

The Methodology of Foreign Language Integrative Teaching at the Initial Stage of Interpreter Training

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ABSTRACT

The topicality of the research is connected with the modern requirements to the education of future interpreters who are to speak a foreign language within the professional context. For this purpose, it is necessary to focus their language training at the initial stage of learning on forming their professional thinking. This raises the need for scientific understanding and development of an effective methodology for foreign language integrative training of future interpreters. The purpose of the article is to try the set of educational communication and search exercises, contributing to the development and formation of the basic professionally important competences of an interpreter at the initial stage of language training. The leading approaches to the study of this problem are the method of experiment, integrative and competence-based approaches to learning. The author of the article has developed an integrative methodology of foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter professional training at the VSHU, which allowed to raise the level of basic professionally important competences necessary for a future interpreter to master the interpretation specialty. The article and the research results described can be useful for teachers of higher educational institutions interested in raising the level of language training of future interpreters.

KEYWORDS

future interpreters, professional competence, integrative teaching, competence-based approach, speech competence, speech practice.

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Introduction

Topicality of the Research

Globalization and integration are changing the requirements to higher professional education. The education system should meet the new demands of the society. As a rule, language educators working with future interpreters have a tendency to teach their subject only, in isolation from all the others. But this approach does not generate a body of knowledge that interpreters are to obtain

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in order to successfully perform their professional activity. Therefore, new approaches are needed in education. The integrative approach developed in the domestic and foreign methodology (Borshcheva, 2011; Kolesova, 2014; Muhammadiyev, 2015; Lawless, 2016), and the competence-based approach (Filatova, 2005; Zimnyaya, 2006; Remezova, 2011) are considered to be the most effective in view of this. The integrative approach can solve a problem of integral training of future specialists not only because of the disciplines integration, but also due to merging of methods, forms and organization of the educational process. Integration makes the pedagogical system more integral and leads to increased levels of the educational process, resulting in the formation of the students' necessary competences. The competence-based approach in training future interpreters focuses on both learning outcomes in the form of professional knowledge, abilities and skills, and on the ability of the future specialists to act in certain situations.

Professional competence of future interpreters is formed in the process of educational purposeful activities. The value of language training of future interpreters is difficult to overestimate. The level of professional competence of future specialists in general depends on how inherent linguistic framework is and how it reflects the future professional activity.

Many domestic and foreign researchers emphasize the special nature of language proficiency needed to master the profession of an interpreter (Alekseeva, 2000; Sdobnikov, 2007; Porshneva, 2003; Remezova, 2011). The training of future interpreters should be constructed in such a way so that learning a language has always been within the professional context. The professional language proficiency implies the ability to generate new knowledge, organize information, improve information literacy, to use different sublanguages, bear in mind and analyze communication and speech experience. Professionally oriented foreign language teaching supports formation of students' professional competence, which is manifested in their ability to realize personal meanings, to understand the cultural characteristics of social and speech behavior of native speakers, the ability to correctly choose the speech behavior and strategy according to the communicative situation, to apply this knowledge in the process of interpreting activity, to be an attentive, competent communication intermediary, i.e. a qualified employee.

Status of a Problem

In today's rapidly developing world and continued change in patterns of international relations there has been some breakthrough in understanding interpreting activity. The society, more than ever, is in need of skilled professionals. The increased requirements to the quality of interpreting education raise the question of the definition of methodical basis for interpreter training at higher education institutions. The Russian higher education system is currently in transition from the traditional teaching to the competence-based approach in education, is oriented towards the world educational space. One of the main higher education trends in the XXI century is the intensification of integration at all levels, from individual to interstate one. Integration is today one of the most innovative phenomena in education. The main function of integration is to achieve synergies based on cooperation and collaboration. The integrative training approach is the methodological basis of the initial professional training of interpreters. The integrative approach to foreign

language teaching is the basis for formation of future interpreters' professional competence.

