PERFORMING ARTS AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL UNIVERSITY OF XXI CENTURY

Galina Zhukova¹, Masaki Ono²

¹St.Petersburg State University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)
²University if Tsukuba (JAPAN)

Abstract

The aim of our report is to present the interdisciplinary research, devoted to the further look into the contents and methods of Performing Arts and Language education. The need for the effective learning design improvement in Arts and Humanities is clear for the responsible educators worldwide. However, at first we have to find the balance between competency and knowledge, being aware of the cognitive simplification and formal implementation of cutting-edge learning technologies. Developing the Methodological framework for our research, we summarize several concepts which can be found in the fundamental work by Fritz Machlup «Knowledge: its creation, distribution and economic significance». He regarded as imperative to include artistic creation and communication among the key factors for the productivity of education, and outlined the historical role of non-verbal knowledge (Music, Drama, Dance etc.) into the educational universe. According to the linguistic nature of thinking, each discipline has its own discourse, as well as the discipline-specific «form of knowledge». The combination of these forms sets the level of cultural knowledge. Intercultural communication starts with understanding other cultures while firmly understanding native language culture: there are well-known Goethe’s maxima that one who does not know the foreign language does not even know the native language.

The Results of our research are structured as follows:

Firstly, we present methodological strategies based on the Russian and Japanese teaching tradition, accompanied by practical examples, relevant in the context of the global perspectives. The important point is how to convey Performing Arts and Foreign Languages to other than native language culture and non-native language speakers. As an example, we include the practical report of Advanced Japanese Language class, conducted by Prof. Masaki Ono in the University of Tsukuba, which is aimed at deepening foreign students’ interests and understanding of Japanese language and culture, as well as their mother tongues. The class analyzes historical changes of the Japanese language in different areas of Japan, comparing Japanese with their mother tongue. Secondly, we analyze global teaching experience in Performing Arts, supported by data provided by Utsunomiya Hidekazu. The issues, committed to socio-cultural approaches to learning, critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding, are summarized for being adapted to the curricula of Performing Arts students in the St. Petersburg State University. Thirdly, enlightening the best transformative educational practices, we suggest lateral solutions for increasing Performing Arts graduates’ global employability, supported by language and cross-cultural adaptive skills. The intellectual chain reaction leads us to the holistic solutions, based on the concept of Global University as the centre of knowledge process in the epoch of «knowledge explosion».

In Conclusion we define that, nurturing the widening spectrum of specializations, Global University sustainable development needs to be balanced between two different types of knowledge – Distinguishing as an intellectual (propositional) function, and Recognizing as a function, more based on the mental models of sense perceptions (seeing, hearing, touching etc.). We propose the integrated strategy for Language and Performing Arts education - from the native language and mother culture proficiency to cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: Performing Arts, Language, Critical Thinking, Competency, Knowledge Explosion, Global University, Cross-cultural Understanding.

1 INTRODUCTION

The interdisciplinary research is devoted to the further look into the contents and methods of Performing Arts and Language education. The aim is to develop strategic approaches to international student recruitment for taking advantage of the opportunities available within the global higher
education market. In view of this, the research deals with the peculiarities of the multilingual teaching in the Performing Arts and Language Education.

The need of a comprehensive viewpoint to the effective learning design improvement in Arts and Humanities is clear for the responsible educators worldwide. To provide a complex education ecosystem, it is necessary to discuss and analyze the existing challenges and threats. The first threat is the predomination of the so-called techno scientific culture, focused on STEM fields, treated by the educational policy decision makers as the opposite to the humanistic knowledge. Here we have to deal with the following consequences: decrease of budget funding, the lack of government support, and decrease of the interest in the society to the humanitarian way of thinking. A recent example of Arts and Humanities neglecting tendency is the planned defunding of the philosophy and sociology in the state funded Brazilian Universities, announced by the new-elected president Jair Bolsonaros [1].

