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Alla Durdas

ORCID 0000-0001-6456-6108

Senior Lecturer
of Department of Modern European Languages,
Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics,
19 Kyoto Str., 02000 Kyiv, Ukraine,
a.durdas@knu.edu.ua

Olga Kostenko

ORCID 0000-0002-3094-5107

Lecturer
of Department of Modern European Languages,
Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics,
19 Kyoto Str., 02000 Kyiv, Ukraine,
o.kostenko@knu.edu.ua

Liliia Mostytska

ORCID 0000-0003-1305-0608

Lecturer,
Irpın State College of Economics and Law,
31 Universitytska Str., 08201 Irpın, Ukraine,
Mostitskiy@ukr.net

MODERN APPROACHES TO TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT FRENCH UNIVERSITIES

The article deals with modern approaches to teaching foreign languages at French universities, existing problems and modern challenges due to historical, social and cultural factors. The modern language and foreign language approaches to a foreign language teaching have been distinguished. The study about a foreign language teaching and learning has been defined as a young discipline in the article. It has been stressed that learning models which viewed language acquisition as the formation of habits and suggested teaching methods emphasizing memorization and drills, have given way to cognitive approaches focusing on information processing and have led to methods based on comprehension and communication. The article emphasizes that France is traditionally viewed as a monolingual country, and here the system of bilingual education is available only for some regional languages: Breton, Corsican, Occitan, Catalan, Basque and German. It has been stated that learning a foreign language in a context of an institution takes place with structural constraints such as a limited contact time and a lack of socialization in the language via an existing community that speaks the chosen language. It is said that the idea of the «native speaker» as a model of proficiency still dominates language education and language mistakes are often stigmatized instead of being regarded as a natural and considerable part of building communicative skills. The modern language and foreign language approaches to second or foreign language teaching have been distinguished. The paradoxes of a foreign language study at French universities have been stressed; three different problems for foreign languages learning and teaching at university level in France have been analyzed. The factors which influence second language acquisition have been considered: the quantity of incoming information, or language exposure which students receive; the type of their interaction; the quality of feedback they get. The lack of hours for foreign language learning at French universities has been stated. The use of instructional and communication technology (ICT) in combination with face-to-face instruction have been suggested as a practical solution in the modern conditions of France's higher education.

Key words: foreign language; second language; teaching foreign languages; university.

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Introduction. To begin with, it is necessary to note that the field of second or foreign language learning is generally considered a young discipline: only in the past fifty years' theories been developed in linguistics and

psychology to explain how individuals learn languages after their first language, and systematic efforts made in educational circles to apply these theories to language teaching (Whyte, 2011, p. 215). Learning models which viewed language acquisition as the formation of habits, and informed teaching methods which stressed on

memorization and drills, have given way to cognitive approaches focusing on information processing and have led to methods based on comprehension and communication. As S. Whyte (2011) states, «scholars in linguistics, psychology and pedagogy agree on key concepts like interlanguage – the developing language system which is both specific to each learner, reflecting his or her language experience, and yet in some respects common to all learners, showing developmental stages which are shared by different learners of different second languages» (p. 215). According to J. Costa and P. Lambert (2009), «the traditional view of France, in terms of language, is that of a monolingual country. In fact, very few people outside France know that over 70 languages are currently listed as Languages of France. Nevertheless, none of them are in any way recognized as official in any part of the French territory». The scholars admit that «education was long seen as one of the main instruments to implement the desired monolingualism in a country where French only became a language spoken by the entire population by the middle of the 20th century» (Costa and Lambert, 2009). Over the past few years, the French official language policy has changed considerably, having led to some consequences concerning language education policies. In fact, the situation is largely tense, or stressful, between conflicting aspects and demands from different segments of the French population regarding language (Costa and Lambert, 2009). According to the researcher, the French language is the dominant, official and asserting its superiority, but plurilingualism is officially valued in the education system, «...in a recontextualisation of the Council of Europe's discourse, and all pupils are required to study at least two foreign languages... and the French position remains equally ambiguous regarding the status and position of English in France and in the education system» (Costa and Lambert, 2009).