The basic idea of the competence-based approach lies in the fact that the main result of education is not knowledge, abilities and skills, but the ability and willingness of a person to perform effectively and efficiently in various socially important situations. This approach involves the formation of human needs when a person continuously replenishes and updates knowledge, improves skills, when these skills turn into competences, which are formed in the course of and for future professional activity. The didactic system of formation of interpreters' professional competence seeks to enhance students' professionally important competences, determined by the needs of the profession and further professional self-development (Zimnyaya, 2006).

Translation competence is a complex multidimensional linguistic and cognitive category, which includes professional skills that allow the interpreter to perform an act of interlingual and intercultural communication. Linguistic competence of an interpreter includes all the linguistic skills characteristic of a native speaker, but, in addition, implies a number of specific features. An interpreter should remember about the system, normal and customary usage of the language, its vocabulary and grammatical structure, about the use of language units to build speech utterances. In this regard, it is important that the professional language study should contain a set of learning interpreting exercises in order to develop students' professional thinking. Future interpreters need to realize that the purpose of education should be the formation and development of professionally important competences that allow them to implement interpreting functions and to achieve a high level of professional competence on the basis of these functions.

An Integrative Approach to Foreign Language Teaching at the Initial Stage of Future Interpreters' Training

The structure of the integrative approach to foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter training includes aspects, principles, goals and results. Aspects of the integrative approach are methodological, organizational and substantial components. The methodological aspect involves integrated methods of foreign language and interpretation teaching. The organizational component implies integrated forms of teaching the subjects mentioned above. The substantial component includes training activities (various methods, high-quality selection of material contributing to the objectives of the integrative course) and extracurricular activities (intercultural interaction, self-instructional material). The basic principles of the integrative approach in foreign language teaching in interpreter training are: the principle of orientation to self-development and self-education; the principle of variability; the multicultural principle of self-determination and self-actualization of the individual; the principle of tolerance; the principle of dialogue of cultures; the principle of communicativeness; the group interaction principle; the principle of consciousness; the principle of professional orientation.

The main goals of the integrative approach to foreign language teaching are to form a holistic picture of the world; to develop new skills and abilities due to interpenetration and mutual enrichment of the system by the elements of various systems; to form a tolerant person ready for constructive intercultural communication; to form a creative person ready to find solutions in different

situations; to form basic professionally significant competences. The result of applying the integrative approach to foreign language teaching at the initial stage of future interpreters' training is the intensified process of training, systematized educational-cognitive activity, formed key competences, formed professional skills; the person ready for effective intercultural communication. The integrative approach to foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter training gives an opportunity to generate future interpreters' professionally significant competences and to prepare students for the development and acquisition of professional interpreting skills in special interpreting teaching in the third and fourth years of studying.