The second threat is the cognitive simplification, caused by formal implementation of cutting-edge learning technologies, led to the narrowing the breadth and richness of the curriculum. The problem situation we can observe now in Russia, is caused by the recent governmental education initiatives, lobbied by senior officials of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. The experiment has started this year from the substitution of the classical face-to-face teaching by the e-learning («on-line courses»). According to the state standards, the “Philosophy” and “Russian History” courses as the core courses (another two are «Life Safety» and «Physical culture», i.e. gym) are obligatory for every Russian undergraduate – from STEM to Performing Arts. The obligatory courses are chosen to initiate the e-learning substitution of traditional teaching by the economical reasons. In all-country scale, to invest once in two modestly financed e-learning products helps government to cut costs on thousands of paid teaching hours (lectures and seminars) of the top-qualified professors and associate professors. According to the local university orders, the required tuition time to support one e-learning course (group interactive chat, study assignment check, QA-sessions, collecting and analyzing the feed-back data) is 20 minutes a semester per one student (for the group up to 50 students) and 5 minutes a semester to one student (for the group up to 100 students).

Such a self-defeating policy contradicts with the declaring trends of nurturing the state human capital and investing in the high qualified workforce. The other contra argument is the crucial importance of philosophy and history courses in the higher education curriculum for the developing critical thinking skills, as well as the sense of self-identity. These courses are implemented to form something not easy to define: Japanese call it sekai-kan - way of thinking (Weltbild), Germans - world outlook (Weltanschauung).

The content and the teaching techniques for such subjects must be personalized, adopted to the diverse socio-cultural background of the students, to achieve the learning outcomes needed. Being standardized, the total e-learning substitution of humanitarian courses damage the ideas of academic freedom and personalization of the education, and, as a result, put to danger the democracy and freedom of speech.

Here we can see, how the new instruments, designed to improve the teaching quality, are used in a wrong way, garbled with the idea to cut costs. This case seriously compromises the reputation of e-learning and blended learning initiatives in Russia. Substantial body of criticism is already in existence among the Arts and Humanities education professionals and the students: the first are blaming policy makers for the lack of forward thinking, the second are ready to fight for their right to have face-to-face teaching, which is quite expensive, but guarantees both the teaching quality and student satisfaction.

The third threat is the non-systematic attention to the actual quality of teaching. If we look back to the paragraph of survey, published in 2014 by the Modern Language Association, called «The Urgent Need to Change», we would find the following warning statements: “Doctorate-granting universities confer prestige on research rather than teaching. A coin of the realm is the reduced teaching load – even the term load conveys a perception of burdensomeness – while honor and professional recognition, not to mention greater compensation, are linked largely to research achievements. The replication of the narrative of success incorporates this value hierarchy and projects it as a devaluation of teaching” [2].

The same issues are discussed in 2019 in the new book by John Tagg, professor emeritus of English at Palomar College, California, US. He argued the actual teaching quality in the US Higher Education Institutions, focused on what he called «the myth of unity of teaching and research: «The reason they find for this is that institutions invest heavily in the machinery for evaluating research and reward research excellence. On the other hand, they invest little, in terms of time, effort or money, in
evaluating or improving teaching. In the realm of research, higher education knows what it is doing. In the realm of teaching, it does not» [3].

Tagg stated that there was no apparent relationship between teaching quality and research quality. To put the discussion back from the head to the feet, we need to refer on the Fritz Machlup formula: «Quality education was surely a precondition of quality research» [4]. In view of this, it is logical, that education, according to his data, became the largest of the knowledge industries. Nowadays the reasons of the discourse disorders are laying in the educational experience and the mentality of the current policy makers, routed into the misunderstanding of the economy of knowledge reproduction. From the managerial way of thinking, the research quality output (especially in STEM fields) is understandable, measurable and profitable, and could be treated as effective in short term. The actual productivity and social rate of return for the teaching quality could be hardly seen in «constantly changing and challenging» future: to manage such sophisticated issues you have to be familiar with the strategically oriented long-term goals and forward thinking, to be able to value the invaluable.

