


TRANSFORMATIONAL INFLUENCE OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL SEMIOTICS ON APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION

At the current stage, in the context of globalization processes, the impact of modern languages, including Ukrainian, on the situation of daily life is becoming a tangible factor. A notable feature of teaching foreign languages in the contemporary school is knowledge integration which enables distinguishing common components and interconnections, thus contributing to the advancement of the didactic system. Improvement of the efficiency of teaching Ukrainian and modern languages at every educational stage is relevant. Both Ukrainian and foreign scholars accomplished a substantial amount of theory-to-practice psychological and linguistic research on the issue of language teaching, language awareness development and improvement of learners' language proficiency, though some aspects, notably the formation of sustainable learning motivation, the conformity of the content of language teaching with the personal life experience and implementation of the advancements in psychology in the education process are the point of issue in the academic community. In this research, we foregrounded one of the aforementioned problems, i.e. the expediency of implementing the principles of social semiotics into the process of teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages. The authors of the article aim not only at providing information on the potential of introducing the principles of social semiotics into the educational process, but also at the potential of practical application of social semiotic perspective in education, i.e. in teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages.

The review of a wide scope of scholarly research suggests that social semiotics as an interdisciplinary scientific field originates from the works by Firth, J., Halliday, M., Martin, J. and C. Matthiessen. Theoretical foundations of social semiotics were developed by Hodge, R. Kress, G. and T. Leeuwen. The impact of semiotics on the educational field is considered in the studies by Christie, F., Derewianka, B., Gilmore, A., Kramsch, C., Mican, P. and G. Williams. The basic considerations of the semiotic work in language acquisition are presented in the research by Royce, T., Stein, P. and L. Unsworth.

The aim of the article is to give further substantiation to the didactic-and-developmental capacity of semiotics in teaching languages. The attainment of the aforementioned aim involves consideration of the following issues, firstly, analyzing the views of scholars on the place of learners' semiotic work in learning, secondly, defining specific features of perception of authentic and pedagogical texts as acts of meaning and communication, and, thirdly, highlighting the ways to the improvement of the approaches to the development of a linguistic individual of a learner.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

Among general scientific methods, a *systemic* one was applied for complex research of theoretical principles of social semiotics. Furthermore, the following *theoretical* methods were used, notably the *comparative and historical* method to analyze the origin of social semiotics as well as the process of the development thereof; the *structural and genetic* method to distinguish the factors that could cause qualitative improvements in students' semiotic work in

language learning and also the factors influencing the formation of language awareness of contemporary learners; the *comparative* method to articulate the proposals for introduction of innovative foreign experience into Ukrainian educational establishments.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of language phenomena within the scope of social semiotics involves the application of systemic functional linguistic theory set forth by Halliday, M. Within the framework of this theory a language is interpreted as a form of activity and as implementation of social relations and processes. Furthermore, the functional approach is a key factor to the establishment and development of links between semiotics and the society (HALLIDAY, 1978). While dealing with material resource for communication and the modes of socially regulated use thereof, semiotics assesses the tenor of usage of semiotic resource both for the production of communicative acts and for interpreting thereof in situations of social interaction. Study of scholarly sources gives ground to conclude that semiotics employs tools from various social and humanitarian scientific fields, notably linguistics, study of culture, sociology, psychology, theory of communication, and study of literature, thus establishing itself as a transdisciplinary approach. The authors discuss the efficient interaction of semiotics, linguistics and pedagogy, in particular semiotic work in learning languages.

