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Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

**INFORMATION CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY
OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER**

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Abstract

This work is devoted to the issue of information security in language education. The modern world information warfare necessitates a foreign language specialist the formation of the ability to handle and evaluate information in order to determine whether it contains information challenges. Within this competence the future teacher must know that language is an effective and efficient tool of influencing minds of the recipients; must be able to recognize and construe language mediated information challenges; must possess skills of foreign language text analysis with a view to identify means of influencing contained in it. At the same time the mentioned competence involves the specialist in the process of forming and developing clear civil and patriotic position. The article focuses particular attention on educational discourse as the scope of informational and psychological warfare. The authentic teaching tools, to which refer authentic informative texts, which are issued by mass media, and the Internet, provide a vast scale of possibilities to implement information threats. The article reviews the role of mass media in the interstate information confrontation, analyses the image of Russia, revealed by the British informative texts to the English-speaking reader. It also highlights the dual nature of the Internet, which on the one hand, is an integral information and communicative technology of educational process, and on the other hand, is used for the organization and implementation of restrained activities, including the extremist ones.

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1. Introduction

One can not overemphasize the value of the information component in the life of the modern society. Information competence becomes one of the key components of future specialist training. It is defined “as a skill of searching, evaluating, using and distributing all kinds of information” (Turusheva, 2009, p.127). According to Turusheva, “students need not so much knowledge itself, but the so-called information competence to survive in the changing information environment” (Turusheva, 2009, p.127).

On the other hand, the information itself is the tool for human control, the basis for manipulating human behavior and consciousness (Libicki, 1995). Understanding the fact that that information is not only a creative but also a destructive force, necessitates the formation of skills to handle and evaluate information. Information processing and evaluation are complex and comprehensive skills that need to be purposefully formed. Otherwise the information would be a cumbersome and pointless load, and in the worst case it will provide a good basis for manipulating (Solovova, 2010). That is why “teachers of any subject should pay serious attention to developing information search, selection, evaluation, analysis and presentation skills” (Turusheva, 2009, p.126). In the context of training a foreign language teacher, whose professional activity is connected with alien society worldview, which is mediated by a natural language, the formation of this competence becomes particularly significant.

2. Problem Statement

Professional training of a specialist always starts with the awareness of the basic laws of modern historical phase. Thus, in accordance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education Facility (FSES HEF) to the results of Bachelor program, 44.03.01 Teacher Education, a graduate must possess the following general cultural competence:

the ability to analyse the main stages and patterns of historical development for the formation of patriotism and civic-mindedness (OK-2).

A characteristic feature of modernity is interstate information confrontation, so-called information warfare. Information warfare is defined as hostile activity directed against any part of the knowledge and belief systems of an adversary (Szafranski, 1995). It is a conflict that involves the protection, manipulation, degradation, and denial of information (Libicki, 1995) as well as presupposes any country to reach the overwhelming advantages in the information field, which allows to influence adversary choice, and hence adversary behavior, without the adversary’s awareness that choices and behavior are being influenced (Szafranski, 1995).

One of the forms of information warfare is information and psychological warfare. It is considered to be the intelligent warfare due to its nature: it is crafted by minds to affect minds (Szafranski, 1995). The weapon employed in this war is language. Language is not only a means of creating information and psychological warfare texts, but it also is the vehicle to human cognition: it plays a crucial role in the process of interpreting reality and forming special conceptual information models of the world in the human mind (Beliaeva & Chernyavskaya, 2016; Kubryakova, 2009).

Bearing in mind the persuasive language function (Chernyavskaya & Molodychenko, 2017) scientists define the information and psychological warfare as the confrontation, which is carried out by means of deliberate, especially linguistic, impact on the mind of an enemy for to achieve the effect of

cognitive repression and/or subordination, as well as by means of using information and psychological protection against these effects (Bernatsckaya et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, it should be noted, that currently Russia has faced a situation of hostility from the West, as well as information and psychological warfare burst against Russia. The targets of this warfare belong to different spheres of Russian social activity: politics, power, education, sports, etc. (Skovorodnikov & Kopnina, 2016) Derogatory evaluation is introduced against even such spheres of Russian life, where it is hardly expected: when assessing world-wide recognized achievements of Russian culture (Ivanova & Salimova, 2015):

- The Bolshoi dancers are over-controlled, with metronome efficiency and bland smiles ... But to watch her dance today, with the world and her life before her, is to see beauty at its truest, and truth at its most beautiful (Guardian 18.08.2013).

