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Scientific article

Distance Learning Technologies in Teaching Russian as a Non-Native Language in Primary School

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Abstract. The article studies distance education technologies in teaching Russian as a non-native language in primary schools. Modern Russian schools are multicultural, because their students have not spoken Russian since childhood together with Russian-speaking classmates. Most of them study in primary schools (grades 1–4). The relevance of the research is determined by the current situation in the world, where distance learning has become an integral part of the educational process, and also by the lack of knowledge of the online resources potential in teaching Russian as a non-native language at school. The aim of the study is to determine the possibilities of including distance technologies in the practice of teaching Russian to foreign-speaking primary school students. The material is scientific and educational literature on the issue, as well as Internet resources for students studying Russian as a foreign and non-native language. The authors used methods of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, forecasting, and survey. The results of the research are detecting the features of distance-learning technologies in modern schools: online resources are used in fragments, the technical capabilities of schools are not used or are not used enough, materials on Russian as a non-native language are not presented on the used platforms, and schoolmasters do not have experience in using distance learning technologies in teaching Russian to foreign speakers and also determining the directions for improving online teaching of Russian as a non-native language to primary school students: interconnected teaching of speech activities, the use of distance learning technologies for students' individual work on the program, presenting generalized material of lessons, language and speech exercises, as well as materials for monitoring. The conclusion contains findings about the educational potential of distance technologies: massive opportunities for generalizing and revising lesson material, language skills automation and speech skills training, interconnected training of speech activities, cognitive activity intensification and compensation for the lack of classroom time for teaching Russian as a non-native language.

Keywords: Russian as a non-native language, language education, distance learning technologies, Internet resource, online resource

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Introduction

The new education system, which is being formed right now under the influence of a dynamically changing world, is part of a single information and educational space, where the distance between teacher and student becomes compulsory, but sometimes the only possible condition for implementing pedagogical activities. Over the past six months, we hear the word “distance” in relation to the educational environment more and more often, and it forces the teacher to master new forms of interaction with the student, to change the usual format of “live” communication, to use other educational technologies.

The problem is that the transition to distance learning makes us look for optimal methods and techniques of work that could fully compensate for the “absence” of a teacher who plays the role of interpreter and transmitter of knowledge, coordinator and mentor. This question very acute in the methodology of teaching Russian to foreign speakers, who experience a number of difficulties in the process of adaptation to a foreign cultural environment, mastering the social role of a student in a Russian school, and in learning a non-native language.

The changes that are taking place cannot but affect the teacher himself. Despite the fact that the current linguistic state of the global information environment is characterized by a fairly high degree of network distribution of the Russian language as a foreign language (hereinafter – RFL) and as a non-native language (hereinafter – RNNL), the issue of training teachers to work in this new reality has not been fully researched.

The very concept of teaching RFL using computer technologies belongs to E.G. Azimov, whose scientific and methodological idea is as follows: “The use of a computer in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language provides variability, increases the effectiveness of teaching only when taking into account the individual characteristics of students (cognitive, motivational factors), strengthening their cognitive activity” (Azimov, 1996: 8).

A number of scientists and methodologists developed the ideas of distance learning, Internet education, and pedagogical and technological innovations. A.A. Atabekova (2002), M.V. Moiseeva, E.S. Polat, M.Yu. Bukharkina, M.I. Nezhurina (2004), L.A. Dunaeva (2006), O.V. Milovidova (2007), O.I. Rudenko-Morgun (2009), M.A. Bovtenko (2019) and other researchers, in fact, stood at the origins of computer language.

Special attention should be paid to the scientific and methodological theory of A.N. Bogolyubov (2008), who considered distance learning as a specific language environment, including educational materials specially developed for self-learning in various media, as well as “a set of tools that allow to compensate for the separation of participants in educational communication by distance, to organize their communication not only in asynchronous, but also in synchronous, including voice, modes” (Bogolyubov, 2008: 7). A.N. Bogolyubov considered modelling such an educational environment as the central task of the methodology of teaching RFL.

In turn, A.D. Gartsov (2009) laid down the scientific and applied foundations of electronic linguodidactics, described in detail the methodology for implementing traditional and innovative components in the system of network language teaching, which ensure learning the Russian language in the optimal mode for students.

