

The discipline 'foreign language' within the concept of lifelong learning in the Educational System of the Russian Federation

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Abstract: The present study discusses the place of the discipline 'Foreign language' in the educational system within the concept of lifelong learning (LL) in accordance with the Concept of long-term social and economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020, which lists the principles of project activities implemented in the prioritized national project 'Education'. Nowadays, special attention is paid to studying foreign language (FL) as an instrument of international communication, to developing cooperation in the educational field, to increasing the possibility of LL and to deepening knowledge in various fields. In modern Russia, new methodological approaches to FL study are in active development, which allows speaking about qualitative changes in the internationalization of the educational system, in the development of international educational programs and in the increasing number of participants in multicultural educational and scientific projects and processes. The present work analyzes the methodological approach to the study and development of FL at all stages of education (secondary, higher and scientific). The authors regarded the most modern regulatory documents (reflecting the latest trends in education) for compliance of the implemented approaches to FL with the existing requirements and challenges of competitive education. The work lists basic requirements for FL study in terms of their continuity and evolution depending on the level of education. In addition, methods and techniques for achieving the necessary level of FL learning are discussed. The authors reach the conclusion that mastering the FL within the educational system of the Russian Federation is in compliance with the concept of LL, yet the requirements for and the results of mastering the discipline are not yet consistent and progressive enough. **Keywords:** lifelong education, foreign languages, cognitive competence, skills formation, communication.

1. Introduction

Due to the constant changes in the educational environment, the concept of lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important both in the Russian Federation and in the world. In addition, this principle plays an important role in the development of the Bologna process, in the internationalization of education. The development and popularization of the concept

spring from historical and geographical preconditions. The concept of LL originated in European countries – trendsetters in world education development at certain periods, yet numerous states and communities of other macro-regions of the world also contributed to the global distribution and implementation of the concept [16, 20, 21].

Notably, the concept of LL is not directed from ‘the inside’ but is in connection with foreign economic factors, namely the competitiveness of the human resources of a state in the world market, where the ability to communicate in a FL in the professional sphere is crucial. Excessive ‘economization’ of the concept, however, causes a lot of negative feedback. «The predominant economic interpretation of LL in the last ten years, however, has become problematic, since many educators and practitioners have come forward with such terms as ‘Lifelong learning’ and ‘Learning to Earn’ as their concise criticism of the way the term is being promoted» [22]. The emergence of the concept of LL involved both formal and informal approaches to the consumption of educational services. The problem of realization of educational services is considered in the works of Zhdankina I. Yu. [25], Batova N. S. [3], Ignatieva N. N. [12], Shamin A. E. [19], Yaroslavova E. N. [23-24], Andreev V. I. [1] and many others.

Studying a FL in lifelong learning is a priority area of the European policy, which was announced at the Lisbon conference in 2001 and then presented in a report on the prospects of European educational systems in Stockholm in 2001. V. Matskevich especially mentions it: «The following objects set out in the Report are particularly relevant to the issue of lifelong language learning:

- education and training systems must adapt to the requirements of LL and be affordable for all citizens;
- FL learning must be improved for Europe to achieve its economic, cultural and social potential» [22, p. 1-2].

At the same time, the minimum level B2 at the stage of higher education, as well as the study of at least two FLs at the earliest possible stage, are mandatory requirements for the development of FL learning.

2. Methods

The main sources for research were the data of Federal state educational standards of general (complete), secondary professional, higher and postgraduate education of the Russian Federation [4-10], as well as scientific articles on educational services realization [3, 12, 19, 25] and on FL teaching [11, 13, 14, 15, 23]. The authors analyzed the most modern regulatory documents reflecting the latest trends in education for compliance of the implemented approaches to FL study with the existing requirements and challenges of competitive education [17, 18].

3. Results and discussion

The Russian educational system currently undergoes successive transformation stages to adapt to international educational standards and to be included in global processes, namely, in the field of LL.

The basis for the education system development in accordance with the Concept of long-term social and economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 is the principles of project activities implemented in the prioritized national project ‘Education’, the openness of education to external requests, competitive identification and support of leaders, targeting resource support tools and the integrated nature of decisions.

