvement in the educational process of native speakers and bearers of relevant cultures with a good level of education and extensive work experience not only contributed to students acquiring deeper knowledge of the language and understanding of the way of life of the relevant people, but was also one of the main factors in exposing them to the social and historical experiences of humanity, which is the most important component of a good education [1; 3].

Of particular importance is the fact that both Russian and foreign teachers took professional examinations before entering an educational institution. They were to demonstrate theoretical knowledge of relevant grammar and literature, and the teachers were often tested on their knowledge of Latin, mathematics, history and geography. Such tests allowed for those without vocational training or sufficient knowledge to be screened out, and only those who passed were hired. Clear accounts from contemporaries and former gymnasium students about the teachers of that time show that among the teachers were outstanding people who spared no effort to make the process of foreign language education exciting.

Conclusion

It should be noted that one characteristic feature common to all periods in the history of foreign language education in Russia was that the knowledge of foreign languages was not an end in itself. The objective was much broader: to promote the moral and cultural development of students of gymnasiums and lyceums. This historical experience indicates that the learning of

foreign languages has been a powerful means of spiritual, intellectual and cultural development for young people.

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Acknowledgements: *The author is grateful to the Russian scientific electronic library elibrary.ru and Russian State Library for the possibility of the necessary information search.*

Author's contribution: *The work is solely that of the author.*