The theoretical developments of leading methodologists and linguodidacts were subsequently implemented on numerous virtual educational platforms created to solve the problems of studying RFL and RNNL outside the language environment, where a teacher is located at a distance, or independently. E.V. Voevoda (2009), M.Yu. Antropova (2015), V.V. Borisova (2018), G.F. Kudinova, I.V. Kudinov, G. M. Kurbangaleeva (2018) and many others analyzed the existing information content for teaching RFL and RNNL, showed their role in increasing educational motivation, demonstrated the possibilities of structuring, organizing and filling various online resources with specific content.

Thus, at present, electronic linguodidactics has already been theoretically justified, and the educational environment itself with the use of distance educational technologies in the process of teaching RFL and RNNL is actively developing and expanding.

However, there are still no full-fledged online courses for teaching Russian to younger schoolchildren, and there is no methodological concept of introducing distance educational technologies into the system of primary language education.

The relevance of the article is determined by the lack of generalizing works reflecting the current state of teaching children RNNL, insufficient knowledge of currency and effectiveness of using distance educational technologies (hereinafter – DET) in primary foreign language education. At the same time, the very problem of using electronic educational resources in language teaching cannot be called comprehensively developed.

The recent changes in public life, which affected the education system in general and the specifics of language education in particular, forced us to turn to a detailed consideration of those issues.

Purpose

The *purpose of the article* is to determine the educational potential of DET in teaching Russian to younger foreign students.

Methods and materials

Among the main methods used to achieve this goal, the following are distinguished:

- theoretical analysis and synthesis of scientific and methodological literature and online educational resources;
- expert-analytical method for assessing the quality of existing Internet resources for teaching RFL and RNNL;
- a non-standardized survey that allowed us to obtain data on using distance technologies in the educational process of younger schoolchildren;
- a method of probabilistic forecasting which gave the hypothesis of the need to organize teaching Russian as a non-native language in primary schools with the use of DET, which have a number of undeniable advantages.

The material for this article is the scientific and methodological literature on information (and in a strict sense – distance) technologies in the educational language space, as well as literature on the theory and practice of teaching RFL and RNNL. The authors analyzed active online textbooks, online simulators, tests, teaching programs, and electronic educational platforms for students with a non-native Russian language. The article is based on systematized data of the survey, which was held between teachers of the Russian language and literature in secondary schools of Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, where foreign speakers are taught together with Russian-speaking children, and additional hours for adaptational and correctional work with foreign schoolchildren are allocated in the curriculum.

Results

1. The survey revealed that most of the existing online RFL resources are not intended for teaching younger schoolchildren in a language environment. Most of the materials are aimed at forming and developing listening and reading skills, while speaking and writing skills remain unaddressed.

2. The conducted survey showed that teachers fragmentally use DET in their work, and online resources are not used at all for teaching RNNL.

3. DET should be an additional means of teaching RNNL in primary school, not replacing traditional remedial classes, but allowing students to develop their communicative competence more effectively through independent work.

4. For younger schoolchildren, it is advisable to present the generalized material of classes, language and speech exercises, and the materials for remote control.

Discussion

According to Federal Law No. 273-FZ “About education in the Russian Federation” (as amended on September, 1, 2020), “distance education technologies are understood as educational technologies implemented mainly with the use

of information and telecommunication networks with indirect (distance) interaction between students and teaching staff”¹. Speaking about DET, we will keep in mind, first of all, the use of the Internet telecommunication network for working with information; in particular, we are interested in the specifics of organizing a lesson in RNNL in primary school using these technologies.

Russian language education, of course, is competitive and has a rich experience of using various information and communication technologies that help the teacher of RFL or RNNL to organize electronic interaction with students. Modern educational and methodological developments for distance learning are actively used in the classroom. For example, full-fledged e-courses are built on the electronic platform Moodle, which has a high interactive potential, and therefore is popular among many teachers (Bart, Gabova, 2017). Moodle contains a wide range of tools to fully support the learning process in a virtual environment. Indeed, with the help of this platform, it is possible not only to demonstrate educational material, but also to test knowledge and monitor students’ performance.

