
METHODS OF TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A SUBJECT

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Abstract:

Teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) to students has been an active area of research for the last several decades. There has been a constant increase in the number of students learning Russian, due to the growing role of the Russian language in the academic environment and to the development of international relations in this area. The ultimate purpose of teaching Russian to international students is for them to speak Russian fluently (first of all, in a specific discipline), to express their thoughts, to understand their interlocutors, to reproduce and interpret orally and in writing the information obtained from print and audio sources. Learning Russian for professional purposes for non-philology university students is not only a means of mastering their future professions, but also a possibility to competently communicate in the professional environment and easily adapt to constantly changing working conditions. This study aims to show how RFL is taught to non-philology students at the current stage of development of higher education, to specify the challenges and the teacher's tasks in this area and, finally, to discuss the development of communicative competence among students.

KEYWORDS: *development, competence, task, show, professional.*

Introduction

A modern specialist is expected to meet new requirements in terms of education and competence, due to innovative processes taking place in various areas of modern society and, above all, in science and technology. These processes require higher education to search for new ways of upgrading and development. Modern university language education is aimed at upgrading RFL training system and at bringing it into conformity with European and Russian educational standards (Petrova, Kurbatova and Solyanik 2010). Russia is a modern country strengthening and expanding its political and economic positions internationally. For this reason, a growing number of international students want to attend Russian universities, and more and more students strive to master the Russian language as a means for receiving training in the chosen field of study. In Russian universities providing education to international students, RFL became an academic discipline in the 1950s and 1960s, and since then it has been developing,

improving and searching for new ways of teaching the Russian language to international students (Pinevich 2011)

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At present, almost every university having programs in the Humanities and other fields of study offers RFL courses. The Russian language is, along with the other academic disciplines, a compulsory course for international students taking university preparatory courses, for students pursuing specialist, bachelor, master and doctoral degrees, and for trainees. As a means for international and professional communication and the language of Russian science and technology, the Russian language is of great interest, first of all, to international students taking courses in non-humanities disciplines (Mets, Mitrofanova and Odintsova 1991). This field of study is referred to as “teaching the Russian language and other disciplines to international students, depending on their professional interests and needs in the Russian language and on the length of study” (Shtchukina 1990). The Russian language training is now taking place in the context of global changes within the entire education system: language learning goals, students’ needs and learning conditions have undergone major changes. One cannot fail to see that changes in quality replaced those in quantity and that students themselves were given the opportunity to determine not only the linguistic, but also the cultural content of language courses. At present, learning goals and objectives in RFL courses are determined precisely by the needs of the learners. Learning Russian as a means for pursuing a specific academic program constitutes the main distinctive feature of the Russian language courses offered to non-philology students. The students’ prime goal is to acquire professional knowledge and skills in a language other than their own (Dubinskaya, Orlova and Saenko 2004). It goes without saying that professional Russian language programs have become one of the main directions in RFL teaching methodology. Russia’s joining the Bologna process poses new challenges to RFL teachers, one of them being the early implementation of new technologies into the learning process and

the creation of new learning approaches and methods allowing for fighting off severe competition and for maintaining the high level of Russian education.

Research methods

1. Synthesis of best practices implies studying professional achievements by a number of creative teachers and highlighting the general and most important points, which further implementation leads to considerable increase in learning efficiency (Farisenkova 2003). Synthesis of experiences is a more advanced stage of knowledge acquisition than mere description of the experiences of specific teachers, since the objective of any methodology research consists in revealing training trends, which makes it possible to set up an efficient training system. In their turn, these common trends can only be revealed if multiple cases of dependence of learning outcomes on techniques in use are observed and analyzed. What is crucial is that these trends must be tracked in the work of various teachers and under different conditions. 2. The study of the history of methodology: The study of any phenomenon must be conducted by taking into consideration its historical development: it is impossible to understand what the phenomenon under investigation represents today and what its prospects for development are without understanding how it appeared and developed. 3. The analytical description method (when studying and analyzing professional literature on the given topic, on linguistics, on the Russian and foreign language teaching techniques and on computer language acquisition). 4. Sociological teaching methods: (a) interviews with students attending preparatory courses and with master and doctoral students aimed at revealing their communication needs when studying RFL; (b) surveys conducted among international students with a view to identify their reasons and needs for studying RFL. A survey meets the precise objectives of the research study, corresponds to age-related peculiarities and possibilities of the surveyed students; some questions are multiple-choice questions, and some invite the surveyed person to provide his or her own answer; each proposed answer gives a different number of points, thus facilitating statistical and mathematical data processing. One of the advantages of surveying is that the data obtained in the process of using this method lends itself to easy quantitative treatment and is of high scientific value. 5. Combination of empirical and theoretical research methods: This means the study of language learning activities by international students taking RFL courses based on academic resources (academic articles, textbooks and professional study guides). 6. The statistical method has been used when processing and analyzing the survey results.

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