The implementation of this goal involves, among other things, «the creation of a modern system of continuous education, training and retraining of professional personnel» [17].

The authors of the present study regard LL as a gradual and progressive deepening and expansion of the range of knowledge and skills in various fields, based on the availability of educational services, the ability of the individual (professional) to self-learn (including the use of information technology) and to adapt to the rapidly changing environment. At the same time, within the framework of the educational system, the concept of LL should be based on the principles of continuity and of integrative methods and content of training. The educational system is the initial impulse for LL, and educational institutions, starting from primary school, should ‘teach to learn’.

Thus, studying a FL as an instrument of international communication, developing cooperation in the educational field, increasing the possibility of lifelong learning and deepening knowledge in various fields acquired a special significance. Obviously, the change of the target paradigm (not theoretical but applied) of learning a FL poses new challenges for education; these are especially noticeable in the educational system of the Russian Federation due to the governmental form change after the collapse of the USSR in 1993.

In this regard, creating conditions in the Russian education system for implementing the concept of LL at all the levels of education in the discipline ‘Foreign language’ is vital.

The present research analyzes the methodological approach to FL study and development at all stages of education, including secondary, higher and scientific education. The authors analyzed the most modern regulatory documents reflecting the latest trends in education for compliance of the implemented approaches to FL study with the existing requirements and challenges of competitive education. The work lists basic requirements for FL study in terms of their continuity and evolution depending on the level of education. In addition, methods and techniques for achieving the necessary level of FL learning are discussed.

It is necessary to begin with the fact that the set of requirements of Federal state educational standard to the content of training within the discipline ‘Foreign language’ is now changed. This metamorphosis can be clearly seen in the study of different generations of Federal state educational standard options at the level of school, secondary special and higher education. Mainly, this is about fundamentally updated terminology tools; this is expressed comprehensively in a set of competencies necessary for students, which allows saying that «the new educational standard is not a standard of content but of results of the educational process» [2].

The Federal state educational standard is not limited to the knowledge component – it is a combination of knowledge and skills expressed in general cultural (universal) competences (GC or UC), general professional competences, and professional competences at the levels of secondary vocational education and higher education. At the level of secondary general education, the Federal state educational standard also operates on the concept of competencies. It is obvious that in the conditions of level education, these requirements should be presented on the principle of continuity.

As for the FL, the competence component related to it is present at all levels of education, which allows asserting the formation of continuous education within it.

A priori, interdisciplinarity and extra-professional competence are obvious, which allows providing the necessary level of FL proficiency not only for communication but also for self-development, for searching and obtaining new information.

Including disciplines related to the FL development in the basic curriculum (which makes them mandatory regardless of the direction of training, discipline or bias of the institution) confirms that a FL is one of the main substantives and thematic components at all levels of education.

It is also necessary to take into account, apart from the basic discipline 'Foreign language', the emergence of such disciplines as 'Business foreign language' or 'Professional foreign language', included in the list of elective subjects or in the variable part of the curriculum at the level of higher education (bachelors and masters).

According to the Federal component of the state educational standards of primary general, basic general and secondary (complete) general education, the FL study should aim at the development of:

- communicative competence, including speech competence, i.e. the ability to effectively use the studied language as a means of communication and cognitive activity;
- language/linguistic competence, i.e. mastering the language means in accordance with the topics and areas of communication and the ability to operate them for communicative purposes;
- social and cultural competence (including sociolinguistic competence), i.e. knowledge of the socio-cultural specifics of the country/countries of the studied language, the capability of speech and non-speech behavior adequate to this specificity, the ability to adequately understand and interpret linguistic and cultural facts;
- compensatory competence, i.e. the ability to navigate the process of FL communication having a limited set of language tools;
- educational and cognitive competence, i.e. further development of special educational skills to improve FL knowledge and use it to continue education and self-education [4].

In addition, the Federal state educational standard of secondary general education lists the results of the program development. In particular, Section 9.1 'Philology and foreign languages' refers to the need to ensure:

- «- introduction of FL and literature (through the study of Russian and native (non-Russian) language) into the values of national and world culture;
- formation of writing skills (...), i.e., being able to write upon the studied problems in a FL, demonstrating creative abilities;
- formation of sustainable interest in reading as a means of learning other cultures and respect for them» [18].