Currently, dozens of electronic training resources on RFL have been developed (<https://www.irlc.msu.ru/teachers/catalog/>); the courses are for students with different levels of language proficiency, are aimed at helping them improve all types of speech activity, include materials on phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, reference and vocabulary materials, offer tests on knowledge, skills and abilities, contain game elements, have a bright interface, etc. The most popular resources in our opinion are “Russian for everyone”, “Learn Russian”, “YouLang”, “Time to Speak Russian”, “Education in Russian”, and many others. We would also like to note the electronic textbooks “Ruslan” (Great Britain) with various language versions, “SUCCESS+”; the international online school on RFL “Russificate”, etc. We emphasize that these Internet resources are created mainly for self-study of a foreign (Russian) language by those who are planning to enter a Russian university or already study in it.

However, there are not so many online resources for younger foreign schoolchildren, and most of them are for children who are learning Russian outside of Russia, that is, outside of the language environment.

First of all, we should mention the project of Pushkin State Russian Language Institute “The Russian language for our children”, which consists of educational and training content and methodological materials to support learning in Russian. On the site of the project, we find two special sections designed for younger schoolchildren: “School Yard” (6+) and “Reading Room” (7+).

The first section contains: (a) proverbs, tongue twisters and counting rhymes that allow children to develop and improve their pronunciation skills in a playful way, as they can listen to the language material, choose and subsequently change

¹ Federal Law No. 273-FZ “About Education in the Russian Federation” (as amended on September 1, 2020). Retrieved November 4, 2020, from: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_140174/.

the pace of pronouncing; (b) tasks for developing linguistic and cultural competence: acquaintance with the basic historical and geographical features of the country of the language being studied, with its customs and traditions (“Congratulations on Easter!”, “Congratulations on the name day!”, etc.) – and tasks to check this competence.

The “Reading Room” section is a catalogue of folklore (for example, the fairy tale “Axe Porridge”, etc.), artistic (the best examples of Russian classical texts) and even journalistic (for example, the essay “Extreme Professions”, etc.) texts, grouped by level of complexity, i. e. aimed at readers with different levels of language proficiency (from A1 to B2). The teacher or parent always has the opportunity to choose the necessary text for reading classes and organize work on it, focusing on the methodological recommendations presented on the site.

The site contains a lot of game tasks for those children who are just learning to read, and those who already know how to do it well. Traditional for Internet resources of this type are the sections: “Vocabulary. Grammar”, “Listening”, “Reading”, “About testing”, “Trying”, “Training”, “Checking”. It should be noted that the absolute “advantages” of the content under consideration include: 1) recommendations for organizing work using the site materials and 2) the distribution of all types of tasks and exercises by the levels of children's proficiency in Russian.

Innovative is the system of certification testing of bilingual students developed and described in detail on the website. The system allows to use descriptors different from those used to determine the level of knowledge of adult foreign students (Kalenkova, Korepanova, 2015).

Besides “The Russian language for our children”, we can name the following internet courses for younger schoolchildren: “Russian as a Foreign Language for Children”, “Hello World: World Languages for Children” and “The Russian language with Smeshariki”. The authors of these resources focused on game as one of the main activities for children of this age. This is evidenced by the colourful interface, large bright pictures, fairy-tale and cartoon characters as assistants in the process of learning a non-native language, a variety of game tasks. The materials help to learn the Russian alphabet, learn to read, expand the vocabulary, perfect the use of certain grammatical structures, give them regional knowledge, but, in our opinion, they cannot fully teach speaking and writing, and those types of speech activity largely influence the results of a foreign students in a Russian school.

Probably, the increased attention to reproductive types of speech activity has two reasons. The first is the recipient of the analyzed Internet resources – children living abroad and learning Russian as a foreign language, or heritage language. Active use of the language, which implies a high level of development of speaking and writing skills, is not the goal of training in these circumstances. In a different situation, there are children who need not only to master the school curriculum in a language that is not native to them, but also to communicate in all areas

that are relevant to them. It is obvious that this requires active work (including with the help of DET) on developing productive types of speech activity in Russian. The second reason, in our opinion, is the specifics of distance learning, which involves the perception of information. Teaching writing in primary school is first of all the formation of technical writing skills, mastering Russian graphics, which is difficult to implement through a computer. Speaking skills are the most difficult to form with DET.

It is necessary to state that today, with the variety of virtual educational platforms for RFL, there are no electronic educational resources that would satisfy educational needs of younger foreign schoolchildren and represent a systematic course on RNNL. However, individual materials from existing resources can be used while teaching certain topics.

