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Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Russian Language for Adult Beginners Textbook Design in Serbian Language and Socio-Cultural Environment

Extended summary

The subject of the paper is the presentation of the experiences of a part of the authors' team responsible for the creation of the Russian language textbook *Ni puha ni pera!* (Ginić et al., 2020), intended for users whose mother tongue is Serbian and, as such, the first of its kind in Serbian applied Russian studies. The design of a foreign (Russian) language textbook for adult beginners presents a challenge, both in terms of method selection and the selection of elements within its macrostructure, primarily the texts, as well as exercises and the choice and development of illustrative materials which are crucial for the textbook efficacy.

The concept of a foreign language textbook for adults should be based on the communicative approach, which involves equal mastery of all manifestations of functional, pragmatic, and linguistic competence. The topics covered in the textbooks are specified by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* for each level individually, but their presentation should be adapted to the age of the target learners, which is in a given case rather broad – from students to senior citizens.

Special attention should be paid to the selection and presentation of linguistic-cultural features, whose minimum is not predetermined and which needs to be defined along with the necessary comparison of cultures, either overt or covert. In the research, the analysis of the textbooks for initial learning of the Russian language was carried out by means of quantitative and qualitative analyses of macrostructural elements and linguistic and cultural material with the aim of presenting the theoretical and methodological starting points of the textbook for initial learning of the Russian language, designed on the basis of the communicative method.

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During the process, the authors relied on the works of Russian and Serbian methodologists: I. Beam, A. Arutyunova, B. Trušina, K. Končarević, N. Ajdžanović (Bim, 1981; Arutyunov, Trušina, 1986; Arutyunov, 1987; Končarević, 2002; Ajdžanović, 2016).

In order to present the theoretical and methodological starting points of a textbook for initial learning of the Russian language with a distinctly communicative orientation, the authors set themselves the following tasks:

1. to determine the distribution of texts as the basic macrostructural element of the textbook with regard to its purpose, method of creation and form; to comment the obtained results in the context of the purpose of the textbook (initial learning) and the method on which it is based (communicative);

2. to emphasize the importance of the apparatus of the adoption organization, that is, the practice system; to determine its diversity, quality, and types; to comment on the obtained results in the context of the purpose of the textbook and the methods on which it is based;

3. to highlight the importance of illustrations as a necessary macrostructural element of foreign language textbooks in motivation for learning, to determine the representation of the illustrative material considering its type and purpose; to stress the quality and innovative use of certain elements of illustrative material;

4. to point out the necessity of including linguistic and cultural material in the textbook, its importance in developing intercultural competence, point out its diversity, but also the provision of an exercise system for determination and repetition.

After a detailed analysis of all the macrostructural elements of the textbook, the conclusion is that every textbook should contain all the necessary elements of the macrostructure, while each element must be addressed individually with due attention, which leaves no room for improvisations. It means that it is crucial to achieve a balance between the texts, as the nucleus of the textbook lesson, and a very dispersed system of exercises. At the same time, exercises for the development of all four language competencies must not be neglected, which will be fully effective if evaluation material is offered after each lesson: a test that checks the adoption of the presented content and thus ensures permanent control of achievement. In addition, the illustrative material presented in a textbook, in addition to being well-crafted, varied and interesting, must be intriguing, and, what is even more important, adapted to its target group. Furthermore, the design of the textbook and the orientation apparatus (preferably elaborate) should be such that they allow easy navigation in the textbook, which additionally favors the motivation to learn.

Finally, the authors pointed out the possibilities for further research based on this paper: (a) comparative expertise of different current textbooks for initial learning of the Russian language on a communicative basis; (b) comparative expertise of textbooks for initial learning on a communicative basis for different foreign languages; (c) analysis of achievements in all forms of language competence of users of different textbooks for initial learning of the Russian language. The realization of the last would indicate the impact of specific textbooks on the achievements of users and enable the improvement of the theoretical and methodological foundations of future textbooks.

Keywords: Russian language, foreign language textbook for adult beginners, linguistic and cultural minimum, textbook design

Source

- Ginić, J., Ajdžanović, N., Spasić, N. i Sabo B. (2020). *Ni puha ni pera! Učebnik ruskog jezika: elementarnij uroven'*. Beograd: Centar ruskog geografskog društva.

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