Didactisation of authentic text when teaching german as a second foreign language with english as the first in a higher educational institution

Didáctica del texto auténtico al enseñar alemán como segunda lengua extranjera con el inglés como primera en una institución educativa

Elena Mikhailovna SHASTINA 1; Anna Vyacheslavna GIZATULLINA 2; Alfiya Ashrafullovna SIBGATULLINA 3; Juri Marjanowich MALYJ 4; Liudmila Vladimirovna TROFIMOVA 5

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ABSTRACT:
The suggested study is dedicated to the problem of the use of authentic texts (ATs) in foreign language (FL) training method in a higher educational institution, particularly when teaching second foreign language (SFL) (in our case, German on the basis of English as the first foreign language (FFL)). The goal of the research is to find and justify the best AT reading and understanding training method when teaching German as a SFL after English as the first on the basis of trilingual/multilingual approach to FL teaching. The aims of the study are the following: 1) to differentiate between the terms “authenticity”, “authentic material”, and “authentic text”; 2) to identify the topical challenges that students face when working with AT; 3) to specify the term “didactisation” and justify the term “secondary didactisation”; 4) to create an algorithm of

RESUMEN:
El estudio sugerido se dedica al problema del uso de textos auténticos (ATS) en el método de formación de lengua extranjera (FL) en una institución educativa superior, particularmente al enseñar la segunda lengua extranjera (SFL) (en nuestro caso, alemán en base de inglés como la primera lengua extranjera (FFL)). El objetivo de la investigación es encontrar y justificar lo mejor en la lectura y la comprensión del método de formación cuando la enseñanza de alemán como un SFL después del inglés como el primero sobre la base de la aproximación trilingüe/multilingüe a la enseñanza de la fl. Los objetivos del estudio son los siguientes: 1) diferenciar entre los términos "autenticidad", "material auténtico" y "texto auténtico"; (2) identificar los desafíos tópicos a los que se enfrentan los estudiantes al trabajar en; (3) especificar el término "didactisation"
1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact that AT is a highly efficient means of teaching FL in a higher educational institution. A priori AT acts as the best way to get familiar with the country of the target language, shows how the language functions in natural social context of native speakers, and, as a result, increases the motivation for studying FL. That said, the authors stick to the definition of AT given by E.V. Nosonovich who understood AT as a text created by a native speaker not for educational purposes (Nosonovich, 1999, 3).

Today the range of multicultural multilingual communicative situations is expanding, and proficiency in several FLs not only becomes socially and economically significant but also allows to satisfy ever-increasing communicative needs of a modern person. The concept of multilingual FL teaching reflects the need to become proficient in several FLs. One of the most closely studied aspects within this concept is the method of trilingual/ multilingual teaching German as a SFL after English as the first. This approach is based on the works of several foreign researchers who studied the phenomenon of transference or, in other words, positive transfer when studying second and following FLs (Hufeisen 2000,14-18; Kärchner-Ober, 2009,81).

The implementation of the concept of multilingual FL teaching creates a problem related to the didactisation of authentic material on the whole and AT in particular. This issue is actively studied by European as well as Russian scientists. “Methodical-authentic and educational-authentic texts” which should match certain parameters allowing to consider them “authentic discourse” appear within “methodical adaptation” of AT (Nosonovich, Milrud 1999: 33-59).

FLs faculty of Elabuga institute of Kazan Federal University (EI KFU) regularly uses the accumulated theoretical and practical experience of foreign and Russian science within the concept trilingual/ multilingual teaching German as a SFL after English as the first and studies the issues of the so called “secondary didactisation” of AT (Borisov A.M., Shastina E.M., Gizatullina A.V., Sibgatullina A.A. 2017: 119-125; Sibgatullina 2017: 201-205).

2. Methods
The methods of the study are determined by the set goals and include analysis of educational, psychological, and methodical literature and studies dedicated to various aspects of the issue under consideration as well as analysis of practical work experience obtained by the German language teachers; questionnaire, participant observation, conversation; statistical methods of processing obtained results.

In order to identify the research problem, we organised a questionnaire survey for 99 students of FLs faculty, which allowed to detect the main methods of SFL teaching problem solution and justify the use of ATs when teaching SFL.

