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Foreign Language Education in Eastern Europe in the Historical and Postmodern Discourse

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Abstract: It is foreign languages that allow one to carry out one's professional duties at the international level, in particular in the academic field. Besides, they are recognized as a key to the development of human culture, which opens new opportunities for international integration and deepens cultural, intellectual and communicative functions of languages. Considering its historical post-totalitarian specifics and social roles, the development of foreign language education in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Eastern Europe, in particular Ukraine, includes materialist and pragmatic and partly postmodernist trends, which need to be studied and analyzed in the context of a modern, postcolonial society. The research aims to systematize theoretical issues and generalize the experience of developing foreign language education for future humanities teachers in pedagogical universities in Ukraine (the mid 20th century - the early 21st century), as well identify some proper ways to implement authentic and world experience into the modern practice of training future foreign language professionals. The following pedagogical strategies are considered to be certain productive areas in the combination of classical and postmodernist trends in education: the integration of repetitive teaching methods and creative activity; the combination of modular and problem-based learning; the use of non-communicative models and cognitive strategies of foreign language education; the introduction of models of foreign language education, which make it possible to specify social, professional and research activity of the student's personality; the reinforcement of extra-curricular activities in the context of foreign language education.

Keywords: *international communication, foreign languages, culture, pedagogical strategies, teaching methods, postmodern education, implementation of experience.*

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1. Introduction

There appears to a need to reconsider methods, content and technologies of foreign language education and theoretically justify the basic concepts and categories in this field, given European integration processes, progressive development of the world community, recognition of a foreign language as a guarantor of human culture cultivation, expansion of intercultural interaction in education, enhancement of ideological, intellectual and communicative functions of foreign languages, review and focus of today's goals and objectives of education on the creation of a modern actor in international communication, as well as on the acquisition of other cultures through their native languages. The solving of this particular problem puts forward special requirements for the quality of teacher education since the effectiveness of students' training for intercultural communication in education depends on humanities teachers.

In Eastern Europe, however, the collapse of totalitarian regimes resulted in a qualitative but largely formal "shift" from a classical model of education to a postmodern one focused on values, actors' roles and educational goals.

It is essential to outline the main transformations in pedagogy and linguodidactic which took place in the context of postmodern society and culture before a historical review of the trends in foreign language education in Eastern Europe and, in particular, Ukraine. Modern theorists of postmodernism indicate the end of the search for universal methods of cognition and reflection and appeal to individual modalities in learning and creativity, the plurality of discourses and rejection of any formal approaches (Derrida, 2009; Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska et al., 2020; Trifonas, 2003). Repetitive teaching methods of humanities are inferior to the individual synthesis of new knowledge in the framework of personal educational and life trajectories. Given that the world and culture are seen as a text in a broad sense, students and pupils are now considered to be the main actors in their development and cognition and learning a post-formal life-long individual process. One of the main goals of humanities education is not the amount of knowledge but the intention, which crystallizes through creative assimilation of human and personal experience. In this regard, Mukhamed (2015) states that a postmodern ethical model of education implies equality between teacher and student, which makes directives- and plans-related forms of education impossible. Accordingly, the primary goals are personal and irrational forms of cognition, which, against the background of compulsory professional competencies, should involve quasi-

professional ones, namely, one's lifestyle and personal cognitive tools. The value of the universal, the national and the personal is equal (Mukhamed, 2015).

Therefore, one of the ways to solve this particular problem is a critical reflection and creative use of the historical experience in developing foreign language education for future humanities teachers in HEIs in Ukraine during the mid 20th century – the early 21st century. The specifics and significance of this period in Ukraine are determined by important transformations in professional training of specialists. After all, European integration processes in education have intensified reforms in foreign language education and contributed to developing conceptually new approaches to its practical implementation, in particular, an interdisciplinary approach.