At the same time, N. Garcia (2015) admits that «the tension between the utilitarian and the cultural dimension characterizing contemporary multilingual education policies in France and Germany results from the separate institutionalization of general foreign language education policies on the one hand and language-of-origin, regional and minority language courses on the other hand».

According to B. Extermann (2018), «society under the Ancien Régime both in Switzerland and France was multilingual, which may appear surprising given the prestige at that time of French within the rest of Europe as well as the fact that after the French Revolution, French linguistic policy aimed to unify the nation through a single national language». The researcher adds that «linguistic borders, however, rarely respect political ones, and the linguistic landscape at that time was made up of many different regional languages and local dialects» (Extermann, 2018).

The purpose of the article is to analyze the modern approaches to teaching and learning foreign languages

at French universities and find out possible problems and challenges typical for this field.

The statement of the problem. The aim of language learning is to communicate freely in a foreign language. This is based on the supposition that language skills which students learn at university are easily transferable to situations of real life, and that students will be proficient at the end of learning a language program. Nevertheless, the reality is different, and results almost always confound these expectations (Adetunji, 2019).

According to J. Adetunji (2019), many people underestimate the difficulties they face while learning a language, as far as language acquisition goes beyond comprehension and involves, among other things, socialization and emotion. The researcher states that «this, and the current learning crisis in tertiary education, means that an urgent conversation on the process of learning is necessary. More attention should be paid to learner subjectivity and experience – an important component of language acquisition» (Adetunji, 2019).

Approaches to teaching foreign languages at French universities. Tracing the development of the science about learning, R. K. Sawyer (2008) suggests the Standard Model of Schooling, based on a commonsense approach to knowledge and learning (p. 5):

- «knowledge is a collection of facts about the world and procedures for how to solve problems;
- the goal of schooling is to get these facts and procedures into the student's head. people are considered to be educated when they possess a large collection of these facts and procedures;
- teachers know these facts and procedures, and their job is to transmit them to students;
- simpler facts and procedures should be learned first, followed by progressively more complex facts and procedures;
- the way to determine the success of schooling is to test students to see how many of these facts and procedures they have acquired».

Due to this, the modern foreign languages perspective may be the most familiar approach to language education in France. According to S. Whyte (2016), «this approach has historically underpinned the majority of teaching and learning of foreign languages in instructed contexts in both compulsory and tertiary education in Europe». The scholar states that «... Its object is the language and culture of a given language, since language is seen as an instrument of cultural mediation, and thus inseparable from the historical and cultural context(s) of its speakers».

On the one hand, researcher dealing with modern foreign languages, «traditionally specialize in specific areas related to a particular aspect of a given language, whereas interdisciplinary approaches also exist» (Whyte, 2016).

On the other hand, learning a foreign language in a context of an institution, takes place with structural constraints. Among them are «... limited contact time

and a lack of socialization into the language through an existing community that speaks the target language» (Adetunji, 2019).

J. Adetunji (2019) states that «one way to counter these obstacles is recreating communicative situations in classrooms such as structured dialogues between learners. But these approaches are often too artificial and ritualized – teachers and learners are trapped in their respective roles and the spontaneity that characterizes real-life communication remains elusive». The researcher also adds that quite often knowledge about the language doesn't transfer to knowledge about its usage and application.

J. Adetunji (2019) stresses that «the idea of the «native speaker» as a model of proficiency still dominates language education, even though it's unrealistic and impossible to define. Language errors are often stigmatized instead of being viewed as a natural and meaningful part of building communicative skills». Moreover, «teachers who banish the students' first language from the classroom disempower learners who are already vulnerable expressing themselves in the language they're studying. All of these factors contribute to a negative learning experience and linguistic insecurity, which in turn lead to poor results».

Due to this, teachers and students should spend more time discussing the reasons for teaching and learning languages – which would be help to address the students' immediate needs and broaden teaching beyond its typically results-based, utilitarian focus. As a result, this would develop learning strategies and cultivate self-awareness in students who are emotionally and academically badly equipped to learn by themselves. Moreover, this «would link the learning process to self-development, which goes beyond linguistic knowledge and know-how» (Adetunji, 2019).