The notion "semiotic work" was introduced by Gunther Kress in his paper "Social semiotic and the challenge of multimodality". The scholar defines semiotic work not as an activity, but also as an engagement to the formation of semiotic resources and participation in the process which relies on some definite principles (KRESS, 2003, p. 39). Social semiotics is concerned with the socially contextualized signs and sign-making processes of representation and communication. Signs are constantly made afresh as people connect form and meaning in ways deemed apt to the particular need and occasion (KRESS, 1997). Sign-making entails both interpretation and expression, i.e. figuring out the meanings made by other individuals from material signifiers, notably the forms they produce, and selecting and combining semiotic (sign-making) resources from those made available socially and culturally in the realization of meaning. It should be noted that, in sociolinguistic, the notion "material" is applied in the meaning implying the phenomena perceived by human sensorium (KRESS, 2015). In that connection, the role of non-verbal means or modes, which include gesture, movement and speech, is pivotal. This necessitates familiarisation of students not only with verbal but also with non-verbal means of communication focusing on intercultural diversity while teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages.

Foucault, M. (1981) observes that people make meanings with semiotic resources Framed by the power of social, cultural and institutional conventions. The implication is that familiarization of learners with meanings of language units, primarily lexico-phraseological ones, should imply a socio-cultural context. Meanwhile, according to Halliday, M. (1978, p. 50), ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions are generated simultaneously and mapped onto one another.

Mavers, D. (2009) highlights that students' semiotic work, notably in language learning, involves application of multimodal interpretation and expressing meanings considering socio-cultural aspect of the educational environment. Here we will briefly consider the phenomenon of multimodality. Gavrilova, M. (2016, p. 101) construes modality as a "key parameter of the analysis to explore how people use resources in order to express authenticity or integrity of one's own world view regardless of its being a fact or a fake, the truth or an assumption in the process of communication".

In the modern society, largely due to the development and expansion of digital information technology, a shift from monomodality, i.e. the mode of information dissemination through separated channels of perception, to multimodality, at which different channels become more integrated and visual elements are used to communicate complicated ideas and views, is observed. Kress, G. (2010) states that in linguistics, the benchmark for cognitive activities is a language, meanwhile, in multimodality, material resources of a language in their multiplicity and variety extend well beyond speech and writing. Analysing communicative acts, Leeuwen, T. (2005, p. 180-267) concluded that at least four types of semiotic resources are

involved in producing multimodal texts: the rhythm (provides the coherence and semantic structure of events in time), the composition (ensures spatial structure of texts and events), the consistency of information (improves cognitive links between units of information structured in time and space) and the dialogue (promotes the awareness of the potential of the structure of a conversation in exploring the links between semiotic resources used in multimodal texts. The availability of multimodal texts has a significant impact on key issues of speech.

The awareness of the semiotic potential of a text as well as recognition of the importance of the adequate selection of lexico-grammatical means on the overall meaning of a text and its impact on the readers is deemed to be of particular significance. It is therefore important that text analysis and other types of practical activities with texts (transforming, folding and unfolding) be widely used in teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages. This issue was scrutinized by Bowcher, W., Butt, D., Christie, F., Derewianka, B., Hasan, R., Martin, J. and G. Williams. In Ukrainian linguodidactics, the aspects of text formation were studied by Andriiets, O., Bakum, Z., Bozhko, O., Goroshkina, O., Holub, N., Karaman, O., Karaman, S., Kopus, O., Kucheruk, O., Mordovtseva, N., Nikitina, A., Ovsienko, L., Palykhata, E., Pentyliuk, M. and L. Popova.

The researchers come to the conclusion that from social semiotics perspective, i.e. as a universal resource of expression, making and realization of meanings, language learning implies authentic language use as acts of meaning, situated in socio-cultural context aligned with social practices. According to Dubin, F., Eskey, D. and W. Grabe, texts which originally were created for native speakers of a certain language are regarded as authentic. The scholar considers such text to be "natural", i.e. "samples of the target language used by native speakers to achieve authentic communication purposes" (DUBIN, 1986, p. 137). Within the context of teaching foreign languages, the examples of such texts include passages from literary works by authentic writers (KUCHERUK, 2017). Regarding teaching Ukrainian, particular importance is attached to texts representing words which render symbols and dialect speech, for instance, in works by such writers as Fedkovych, Yu., Khotkevych, H., Kostenko, L., Kotsiubynskyi, M., Lys, V., Matios, M., and H. Vdovychenko.