Nowadays, a Western layman is purposefully forced to form a negative image of Russia: the Russian State is discredited and often demonized (Ivanova, 2016). Such events as large number of English fans refusing to travel to Russia to visit World Cup 2018 year on the eve of the Championship out of fear for their lives and security, evidence the existence of such linguistic-cognitive structures from representatives of the Anglophone community.

It is very important for the students (future teachers) to be well aware of main features of the current historical moment in order to analyse and evaluate the information critically and form clear civil and patriotic position. In this context, a significant element in the training of a teacher is educative University environment, the main purpose of which is the formation and development of patriotic traits of personality.

2.1. Educational discourse as the scope of information and psychological warfare

Educational discourse, as pointed out by T. van Dijk, is the most influential one after media discourse, because there is no institute and no discourse, comparable in its magnitude with the institute and the discourse of school (van Dijk, 2008). This section will focus on such components of the educational discourse as authentic learning tools and the Internet. They, as important and effective means of modern education, can serve as a source of information threats.

Authentic texts feature is that they were not originally created for educational purposes and are written for native speakers of some language (Harmer, 2010). Authentic texts reflect the world view of a given society, and therefore may contain alien (and even hostile) ideological structures to a foreign speech community.

Authentic informative texts, including articles, interviews, opinions, comments, etc., deserve special attention in terms of the information-psychological effects they produce. Usually mass media are the bearer of these texts (Panarin, 2012). It is known that mass media are used in modern information confrontation as communication medium. According to Joseph, "technological developments over recent years have ensured that the mainstream mass media will play a growing role in social and political processes, and in shaping perceptions and policies relating to domestic as well as international conflicts" (Joseph, 2014, p.225).

An analysis of English news texts dedicated to the XXII Olympic Winter Games, 2014, held in Sochi, reveals that the semantic emphasis is ousted from the Games as the biggest sporting event, to the image of Russia as a host country. The British media has paid no attention to the role of our country in the

development of the International Olympic movement, nothing has been said about the outstanding achievements of the Russian (Soviet) athletes, having written quite a lot of pages in the annals of modern Olympic Games, etc. On the contrary, a negative image of the Russian State has been created. Without going into the linguistic analysis of the text, here are just a small excerpt from the article titled "The ice tsar cometh, but anyone who can is leaving his ruined country", which was issued in the newspaper, related to the broadband quality press:

...the stealing has been audacious, enormous – theft from every single direction. ... Theft of this kind happens because Russia does not have a modern state. Russia is rather medieval. Putin controls a feudal court. His inner circle even call him the “tsar” (Sunday Times 09. 02. 2014).

It is interesting to note that this article presents the binary Sochi — Russia opposition, based on the statement that a part of Russia cannot be a territory with modern sports facilities, infrastructure, natural beauty, i.e. all, that is inherent in European countries, and became seen by fans from different countries:

Sochi could not look like the real Russia. Sochi must look like a showcase because Sochi is meant to show Russia to the world – strong and shining.

Thus, the future teachers must realize that the process of authentic material selection requires careful analysis of the information and content. No less attention should be paid to the organization of training activities through the Internet.

The fact that online resources are invaluable and vast database enabling creation of the information-subject environment, education and self-education of people, arouses no doubt (Crystal, 2001). The Internet is used as a materials resource, a classroom tool and a coursebook. The Internet-based communication provides an opportunity of live contact with native speakers. In this case, the student finds him/herself in a situation of natural language environment. According to Galskova (2004, p.11), this situation is an indisputable advantage, because neither the teacher with a good foreign language competence language, nor authentic learning tools are able to fully compensate the absence of direct interaction with native speakers of a language.