The multidisciplinary nature of foreign language education lies in the simultaneous study of the culture of the people, which strengthens the understanding of world culture as a whole and develops the ability to navigate in today's multicultural and information society (Onishchuk et al., 2020). Foreign language learning is now focused on the development of students' ability to use languages practically, their involvement in another (national) type of consciousness, as well as the creation of a new "linguistic world-image" and the understanding of a representative of another linguistic "world-image" (Khaleeva, 1995). The aim of foreign language education becomes the creation of a spiritual person with stable orientations: a culture of humane communication, personal linguistic outlook, a culture of aesthetic perception of reality (Passov, 1991). A rational way of developing students' abilities and skills is accompanied by simultaneous adaptation to future professional activities and life-long personal development (Gerasymova et al., 2019). Foreign language education acts as a specific type of knowledge based on the student's personal irrational and practical experience (Kozłowski, 1996).

A historiographical analysis shows that scientific-pedagogical sources contain information on various aspects in the development of foreign language education for future humanities teachers at Ukrainian universities in *historical retrospect*. However, the information provided in these sources does not systematically highlight the dynamics, stages and major trends in addressing the problem under study.

The research methods are the following: historical (historical-typological, chronological, retrospective) methods – to trace the dynamic development of foreign language education for future humanities specialists at Ukrainian universities in the period under study; general scientific

methods – analysis, synthesis, systematization, generalization – to conduct a complex retrospective and perspective historical analysis of stages in the establishment of foreign language education; comparative-analytical methods – to determine theoretical and methodological principles of research and conduct a comparative analysis of traditional and postmodern trends in education; chronological methods – to determine the dynamics of changes in the foreign language education system in Ukraine during the period under study; the extrapolation method – to find and isolate postmodernist tendencies in the Eastern European linguodidactic discourse of the mentioned period.

2. The main trends in the development of foreign language education in Ukraine in the postmodern era

The analysis of historical, social, cultural and pedagogical conditions and factors that have led to certain changes in the aim, objectives and content of foreign language education in Ukraine allows one to determine three stages in the development of foreign language education for future humanities teachers at Ukrainian universities during the mid 20th century – the early 21st century.

Stage 1 (1950-1960) is the emergence of general scientific interest in foreign language education. *The main trends* of this period include *the focus on character building within the educational process* (foreign language training of humanities teachers was closely linked to patriotic and international education); *the integration of related degrees* (Ukrainian Language and Literature, Foreign Language; Russian Language and Literature, Foreign Language); *the intensification of foreign language education at the expense of didactic means*; *the pedagogization of higher education* and the enhancement of future humanities teachers' professional knowledge about foreign languages.

Stage 2 (1970-1980) is foreign language education in the context of higher education reforms. *The main trends* of this period are *the changes in the language model* of humanities specialists' training and the transition from a 4-year to a 5-year training plan; the introduction of additional linguistic courses; *the emergence of new methodical approaches* (communicative and personality- and activity-oriented ones), which have become the first markers of postmodernist trends in the post-Soviet educational space.

Stage 3 (1990-2018) is the sustainable development of foreign language education under the conditions of integration into the European Higher Education Area. *The main trends* of this period are the *diversification* and expansion of humanities degrees; the enhancement of *Foreign Language* as an

academic course; the *internationalization* of foreign language education, the expansion of future humanities teachers' participation in international educational and research projects; the introduction of degree-based training for future humanities teachers; the creation of continuing language education; *the multicultural focus* of foreign language learning to address priority objectives of modern foreign language education; *the expansion of linguistic pluralism*, which ensures the development of "linguistic personality"; the creation of a single educational space of the language field, in which foreign languages serve as an invariant component. The main achievements of this period are the recognition and implementation of the basic linguodidactic value of the postmodern era. Indeed, an educated person should be constantly involved in cross-cultural dialogue, and a foreign language, like a mother tongue, is a universal code of cognition and acquisition of traditional, archetypal, innovative, technological and personal aspects.

Regarding methodological approaches of the postmodern Ukrainian education, it begins to follow an integrated study of certain countries' language and culture, as well as on a dialogue between native and foreign cultures, in the period under study. Such education aims to teach language through culture, culture through language and, most importantly, educate *homomoralis*, that is a person with a conscience who distinguishes between good and evil and has high moral principles (Grishkova, 2007; Passov, 1991). The idea of treating education and character building in the context of cultures' interaction spread significantly in foreign pedagogy at the end of the 20th century.