3. Research results

ATs as a product of a different worldview of FL native speakers are of particular significance in studying the culture of target language country. One of the goals of our work was to identify the challenges of working with ATs that students studying German as a SFL after English as the first face. We designed a special questionnaire for the target group of students of FLs faculty. It consists of 3 parts with 18 questions in total. 99 students of four different years (year 2 to 5) took part in questionnaire survey. Analysis of the survey results showed that 60% of the respondents had difficulties with reading ATs while only 10% classified these difficulties as minor ones. Among the obstacles to mastering AT reading in SFL were the following: grammar difficulties (grammatical structures which are difficult to understand and to use) for 33% of the respondents, understanding of compound and derived words for 40%, “false friends” for 42%, absent or insufficient socio-cultural knowledge of the country of target language for 50%. According to the questionnaire results, lack of timely measures for elimination of these difficulties and teachers’ attention to these aspects while working with ATs lead to decreased motivation for studying SFL in 35% of cases.

During the research the authors of the article suggested that optimisation of teaching students studying German as a SFL after English as the first to read on the basis of ATs can be achieved through didactisation of AT. Didactisation based on the identification of lexical, grammatical, and phonetical similarities of both languages makes the work with ATs within multilingual education (German after English) more effective. The authors have suggested and tested the algorithm of secondary AT didactisation within trilingual teaching of German backed by native and the English languages.

4. Discussion of the results

Despite the fact that the term “authentic text” (AT) is one of the basic notions in the methodology of FL teaching, it still is a source of arguable points. First of all, it is necessary to explore the interrelation between such phenomena as “authenticity”, “authentic material” and “authentic text”. According to E.V. Nosonovich, the notion of “authenticity” is methodically not only text description, it includes all aspects of the educational process: educational interaction, material presentation and formatting methods, type of tasks, perception specifics, etc. (Nosonovich, 1999, 4). Authentic materials are close to cultural artefacts in their significance as they are products of human activity (Gilmore, 2007, 107). Therefore, any artificially created object, a simple unit of culture, such as a piece of music, literary text, TV programme, etc., can be considered authentic materials which can be used in FL teaching.

E.V. Nosonovich understands AT as a text created by a native speaker not for educational purposes. Thus, all texts can be divided into authentic and inauthentic (educational) for convenience. Methodically ATs and their characteristics as well as “methodical authenticity” phenomenon are also justifiable (Nosonovich, 1999, 3-7).

It is natural that such definition allows texts of different genres and topics to be considered authentic materials. M. Bludau mentions three AT groups: texts related to the so called “personal” information (mit personalisierten Darstellungen): interviews, biographies, letters, diaries, etc.; informative texts from encyclopaedias and reference literature, from newspapers...
and magazines, etc.; literary texts (Bludau, 1993, 209-210). Development of mass media, advertising and such “new” forms of communication as mobile connection and the Internet allowed to considerably expand the range of ATs (Altmayer, 2002, 3).

Methodical literature traditionally mentions not only positive experience of working with ATs but also “side” and undesirable result due to the fact that ATs are usually congested with unfamiliar lexical material causing difficulties and naturally leading to demotivation of students and sometimes being one of the reasons of students’ poor performance (Gizatullina A.V., 2015: 1333).

According to E.V. Nosonovich and R.P. Milrud, it is preferable to base FL teaching on authentic materials from original sources which were not meant for educational purposes. “Methodical-authentic and educational-authentic texts” which should match certain parameters allowing to consider them “authentic discourse” – a text considered in terms of events and characterised by vocabulary and grammar natural for a native speaker, relevant linguistic means, and authentic word use – appear within “methodical adaptation” (Nosonovich, Milrud 1999: 33-59). The significance of preserving the authenticity of the genre is stressed as genre and composition variety allows students to get familiar with speech clichés, phraseology, and vocabulary related to different areas of life and belonging to different styles.

The authors of the article prefer the term “didactisation” of AT adding certain “methodical processing” of the text complying with its socio-cultural background to this notion.

Universally dominant role of the English language in the educational system requires the review of existing approaches to teaching German in a higher educational institution. Different aspects of teaching German after English in a higher educational institution were studied by Russian scientists (Vasilenko, 2015; Golovanova, 1984; Yeremina, 2005; Ilner, 2015; Lopareva, 2006; Mametova 2013, etc.) who believe that multilingualism in the educational process should become a mandatory component of contemporary specialist’s portfolio. The English and German languages are the best combination because due to, first of all, a large body of similar vocabulary it is easier to understand and use new words.