For the objectivity of the analysis within the framework of the secondary professional education, higher education and postgraduate levels, the authors considered the Federal state educational standard and direction of preparation that do not have direct or partial relation to a FL as an element of the profession. However, the Federal state educational standard analyzed below corresponds to one larger profile group, namely 350000 'Agriculture, forestry and fisheries'.

Federal state educational standard of secondary professional education level does not contain general competences which would specifically determine the level of FL proficiency, but stipulates the knowledge and skills required for development in the context of the basic

professional educational program formation. For instance, the authors considered the Federal state educational standard of secondary professional education 35.02.07 in the discipline 'Mechanization of agriculture' in the framework of the discipline 'Foreign language' included in the obligatory part of the educational cycles:

The student is to be able:

- to communicate (orally and in writing form) in a FL on professional and everyday topics;
- to translate (using a dictionary) foreign texts of professional orientation;
- to improve oral and written language and vocabulary;

The student is to know:

- the lexical (1200 - 1400 lexical units) and grammatical minimum required for reading and translation (with a dictionary) of foreign texts of professional orientation [10].

At the levels of higher education, including bachelor's and master's degrees, a tendency is observed to change the formulation of the competencies that ensure the FL development; however, it should be noted this allows speaking about qualitative progress in the study of the discipline.

For instance, the Federal state educational standard 3+ and 3++ (bachelors) in the field of study 35.03.06 'Agroengineering', which is not a linguistic discipline, makes it possible to trace the differences:

- within the framework of Federal state educational standard 3+, teachers need to form the general competences GC-5 («the ability to communicate orally and in written form in Russian and FL to solve the issues of interpersonal and intercultural interaction») and GC-6 («the ability to work in a team, being tolerant to social, ethnic, religious and cultural differences») [5].

- within the framework of Federal state educational standard 3++, teachers need to form universal competences UC-4 («the ability to effectuate oral and written business communication in the state language and in the FL(s)») and UC-5 («the ability to perceive the intercultural diversity of society in the socio-historical, ethical and philosophical contexts») [6].

- at the graduate level (master degree) in Federal state educational standard 3+, teachers need to form general professional competence GPC-1 («willingness to communicate in oral and written form in the state language of the Russian Federation and a FL to solve professional tasks») [7].

- within the framework of Federal state educational standard 3++, teachers need to form universal competences UC-4 («the ability to use modern communication technologies, including FL(s), for academic and professional interaction») and UC-5 («the ability to analyze and take into account the diversity of cultures in the process of intercultural interaction») [8].

Having carried out a comparative analysis of the implemented competencies in the Federal state educational standard, the authors concluded that the level of FL development in the last Federal state educational standard 3++ gives clearer descriptions of competences and lists high demands, and the bachelor level concretizes the FL communication sphere and summarizes the understanding of intercultural diversity. At the master's level, there is a

transition from readiness to communicate in a FL to knowledge of communication technologies, as well as from professional to academic and communication.

Speaking about the continuity of competencies from undergraduate to graduate level, Federal state educational standard 3+ traces a certain evolution of requirements: from the ability to be ready for communication and solving problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction to professional activities. This indicates higher requirements for language knowledge level and deepening of the subject orientation of this knowledge. The same trend is evident in the comparison of competencies identified in Federal state educational standard 3++; it is the transition from the ability to carry out business communication to the use of modern communication technologies for academic and professional interaction, as well as from perception to the analysis and accounting of intercultural diversity.

The postgraduate level also includes a FL as a mandatory content component. Within the framework of the Federal state educational standard in the field of study 35.06.04 'Technologies and means of mechanization and energy equipment in agriculture, forestry and fishing industry', students should have the following competencies: UC-3 («willingness to participate in the work of Russian and international research teams to solve scientific and educational problems») and UC-4 («willingness to use modern methods and technologies of scientific communication in the state languages and in FL(s)» [9].