We must admit that second language study at French universities includes both modern language (literary) and foreign language (communicative) approaches, although literary aspect dominates in teaching. According to S. Whyte (2011) traditional educational models based on the transmission of knowledge are unable to cover recent progress in understanding of learning theory, which offers cognitivist and constructivist approaches to teaching and learning languages. In addition, similar advances peculiar to second language learning and teaching cannot be based on the standard grammar-translation method, but instead require communicative, task-oriented teaching space.

Considering the problem of teaching foreign languages in France, it is necessary to note that the system of bilingual education is available only for some regional languages: Breton, Corsican, Occitan, Catalan, Basque and German which is considered a regional language in Alsace. J. Costa and P. Lambert (2009) state that «as a result of parents' pressure in the 1970s, and, with the opening of private immersion

schools in Brittany, the Basque Country, Northern Catalonia, Languedoc and Aquitaine, the state took action and created its own bilingual primary system, where children are educated in French and in a regional minority language for equal numbers of hours». Thus, in France bilingual education increasingly constitutes an institutionalized integration of pluralistic approaches. So far, the system has been really operational only for primary education. Bilingual sections exist at secondary schools in the Occitan-speaking regions, in Brittany, Corsica and other places, but «... they usually consist in a greater number of hours in the regional language and the teaching of one academic discipline, usually history-geography, through the medium of the minority language» (Costa and Lambert, 2009).

Along with other European countries, the French education system has long maintained the traditional academic distinction between modern and foreign language study. It is interesting to note that modern languages, or *langues vivantes*, are defined in opposition to the classical languages, Greek and Latin, and thus placed in literature and arts academic family (Whyte, 2011, p. 214).

On the other hand, a foreign language is contrasted with the native language, and it rather belongs to the domains of linguistics and education, to the field of social sciences (Whyte, 2011, p. 214).

Therefore, as S. Whyte (2011) emphasizes, «the same language – English, or Spanish, or German – may be studied in an arts faculty as a vector of the culture of the countries in which is it spoken, or in social sciences as a communicative tool for the student to acquire» (p. 214).

So, each approach to second language learning sets its own goals, which influence teaching methods: modern language teaching takes *High Culture* as its ultimate goal, and traditional grammar-translation method is used to train students; foreign language teaching aims at obtaining language proficiency, and to a certain extent follows trends in second language teaching – from audiolingual methods using communicative approaches to task-based learning (Whyte, 2011, p. 214).

At present, in the French university system two approaches to second language study are represented by:

- Langues, Littératures, et Civilisation pour l'Enseignement (LLCE) stranding for modern languages;
- LANGues pour Spécialités d'Autres Disciplines (LANSAD) stranding for foreign languages;
- the two directions differ considerably in their positions on culture and language proficiency;
- the LANSAD focuses on communicative language use, including comprehension and expression in second language, with the culture of countries where the language is spoken a secondary concern.
- the literary LLCE approach favors a strong cultural orientation, including literature, social and political history, and textual linguistics and considers the development of language proficiency as a pre-requisite,

the responsibility of individual students and preferably accomplished during study visits abroad (Whyte, 2011, p. 214–215).

This phenomenon is considered as one of the paradoxes of second language study at French universities. It is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Paradoxes of second language study at French universities

Responsibilities in instruction of second language	
<i>Literary, LLCE, modern language specialists</i>	<i>LANSAD departments</i>
all instruction in their language in French primary and secondary schools, as well as all university language programs	only for students taking optional courses, and are, like the teacher training colleges, staffed by LLCE professionals

Source: adapted by the authors (Whyte, 2011, p. 214–215)

This state of affairs creates three different problems for second language teaching and learning at the university level in France (Whyte, 2011, p. 214–215):

1) the number of hours for language learning: since students are more or less expected to be responsible for developing their own language proficiency, language programs include a very small proportion of hours required for even minimal communicative competence;

2) instructional methods, which for modern language specialists are based on the transmission of culture as a structured body of knowledge, as opposed to the development of particular competence on the part of individual learners;

3) recent changes in both Arts and Humanities in higher education and university populations, including increasing heterogeneity of learners' needs and abilities, and requiring far-reaching changes in both goals and methods of second language teaching.