On the other hand, it is worth recalling the quotation made by a famous American film critic, journalist, screenwriter, and author Roger Ebert: “If the Net is the most useful research tool ever available ... it is also the most misleading, dangerous and seductive” (Ebert, 1996). Thus, virtual communication can be a serious threat due to the peculiarities of Internet communication: openness, anonymity systems, physical representation, etc.

The fact that Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) is used as a vehicle for information and psychological operations is not new (van Niekerk & Maharaj, 2013). Currently, the Internet had been providing a vast and effective venue for carrying out information and propagandist and psychological activities, such as those promoting extremist materials and recruitment of young people into extremist or other prohibited organizations, as in the case of Moscow student Varvara Karaulova.

Students are required to know that the Internet can be a powerful development tool if it is used reasonably and critically. At the same time the Net is not reliable source of Information. It can be used as a weapon that influences minds of people.

3. Research Questions

With regard to the set out above characteristics of modern period of information technologies development, on the one hand, and international confrontation, on the other, a particular relevance is gained by the issues that relate to the knowledge, skills and personal qualities a foreign language teacher should possess for to provide information security?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to validate the necessity of formation of an ability to handle and evaluate information by a foreign language teacher, focusing attention on knowledge and skills that underlie this ability.

5. Research Methods

The research methods used are: description and observation, synthesis, critical discourse analysis, case method

6. Findings

Information competence is an essential component of effective teacher training. It is defined as the ability to search, evaluate, interpret, organize and maintain information as well as to use computers to process information. One of the main features of information competence is life-long learning.

Interstate information confrontation has become an integral part of modern era, currently having reached particular tension and urgency. To ensure the information security of an individual and society as a whole, it is necessary for the people to build the ability to counteract the information challenges. The specialist of the future should be able to find adequate responses to the new information challenges, using the information confrontation tools.

First, a foreign language teacher must know that language is efficient means of influencing cognitive and behavioral activities of the recipient (Chernyavskaya & Molodychenko, 2017; Almazova, Eremin, & Rubtsova, 2016; Kogan, Khalyapina & Popova, 2017). It is the main weapon of information and psychological warfare. Since the information challenges are mainly represented by language challenges, a future specialist must be able to analyse a foreign language text to determine whether it contains any explicit and implicit information, which, in its turn, requires language text analysis skills possession.

Above-mentioned knowledge and skills can be formed within the framework of such academic disciplines as Cognitive Linguistics, Communication Studies, Political Linguistics, Linguistics of Information and Psychological Warfare, Mass Media etc. It is obvious that these subjects should be included into the curriculum.

Furthermore, a specialist must realize that information challenges penetrate virtually in all human activities, including education. In this regard, a future teacher must have clear understanding of the potential channels (sources) of information threats dissemination in his/her subject area. As to foreign language teaching, these sources are authentic informative texts and the Internet. The organization of work with such educative means deserves special attention: it must be carefully thought out, methodically grounded,

managed and controlled. The specialist should be aware of reliable and trusted sites which are specifically designed for English language teaching. It helps to escape pointless and destructive information.

Finally, an important element in the training of a teacher is the formation and development of patriotic traits of personality. It is a diverse and multi-level process that includes the formation and development of national and cultural identity, confrontation against any manifestations of intolerance towards other nations and peoples, development of thrive for civil moral and spiritual perfection. A man who loves and supports his country and people, retains his national and cultural identity during intercultural communication can successfully cope with any aggression, including information threats.

7. Conclusion

The development of the information society has been accompanied by the new challenges arousal. Information challenges are, first of all, the verbal challenges related to persuasive function of language. The authentic learning tools and the Internet discover the ample opportunity to implement this function. It is necessary that a foreign language specialist possesses purposefully generated skills to evaluate and process information with a view to identifying means of influence, including manipulating the recipient. Therefore, it is necessary, on the one hand, to form the subject competences connected with the ability to analyse text, and on the other, to ensure during the process of training the formation and development of certain moral and ethical attitudes, clear citizenship, patriotism, as well as an awareness of their own national and cultural identity, allowing the teacher to actively oppose the information challenges and secure educational environments.

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