

An overview of foreign language education in Ukraine at the turn of the 20th century

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ABSTRACT: The article is devoted to examining historical and pedagogical aspects of the development of foreign language education in Ukraine, with the focus on the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The specifics of teaching foreign languages in schools and gymnasiums are analyzed. Differences and similarities of foreign language training in parts of Ukraine belonging to the Russian and Austria-Hungarian Empires are highlighted; main stages in the formation of the national system of teaching foreign languages are outlined. In the second half of the 19th century language education is gaining new significance with the appearance of 'modern languages' courses, which opens up opportunities for the development of humanitarian education and training of teaching staff in the field of language education at the beginning 20th century.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Language education; Foreign Languages; Teaching Methodology; Ukraine; XIX-XX Centuries.

Introduction

Language education in Ukraine went a long and difficult way to recognition in the education system. The problems of language acquisition have always been and remain among the main issues of the formation of Ukrainian culture. Today, in the time of reforming the language policy of Ukraine, the study of foreign language teaching and learning practices in historical retrospect has become especially vital. Therefore, it is essential to discover the reasons that served as an impetus for the formation of the language education system and its development during the times of the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary.

Analysis of the latest scientific works and publications shows that the 19th

and 20th centuries was the most outstanding period in the formation of language education in present-day Ukraine. It is specifically the period when schooling spread throughout Ukraine was initially carried out in Latin, Russian, or German. At that time children had Ukrainian and Russian classes in Sunday church schools in the east, south, and north of Ukraine, which were under the rule of the Russian Empire, whereas in the western territories, which at that time belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, learning Polish, German, and Hungarian languages was common. In our opinion, it is worthwhile to analyze cultural and historical processes that determined the formation and development of foreign language education in Ukraine and specify the main stages of foreign language domestic pedagogical methodology at the end of the 19th – early 20th century.

A significant contribution to the study of the problems of language education in the researched period has been provided by A. Dolapchi¹ and I. Kurliak². The findings of these researchers enable insight into the specifics of language education in Ukraine in this period and allow us to determine the main stages of the formation of foreign language teaching methods. This paper attempts to unify the existing research and outline the stages of teaching methodologies, thus exploring the specifics of the formation and development of language education in Ukraine in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

1. *The history of foreign language education in Ukraine*

The history of foreign language acquisition in Ukraine dates back to 1576 when teaching foreign languages was introduced at the Greco-Slavic-Latin Academy in Ostroh. This practice gradually spread all over Ukraine in most gymnasiums and universities. I. Zaichenko³ notes that learning a foreign language was often mandatory in «fraternal schools». Thus, according to the researcher learning Greek in fraternal schools was based on the principle of knowledge of ancient culture and supporting the cultural ties of Eastern Slavs with Byzantium. This allowed students not only to be able to write competently and quickly read philosophical works in Greek, but also to communicate fluently in classes. It was also in fraternal schools that bilingual education was

¹ A. Dolapchi, *Teoria ta praktyka navchannia inozemnykh mov yak component zmistu himnasiinoi osvity v drubii polovyns XIX – pochatku XX st.* [Theory and practice of teaching foreign languages as a component of the content of gymnasium education in the second half of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries], Kharkiv, 2008 (in Ukrainian).

² I. Kurliak, *Rozvytok klasychnoi osvity na zakhidno-ukrainskykh zemiakh (XIX-pochatok XX st.)* [Development of classical education in the western Ukrainian lands (19th – the first half of the 20th centuries)], Kyiv, 2000 (in Ukrainian).

³ I. Zaichenko, *Istoria pedahohiky* [History of pedagogy], Kyiv, 2010 (in Ukrainian).

first introduced in Church Slavonic and Greek. Continuing the tradition of the development of language education, the Kyiv Collegium started teaching several foreign languages, in particular Latin, Greek, Old Hebrew, and German. Among the outstanding graduates of Kyiv Collegium were H. Skovoroda, F. Prokopovich, and A. Satanovsky, who themselves practiced teaching foreign languages and worked on translations of world literature masterpieces into Ukrainian. Various philosophers and teachers of that time saw the huge potential in learning foreign languages, listing expansion of one's worldview and mastering a new type of thinking as the most valuable.