S. Whyte (2011) says about a broad agreement on factors which influence second language acquisition. Among them are the quantity of language exposure received by learners; the type of interaction in which they engage; the quality of feedback they get (p. 214–215).

While researchers are busy with investigating individual factors of learning languages such as language aptitude, motivation and learning styles, teachers consider hours of instruction. In Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2001) operates with six levels of proficiency: beginner A1 and A2; intermediate B1 and B2; advanced C1 and C2. Study programs in French, English and German coincide in their estimations of the number of hours required to reach each level: 200 for A2, between 500 and 750 for B2, and 1,000 to 1,200 for C2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2001).

Nevertheless, between 150 and 200 hours of studying are necessary to progress from one level to the next. As Whyte S. states, although «official programs set a standard of level B1 for the end of secondary Arts and Humanities in Higher Education schooling, many students are still at level A2 even after additional years of post-secondary instruction, suggesting a shortfall of

some 300 to 500 hours necessary to bring them to the B2 level recommended as an outcome for university foreign language instruction» (Whyte, 2011, p. 216–217).

Moreover, at French universities, the number of instruction hours in degree courses for LANSAD students do not reach these figures. Students may be offered one or two hours per week in two 12-week semesters, for a total of 24 to 48 hours per year. Students taking degrees in languages with business may have a double quantity of hours in each language, or 96 hours per year (Whyte, 2011, p. 216–217).

According to the research, lower teacher–student proportions and homogeneous classes produce more effective learning (Whyte, 2011, p. 217).

At the same time French universities are considered to be particularly accessible compared with universities in other European countries. First-year students with little or no experience in English have the right to enroll in a set of English classes at a postsecondary level together with those who studied English for seven years in high school, as well as French-English bilinguals and residents of other European countries. These numbers may reach 40 or 50 students per class, which is clearly a long way from the conditions in which individual interlanguage development can be cultivated (Whyte, 2011, p. 218).

The opinion of M. Siebens is very relevant in the context of the problem. She states that «English is the first choice of a foreign language in France, and the issues associated with teaching and learning of English are particularly controversial» (Siebens, 2016, p. 41). She admits that as a teacher of English in the private sector, the strongest demand comes from adult learners, but their level of English is low, they are beginners very often, despite learning this language for years at school (Siebens, 2016, p. 41).

In the conditions of funding difficulties in higher education in France, the only practical solution to these failings in both hours and conditions for foreign language studying seems to be the use of instructional and communication technology (ICT) in combination with face-to-face instruction. Input can be provided by the internet, interaction and individualization, having opened access to a large number of authentic language

resources and the opportunity to receive almost unlimited linguistic materials in the language chosen for learning. At the same time, the integration of ICT into university foreign language instruction requires changes in instructional methods (Whyte, 2011, p. 218).

Conclusions. Having analyzed the modern approaches to foreign languages study at French universities it is possible to state that learning a foreign language in a context of university is hindered by structural constraints: limited contact time and a lack of socialization in the language via the community speaking the target language. The knowledge about the

language doesn't transfer to knowledge about its usage and application. A foreign language study at French universities includes both modern language (literary) and foreign language (communicative) approaches, literary aspect is considered to be dominant in teaching. The main problems for foreign languages teaching and learning at French universities are the number of hours; instruction methods and recent changes in university curricula and university population. Instructional and communication technology (ICT) in combination with face-to-face instruction are suggested as possible solution.

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СУЧАСНІ ПІДХОДИ ДО ВИКЛАДАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ В УНІВЕРСИТЕТАХ ФРАНЦІЇ

Дурдас Алла, старший викладач кафедри сучасних європейських мов,
Київський національний торговельно-економічний університет,
вул. Кіото, 19, 02000 Київ, Україна, a.durdas@knute.edu.ua

Костенко Ольга, викладач кафедри сучасних європейських мов,
Київський національний торговельно-економічний університет,
вул. Кіото, 19, 02000 Київ, Україна, o.kostenko@knute.edu.ua

Мостицька Лілія, викладач,
Ірпінський державний коледж економіки та права,
вул. Університетська, 31, 08201, Ірпінь, Україна, Mostitskiy@ukr.net