The analysis of relevant scientific sources shows that the concept of "foreign language education" has several *parameters*: as a *holistic pedagogical process*, it is of regular, purposeful, manageable and innovative character, determined by social demand, cultural and historical conditions; *as a value* (relationships, knowledge, culture); *as an activity*, it is characterized by the subject-subject interaction in intercultural communication; *as a result*, it is a set of relevant competences.

Today, there appear related concepts which reveal new meanings and approaches to understanding the category under study: *plurilingualism* – learning several languages or coexistence of different languages in a particular society; *bilingualism* – learning in two foreign languages at the same time (Pukhovska, 1998; Tadeeva, 2008); *multilingualism* – diversifying languages in a separate educational system or encouraging students to learn more than one foreign language (Nikolaeva, 2003).

The transformational characteristics of foreign language education in professional training of future humanities teachers are defined as follows: such training should be based on the provisions of educational documents adopted by the Council of Europe which refer to elaborating standard characteristics of language proficiency and levels of foreign language competence (Common European Framework of References for Languages); establishing inseparable links between general humanities-oriented and linguistic training of future teachers; creating a universal multimodal educational space.

The pedagogical principles which can ensure effective foreign language education in this period include the following: improving personal language strategies of teachers which is associated with the creation of different levels of educational space: individual language thesaurus and intelligence, individual language strategy and space. The level of individual linguistic intelligence implies one's ability to use a personal linguistic thesaurus to individually address various verbal and non-verbal situational tasks.

Foreign language education of future humanities teachers is understood as the process and the result of the training: specialists have a set of competencies, systematic knowledge and practical skills in the field of foreign languages, which allow them to solve theoretical and practical tasks within the area of foreign language training.

In the postmodern era, one can observe an intensifying impact of strategic documents of the Council of Europe on the enhancement of the quality of foreign language education for future humanities teachers in Ukraine. It is linked with the consideration of the Council of Europe's recommendations on language education and the characteristics of the European educational space, its innovative nature. The following documents were important for the development of foreign language education in Ukraine during the period under study: the Threshold Level (Van Ek, 1975); the White Paper on Education and Training: Teaching and Learning towards the Learning Society (European Commission, 1995), which, for the first time, required all EU members to know two foreign languages; "Education in a Multilingual World: UNESCO Education position paper" (UNESCO, 2003) recommending to implement the principles of multilingual education, recognize language as an essential component of intercultural education and an essential element of culture; the EU's 'Education & Training 2010' programme (Council of the European Union, & European Commission, 2004), which prioritizes the enhancement of quality and effectiveness of teacher training; such documents as "The European Strategy for Multilingualism: Benefits and Costs" (Gazzola, 2016), the Sorbonne Joint Declaration (Allegre et al., 1998), "Bilingual Education in Europe: Dominant

Languages” (Hélot & Cavalli, 2017), “The European Language Portfolio: the Story so Far (1991-2011)” (Little et al., 2011), “Strategic Research Agenda for Multilingual Europe 2020” (Rehm & Uszkoreit, 2012).

3. Foreign language education of humanities teachers at Ukrainian universities (the mid 20th century – the early 21st century)

The development of foreign language education in the second half of the 20th century was determined by the changes in approaches to the content of education. Also, there appeared a need to improve foreign language education and enhance the quality of future humanities teachers’ training. It was recommended to address the issues of patriotic education, develop civic responsibility and “pedagogize” professional training of future teachers through the content of foreign language education. Content-related innovations involve differentiating theory and practice of foreign language learning, enhancing psycho-pedagogical training, introducing optional foreign-language and professionally-oriented courses.

Since the 1990s, the content of foreign language education has been developed under the following factors: reforms in the national education system, which began immediately after the declaration of state independence and its development following the Constitution of Ukraine and the Law on Education; strengthening the national character and, at the same time, competitiveness of Ukrainian education in the world market; changing the paradigm of social consciousness, rethinking values-based orientations, comprehending the priority of universal and national values. The content of foreign language education in the period under study was structured based on the following content-related lines: speech-related (developing communicative competency), linguistic (linguistic thesaurus), sociocultural (links between language learning and sociocultural competency development) and activity-related (developing thinking).