The implementation of principles of social semiotics enables to ascertain how learners engage in making meanings through texts. Halliday, M. (2009) observes, that:

In all language education, the learner has to build up a resource. It is a resource of a particular kind: a resource for creating meaning. I call it a 'meaning potential'. Whether someone is learning the mother tongue, learning to read and write, learning a second or foreign language, learning science or mathematics, or learning the styles of written composition – all these are forms of meaning potential. (p. 274).

Learning a language is learning to make meanings, mastering the resources of the system of a language for the expression and understanding of meanings. Mickan, P. (2013a, 2013b) states that language teaching is a process of students' socialisation in making meanings with texts, intentionally building learners' discourse resources for taking part in acts of meaning in society. Thus, social semiotics perspective in teaching foreign languages enables to form links between a language and a certain social structure, which is one of the aspects of the respective social system, and therefore between a language and the system of meaning thereof.

Implementation of social semiotics principles in language teaching implies transformation of methodology of teaching languages, alteration of approaches to teaching, development of innovative programs and criteria for the choice of teaching resources. Bond, M., Chu, P., Lopez, E. And E. Robertson Rose observe, that in the field of language teaching the traditional approach is still predominant, which is reflected in regarding grammar and vocabulary as a supporting structure detached from texts and lacking the necessary semantic meaning, let alone the due consideration of texts and contexts. According to the views of the aforementioned scholars, teachers commonly "dissect" texts and, taking them apart, reduce the discourse of a text to a list of grammar phenomena and vocabulary. Thus, learners have to reproduce textlike products to make a communicative act possible. Mickan, P. (2013b) notices that the separation of sentences from text, grammar from context, words from discourse,

language from culture, exercises from meaning, that is language from context, persists in curriculum designs and pedagogies.

It is on the level of text that ascertaining of the semantics of a word, the respective conceptual links and comprehension of stylistic differentiation of modelling of coherent utterances occurs. In modern linguistics and linguodidactics, there is no consensus concerning the class of phenomena under which a text could be classified (a unit of speech, a higher level of a language system or a speech product). The use of text material at lessons enables to integrate vocabulary-and-semantic with vocabulary-and-spelling activities, thus enriching the vocabulary of learners and developing spelling skills. Furthermore, it helps reveal the whole of literature, gives access to the character and image based content as well as to the message of a literary work through language forms, rhetorical-expressive and narrative-composition means, contributes to improving the standard of speech develops a long-lasting interest in the subject which is deemed to be a key to literacy and comprehension of the elementary grammar system. Acquisition of extralinguistic information by learners gives rise to deliberated and motivated mastering of linguistic information, and vice versa, internalizing linguistic units considering their functions with due regard for the discourse ensures adequate perception of the reality, since a text is an information medium and a learning tool for understanding the environment and shaping a holistic national-and-linguistic worldview.

The evaluations of international textbooks by Tomlinson, B. (2012) and A. Gilmore (2015) illustrate the continued representation of language units separated and extracted from the text and context, despite the knowledge that decisions about the lexico-grammatical instruments of texts are dependent on selection at the semantic level of text type appropriate to social context. In Johns, T. view, the principal criterion for text selection for teaching in class is authenticity and "changes introduced in text for teaching in class should be minimal" (JOHNS, 1994, p. 103). Moreover, the genre of pedagogical texts should be taken into consideration, since they are deemed to be communicative patterns used in real life situations (RIVERA, 2012).

A large number of researchers, namely Christie, F., Hasan, R., Mican, P., Rothery, J., Schleppegrell, M. And G. Williams uphold the position of the necessity of an approach to language teaching relying upon the advances and developments of social semiotics. Social semiotic pedagogy is based on learner activities with authentic texts drawn from real life situations and represented in the respective social context. Such texts could be intended both for reading and listening for further formation of an answer or response in accordance with meanings conveyed by the text. Understanding of potential meanings and expressing potential meanings through texts which address and convey various social contexts is considered to be the object of language learning. Under such circumstances, learners are engaged in understanding texts and expressing meanings in texts regarded as acts of meaning. Hasan, R. (2012) points out that acts of meaning require an individual who creates meanings and another person for whom this meaning is meant, namely "a meaner", "meaning" and "meant to". This accounts for dialogising of the educational process.

