EDUCATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PREFIGURATIVE CULTURE: NEW RISKS AND NEW CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The article discusses new risks and new challenges in education, and also gives some recommendations on the restructuring of the training technique.

The authors analyze how modern prefigurative society influences the formation of the life values in young people, which is totally different from the previous generation life values.

Next, the authors explore the problems associated with the abundance of information in modern life, and highlight the 15 risks and challenges of today's education, which are the result of both changes in the mentality of students and an excess of information. Analyzing these challenges, the authors come to conclusion that the current generation of students requires new forms of academic work.

The article suggests some methods for solving the modern educational challenges when teaching Russian as a foreign language: digest - method, project - method, use of social networks and instant messengers like WhatsApp.

According to the authors, the advantages of the digest- method are that this method allows the student to get a lot of information in a very quick and economical way. The use of digests helps to fill gaps in lingua-cultural knowledge of students and enhance their communicative competence. Statistical data obtained as a result of questioning 90 students before using the digest and after confirm the provisions stated in the article.

The use of the project- method (Project Based Learning) has also proven itself in the training system. The authors talk about their work experience, when students are happy to prepare projects related to their future professional field, which involve searching the Internet for information on the topic, selecting, organizing and minimizing the material, and then creating Power Point presentations based on it. Such work makes students more creative, it teaches them “to grab” the most important information, as well as to structure, systematize and minimize the selected material, training logical and teamwork skills.

Social networks (Facebook, VKontakte, etc.) and WhatsApp can also be used in the modern educational process, especially in the absence or lack of interactive facilities. The rapid exchange of small pieces of information (including video, audio and infographics) in a WhatsApp group or on a social network is, on the one hand, the best format for a modern students who are used to multitasking and unable to perceive large informational content, and on the other hand, corresponds to the habits of young people to prefer visual information. In the article authors give some examples how they use this way in the frame of teaching Russian as a foreign language.

Keywords: virtual world, prefigurative culture, education, project method, digest, Russian as a foreign language.

1 INTRODUCTION

As noted in the media today, many young people who graduated from school in the nineties or two thousand years, are fundamentally different from previous generations. We can see it in their complete indifference to the values that inspired their parents. They do not try to make a good career, earn a big money, or travel around the world. According to some scholars [1], [2], [3], [4] the modern world forms a new type of society - a prefigurative society. In this society, the life of young people is completely different from the life models of the older generation. Older generation often becomes incapable to give any useful and significant knowledge to young peoples, moreover - in this society parents have to learn from their children. The author of the typology of cultures M.Mid [5] describes the prefigurative culture as a culture of very fast and intensive transformations: innovations occur at such a furious pace that the adult population simply does not have time to master them. As M. Mead emphasizes,
past experience in this culture is sometimes not only insufficient, but also harmful, hindering the creative approach to new situations that have not happened before.

Modern youth are often called generation Y, millennials or “satori” - the last term literally means “enlightenment” in Japanese (as in the meditative practice of Zen is called “inner personal experience of cognition the true human nature through achieving the” state of one thought”). In other words, “enlightenment” is understood as the ability to see life without imposed stereotypes, conventions and rules. "Many problems relating to the well-being of a person are solved not through struggle, but quite the opposite. Give up. Give up all self requirements, let life go the way it goes and see how the forces start to return... ". These words were written by one Russian blogger who is extremely popular among the Russian young peoples. It is clear that these ideas are diametrically opposed to the appeals that defined life models for the grandfathers and fathers of today's Russian adolescents: “Struggle and search! Find and do not give up!”

"Satori” psychology is based on the following principles:

1 Relation to material values (brand clothes, expensive cars, etc.): The desire to stand out from the crowd is stupid.
2 Relation to the struggle for something: Perseverance is not a guarantee of success, so do not spend your life on it.
3 Attitude to love: Love is a relative concept, today you have it but tomorrow it is gone, and it is not worth the subsequent disappointment.
4 Attitude to career: Career is not a criterion of happiness. A person may feel happy with little. All you only need - to do what is interesting to you.
5 Relationship to the family: Marriage is meaningless.
6 Relation to money: Searching for money takes a lot of time, and the process of spending money is not really interesting.

"Satori” generation is an extremely pragmatic, wise and, at the same time, lonely generation. Some researchers call it "the generation of three I": infantilism, isolation, Internet.