It is also necessary to note the tendency of the spread of Latin in educational institutions of Ukraine. Following the example of European universities, in which courses in rhetoric, poetics, and philosophy were delivered in Latin, educational institutions in Ukraine also started introducing studying various disciplines in Latin. Also important was the fact that in the 17th and 18th centuries Europe Latin was not only the language of legislation but also the language of diplomacy, justice, and philosophy. In the 19th century, new types of educational institutions began to emerge – gymnasiums. The mastery of foreign languages in gymnasiums was conditioned not so much by psychological and pedagogical necessity, as much as by following European cultural tradition. Pedagogical schools of the 19th century initiated training of in-service teachers of ancient languages. Thus, since 1804, the professional training of ancient languages teachers «had a pronounced cultural nature with an emphasis on ancient culture and was carried out at first in language departments of universities»⁴. In 1835, the training of foreign language teachers was introduced at the Faculty of Philosophy at Kharkiv University, where the following departments were created:

- 1) Department of Philosophy;
- 2) Department of Greek Literature and Antiquities;
- 3) Department of Roman Literature and Antiquities;
- 4) Department of Russian Literature and the History of Russian literature;
- 5) Department of History and Literature of Slavic dialects;
- 6) Department of General History;
- 7) Department of Russian history;
- 8) Department of Political Economy and Statistics;
- 9) Department of Eastern Literature⁵.

⁴ S. Zavhorodnia, *Pidhotovka vchyteliv dlia ukrainskoi shkoly Halychyny* [Training teachers for Ukrainian schools of Galicia], Ivano-frankivsk, 1999 (in Ukrainian).

⁵ A. Dolapchi, *Teoria ta praktyka navchannia inozemnykh mov yak component zmistu himnasiinoi osvity v drubii polovyns XIX – pochatku XX st.* [Theory and practice of teaching foreign languages as a component of the content of gymnasium education in the second half of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries], Kharkiv, 2008 (in Ukrainian).

Despite the presence of foreign languages in pedagogical education, their study in secondary schools was plummeting. In fact, it was noted in the secondary school development project that «Multi-faceted intellectual development, strength, depth, and accuracy of thinking, as well as high moral features, sophisticated aesthetic taste, in a word, all the integral parts of intellectual and emotional culture can be acquired without the knowledge of foreign languages, if national science, national literature and art are at the corresponding level. In the absence of this last condition, knowledge of foreign languages could hardly make up for the shortcomings of the cultural environment»⁶.

2. Teaching foreign languages in the Ukrainian territories under the rule of the Russian Empire

The nature of further educational reforms of the second half of the 19th century significantly influenced the narrowing of the general cultural and general educational role of foreign languages (both ancient and modern). Our analysis of historical and pedagogical sources on problems of the development of language education on the territory of Ukraine during the reign of the Russian Empire shows that in the 19th and early 20th century the leading trend of education was the study of foreign languages – classical and modern European. In secondary schools and gymnasiums, there were 16 classes per week designated for learning Latin. Starting from the first-grade students mastered grammar, from the second one they practiced reading, studied the works of the classics, and by the third grade were quite fluent in Latin. The distinguishing feature of learning Latin was that it was studied in comparison with the Russian language. So in the second grade, the first hour was allocated to translations from the Russian language into Latin, and in the third – to poems in Latin.

As for the modern languages, namely German, French, and English, up to 16 lessons per week were allocated in all 4 grades. As was the case with the study of classical language, first graders learned grammar, in the second grade the main attention was paid to translations, the third grade was dedicated to learning how to read and write, the fourth grade – to reading prose and poems, writing essays. Interestingly, foreign languages were also studied in secondary educational institutions for girls, but syllabi in the female schools differed significantly from male ones. Thus, in gymnasiums for girls, the number of hours devoted to the study of languages was considerably lower; also, language courses were not mandatory and required additional fees.