For the Performing Arts Education, with its practical and skill-based curriculum, the abovementioned threats could even be more dangerous and counterproductive to the employment outcomes in terms of financial stability and contractual security of the future alumni. On the other hand, the university based education prescribes academic breadth and in-deep studying approach; otherwise we would miss the difference between the university degree programmes and training courses in private studios, held by independent performing arts professionals. The high demand for the postgraduate level study programmes (PhD in Artistic Research, Doctor of Musical Arts, Aspirantura etc.) in Performing Arts is caused by the sustainable need to legitimate not only teaching, but the artistic maturity for the degree-holders, looking for the global employability. To find the balance between competency and knowledge, academic breadth and performing skills - that is the crucial point to form the successive and competitive education offer, acclaimed globally.

2 METHODOLOGY

According to the linguistic nature of thinking, each discipline has its own discourse, as well as the discipline-specific «form of knowledge». The combination of these forms sets the level of cultural knowledge. This paradigm correlates with the famous principle of complementarity, announced in 1928 by Niels Bohr, holds that objects have certain pairs of complementary properties which cannot all be observed or measured simultaneously. The complete knowledge of phenomena requires descriptions of both properties: together they present a fuller description than either of the two taken alone [5].

Intercultural communication starts with understanding other cultures while firmly understanding native language culture: there are Goethe's words that one who does not know the foreign language does not even know the native language. Different scientific language made us difficult to be sure to speak about the same [5]. Developing the Methodological framework, we summarize concepts from the fundamental unfinished work by Fritz Machlup «Knowledge: its creation, distribution and economic significance». He regarded as imperative to include artistic creation and communication among the key factors for the productivity of education, and outlined the historical role of non-verbal knowledge (Performing Arts, Music, Dance etc.) into the educational universe [4].

3 RESULTS

3.1 Russian and Japanese teaching traditions in global perspective

The important point for our research is to systematise the Performing Arts and Foreign Languages curriculum design methods for other than native language culture and non-native language speakers. The aim is to enlighten the methodological strategies of the Russian and Japanese teaching traditions, accompanied by practical examples, relevant in the context of the global perspectives.

For answering these questions from a comprehensive viewpoint, we have to recognize the actual impact of the ethno-cultural diversity and its role in modulating the cognitive aspects of creative thinking and learning process. The intense stream of globalization urges us to focus on the «common-diverse» opposition in cross-cultural research, which could be analyzed via the concept of national representation. The term «representation» is widely used in the modern epistemological paradigm (Gadamer, Rorty, Vartovsky, Heidegger) to present phenomenon via the models, symbols, and signs inside the lingual, logical and mathematical systems. The function of the representation is to substitute ideal and real objects, relation or changes [6].
National representation deals with the distinction, which needs to be made separating the methods, used by native and non-native language speakers to create, perceive and modify their cultural experience. To name the example of the mutual dependency of all human activity from the ethnocultural diversity, we could mention the cognitive and perceptive aspects of musical creation, reproduction and appreciation. The «flowering complexity» of the musical thought and the multiplicity of its theoretical reflections specify the current state of the global musical discourse, formed by diverse groups with different ethnicity, developed their own thesaurus.

Performing Arts Education unites professionals who are dealing with so-called temporal arts (Music, Dance and Drama), and the nature of these arts is rooted in communication. For example, the musical opus and/or the musical interpretation as a phenomenon truly exists only in a form of the communication act. If we analyze successive career paths of performing arts graduates from so-called X-generation (born after the 1980) we will find the diverse education trajectories, formed by the pool of masters and taught by several institutions from around the globe. These educational practices could treat as problematic in terms of both communication and identity. It prescribes face-to-face teaching and training on the non-native language. Sometimes we have to use the language (English, German), which is non-native for both teacher and student. Using the simultaneous translation is not productive, because of time limits. The teaching proficiency in the Performing Arts education depends on the combination of verbal and non-verbal activity in class. The following steps of teacher-student interaction are important: to find the reason of the mistake, to discuss several ways of solving it, to choose and realize practically the most effective way. The problem situation is usually analyzed according to the dominated teaching tradition, but the educator has to be familiar with the aspects of cognitive and perceptive diversity, demonstrated by students with multilingual and multicultural background.