Having mastered smartphones, iPhones, tablets and other gadgets since childhood, young people live in two worlds - real and virtual. The virtual world can appear completely real to the observer, and this is how it differs, for example, from the spiritual, fantastic, mythological and other worlds, where the observer can only imagine but cannot feel, smell, hear, etc. As S. Low notes [6], with the development of artificial intelligence, with the invention of virtual hands, feet, eyes, ears, the eternal philosophical problem - “what should be considered a reality” - acquires a new meaning, because “a sufficiently powerful computer could create for you all virtual the environment ” [6].

Psychologists and psychiatrists have recently expressed concern that an increasing number of people (especially the younger generation) are leaving real life for virtual life. The virtual world for teenagers is much more interesting and, if I may say so, more “natural”. They are often completely lost the desire to communicate live. They are lonely by our standards: they don’t go to visit friends, instead of texts they use memes, “likes” or photos, when they want to talk - they chat in chat rooms. In chat rooms they use a special language ( IMHO, LOL, OIC, ROTFL, etc.). Their texts are usually very short because the “satori” generation has grown on comics, computer games and social networks, where the minimum of words is used (for example, the restrictions on the maximum length of messages originally put on Twitter - 140 characters, and only recently, in October 2017, they were expanded to 280). Excess of surrounding information makes young people save time and energy. For example if in the school young people are asked to read some long novel, they do not read it, but its brief content found on the Internet.

Of course, not all young people are “satori”. “Enlightened” in its pure form is only a part of modern youth. Both in schools and in universities there are “followers of their parents” as well. This part of young generation seeks to make a career, participate in competitions, student conferences, etc. But some features of “satori” we probably can meet in any representative of the younger generation. And the modern teacher must take this fact into account when teaching.

2 METHODOLOGY

At the beginning of our research, we tried to identify and systematize some new risks and challenges in the modern education system. The results are presented in Table 1.
Table 1. New risks and new challenges in education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>The field</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>deficiency</td>
<td>oversupply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experience / authority of the older generation</td>
<td>Needed, always useful</td>
<td>Almost does not require, often useless or even harmful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Real communication</td>
<td>the main form of communication</td>
<td>Have stopped being the main form of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Virtual communication</td>
<td>Practically did not exist (exception - phone)</td>
<td>Became the main form of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Learner's creativity in learning</td>
<td>Suppressed or simply was not in the focus of learning</td>
<td>Coming to the focus of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School and university courses</td>
<td>Efficiently prepared for future work</td>
<td>Often ineffective or even completely useless for future work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Accumulation of theoretical knowledge, the fundamental theoretical base</td>
<td>Absolutely essential for building a successful career</td>
<td>Not a necessary condition for career growth, the main thing is skills and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Getting practical skills in the future profession</td>
<td>Not particularly important</td>
<td>One of the most important conditions for a successful career is &quot;doing learning&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The ability to quickly find the information you need</td>
<td>Not particularly important with libraries and librarians</td>
<td>Absolutely essential skill for those who want to succeed in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Knowledge of foreign languages (especially English)</td>
<td>Desirable, but not necessary condition for a future successful career</td>
<td>Absolutely necessary for finding a job and building a future career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Career start</td>
<td>After graduation</td>
<td>Simultaneously with the learning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The prospect of having to relearn, change specialty</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Very often (the concept of &quot;continuous learning&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Attitude to information received from the teacher</td>
<td>Credible information</td>
<td>Requires verification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Attitude to the teacher's personality</td>
<td>Respect (real or imaginary), the impossibility of a rude response or aggressive behavior towards the teacher</td>
<td>The possibility of a rude response or aggressive behavior towards the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Relationship to the curriculum</td>
<td>Assignments for all courses must be done</td>
<td>Among the courses you should highlight those that are interesting; you should not waste time on fulfilling assignments to other courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having analysed the Table 1, we can point to a number of a basic psychological features of the modern student (Table 2):

Table 2. The basic psychological features of the modern student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Psychological features of the modern student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Confidence that at any time you can get maximum information from the Internet. It should be added that information is preferred compressed, economical, built on the principle of &quot;comments&quot; from social networks and forums.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The brain of a modern young person processes information with greater speed than the previous generation, so they are bored in classes where education is given according to traditional standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Modern young people are often skeptics: they do not believe the opinions of others, preferring to create their own and rejecting generally accepted authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>They were born &quot;with a computer mouse in hand&quot;, so without modern gadgets, in the absence of the Internet, they feel they are losing ground.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, whether we want it or not, but under the influence of changes to the addressee of the learning process, this process itself must be changed (according to the principle “If the mountain does not go to
If our students cannot think of their life without the World Wide Web, then our task is to try to use the opportunity given us by the Internet in educational purposes.