Статтю присвячено дослідженню сучасних підходів до викладання іноземної/другої мови у французьких університетах, проблем, пов'язаних із викладанням, та сучасним викликом, зумовленим історичними, соціальними та культурними факторами. Галузь дослідження питань вивчення іноземних мов зазначено в статті як відносно молоду дисципліну. Підкреслено, що моделі навчання, згідно з якими засвоєння мови розглядалось як формування звичок, а також обґрунтовані методи навчання, в основі яких – запам'ятовування та тренування, поступилися місцем когнітивним підходам, орієнтованим на обробку інформації, що призвело до розвитку методів, заснованих на розумінні та спілкуванні. У статті підкреслюється, що Франція традиційно розглядається як одномовна країна, а система двомовної освіти доступна лише для деяких регіональних мов: бретонської, корсиканської, окситанської, каталонської,

баскської та німецької. Зазначено, що вивчення іноземної мови в умовах закладу освіти відбувається в умовах структурних обмежень, таких як обмежений час контактування та відсутність соціалізації за допомогою мови, що вивчається, та через спільноту, яка розмовляє мовою, яка вивчається. Ідея наявності «носія мови» в якості професійної моделі все ще домінує у мовній освіті, хоча це нереально і неможливо визначити. У статті підкреслено, що мовні помилки часто стигматизуються, замість того, щоб їх розглядати як природну та значущу частину побудови комунікативних навичок. Виділено сучасний мовний та іншомовний підходи до викладання іноземної/другої мови. Наголошено на парадоксах вивчення другої мови у французьких університетах, які стосуються обов'язків фахівців з викладання іноземної/другої мови. Проаналізовано три різні проблеми вивчення та викладання другої мови на університетському рівні у Франції. Розглянуто фактори, які впливають на засвоєння другої мови: кількість вкладених даних, зануреність студентів у мову, тип взаємодії, в якій вони беруть участь; якість зворотного зв'язку, який вони отримують. Зазначено недостатню кількість годин, що виділяються на вивчення другої мови у французьких університетах. Використання навчальних та комунікаційних технологій у поєднанні з очним викладанням пропонується як практичне рішення проблеми в сучасних умовах вищої освіти у Франції.

Ключові слова: викладання іноземних мов; друга мова; іноземна мова; університет.

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ПРЕПОДАВАНИЮ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ ФРАНЦИИ

Дурдас Алла, старший преподаватель кафедры современных европейских языков,
Киевский национальный торгово-экономический университет,
ул. Киото, 19, 02000 Киев, Украина, a.durdas@knute.edu.ua

Костенко Ольга, преподаватель кафедры современных европейских языков,
Киевский национальный торгово-экономический университет,
ул. Киото, 19, 02000 Киев, Украина, o.kostenko@knute.edu.ua

Мостицкая Лилия, преподаватель,
Ирпенский государственный колледж экономики и права, ул. Университетская, 31, 08201 Ирпень,
Украина, Mostitskiy@ukr.net

В статье рассматриваются современные подходы к обучению иностранным языкам во французских университетах, проблемы, связанные с этим, а также современные вызовы, обусловленные историческими, социальными и культурными факторами. Подчеркнуто, что модели обучения, согласно которым усвоения языка рассматривалось как формирование привычек, а также обоснованные методы обучения, в основе которых – запоминание и тренировки, уступили место когнитивным подходам, ориентированным на обработку информации, что привело к развитию методов, основанных на понимании и общении. Выделены современные подходы к обучению иностранным языкам. Подчеркнуты парадоксы изучения второго языка во французских университетах. Проанализированы три различные проблемы изучения и преподавания иностранных языков в университетах во Франции. Рассмотрены факторы, которые влияют на усвоение второго языка: количество вложенных данных, включенность студентов в язык, тип взаимодействия, в котором они участвуют; качество полученной обратной связи. Использование учебных и коммуникационных технологий в сочетании с очным обучением предложено в качестве практического решения проблемы в условиях, в которых находится современное высшее образование во Франции.

Ключевые слова: второй язык; иностранный язык; преподавание иностранных языков; университет.

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