3.1.1 Advanced Japanese Language class: the emphasis on creativity

To analyze global teaching experience in Performing Arts and Language Education, we supported our personal teaching experience by data provided by Utsunomiya Hidekazu, who had investigated the issues, committed to the Japanese experience in developing the socio-cultural approaches to Music and Language learning [7]. According to the practical report of Advanced Japanese Language class, conducted by Prof. Masaki Ono in the University of Tsukuba, the emphasis on creativity could be achieved by deepening foreign students’ interests and understanding of Japanese language via comparative practices based on their mother tongues. The class explores historical changes of the Japanese language in different areas of Japan, comparing Japanese with their mother tongues. However, the overall picture is on serious decline, making concerns about the global lack of the effective educational programmes, devoted to critical thinking skills and cross-cultural understanding. The president of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Paul Drechsler demonstrated in his 2018 report how current education policy had gone counter to the needs of business, and called on policymakers to prioritize teaching that encourages creativity and team working. Taking into account the perspective of increasing automation, the education system has to concentrate on the subject areas which expand minds, build problem solving skills and creativity, needed for the business and industry as well. In view of this, the Chinese leading universities current attempts to cross over from cultivating A students, judged on their exam grades, to X students, who represent the model focused on a spirit of the disruptive innovation, could be treated as a moving to the right direction.

3.1.2 The concept of Global University as the centre of knowledge process in the epoch of «knowledge explosion».

The intellectual chain reaction leads to the holistic solutions, based on the concept of Global University as the centre of knowledge process in the epoch of «knowledge explosion». Enlightening the best transformative educational practices, we point out to the variety of approaches for increasing Performing Arts graduates’ global employability via developing language and cross-cultural adaptive skills. The increased popularity of implementing the methods and techniques, fostering the soft skills development, justify the paradigmatic changes in the curriculum design, tailored for the individual needs.

In the epoch of knowledge explosion, the educational policy of the leading Russian classical university is elaborated in coherence with its mission and national goals, such as national defense, enlightenment, social justice, intellectual and economic well-being in a stronger, more vibrant civil society, fostering the creative potential of young generations. The aims of the global university, developing competitive Performing Arts and Language education programmes, could not be reduced
to the adaptation to the current needs of the local job-market. The long-term strategy roots in the global humanitarian values, taking into account the ethno-cultural diversity and sustainable development of national educational and cultural traditions to achieve the abovementioned long-term national goals.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of proposed integrated strategy for Language and Performing Arts education is to lead from the native language and mother culture proficiency to cross-cultural understanding. Nurturing the widening spectrum of specializations, Global University sustainable development needs to be balanced between the two different types of knowledge – Distinguishing as an intellectual (propositional) function, and Recognizing as a function, more based on the mental models of sense perceptions (seeing, hearing, touching etc.). To focus on the all-embracing vision and thought, the curriculum design has to be equipped by the following issues:

1. The interdisciplinary linkages to balance the lack of STEM and Humanities educational content relevant to the Performing Arts and Language programmes.
2. The competence model has to include entrepreneurial skills, adapted to the professional qualification framework, relevant to the content of the Performing Arts and Language Education.
3. To build multilingual communication skills, self-presentation, socialization and media interaction.

The Performing Arts and Language education has a substantial social rate of return as an anthropological practice of transforming the society, has an outstanding potential to answer the global challenges in the XXI century. To eliminate threats, such as «digital dementia», to be an innovative tool for the diversity protection in terms of cultural identity. Global university with forward thinking has to develop the Performing Arts and Language Education ecosystem, to create think tanks to help policymakers to avoid destructive decisions, that could provoke painful consequences for the global development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research reported in this article had been supported by the Japan Tobacco International in cooperation with the Young Researcher Support Grant Programme of St. Petersburg State University. The authors wish to thank for the assistance and support the following contributors: Dr. Prof. Konstantin Zhukov, Dr. Prof. Usuyama Toshinobu and the GENIS Project Team of the University of Tsukuba.

REFERENCES