Since the 20th century, the main centers of language education for teachers

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

became pedagogical institutes and two-year pedagogical courses, in which in-service teachers of ancient languages were trained. Those teachers were able to teach foreign languages only to students of newly created gymnasiums. By the *Statute of gymnasiums and pro-gymnasiums in the Russian Empire* (1864) gymnasiums were divided into two types: classical and real⁷. In classical gymnasiums, only ancient languages were taught, and the main emphasis was on teaching science. In real gymnasiums, the focus was on the study of natural sciences, and the language education of real gymnasiums was based on the study of the so-called modern languages (German, French, or English). The essential difference between real and classical gymnasiums was that only graduates of the latter received the right to further education. It was due to the specifics of university education, where classes were mostly conducted in Latin. On July 30, 1871, classical gymnasiums were divided into gymnasiums and pro-gymnasiums. In the latter, according to the new requirements, the number of hours to study languages was significantly increased. Thus, instead of 28 hours of Latin in classical classes gymnasiums, 37 weekly hours were introduced in pro-gymnasiums. Learning Greek in pro-gymnasiums involved 35 hours per week. It was also special that learning new languages was introduced from the second year of pro-gymnasium. If Latin and Greek were studied during first three years (Latin – 1st year, Greek – from the 3rd year), learning new languages was integrated in the 2nd year⁸. This was mostly due to the complexity of concurrent learning of several languages that represented different language systems. That is why it was not uncommon for pro-gymnasiums to include only one or two ‘new languages’ in the curriculum.

In 1872, the status of real gymnasiums was changed to real colleges. The peculiarity was that students could get only secondary education in real schools, and did not have the right to enroll in universities. This way, receiving a classical education, namely learning ancient languages (Latin and Greek), became the only way to obtain higher education, which undoubtedly affected the quality and level of training of future university entrants. Thus, according to the definition of T. Mishelina, «Ancient languages were the main educational tool that was recognized, and the only way to the university was made through a classical school⁹». As A. Dolapchi notes in her research, «Proponents of teaching classical languages in gymnasiums at the end of the 19th century were convinced that this educational discipline is not only a tool for mental gymnastics, but also a powerful general educational force capable of developing

⁷ O. Mysechko, *Rozvytok kulturnoho komponentu u zmisti profesiinoi pidhotovky maibutnioho vchytelia inozemnoi movy* [Development of the cultural component in the content professional training of a future foreign language teacher], Zhytomyr, 2005 (in Ukrainian).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹ T. Mishelina, *Historical and pedagogical aspects of foreign language education in Ukraine*, «Educational Dimension», n. 2, 2023, pp. 3-10 (in English).

students' intelligence, expand their worldview, develop morality, fill souls and hearts with high ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty»¹⁰.

3. *Language acquisition in Western Ukraine*

The situation with the language education in Western Ukraine was different in the rest of Ukraine. What distinguished it was the wide spread of the German language. However, it was accompanied by the problem of the lack of appropriate didactic materials. Therefore, at the Vienna Teacher's Convention in 1867, the best teachers from Galicia and Bukovyna were entrusted with the preparation of Ukrainian-language textbooks designated for foreign language acquisition. The content and structure of foreign language textbooks issued in Austria met the pedagogical standards of that time and had a huge impact on the Ukrainian ones. For a long time, Austrian textbooks were simply translated into Ukrainian, but later teachers began to compile their own textbooks following the same didactic principles. Ukrainian publications underwent severe peer review and after lengthy and thorough discussions and analysis procedures were submitted for approval to the Ministry of Education¹¹.