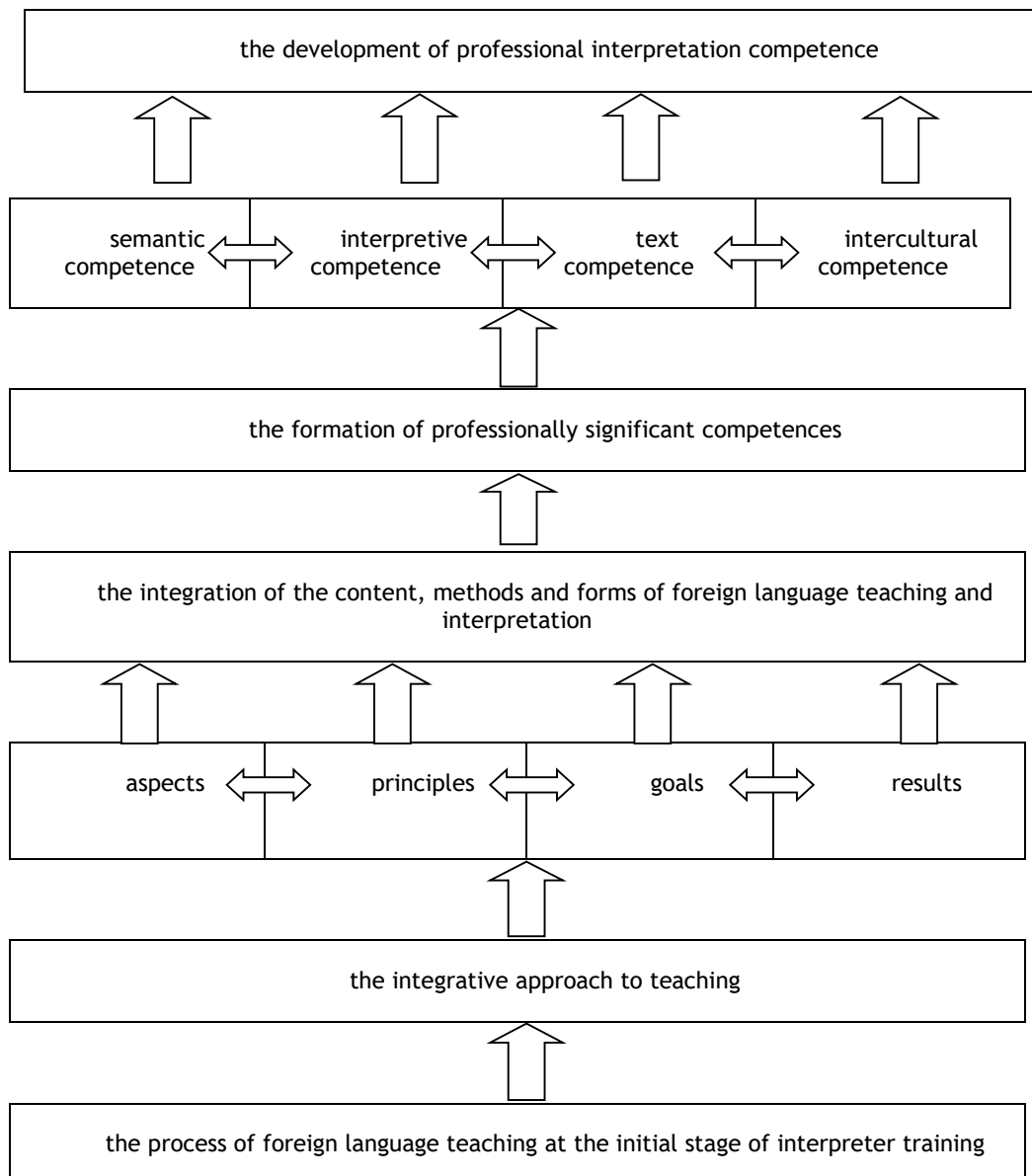


Figure 1. The model of integrative methodology of foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter training

Basic Professionally Significant Competences

Basic linguistic training plays an important role in the structure of interpreter training. It lays the foundation for a professional interpreting education the main objective of which should be to form a professional linguistic personality of an interpreter. Drawbacks in the process of interpreter training may cause communication failures and misunderstanding between the representatives of different cultures. Interpreter profession refers to the occupations that require professional language use. Professionalism in this case is primarily manifested in intended and controlled speech acts, in the systematic practical knowledge of the native and foreign linguistic and background material, the ability to establish cross-language and cross-cultural conformity and differences in ways of expressing concepts. Professionalism is also characterized by the developed switching mechanism, which consists in the reinterpretation of all the meanings or their part in the signs of one or another language.

Interpreter's thinking is characterized by the following professionally significant qualities of verbal and cogitative activity:

- the ability to make probabilistic forecasting in assessing the situation and choosing a mode of action while receiving or understanding messages;
- high semantic memory capacity;
- a significant amount of short-term memory;
- the ability to concentrate and distribute attention;
- the knowledge of the way meanings are constructed and definition of the contextual meaning of the message;
- the ability to construct the meaning of the message and correlate the contextual meaning to the situation and background knowledge;
- the ability to curtail the semantic content of the utterance in the inner speech and to expand it in the external speech;
- the ability to analyze facts and situations;
- the ability to solve typical communicative tasks;
- the ability to make subjective speech decisions and take responsibility for them;
- the conscious effort to improve skills and knowledge. This group of the operating skills is the basis for professionally significant competences needed for interpreting.