In September – October, 2020, the authors of this article conducted a survey between primary school teachers. The research was aimed at studying the practices of using DET by teachers working with both Russian-speaking and foreign schoolchildren not in a quarantine situation. 59 teachers of schools of Vasileostrovsky, Kalininsky and Nevsky districts of Saint Petersburg, Vsevolozhsky district of the Leningrad region were interviewed. In accordance with the task, teachers were asked questions about their experience of using DET, including in teaching Russian as a non-native language; about awareness of the existing electronic educational resources on RFL and RNNL for younger schoolchildren; about the feasibility of using DET in working with younger schoolchildren; about the technical possibilities for using DET in regular and extracurricular activities at school.

The analysis of the responses allowed us to draw the following conclusions.

1. Teachers do not have a well-formed idea of the meaning of the terminological phrase “distance educational technologies”. The interviewees often had to explain what electronic educational resources can be considered as DET. For example, the question “How do you usually use distance learning technologies in your work?” was answered as follows: “I’m looking for pictures on the Internet”, “I download ready-made presentations for lessons from the Internet”, and so on. Accordingly, quantitative data on the use of DET can rather be considered as data on the use of Internet resources in general: 30.3% of respondents said that they often used DET, 50.9% – that they rarely used them, 18.8% – that they did not use them at all.

2. 100% of teachers are not familiar with electronic educational resources on RFL and RNNL for younger schoolchildren and, accordingly, have never used them in their work. Most often, among the network resources used in training, the educational portal “Учи.ру” and the digital educational resource “YaKlass” were named, but special materials for foreign speakers are not presented on these Internet sites.

3. Teachers did not think about the possibilities of using DET in working with non-Russian-speaking children. So, when asked about the feasibility of using distance learning in working with all younger schoolchildren, the vast majority of

respondents (88.1%) answered in the negative, arguing their point of view in different ways, for example: “children need to develop writing skills, and not by clicking buttons”, “they are constantly with phones, even if they do their lessons in traditional notebooks”, etc. Nevertheless, the interviewer's remark that DET in teaching foreign languages would allow to more effectively organize students' independent work and to some extent make up for the lack of classroom hours, often aroused the teachers' interest. This remark became the starting point for a subsequent conversation about the resources on RNNL for children.

4. In modern schools, there are technical opportunities for using DET in both regular and extracurricular activities, but these opportunities are not fully used. Thus, 71.2% of teachers noted that their school has special computer classes with Internet access, but they have never used these classes to organize their students' work. 8.5% of respondents do not know whether their school has the necessary technical capabilities. 20.3% of teachers use the technical capabilities of the school.

The lack of experience in using DET in teaching RNNL, and the lack of teachers' awareness in this area indicate that they will have difficulties in selecting and organizing the educational material of online resources independently. It is obvious that the effectiveness of remote work is provided by a set of management decisions aimed at providing various types of support: technical, pedagogical, organizational (Diachkova, Kulkova, 2020). Despite the availability of technical capabilities in modern schools, most teachers are not ready to systematically and regularly use DET. This situation can be changed if the course program on RNNL for schoolchildren is developed, and it provides for the use of network resources. The course content should be based on the state educational standard for RFL of the first level of general knowledge and the approximate basic educational program of primary general education in the subject part “Russian language”. It is important to select the material in accordance with the current approaches to teaching RNNL (Zheleznyakova, Lapteva, 2020).

On the one hand, modern reality necessitates the use of electronic learning tools. On the other hand, it is obvious that learning a non-native language cannot be completely virtual. Distance learning should not be a goal in itself, it can organically complement the full-time remedial course, which usually involves no more than two academic hours per week in primary school.

The lack of training time for automating speech skills and forming the communicative competence of foreign speakers makes it necessary to use DET to consolidate and work out the material introduced in the classroom, as well as to control the schoolchildren's activities. In this regard, the virtual environment should present new materials for learning, but language and speech exercises related to the topic studied at the lesson, as well as tests.

The material that was presented in the classroom can be included in the distance course in the form of diagrams, tables, and illustrations with the purpose of repetition and generalization. The extensive visualization capabilities provided by

online learning will contribute to a better memorizing of the material, increase learning motivation and enhance the cognitive activity of students.