In the second half of the 19th century appeared the so-called «folk schools» which were the initial stage of education for children from 6 to 14 years old. Officially folk schools were introduced by the law on changes from «trivial schools» to «folk» schools dated May 14, 1869. Only the graduates of teachers' seminary schools had the right to teach in public schools. According to the Law on Compulsory Primary Education, enacted in 1870, the Bukovyna Seim defined the basic requirements for teachers and students. The duration of the study was 8 years, upon completion of which students had the right to enter secondary school¹². Secondary education was represented by classical and real gymnasiums, girls' schools, and lyceums. Secondary education was mostly an intermediate link between primary and higher education but was not mandatory. After graduating from gymnasiums, students were allowed to work in public institutions or continue studying at universities. An innovative feature of gymnasiums was the introduction of new languages into the cur-

¹⁰ A. Dolapchi, *Teoria ta praktyka navchannia inozemnykh mov yak component zmistu himnasiinoi osvity v druhii polovyns XIX – pochatku XX st.* [Theory and practice of teaching foreign languages as a component of the content of gymnasium education in the second half of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries], Kharkiv, 2008 (in Ukrainian).

¹¹ V.I. Karbulyskyi, *Rozvytok narodnoho shkylnytstva na Bukovyni* [Development of folk schooling in Bukovina], Chernivtsi, 1905 (in Ukrainian).

¹² I. Malafiiik, O. Sovhar, *Schooling system in Galicia at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XI, n. 1, 2016, pp. 27-37 (in English).

riculum. Thus, graduates were to be fluent in German, French, or English. According to the new curriculum that was introduced for real gymnasiums in 1877, the study of French became mandatory. Classes were distributed as follows: 1st grade – 5 hours per week, 2nd and 3rd grades – 4 hours each, 4th and 5th grades – 3 hours each; 2 hours per week were allocated in the 6th and 7th grades. Also reforms of the educational system provided for taking into account the ethnic characteristics of the region and linguistic compatibility education for the study of natural sciences and mathematical or humanitarian disciplines. It is worth noting that from the second half of the 19th century, the main emphasis in education moved from a classical to a humanitarian orientation. French language was introduced in middle schools, and since 1880 either was English. The creation of girls' schools in Galicia and Bukovina was also an important step forward. The purpose of such schools and lyceums was to educate girls mostly in natural sciences and humanities, excluding the classical component of gymnasium education. Therefore, a substantial amount of time was allocated to the study of foreign languages. The task of these institutions was to prepare girls for women's professions¹³.

The formation of bilingual schools in Transcarpathia, Galicia, and Bukovina was a unique phenomenon. According to the legislation, the official language of Austria was German, but according to the Law «on the equality of peoples», Ukrainians had the right to study in their native language¹⁴. This led to the emergence of the so-called «utraquist» (bilingual) schools. In Bukovina they mostly operated in Ukrainian, German, and Romanian; in Transcarpathia, classes were delivered in Ukrainian, German, and Hungarian; in Galicia Polish, German, and Ukrainian were employed. The peculiarity of these schools was that half of the educational subjects were taught in the student's mother tongue, the other half in the dominant language of the authorities (Hungarian, German, or Polish). Accordingly, Austrian legislation required that in settlements with a mixed population type creation of similar utraquist schools was mandatory. But, despite certain positive aspects, the activity of utraquist schools had a negative effect on the level of knowledge assimilation. This was due to the lack of a clear distribution of educational subjects that were supposed to be conducted in the state and native languages. The study of the German language in Bukovina was allowed only to those students who spoke Ukrainian, and therefore learning other languages (Greek, French, or English) was not a priority.

In general, comparing the situation of language education in the West and

¹³ O. Sovhar, *Awakening: Struggle for Ukrainian education in Eastern Galicia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XVII, n. 2, 2022, pp. 25-37 (in English).

¹⁴ I. Karbulytskyi, *Rozvytok narodnoho shkilnytstva na Bukovyni [Development of folk schooling in Bukovina]*, Chernivtsi, 1905 (in Ukrainian).

the East a conclusion can be made about a higher quality level of language education in the western regions of Ukraine. Despite the usurping policy of Austria-Hungary concerning Ukrainian lands, the level of social security and educational policy in these regions was significantly higher than in the eastern regions within the Russian Empire. Analysis of scientific research on didactic teaching aids of foreign languages shows that the main goal of language education at the beginning of the 20th century was the implementation of the following key tasks, namely the transfer of accumulated knowledge; comprehensive personality development; meeting the society's requirements.