Professionally significant competences in interpreter linguistic training are:

1. The semantic competence is an ability to mobilize the resources (organized in a system of knowledge, skills, personal qualities) required to extract and generate the meaning;
2. The interpretive competence is an ability to mobilize the resources required to determine the contextual meaning of language means and their transformation;

3. The text competence is an ability to mobilize the resources necessary for text activities (to generate and to reproduce the text), and also to distinguish the type, genre and style of the text;

4. The intercultural competence is an ability to mobilize the knowledge and skills necessary for adequate meaning interpretation of verbal and nonverbal behavior of the representatives of different cultures.

The formation and development of these competences in foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter training contribute to the development of professional interpretation competence. The semantic competence which is based on semantic memory, concentration and switching of attention allows students to perceive and keep in memory the semantic content of the message and to distinguish semantic units. Due to the interpretive competence skills to convey, formulate and reformulate the meaning of the message received in accordance with the context are developed. The textual competence which is also important forms the ability to maintain the denotative, connotative, normative, pragmatic and aesthetic text equivalences. The intercultural competence develops the professionally significant ability to build a statement so that it was correctly interpreted by the interlocutor representing another culture.

Materials and Methods

Theoretical and Empirical Methods

A complex variety of methods complementary to each other was used to do the experiment. They are as follows:

- theoretical methods – literature analysis, instructional and methodological materials on the research problem; study and synthesis of the innovative pedagogical experience, analysis, synthesis;

- empirical methods – observation, ascertaining and formative pedagogical experiment, methods of mathematical statistics.

Base of Research

The base of the research was the Vyatka State Humanities University.

The Stages of the Research

The study was conducted in three stages:

In the first stage an experimental site was created at the department of Linguistics of the Vyatka State Humanities University; the set of educational communication and search exercises was developed to be used at the lessons on the discipline “The practical course of the first foreign language” for the second-year students in accordance with the educational and thematic curriculum for the specialty “Translation, Interpreting and Translation Studies”.

In the second stage the set of exercises aimed at the formation of the basic interpreters’ professionally important competences was implemented in the educational process.

In the third stage the system of exercises was tried; the results of the pedagogical experiment to enhance the professional competence of students whose major is “Translation, Interpreting and Translation Studies” were summarized; the research materials were systematized and presented.

Evaluation Criteria

The students’ learning effectiveness was evaluated from the point of view of formation of the following basic professionally important competences:

- the level of the semantic competence;
- the level of the interpretive competence;
- the level of the text competence;
- the level of the intercultural competence.

The Course and Description of the Experiment

The research was done in 2014-2015, the participants of the experiment were the second-year students of the Linguistics department, specialty “Translation, Interpreting and Translation Studies”, the Vyatka State Humanities University, in the amount of 30 people.

The ascertaining stage of the experiment was aimed to assess the level of the students’ basic professional competences. To this end the students were provided with a set of oral tasks the main objective of which was to determine the level of such qualities as verbal lability (the ability to vary the convey of the meaning); attention focusing; speed of speech reaction; the volume of language resources available; probabilistic forecasting; the volume of semantic, verbal and short-term memory; switching mechanism (stylistic resources). To identify the level of proficiency in the mentioned qualities the participants were given tasks to transform the grammatical structure of the utterance, to reformulate and paraphrase the meaning; to use synonyms and antonyms; to assess the ability to sense and predict the situation, to retrieve and recall the key information of the message heard; to reduce the text; to explain, comment on the concept, the fact, to give a definition; to reproduce from memory a series of numbers and dates, geographical names, proper nouns in the given order.

On the basis of the results obtained the group of the students under the letter “A” in the amount of 15 people was selected as the control group, the experimental group consisted of students under the letter “B” in the amount of 15 people who had low task execution results.

The formative stage of the experiment involved the students of two groups: group A – the control group (CG) and group B – the experimental group (EG).