An important principle of teaching a non-native language is the principle of interrelated teaching of types of speech activity, which should be reflected in DET. It is necessary that students form both receptive and productive types of speech activity within the same topic, on the same language material. For younger schoolchildren, the optimal sequence of types of speech activity within one topic is as follows: listening-speaking-reading-writing. Accordingly, we can place on the online platform: audio recordings of texts with a pre-listening task in audio format: “Listen and tell me what this story is about. Write down your answer in the form of an audio message”; tasks that develop listening and speaking skills, for example: “Listen to questions and answer them, write down answers in the form of audio messages”; tasks that develop reading and writing skills, for example: “Put the sentences in order”, “Petya wrote a story about his city and mixed up some words. Correct his mistakes”, etc.

The importance of working on productive types of speech activity was discussed above. Indeed, it is not easy to develop them remotely. Thus, speaking is the most difficult type of speech activity in terms of distance learning, but modern technologies allow to make audio recordings of messages and exchange them. Voice forums, audio chats – these forms of communication in the virtual world make it possible to include speaking tasks in online training. It is advisable to organize the formation of technical writing skills and mastering Russian graphics in classroom, but the skills of constructing a written statement can be effectively developed in the Internet environment.

Conclusion

Despite the ever-growing demand for DET, including in the field of language education, Internet resources that could be consistently used in a course of RNNL at school have not yet been created. Teachers do not use existing virtual resources to work with foreign children and do not fully understand the feasibility and ways of using Internet sources in teaching. This demonstrates the importance of working in two directions: creating a systemically organized online course that accompanies traditional classes in accordance with the training program, and improving the skills of teachers in the field of DET.

The educational potential of using distance learning technologies in teaching children RNNL in a language environment is determined by the wide possibilities in terms of generalization and repetition of lesson material, automation of language skills and training speech skills, and interrelated teaching of speech activities. In addition, learning in an online environment activates the cognitive activity of schoolchildren and allows to some extent compensate for the lack of classroom time allocated for classes in RNNL.

The research perspective is seen in the creation of a program on RNNL for primary schools, which involves combining offline and online classes, developing content, and determining the most effective methods and techniques of teaching.

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Научная статья

Дистанционные образовательные технологии в обучении русскому языку как неродному в начальной школе

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Аннотация. Изучаются проблемы применения дистанционных образовательных технологий в обучении инофонов русскому языку как неродному в начальной школе. Современная российская школа является поликультурной, поскольку в ней наравне с русскоязычными одноклассниками обучаются дети, не владеющие русским языком с детства. Особенно много таких учащихся в начальной школе (1–4 классах). Актуальность исследования определяется сложившейся в мире ситуацией, в которой дистанционное обучение стало неотъемлемой частью образовательного процесса, и недостаточной изученностью потенциала онлайн-ресурсов в обучении русскому языку как неродному в школе. Цель статьи – определить возможности включения в практику преподавания русского языка младшим школьникам инофонам дистанционных технологий. Материалом послужила научная и учебно-методическая литература по проблеме исследования, а также интернет-ресурсы, предназначенные для изучающих русский язык как иностранный и как неродной. Исследование проводилось с помощью методов анализа и синтеза, оценки, прогнозирования и опроса. Результаты работы заключаются в выявлении особенностей использования дистанционных образовательных технологий в современной школе: онлайн-ресурсы применяются фрагментарно, технические возможности школ не используются или используются не в полной мере, на применяемых платформах не представлены материалы по русскому языку как неродному, у учителей отсутствует опыт применения дистанционных образовательных технологий для преподавания русского языка инофонам, а также в определении направлений совершенствования онлайн-обучения младших школьников русскому языку как неродному: взаимосвязанное обучение видам речевой деятельности, использование дистанционных образовательных технологий для организации самостоятельной работы школьников по программе, представление в дистанционной форме обобщенного материала занятий, языковых и речевых упражнений, материалов для контроля. В заключении содержатся выводы об образовательном потенциале использования дистанционных технологий: определяются возможности с

точки зрения обобщения и повторения материала уроков, автоматизации языковых навыков и тренировки речевых умений, взаимосвязанного обучения видам речевой деятельности, отмечается активизация познавательной деятельности школьников и компенсация недостатка аудиторного времени, выделяемого на занятия по русскому языку как неродному.

Ключевые слова: русский язык как неродной, языковое образование, дистанционные образовательные технологии, интернет-ресурс, онлайн-ресурс

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