In this article we attempt to analyze some ways of using modern educational technologies and the World Wide Web when teaching Russian as a foreign language. It is about using for this purpose the digest-method, the project - method, social networks and the WhatsApp messenger.

2.1 Digest – Method

As is well known, the study of any foreign language cannot be limited only by language knowledge: it is about creating a new conceptual world view. This view is inherent in a language community speaking this language, because each language reflects a certain system of ideas about the world [7], [8], [9], [10].

This view determines the communicative competence of the individual, which includes two components: linguistic and cultural. The associated question is: what kind of cultural information we, teachers of the language, should give to our students? Obviously, this is knowledge about the history of the country whose language we teach, about its culture (literature, music, cinema, theater, etc.), about the traditions and customs of the people speaking the language being studied, and, of course, about standard etiquette expressions. Thus, we should give to our students a lot of information but this huge amount of knowledge should be given as concise as possible because the number of classroom hours is very limited. How to get out of the situation?

In this case the digests are applied. Imagine a short course in Russian literature, written in simple language (understandable to foreigners), which includes concise information about the most famous writers and poets with brief retellings of their works included in the “basic” course of Russian literature. This course also includes some expressions from Russian literature that have become sayings in the lexicon of the modern native speaker. Each theme in this digest provides a link to online resources, where the student can get extended information.

We add that by creating the digest from a template, in the form of a collection of modules, it is possible to easily replace outdated information in a specific module without rewriting the entire digest.

Completing literature digest with digests about the most well-known Soviet and Russian films, popular Russian music groups, famous works of visual art (with reference to Internet resources, where they can be found in their original form), Russian history, Russian speech etiquette, etc., we get a linguistic-cultural complex, clearly aimed at the formation of the cultural component of communicative competence among foreign students.

Each digest is created on the basis of the standard because that’s the ignorance of the standard distinguishes a foreigner from a native speaker. Digest, giving a foreigner a standard background knowledge, actively helps the teacher in his work on the formation of students’ communicative competence.

A further aspect of the problem associated with linguistic research must not be overlooked. In recent years, in many Russian universities, working with foreign students, a new contingent has emerged: the so-called “bilinguals” - students from the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. Being citizens of other countries, all students from the CIS have course “Russian as a foreign language” included in the curriculum. That gives rise to the following problem: among such students there are those who really have a poor knowledge of the Russian language, and those for whom, in fact, the Russian language is native (as, for example, for students who graduated from a Russian school at home). But, as our experience shows, all bilinguals (even absolutely fluently speaking Russian) have a very poor basic knowledge of Russian culture, literature, science, history — precisely those background knowledge, the absence of which distinguishes them from native speakers. A digest may help them as well.

2.2 Project – Method

The second method mentioned above - the project-method (PBL -Project Based Learning) - also reflects innovative changes in the training system. In modern conditions, when each representative of the younger generation has good computer skills and owns the technique of creating presentations, it is a good idea to use this for educational purposes. As our experience shows, students are happy to prepare projects related to their future professional field, which involve searching the Internet for information on...
the topic, selecting, organizing and minimizing the material found and creating Power Point presentations on its basis. Such work is usually liked by students, because: 1) it is connected with the Internet they love so much, 2) it is, of itself, creative, 3) teaches them to distil the most important information from the abundance of information, and also 4) teaches them to structure, systematize and minimize the selected material, training logical skills (which they will need later in writing diploma and term papers). At the same time, work on a project can be both individual (for students who are individualists by nature) or in group (which provides useful teamwork skills). And of course this work expands the vocabulary of students, their writing and speaking skills (in the public presentation of their work, students usually begin to understand well the difference between written speech presented on slides and oral performance). In order to increase the motivation, the project topic should be chosen by the teacher together with the student (in this case the teacher prepares a list of possible projects). The teacher can also give students the opportunity to come up with projects themselves.

2.3 Social Networks and Messengers

Practice shows that social networks (Facebook, VKontakte) and instant messengers like WhatsApp and Viber also could be a convenient innovative tool for learning, especially in the absence or lack of interactive whiteboards, which, unfortunately, is often a reality in many Russian universities. By organizing a group in an instant messenger or on a social network with students, the teacher gets the opportunity not only to be in contact with students outside school hours, but also to organize self students studying. Publishing in the group links to the necessary, useful and also interesting information for the student, the teacher broadens the student's outlook, forming cultural component of his communicative competence. During class the teacher sometimes does not have time for such work, because the focus of his efforts is primarily on the development of grammatical skills. Posted materials, containing a large number of audio and video materials, infographics, comics, etc., are very positively perceived by students, unlike traditional lists of books recommended for reading. The rapid exchange of small portions of information represents, on the one hand, the best format for a modern student who is used to multitasking and is incapable of perceiving large informational content, and on the other hand, it corresponds to the inherent habit of young people for the priority of visual information and for its better assimilation. Moreover, such materials provide students with "fresh" information that is relevant right now and today, which allows foreign students to overcome the communication barrier in a situation of intercultural communication. Finally, chatting based on short texts helps the development of verbal and written speech.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Digest-Method