The experiment was conducted in accordance with the curriculum in the process of teaching “The practical course of the first foreign language”.

The set of educational communication and search exercises was fully implemented while working with the experimental group. They were aimed to form the students’ professional competence whose major was “Translation, Interpreting and Translation Studies” (Table 1).

Table 1. The set of educational communication and search tasks and exercises aimed at the formation of the basic professionally important competences of the VSHU second-year student interpreters

educational communication and search tasks and exercises	basic professionally significant competence formed	level of basic professionally significant competences
<p>- make a Glossary on the topic, be prepared to explain the meaning of the written words/phrases;</p> <p>- listen to a number of words and phrases on the topic (dates, geographical names, proper names), memorize it and reproduce it from memory in any / same order, give the Russian equivalents of the suggested words;</p> <p>- the “snowball” game: 1) repeat the word / phrase on the subject, offered by the first student, give your word / phrase, etc., give the Russian equivalents of these words; make a story, situation with the use of these words in the same order; 2) repeat in turns after the teacher the sentence given to you and the previous sentence. When you hear the expanded version, test yourself whether you remember the whole sentence;</p> <p>- listen to the text, write down the key words that convey the basic meaning, render the contents of the text using the key words;</p> <p>- read/listen to the text, give the translation review of the highlighted words and expressions; adapt the content of the text for children/for professionals/for a wide range of readers, etc.</p> <p>- listen to your classmates’ dialogue (prepared or spontaneous), render the content of the conversation in short in Russian/English</p>	<p>the semantic competence</p>	<p>high level: the student memorizes a large amount of semantic information, holds it in memory and renders it to a third party; possesses the skills of active listening / reading; is able to provide meaningful units, key words that convey the main meaning in the text;</p> <p>average level: the student possesses sufficient semantic memory; has basic skills of active listening / reading; has some problems with identifying key words;</p> <p>low level: the student memorizes a small amount of semantic information, not always holds in memory and renders it to a third person; has no skills of active listening / reading; is not able to distinguish semantic units, key words that convey the main meaning in the text.</p>

Table 1. Continued.

educational communication and search tasks and exercises	basic professionally significant competence formed	level of basic professionally significant competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explain the meaning of the words/phrases on the topic written in the cards so that your group-mates could guess what you are speaking about (give synonyms / antonyms); make up a dialogue in the framework of the topic, using words and expressions from all the cards given to you and your partner; - render the contents of the utterance/text heard in a more concise form (in one sentence), replacing words while keeping the logical connection; - listen and repeat first the basic semantic structure of the utterance/text, then its expanded version; - render the plot of the fairy tale in the style of informational messages, the contents of the interview - in the style of newspaper articles, public presentations, the content of the household dialogue in formal and business style, the content of the figure/graph/diagram as a text message, etc. - the “broken telephone” game: the students are to read, listen to, watch the news on the topic of study in Russian and English at home for each lesson, at the lesson there are two students in the classroom, the rest go out, the first student transfers the contents of the prepared information message to the second student using the language selected by the teacher, the second renders everything memorized to the third one, etc., at the end of the game the original version of the message is read aloud, conclusions are drawn (the work should be in the native language at the initial stage, then in a foreign language, in the second term you can ask students to convey the message in the appropriate language) 	the interpretive competence	<p>high level: the student is able to explain the meaning of words, phrases in both native and foreign languages, to render the information heard in full; is able to express thoughts in different styles, forms; has the skills of speech compression, syntactic expansion;</p> <p>average level: the student explains a sufficient amount of words and phrases; not always distinguishes typical, genre and stylistic features of the text; partially conveys the information heard;</p> <p>low level: the student is not able to paraphrase, give definitions, has difficulty in concretizing, generalizing the information; does not distinguish between types, text styles.</p>

Table 1. Continued.

