

Study Course of Mother-Tongue: Relevant Aspects

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Abstract

The article analyzes relevant aspects of the Russian language syllabus for schools in the light of the study content being presented in reference documents while taking into consideration historical background and context. Based on modern methods of scientific research, experimental work and experience in designing the study content of the Russian language course the authors conclude that relevant aspects of the school course syllabus come The article analyzes relevant aspects of the Russian (native) language syllabus for schools in the light of the study content being presented in reference documents while taking into consideration historical background and context. The article aims at drawing attention to peculiarities of designing the study content of the mother-tongue course formed at the edge of the 19-20th centuries which are still fruitfully developing nowadays. Based on modern methods of scientific research, experimental work and experience in designing the study content of the Russian (native) language course the authors conclude that relevant aspects of the school course syllabus come down to progressive movement towards competence approach in the presentation of the course's content; actualization of its supra-subject (meta-subject) function; implementation of its axiological aspect; orientation of the school course on the development of the child's personality, one's cognitive and creative abilities, as well as spiritual and social experience. The research resulted in methodical system aimed at meeting axiological, thematic and meta-subject challenges during the students' broad-ranging activities.

Keywords: *mother-tongue, designing the study content of the mother-tongue course, relevant aspects of syllabus.*

1. Introduction

While performing its basic functions as a tool of communication and expression of thoughts mother-tongue also provides ways for interpersonal and social interaction, participates in the formation of consciousness, self-awareness and worldview of the individual, thus stays the most important means of storing and transmitting information, traditions and history of the people speaking it. Proficiency in native language determines the ability to think analytically, to master various methods of intellectual activity, as well as the ability to express your thoughts convincingly and to accurately understand the thoughts of others, to extract and analyze information from various texts, to navigate oneself in key challenges of modern life and in the world of spiritual and moral values. As a system of understanding reality Russian (native) language ensures the development of the child's intellectual and creative abilities; develops one's abstract thinking, memory and imagination; forms the skills of independent learning, self-education and personal fulfilment. Learning Russian language improves moral and communicative culture of pupils. Being a form of storage and assimilation of various knowledge Russian (native) language is inextricably linked with all school subjects, thus it has a special status: not only as an object of study but also as a language of instruction. It affects the quality of academic success and contributes to mastering future profession. That is why nowadays when new Federal State educational standards are being introduced the issues of Russian mother-tongue syllabus acquire specific significance.

2. Problem statement

The risks of the school's transition to new standards have been repeatedly discussed in the pedagogical press. Among such risks methodologists and practitioners noted, first of all, a high degree of uncertainty in solving one of the central questions of didactics – “What do we teach?”, i.e. the absence of educational content in the new standards, the content which must be in turn covered in educational process [12]. That being said, due to certain changes in the focus of education and its goals the ways of presenting the subject content have also changed in the second-generation standards: from a specific general minimum of content to presentation of the content via the results of subject's studying. At the same time the concept of the educational programme as of a set of various subject programmes is replaced by the concept of it being a special reference document. In this case it is not the content itself, but the composition of the programme, including exemplary programmes for individual academic subjects, programmes for upbringing and socialization of schoolchildren, programmes for the formation of universal educational activities, etc. that become an object for standardization [1].

However, presentation of the syllabus for teaching Russian language in schools in a form requirements document is not a matter of supporting or restraining creativity and initiatives of the participants of educational process. It is an issue of implementation of the State's interests in the sphere of general education [12]. The results declared in the second-generation

standards were not provided with the study content and therefore did not ensure the creation of a unified educational space as well as of unified requirements for the final attestation of school graduates. When talking about the study content of the Russian language course it is a matter of preserving and developing those relevant aspects of the Russian (native) language teaching programmes which began to form at the end of the past - the beginning of this century when the state educational standards of the “first” and “second” generations were developed.

3. Research questions

Our analysis led us to pose the main research question: which aspects of the mother-tongue tuition formed at the end of the past - the beginning of this century should be maintained and developed in the 21st century, which of these aspects are the most relevant?

4. Purpose of the study

The aim of the research was to identify relevant aspects of the mother-tongue syllabus within the framework of the subject content presentation in reference documents, and historical background.

5. Methodology

The main methods of this study were content analysis; systematization of the results of pedagogical and methodical scientific researches in order to determine the scope of existing knowledge on the issue; generalization of the author’s experience in standardizing the subject content of the educational programmes for the Russian language as native; reflection of personal scientific and pedagogical activities.

6. Findings

In the international educational practice of designing and standardizing the mother-tongue tuitions it is possible to identify the mainstream aspects for study content in a number of countries. Thus, in China where distance education is actively developing the selection of content for distance courses, the content’s selection criteria and its common points with the traditional subject courses are particularly emphasized [14].

Singapore scholars pay special attention to the expansion of the education content while offering its diversification and giving consideration to the development of specific cognitive skills that promote creative thinking, curiosity and perseverance in learning activities [5].

Argentina is adopting new practices of introducing digital resources into the study content, recourses that are both designed specifically for schoolchildren, and at the same time are developed by schoolchildren [4].