To address the aforementioned goals advanced by social the semiotic pedagogy, it is expedient to implement the text-based approach to teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages. Derewianka, B., Hart, M., Martinez, B., Maxim, H., Richards, J., and Rivera, J. construe the content of the notion "text-based approach" variously. For instance, Richards, J. (2006, p. 36) regarded the aforementioned approach as "text-based instruction which involves being able to use different kinds of spoken and written texts in the specific contexts of their use". Maxim, H., Rivera, J. and Hart, M. present it as "a genre-based approach" to language teaching. Within the framework of this approach, Maxim, H. (2004) sees communicative competence as a phenomenon involving the mastery of different types of texts. Beverly Derewianka (2003, p. 135) purports that the terms "genre" and "text type" are used interchangeably and in some cases, the term "text type" has been adopted because it is more transparent and immediately accessible to teachers. Ukrainian researches consider that the text-based approach is of high priority in teaching languages and it is implemented in text-based learning of language units. We define the text-based approach to teaching languages as one that envisages employment of relevant texts of various types or genres selected to facilitate the language teaching process aiming at the development of key and subject competences in learners.

The text-based approach to teaching languages involves reading and listening to large amount of authentic texts selected according to the tasks and aims set forth in current education programmes and syllabi in Ukrainian and foreign languages. The aforementioned texts should also address students' cognitive interests and demands as well as their communicative experience. The introduction of actual, problem-solving and humorous texts dealing with pertinent social and political topics in Ukrainian and foreign languages lessons is efficient enough to master various stylistic genres. Learning tasks compiled basing on authentic texts result in sincere and genuine reactions and responses unlike induced questions made to check reading comprehension. The respective answers are never true reactions to the read or heard. Working on authentic texts, learners improve and develop their skills of expressing one's own thoughts, views or discord, of demonstrating one's knowledge and ideas or interpreting the reality. Text analysis should prepare the learners for working on grammatical structures and forms of expression. While observing the texts, the students learn to analyse the discourse and lexico-grammatical resources used for textualisation of meanings. Accordingly, authentic texts create the context and essential content to produce meaningful reactions and responses and establish the functional basis for communication with students of an educational institution, friends and teachers (BONDARCHUK, 2001).

At the lessons of Ukrainian and foreign languages, it is expedient to use texts which illustrate a language play and unconventional graphical formatting since gamificated perception of a word enables the development of an individual's speech culture. The use of semantic meaning of speech units in a gamification context develops unconscious understanding of linguistic standards and linguistic creativity in students. Introduction of precedential texts in language class is becoming particularly relevant. Those are universally known paradigmatic texts cited or reproduced in literary works and in speech of highly cultured and educated people. Of late, there has been an increase in number of exercises and tasks based on texts with the national background. They are drafted in such a way as to allow the shaping of the national language worldview.

A review of the content of the current programmes on the External Independent Evaluation in foreign languages as well as the respective syllabi and curricula indicates that compilers declare the formation and development of the communicative skills engaging the learners in the situations of real-life communication. However, the testing systems aim at checking the usage of particular grammar phenomena in decontextualized sentences or with the help of multiple choice questions. This drawback is inherent not to the Ukrainian texting system only, but also to other international systems. The contradiction between the programme objectives and practices is conspicuous in national tests which are intended to assess language proficiency. Based on analysis of candidates' experiences with the high stakes International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Mickan, P. wrote that the measurement of written language performance requires more than the analysis of individual linguistic or content elements. The integration of the various components of a text is more important than the individual components (MICKAN, 2003). "Clearly rating is a whole-of-text activity which involves semiotic processes associated with interpreting the text, the prompt, and the criteria" (MICKAN, 2003, p. 151). Harnessing the potential of advancements in psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, stylistics and rhetoric is essential for methodically sound arrangement of text-based activities, since it enables versatile analysis of the issue of practical implementation of the linguistic system.