educational communication and search tasks and exercises	basic professionally significant competence formed	level of basic professionally significant competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - listen and complete the statement, observing the norms of the literary language and the style of the message in the native/foreign language (pre-training/no training); - restore the missing lexical items in the text on the topic; - restore the logical structure of the utterance/text; - give a summary of the text; - determine the type, genre, style of the text, highlight lexical units that are beyond the scope of this style, make the necessary changes; - identify the topic, the communicative purpose of the source text, analyze the composition of the text, describe the genre and stylistic features of the text (elements of the pre-translation text analysis); - do the sight translation of the given text 	the text competence	<p>high level: the student distinguishes between text types, genres, styles; is able to predict the meaning of the situation; sees the logical structure of the text; has mastered the skills of text analysis, the sight translation skills;</p> <p>average level: the student does not always distinguish between types, genres, styles of the text; has difficulty in forecasting the situation; not always sees the text structure, answers most of the questions while analyzing the text; has mastered the basic skills of sight translation;</p> <p>low level: the student does not distinguish between the types, genres, styles of the text; is not able to predict the situation; does not see the text structure, has mastered the basic skills of text analysis</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explain the meaning of the culture-bound terms given (in the native / foreign language), give their meaning in the appropriate language; give your own examples; - make the given requests, suggestions and questions less direct, more polite from the point of view of the representatives of other culture; 	the intercultural competence	<p>high level: the student is able to compare linguistic phenomena in their interrelation with culture and mentality; has knowledge and skills necessary for the adequate interpretation of speech and non-speech behaviour of the representatives of different cultures;</p>

Table 1. Continued.

educational communication and search tasks and exercises	basic professionally significant competence formed	level of basic professionally significant competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - render the suggested statements mitigating their language; - interpret the suggestions trying to observe the socio-cultural norms of the target language; - act as an interpreter of the speech, dialogue, interview on the topic (prior preparation is required, interpreting can be unilateral and bilateral, it is advisable to use this assignment toward the end of the academic year); - role-play on the topic (talk show, conference, round table, etc.) with the students acting as interpreters 		<p>average level: the student is able to distinguish culture-bound terms, to find the equivalents of these words in the Russian language; knows the rules of behaviour at a sufficient level when dealing with the representatives of other cultures;</p> <p>low level: the student is not aware of the socio-cultural context of the specific situation within intercultural communication; not always follows the rules and standards of conduct when dealing with someone representing a different culture</p>

Results

The comparative characteristics of the level of basic professional competences at the ascertaining stage of the experiment have shown that the students in experimental and control groups have identical low level of development of basic professional interpreting skills.

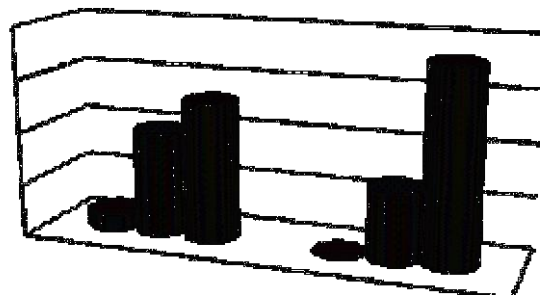


Figure 2. The correlation between the levels of basic professional interpreting competences in the CG and EG before the experiment

The results of applying the set of educational communication and search exercises in the experimental group showed that 13% were the students with the low level of development of semantic competence; 53% of students demonstrated

the average level, the high level was shown by 33% of students. The number of students in the EG with the low level of development of interpretive competence was 13%; 47% showed the average level; 40% of the students demonstrated the high level. The number of students in the EG with the low level of development of textual competence amounted to 13%; 40% of students showed the average level; 47% of students were classified as those of the high level. The number of students with the low level of development of intercultural competence was 13% in the experimental group, 27% in the control group; 40% of students in the EG and in the KG showed the average level; the number of students with the high level amounted to 47% and 33% respectively.