In Latvia, the evolution of society is associated with scientific and technological education, therefore scientific knowledge obtained in school is often considered as formal, not based on understanding of the study content. The study focuses on the following theses: modern society needs scientific literacy; learning without any interest is unproductive; all educators should support youth education, literate youth.

The issue of incorporating a communicative component in the study content in regular schools with a focus on oral communication – which the authors claim to be of great importance for the personal growth and professional development of schoolchildren – is being explored in the United States [8].

However, in study programmes for our mother-tongue these ideas are far from new. For example, in the second half of the 19th

century such educational subject as “Russian language” was considered by teachers not only as a cognitive (giving knowledge), but also as practical (forming speech skills) discipline. The problem of combining language learning and speech training was raised at the dawn of the methodology of teaching the Russian language. The ways of its solution were outlined in the works of Buslaeva F., Stoyunina V., Ushinsky K., Vodovozova V., Bunakova N., Ostrogorsky V. and others.

At the end of the 20th century through changing socio-cultural reality and hence modernization of the Russian education system the idea of a practical, communicative focus of the Russian language study course becomes systemically important. The implementation of this idea is aligned with the development of educational standards at the close of the 20th – first decade of the 21st century. The standard dated back to 2004 determines the content of the Russian language curriculum in the form of three thematic blocks correlated with the types of competences that are to be developed in the process of studying Russian (native) language: communicative, linguistic (philological), lingual and cultural. The first block targets the improvement of speech skills, as well as understanding the features of language units functioning in the process of speech activity; the second is attributed to the language organization as a system, to the culture of speech, including basic information on the theory of linguistic manipulation; the third block is dedicated to the questions of language’s convergence with history and culture of the people [3]. The main aspects of the study content for Russian (native) language teaching programmes specific for previous periods have developed in the Fundamental Core of the Study Content for General Education [6], in projects of the Tentative Education Programme for the Russian language in Regular Schools [10, 11] prepared due to the development of the second generation of the Federal Education Standards.

Resulting from the changes in the focus of education and its goals the second-generation standards include different means of presentation of the study content: from a specific general minimum of content to presentation of the content via the results of subject’s studying. The results declared in the second-generation standards were not provided with the study content. The specific study content in subject areas and particular subjects was highlighted in the Tentative Basic Education Programme for Basic General Education dated 2015 [9]. However, the study content for the Russian language as mother-tongue presented in the Tentative Programme requires more specification in order to strengthen practical component of education, as well as to include topical theories and facts tested in science in the content.

The cognitive turn in linguistics gave a powerful impetus to the development of the theory and practice of communication. The system-structural paradigm has been replaced by the anthropocentric paradigm in science. Language is now considered not in isolation from its creator, treasurer and speaker but as a way to get across the mentality of the nation, into the consciousness of its representatives, with a person as the focal point. That is why the mother-tongue is the axiological core of the educational process in school. As a component of cultural experience of the nation native language is a means of preserving and transmitting cultural information, a way of familiarizing the child with material and spiritual culture of peoples, an instrument of perception of national and humanistic values of the Russian people that determine the “cultural awareness” of the world [7]. Cultivation of respectful attitude towards the mother-tongue, of a conscious attitude to it as to a cultural phenomenon, understanding of its role in the life of a person, society and the State, formation of ideas about the speech ideal and the necessity to follow it, the ability to assess aesthetic potential of the Russian language have always been and should be one of the most important areas of the study content in programmes for the Russian language at school.

The development of information and computer technologies, the Internet, and globalization processes significantly bring the problem of the student’s orientation in the world of objective

values up to date and underline the importance of universal values in the curricula on mother-tongue at schools.

The evolution of the study content should indeed be “(in terms of the content and the technology of teaching) implemented through the use of all the language resources of socialization of an educated and creative personality by internal means of the object under study, in order to form positive motivation to study the Russian (native) language, to attract young people’s interest to their mother-tongue, to promote care and love for its speakers – the great Russian people” [13].

7. Conclusions

The practice of designing the school course of the native Russian language consistently reflects the main directions and stages of its development over the last two decades, the most important of which has been strengthening its practical, verbal and communicative orientation.

The tendency of the modern course of the Russian (native) language to the development of all types of speech activities in their unity and correlation leads to the sort of the content selection and its presentation in the process of education that would ensure the formation of the ability to consciously perceive and understand speech (listening) and the written word (reading); to convey in oral and written form one’s own thoughts correctly, accurately, logically, harmoniously, and expressively according to the given conditions of communication (speaking and writing). This approach creates real setting for the implementation of meta-subject function of the mother-tongue in the system of modern school education. Thereby one of the essential features of the formation of the Russian (native) language syllabus at present is its focus on functional literacy as a person’s ability to receive, understand, master, process, store, transmit, and effectively use information (primarily the textual one) in daily, educational, professional and public life [2].

The approaches to the study content design reflected above have been developed following both natural unity of the traditions of the Russian language education programmes design formed in the works of our predecessors and those new approaches and principles of teaching the mother-tongue that were shaped under the influence of the achievements of linguistics and language pedagogy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

These approaches can form the backbone for a new developing methodical system which will focus on mastering subject competencies, solving axiological and meta-subject problems in the course of various students’ activities.

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