In the end of the 1990s the viewpoint of studies suddenly changed as more and more scientists noted positive influence – transference – which meant transfer of positive experience of studying the first FL to the following foreign ones. The change of vector brought updated approaches of FL teaching according to which multilingual education can be more effective if such phenomena as interference and transference are taken into account (Hufeisen 2000, 14-18; Kärchner-Ober, 2009, 81).

Including authentic materials into the study of the German language after English is an efficient method meeting the requirements of our information-intensive times. AT does not only familiarise students with culture, mentality, and social life of the target language country but also gives an opportunity to adequately react to current social problems, to compare development trends of other societies with similar trends in one’s own society, which contributes to the development of students’ intercultural competence. E.V. Malkova makes a fundamental conclusion, saying that intercultural and communicative competences naturally complement each other and the former can only be developed in case the latter is developed as well (Malkova, p. 13).

E.V. Nosonovich and R.P. Milrud designed the criteria of informative authenticity when selecting the materials to be used in the educational process (Nosonovich, Milrud, 1999, p.11-18) and also justified culturological, informative, and situational aspects as well as the aspect of national mentality and the aspect of learning task. As a result of such comprehensive approach to authentic text material, AT remains an educational means and also becomes an educational goal, as it creates prerequisites for creation of new texts containing personalised information.

In accordance with the above-mentioned, the authors of the article single out the texts derived from the Internet, as they are characterised by “topicality of information that can (and should) be updated if necessary” (Severova, 2009, 50), which makes these texts indispensable for the
educational process.

International German public television and radio broadcasting company Deutsche Welle (DW) in association with Goethe-Institut presents monthly selection of authentic materials in their Newsletter für Deutschlehrer. Praktische Handreichungen und Tipps für den Deutschunterricht. Ein monatlicher Newsletter der Deutschen Welle und des Goethe-Instituts. ATs in the section Deutsch Aktuell – Top-Thema mit Vokabeln provide not only topical information about the country of target language but also about world events in different fields of social life. Authentic materials are accompanied by a glossary, a series of vocabulary and grammar tasks, audio or video recordings, which allows to consider these texts as primary didactisation ATs. Further work (secondary didactisation) backed by students’ linguistic experience obtained when studying English is based on them.

Standard criteria of material selection should be used when selecting ATs: 1) the topic of AT should be interesting for students; 2) linguistic format of AT should match the level of FL; 3) AT should correspond to the goal of reading (general, selective or detailed comprehension); 4) the volume of AT should correspond to the set task; 5) AT should be appropriate for linguistic work (for instance, vocabulary and grammar exercises) and effective independent activity.

The selected AT «Wenn das Smartphone süchtig macht» (Autor: Ruben Kalus/Benjamim Wirtz) meeting all the above-mentioned criteria was offered to the second year students of FLs faculty (Linguistics, specialising in translation and translation studies). Primary didactisation allows to eliminate certain lexical difficulties with the help of the glossary, to control the comprehension of the text (general and selective comprehension), to revise adjective declension grammar, to practice articulation and intonation while listening to the text. The suggested AT didactisation is meant for people with rather high level of German proficiency and can be partially used for working with students.

Secondary AT didactisation within trilingual teaching of German backed by native and the English languages can be implemented according to the following algorithm:
5. Conclusion
In conclusion of our work it should be noted that we have studied the terms of “authenticity”, “authentic material”, and “authentic text” in view of FL study. Introduction of ATs in the process of FL teaching contributes to acquisition of linguistics and socio-cultural information by students, however, methodical organisation of working with such texts has a number of specific features. During the research we have justified the notion of “secondary didactisation” of AT which is additional methodical processing of AT aimed at taking into account the existing linguistic experience of students within the process of teaching German as a SFL after English as the first.

The conducted research identified topical challenges that students face when working with ATs the analysis of which allowed to design an algorithm for working with ATs within teaching German as a SFL. This approach can be used both within trilingual education and FL teaching on the basis of native ones (natural bilingualism).

We see the prospects of further study of the issue of didactisation of ATs in more detailed study of the reasons for difficulties in working with ATs as well as methods taking into account the proficiency of students in several FLs.

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