Thus, more than half of the students in the experimental group (73 %) in the beginning of the experiment were assigned to the low level of development of basic professionally significant competences. In the control group, the number of such students is somewhat less – 60%. The formative experiment showed that 60% out of 73% of EG students were classified as average at the end of the academic year, they demonstrated the low level of basic professionally significant competences in the beginning of the term. 20% of students showed the average level registered. 47 % of students showed the high level of basic professionally important competences instead of 0 % in the beginning of the experiment. The positive dynamics of development of basic professional competences were noted among 50% of EG students. The negative shift of the development level was not observed.

A similar assessment of development of the basic professionally important competences was given to the students in the control group at the end of the academic year. Positive changes in the CG were observed among a small number of students. Only two of the four CG students who had the low level of basic professionally significant competences in the beginning demonstrated the average level at the end of the academic year. Positive dynamics in the level of development of professional competences were observed among 15% of the CG students. The negative shift of the development level was not registered.

The results of the experiment have proved the effectiveness of the set of educational communicative integrative exercises in teaching speech practice aimed at improving the level of basic professionally important competences, determining students' training in the specialty "Translation, Interpreting and Translation Studies". By the end of the academic year, the students of the experimental group have mastered the skills of attention concentrating and switching, highlighting notional units of the utterance, have shown the ability to keep the semantic content of the message in memory, have learned how to transfer, formulate and reformulate the meaning of the message received in accordance with the context, to convey the features of the text, to compose statements in terms of the norms and rules of intercultural communication, which is the basis for professional training of future interpreters in the third and fourth years in the classroom interpretation.

Discussions

The problem of using an integrative approach in foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter professional training have been developed considering the following ideas: V. F. Tenishcheva (2008) about the integrative-contextual model of professional competence formation; I. V. Zhuravleva (2014),

E. M. Kolesova (2014), B. Z. Mukhammadiev (2015) about the integrative approach to teaching; O. V. Borshcheva (2011) on the structure of an integrative approach to foreign language teaching; I. A. Zimnyaya (2006) on key competences in the specialist's portrait; L. V. Remezova (2011) on the professional competence of an interpreter; A. N. Shchukin (2004) on the linguistic competence of an interpreter; V. N. Komissarov (2002) on the uniqueness of the linguistic personality of an interpreter; E. R. Porshneva (2007) on the language training of interpreters; V. V. Sdobnikov (2007) on the structure and content of interpreter training.

The literature on the research problem does not adequately cover the issue of the mutually needed active methods of foreign language teaching at the initial stage of interpreter professional training on the basis of the integrative approach aimed at formation of basic professionally important competences of future interpreters.

The comparative analysis of the levels of basic professionally important competences among the students of experimental and control groups has shown that the suggested model of professionally-oriented integrative student teaching at speech practice lessons at higher education institutions is more effective than the existing, traditional model of language teaching that is not advanced enough to provide future interpreters with professionally important skills to successfully pursue interpreter training.

Conclusion

A future interpreter is supposed to speak a foreign language not only on the verbal level, but also on the level of meaning. For this end, it is necessary to focus language training at translation departments on the intellectual development of students, formation of their professional thinking. Only due to this it is possible to implement a reorientation of the basic language education onto the formation of professional identity of the future expert, and thus, more thoroughly prepare students for their mastering interpretation skills. Therefore, the main goal of basic language training should be the formation of a professional linguistic personality of an interpreter.

The experiment conducted at the Linguistics department at the Vyatka State Humanities University has shown that the set of educational communication and search exercises contributes to the development and formation of basic professionally significant competences, helps the students to realize their own linguistic and professionally significant abilities and capabilities, the level of development of verbal intelligence and language culture and prepare them for mastering the specialty of an interpreter.

The perspectives of the research conducted are problems of implementation of the formulated ideas and the author's methodology in the practice of future interpreters' language training at other universities of the region training students in the specialty "Translation, Interpreting and Translation Studies".

Recommendations

The study of the problem of formation of future interpreters' professional competence when mastering a foreign language course at the University has revealed the importance and the necessity of using integrative and competence-based approaches to the problem of formation of professionally significant skills

in the process of language training of interpreters. The results described in the article may be useful for the modernization of the process of foreign language teaching to students of translation departments at higher educational institutions.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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