CONCLUSIONS

Language teaching is first and foremost teaching meanings contained in texts. It also assumes teaching how to choose the style and lexico-grammatical means for productive communicative and socio-cultural activities. In view of this, teaching languages should be regarded as a socialization process which is able to integrate effectively learners' skills to use semiotic language resources acquired from life experience as well as their awareness of the wide genre repertoire of texts. A social semiotic perspective on language learning offers an agenda for language curriculum renewal and for the transformation of the process of teaching languages. Text-based research is a practical approach to addressing questions about language teaching, about language remediation, about assessment of language proficiency and about language acquisition. The implementation of social semiotics principles is deemed promising in view of

the development of an emerging concept of language teaching and, as a consequence, a revision on the content of programmes and curricula in Ukrainian and foreign languages as well as approaches to language teaching in general. The scientific paradigm related to the potential of the implementation of authentic text resources in teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages is a dynamic and inclusive one and thus involves further research and innovative approaches.

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Transformational influence of the foundations of social semiotics on approaches to language teaching

Influência transformadora dos fundamentos da semiótica social em abordagens ao ensino de línguas

Influencia transformadora de los fundamentos de la semiótica social en los enfoques de la enseñanza de idiomas

Resumo

Os autores analisaram os pontos de vista dos estudiosos estrangeiros sobre a contribuição do trabalho semiótico dos alunos no processo educacional, determinaram as peculiaridades da percepção dos textos autênticos e educacionais como atos de comunicação social e estabeleceram as formas de revisar as abordagens para a formação de um indivíduo linguístico. Por essa razão, a análise de texto e outros tipos de atividades de texto (transformação, colapso e expansão) são amplamente utilizadas no processo de ensino de línguas ucranianas e estrangeiras. Os autores estabeleceram que a integração dos fundamentos da semiótica social no processo de ensino das línguas deve prever a transformação dos princípios da metodologia de ensino de línguas, alterando abordagens ao ensino, projetando novos programas e critérios para a seleção dos recursos didáticos.

Palavras-chave: Abordagem semiótica social. Texto. Potencial semiótico de um texto. Ensinando línguas ucranianas e estrangeiras.

Abstract

The authors analyzed the standpoints of foreign scholars concerning the contribution of students' semiotic work into the educational process, determined the peculiarities of perception of authentic and educational texts as social communication acts and established the ways of revising the approaches to the formation of a language individual. The students' awareness about the For this reason, text analysis and other types of text activities (transformation, collapsing and expanding) are extensively used in the process of teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages. The authors established that integration of foundations of social semiotics into the process of teaching languages should envisage the transformation of the principles of language teaching methodology, altering approaches to teaching thereof, designing new programs and criteria for selecting teaching resources.

Keywords: Social semiotic approach. Text. Semiotic potential of a text. Teaching Ukrainian and foreign languages.

Resumen

Los autores analizaron los puntos de vista de los estudiosos extranjeros sobre la contribución del trabajo semiótico de los estudiantes al proceso educativo, determinaron las peculiaridades de la percepción de los textos auténticos y educativos como actos de comunicación social y establecieron las formas de revisar los enfoques para la formación de un individuo lingüístico. Por esta razón, el análisis de texto y otros tipos de actividades de texto (transformación, colapso y expansión) se utilizan ampliamente en el proceso de enseñanza de ucraniano y lenguas extranjeras. Los autores establecieron que la integración de los fundamentos de la semiótica social en el proceso de enseñanza de lenguas debe contemplar la transformación de los principios de la metodología de enseñanza de lenguas, alterando los enfoques de enseñanza de las mismas, diseñando nuevos programas y criterios de selección de recursos didáticos.

Palabras-clave: Enfoque semiótico social. Mensaje de texto. Potencial semiótico de un texto. Enseñanza de ucraniano y lenguas extranjeras.