In the 1960s-70s, the Soviet paradigm of humanities education significantly isolated from that in the world. In this regard, it was essential to improv forms, methods and means of teacher training and enhance their methodological training. In the 1970s-1980s, Ukrainian foreign language education introduced the following methods: *grammar-translation method* (learning grammar and translating texts), *audiovisual method* (using video equipment); *audio-lingual method* (developing oral speech based on listening and oral communication in the process of mechanical repetition of educational dialogues); *structural and global methodology* (perceiving foreign language by ear, revealing its meaning through films, tape recordings);

suggestopedia method (boosting motivation towards learning); *communicative method* (recognizing a foreign language as a means of communication); *emotionally meaningful method* (imitating human behaviour in a foreign-language environment based on game-based learning). Thus, personality-centric, communicative and semantic approaches are gradually gaining popularity, which practically corresponded to the postmodernist trends of that time.

In the late 1980s – the early 1990s, innovative concepts and approaches to foreign language education were implemented at Ukrainian universities with a significant delay (compared to Western Europe): the concept of *intensive foreign language learning*, the modular approach (Selevko, 2005; Maksimov, 2002); *a competency-based approach* and *the contextual learning concept*.

In the postmodern period, the concept of the method begins to correlate closely with educational technologies. Back in the Soviet era, it was proved that education could not be implemented without the latest advances in audiovisual and digital technologies. After the introduction of computer technologies in foreign language education in the 1990s, the technology of “educational environment” became especially important and the concept of “information educational environment” popularized. Unfortunately, e-learning technologies in most institutions remain additional tools for acquiring foreign language competencies.

4. Extrapolating the postmodern experience of foreign language education for future humanities specialists

Today, foreign language education in Ukraine is largely focused on the cultivation of an open, multimodal, creative personality striving for continuing development. However, one still prioritizes creative thinking based on a high level of foreign language proficiency as a means of communication in the field of professional interaction. The effective ways of using innovative experience of foreign language education in the mentioned period include pedagogical strategies, such as integrating *reproductive teaching and creative activity* (expanding vocabulary and business games; working with reference literature, independent work); language exercises and analyzing some specific situation; *combining modular and problem-based learning* through developmental learning; applying *non-communicative models of foreign language education* (strengthening interpersonal communication, expanding spheres for realizing foreign language communication realization; flexible concepts of foreign language education); using *cognitive strategies of foreign language education* and intercultural focus of communication (involving students to

comprehend the peculiarities of mindset and values of native speakers to find an optimal communication strategy); introducing a model of foreign language education, which makes it possible to *specify social, professional and research activity* of the student's personality; strengthening *extracurricular activities* within foreign language education (professionally oriented events in English, activities of foreign language clubs); using *intensive methods* (suggestopedia, emotional content, activation and rhythmopedia methods), *perceptual methods* (videos, meetings with teachers from abroad); *modelling systemic relations* that are characteristic of pedagogical activity (imitating professional problems and contradictions); applying *methods of broadcasting socio-cultural components* of foreign language education content (inviting native speakers, participating in international projects).

The analysis of authentic literature of that time identifies the most effective methods of foreign language education abroad, which should be more thoroughly implemented at the post-neoclassical stage: *grammar-translation method*, which involves writing work and focuses on the study of grammatical rules by translating original texts; *audio-lingual method*, which ensures rapid training of foreign language specialists based on the following provisions: language learning is habit-formation; mistakes are bad and should be avoided, as they make bad habits); language skills are learned more effectively if they are presented orally first, then in written form; analogy is a better foundation for language learning than analysis); the meanings of words can be learned only in a linguistic and cultural context; *cognitive-code methodologies*, whose main principles are oral learning of foreign languages and language-based thinking; *comprehension approaches*, which reflect the process of acquiring one's first language based on the following principles: learning to speak involves a preparatory period; the level of language understanding must be superior to one's ability to speak it.