Also, as noted by A. Dolapchi¹⁵, teaching foreign languages was directed by two main approaches:

- deductive (provided the use of scientific, translation-grammar, and text-translation methods);
- inductive (visual, logical, direct methods).

According to the definitions of some researchers, it is the period of the second half of the the 20th century was a stage in the formation of the national system of teaching foreign languages. Having carried out a comprehensive analysis of studies devoted to the problem of language education in the researched period, we determined the following stages in the development of foreign language learning methodology:

The first stage – 1820s-1840s. At this stage occurred the emergence of theoretical foundations of foreign language teaching. As previously noted, foreign languages were only entering the education system of Ukraine. Namely, the basic principles of teaching ancient languages through the transfer of practical experience were formed at the Ostroh Academy and fraternal schools.

The second stage – 1840s-1860s. This period is characterized by the appearance of gymnasiums, in which language education became compulsory and had significant methodological accomplishments. Deductive methods became widespread at this stage. The main focus of that time teachers was the study of grammar. Students learned languages by doing written translations and studying the phonetic features of ancient languages. Language education at this period was predominantly done through the use of theoretical methods of learning by studying rules of writing and reading; teaching grammar based on comparison with the grammar of other languages (Russian, Ukrainian, Latin); and was characterized by the lack of general didactic principles of educational material organization and oversaturation of educational material, the lack of uniform criteria for assessing the level of knowledge.

¹⁵ A. Dolapchi, *Teoria ta praktyka navchannia inozemnykh mov yak component zmistu himnasiinoi osvity v drubii polovyns XIX – pochatku XX st.* [Theory and practice of teaching foreign languages as a component of the content of gymnasium education in the second half of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries], Kharkiv, 2008 (in Ukrainian).

The third stage – 1860s-1890s. The distinguishing feature of this stage was the implementation of inductive methods into teaching foreign languages. The main reason for this was the low level of students' language competence using deductive methods and the oversaturation of the educational material. The goal of the inductive method was the formation of practical experience of mastering the language, which involved the creation of a special language environment, increasing the role of students' self-study. At this stage, the main principles of educational planning were developed according to students' age and mental capabilities. In classical gymnasiums, curricula were developed for each course; the study of ancient and modern languages was separated. The shortcomings of this stage could be seen in the bigger number of hours for study and an increase in the academic load, which also led to a low level of students' language competence.

The fourth stage – 1990s – the beginning of the 20th century. The peculiarity of this stage was determining the need to develop qualitatively new methods for learning a foreign language by combining practical and theoretical study of educational material, formation of humanistic principles in the pedagogical process, and increasing the role of modern languages in educational programs at gymnasiums and universities. A change in the basic principles of language education led to a reduction in the number of hours for studying ancient languages and shifting the focus to modern languages.

Conclusions

Summing up, it can be noted that the development and formation of foreign language teaching methods in Ukraine during the period of the 19th and the 20th centuries, both under the rule of Russia and Austria-Hungary, occurred rather gradually, with the change of the educational system and the creation of general approaches to teaching.

A significant difference can be considered in the influence of European education traditions on the formation of the language education system in the Western territories of Ukraine, where the goal was a skillful combination of native language and teaching foreign languages. Language education in the territories of Central and Eastern Ukraine was under constant pressure from the Russian Empire state-building policy in the second half of the 19th century. Even though in different regions the level of teaching and learning differed, command of at least two foreign languages was mandatory for admission to a higher educational institution. In the second half of the 19th century language education is gaining new significance with the appearance of 'modern languages' courses, which opens up opportunities for the development of humanitarian education and training of teaching staff in the field of language education at the beginning 20th century.