To assess the results of the digest method, 2 groups were selected - bilingual students who arrived to study in Russia from the CIS, and Russian students. A comparative survey of both groups was conducted.

The proposed questionnaire included questions to assess the background knowledge of the informants. In total, 90 informants took part in the survey, which included bilingual students who studied at school in Russian (category 1), bilingual students who did not study at school in Russian (category 2) and Russian students (category 3), 30 people in each category. The results of the survey, we summarized in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Categories of respondents</th>
<th>Correct answers to the questionnaire by topic (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russian History</td>
<td>Russian Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>71,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>62,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the responses showed that, unfortunately, not all native speakers have a full knowledge of Russian culture, but nevertheless the table shows that there is a background standard for native speakers that bilinguals do not have.
In continuation of the experiment, bilinguals of the first and second groups (category 1 and category 2) studied materials of the literature digest (being prepared for publication). After that a second survey was held on. This survey was aimed at assessing students’ knowledge in the field of literature. The survey was conducted only among the bilinguals of the first and second groups (category 1 and category 2). The results of the first and second questionnaires are presented in the following diagram (blue color - the percentage of correct answers before working with digest, red - after).

Diagram 1. Comparison of the results of the first and second questionnaires

The diagram clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the digest in the educational process: for the first category bilinguals, the percentage of correct answers increased from 85% to 97%, almost equal to the percentage of correct answers of Russian students. For bilinguals belonging to category 2, this change is from 56% to 84%.

Summarizing all the above, we can say that the practical importance of using digests is: 1) the didactic perspective of filling gaps in background knowledge; 2) the opportunity to improve learning productivity by redistributing of study time (the release of part-time hours and the ability to use this time to work more efficiently in the classroom), increasing the activity of students, and flexible updating of educational materials.

3.2 Project – Method

When using the project-method, the organization of work on the project proceeded through the following stages:

1. Collective discussion of the project structure and preparation of indicative plan.
2. Preparatory language work: reading the text on a chosen topic, including the necessary language material.
3. View teacher-recommended videos on the topic.
4. Identification of individual topics and individual selection of information in accordance with the plan (in textbooks, professional journals, on the Internet, etc.).
5. Discussion of texts compiled by students in terms of logic, informativeness, conformity with selected topic. In this stage language and speech errors are corrected.
6. The division of the verified text material into separate meaningful parts (slides), to which the necessary illustrations are selected.
7. Preparation of the presentation in the program Power Point. Formulation short commentary for each slide.
8. Preparation for the performance: work on pronunciation, intonation and speed of speech.
9. The final stage of work - demonstration of the results of collective activities. This stage can be organized in the form of a “round-table” or in the form of a presentation competition.

As practice shows, the use of the project method significantly increases both the interest of students and the quality of learning material. During the experiment, two groups of students of the 3rd year were selected. Both groups studied the course “Russian language in professional activity” for one semester. In the first group, one of the topics was studied using the project method, in the second group only traditional methods were used. The final testing showed that the level of knowledge on this
topic among the students of the first group was higher in comparison with the students of the second group. A comparative analysis of the results of the final control in the first and in the second groups is presented in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counting parameters</th>
<th>The group in which the traditional way was used</th>
<th>A group in which the project method was used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of students who participated in the testing</td>
<td>40 people</td>
<td>40 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test results (maximum number of points -30)</td>
<td>19 points / 60.3%</td>
<td>24 points / 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade point / percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who received more than 25 points</td>
<td>10 people (25% of the total number tested)</td>
<td>18 people (45% of the total number tested)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who received an unsatisfactory grade</td>
<td>6 people (15% of the total number tested)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, a properly designed educational project involving the implementation of important practical tasks allows students quickly and willingly to acquire the necessary communicative and professional competencies.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, we note that in the conditions of prefigurative culture, it is educational structures that are the first to face new challenges. But taking into account the peculiarities of the new generation, timely restructuring of the teaching methods, using flexibility of the educational process we are able to successfully overcome all new risks and challenges.

REFERENCES