Recently, some effective foreign methods have been introduced. They include grammar-translation method, audio-lingual method, cognitive-code methodologies, as well as other technologies of introverted and personality-oriented learning of foreign languages.

5. Conclusions

The content of foreign language education in Ukrainian pedagogical universities (the mid 20th century – the early 21st century) should reflect three interrelated components, namely, language and language skills, practical abilities and skills and values. Accordingly, it addresses current problems of language functioning in society; theoretical minimum of information about a

language and its system necessary for creating a linguistic picture; a functional system of speech, represented by speech activity in the unity of four components; the aspect of speech culture that encompasses its normativity, adequacy, aesthetics, multifunctionality; certain information that reveals the phenomenon of human, humanity, Ukraine and other countries in their identity and all-planetarity at the same time. in Ukrainian universities offering teacher education (the mid 20th century – the early 21st century).

The article outlines three basic stages in the development of foreign language education for future humanities teachers at Ukrainian universities (the mid 20th century – the early 21st century) and reveals the basic trends in each stage. *Stage 1* (1950-1960) is the emergence of general scientific interest in foreign language education. *Its main trends* include the focus on character building within the educational process; the integration of related degrees; the intensification of foreign language education at the expense of didactic means; the pedagogization of higher education; the individualization and enhancement foreign language teaching methods. *Stage 2* (1970-1980) is foreign language education in the context of higher education reforms. Its main trends are the changes in the language model of humanities specialists' training; the emergence of new methodical approaches; the introduction of personality-centric methods as the first manifestations of postmodernist ethical trends. *Stage 3* (1990-2018) is the sustainable development of foreign language education under the conditions of integration into the European Higher Education Area. *Its main trends* are the diversification and expansion of humanities degrees; the internationalization of foreign language education; the multicultural focus of foreign language learning; the expansion of linguistic pluralism; the creation of a single educational space of the language field. During that period, post-neoclassical trends are significantly but insufficiently implemented in the educational process. The latter, as well as its actors, is ready for more radical transformations: the introduction of distance and electronic foreign language learning; the introduction of personal educational trajectories; the transition of basic forms of educational activities to the student-led multimodal process of self-learning and self-improvement.

The article singles out technological and methodical components of foreign language education at that time. They are presented with the ideas of algorithmization and activation of the educational process; the emergence of grammar-translation, audio-visual, audio-lingual, structurally global, suggestopedic, communicative and emotionally semantic methods. The forms of foreign language education, in addition to traditional ones, include specialized courses, seminars, individual and group consultations. The

technologization of foreign language education during that period is connected with the use of technical educational tools: slides, transcripts, films. In the 1990s, with the advent of computer technologies and the Internet, the technology of “educational environment” became especially important. At the same time, the concept of “information educational environment” was understood as the software-telecommunication pedagogical space with the only technical means for implementing the educational process.

The article identifies the ways of implementing both national and foreign experience of foreign language education during the mid 20th century– the early 21st century. The following pedagogical strategies are considered to be certain productive areas in the combination of classical and postmodernist trends in education: the integration of repetitive teaching methods and creative activity; the combination of modular and problem-based learning; the use of non-communicative models and cognitive strategies of foreign language education; the introduction of models of foreign language education, which make it possible to specify social, professional and research activity of the student’s personality; the reinforcement of extracurricular activities in the context of foreign language education. The most effective methods of foreign language education in foreign countries are as follows: grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods, cognitive-code methodologies, comprehension and communicative approaches and others. They should be implemented in the practice of Ukrainian universities.

Thus, the analysis of historical development and dynamics in methodological paradigms, methods and approaches proves that linguodidactic strategies in the post-Soviet Eastern Europe have changed according to the “classical – neoclassical – post neoclassical education” system, within which the importance of the alternative, the other and the personal grew while preserving obligatory competencies in the epistemological content of education. Personal, irrational, existential and cross-cultural components were gradually involved in the process of acquiring foreign language competencies. It seems that such a situation is now leading to the “alignment” of the post-Soviet and world postmodernist educational paradigms.

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