Special attention should be paid to the competences reflecting the abilities of students to intercultural communication and to understanding cultural diversity which are included as universal at all levels of education. Not only knowledge of the language but also of the geographical, economic, social and cultural peculiarities in the studied language countries will allow establishing more effective communication, knowledge and self-improvement in personal and professional aspects.

In modern Russia, new methodological approaches to the FL study are actively developing, which allows speaking about qualitative changes in the internationalization of the educational system, the development of international educational programs, increased number of participants in multicultural educational and scientific projects and processes. The Russian citizen is open to the world and has the opportunity to find and gain knowledge not only within the native but within the FL educational field.

First, speaking about the aforementioned principle of continuity and LL, it is necessary to take into account not only the competence component of the discipline but also the commonality of methodological approaches and techniques in teaching a FL. A mandatory requirement of Federal state educational standard for the development, including FL, is the use of interactive methods as an innovative element. It should be noted that the number of classes conducted using such methods is not regulated at the level of general education, but at the level of secondary professional education and higher education it has a ratio of 25% to the rest of the classes. Evidently, this obliges the teachers of the discipline to move from grammatical translation method ('reigning' in the USSR era) to a wide variety of modern methods, such as business and role play games, case-method, discussion, essay, work with authentic sources, etc. In Russia, there are numerous scientific and methodological works devoted to the introduction and testing of the latest developments in this area, which are presented on virtual portals (for example, www.pedsosvet.ru and www.elibrary.ru). These resources contribute to the distribution of knowledge and to mutual enrichment and experience exchange among teachers.

4. Conclusions

Analysis of the above-mentioned data allows making the following conclusions:

1. The discipline 'Foreign language' is obligatory at all levels of education, being included in the basic part of the curricula of the considered profiles and areas of training.

2. Competencies related to the FL study are universal and meta-subject in nature.

3. It is not yet possible to speak about the fully realized principle of continuity within the discipline 'Foreign language' at all levels of education. If the levels of secondary general education and higher education, as well as postgraduate study, focus on the competency approach, at the level of the secondary professional education only knowledge component of the content of study is implemented.

a) Thus, at the level of secondary general education, the FL study implies a combination of communicative, linguistic and socio-cultural competencies as related to the formation of language and speech skills and abilities. They are complemented by compensatory, educational and cognitive competences which are key ones for learning. This approach is implemented in relation to the discipline 'Russian language'.

b) at the level of secondary professional education, FL activity is excluded from the list of formed competencies but is reflected in the requirements for mastering the discipline, where recommendations are given for knowledge and skills related to vocabulary, communication, translation and cognitive activity.

c) at the higher education level, the FL study should be carried out within the framework of two universal competencies, also related to the Russian language and implying communication and perception of intercultural diversity at the undergraduate level and the use of communication technologies in professional communication and analysis and taking into account the diversity of cultures at master's level.

d) at the post-graduate level, FL teaching is also implemented within the framework of two universal competencies – readiness to work in international research teams and the use of scientific communication technologies.

With this 'linear' consideration, it becomes obvious that the continuity of competencies and a pronounced increase in the level of requirements for the FL development are observed only at the stages of undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate studies (presented in the latest Federal state educational standard). At the same time, secondary general education is guided by the same principles and approaches in the presentation of requirements but at the same time neutralizes clear descriptors that would be able to characterize the specific results of the development of the discipline 'Foreign language'. The level of secondary professional education at the same time does not contain a direct competence component in relation to a FL.

4. There is a positive fact that the socio-cultural component of competencies is included at all stages of training (excluding secondary professional education). This allows making assumptions about improving the abilities of students in intercultural communication and, consequently, ensuring their greater competitiveness in the global labor market and the scientific sphere.

5. The distribution of knowledge about modern approaches to the FL study increases the integration and continuity with regards to the FL teaching methodology modernization.

The authors believe that mastering a FL within the educational system of the Russian Federation shows compliance with the concept of LL, yet it is still not possible to trace the

progressive and consistent nature of the requirements and results of mastering the discipline. Nevertheless, the authors assume that the existing approaches and methods in the educational system of the Russian Federation (including goal-setting) in the aspect of learning a FL, subject to their further improvement, will allow using a FL as an object and tool for obtaining knowledge throughout life.

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