

РЕЦЕНЗІЯ

S.S. Kunanbayeva. The Modernization of Foreign Language Education: The Linguocultural-Communicative Approach. – London : Hertfordshire Press, 2013. – 293 p.

The book under review (first published in Almaty in 2010) presents a successful attempt at combining two formats, those of a monographic study and a textbook, as well as integrating several areas of research (linguistics, psychology, pedagogy, didactics, theory of communication, cultural studies etc.) under the umbrella term of *modernizing foreign language education* (further MFLE). It is not accidental that the issue of FLE modernization brought up in Prof. S.S. Kunanbayeva's book as an integrated theory, alongside its practical applications, emerged in its most comprehensive form in Kazakhstan, a country with bilingual, or rather multilingual and multicultural population, fast-growing economy and vast international relations.

The book that consists of three parts focuses upon (i) theoretical foundations of MFLE, with a special emphasis on intercultural communication influenced by a number of sociocultural and socio-educational factors, along with a new, authentic interpretation of key FLE categories, (ii) its methodological background related to the competency-based approach in the framework of MFLE intercultural communication model and basic categories of MFL education, as well as (iii) the principles and heuristic potential of MFLE modelling in terms of its educational content, management, organization and technologies, combined in its practical component with a well-elaborated typology of exercises and a toolkit of assessment forms. The main bulk of the text is supplemented with quite a few informative tables, figures and diagrams that furnish the book's content, each Chapter being followed by practical tasks and case studies. Theoretically, the book under consideration fills in a substantial gap between traditions and modernity in FL teaching methodology, on the one hand, and current gains of cognitive and cultural studies related to foreign language acquisition, on the other. In this and many other respects Prof. Kunanbayeva's book might become seminal for Ukraine too, as a state where an adequate language policy is in great need though still in the making.

In most general terms, Prof. Kunanbayeva's MFLE conception as a part of multidisciplinary educational paradigm, grounded in empirical and theoretical data, envisages that foreign language teaching methodology of today can no longer be approached as a formal technological or communicative construct *per se*. On the contrary, it should be regarded procedurally as a dynamic cognitively and culturally charged educational process that results in moulding and cultivating a new bilingual (or multilingual) and bicultural (or multicultural) personality with a developed language consciousness and cross-cultural communicative competency, well adapted to the changing social and professional milieu.

Prof. S.S. Kunanbayeva, who is not only a researcher of European renown but also an expert in educational administration as Rector of Ablai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages, quite consistently puts into the centre of her academic reasoning a personality of the learner, and wider, an anthropological interpretation of education in the convergence of its cognitive, cultural, ethnic, social and ethical facets. All of them are examined in the book in a most detailed and profound way, while revealing the evolution and the state of the art in FLE methodology against a very wide background of adjacent disciplines. Another structure-forming concept of Prof. Kunanbayeva's study concerns educational modelling as a heuristic tool and fundamental principle of MFLE. Such an approach encompasses an innovative integrative competency model (p. 93) with its six methodological principles (cognitive, conceptual, communicative, socio-cultural, developmental-reflexive and linguocultural) that presuppose changes in conceptualizing the world while learning

a foreign language. It also highlights anew the issue of competence and competency, bringing to the foreground intercultural communicative competency that is structured by the combination of seven sub-competencies (p. 123), where cognitive, conceptual, social, cultural, communicative, personality-centred and linguistic perspectives are integrated.

The book proceeds with outlining linguocultural foundations of cultivating a polylingual personality in the multicultural environment, which is generalized upon in a schematized format (p. 126) that integrates a multitude of factors related to language education and MFL education in particular, being extrapolated on the language situation in Kazakhstan multinational society, where native Kazakh and native Russian speakers (primary language personalities), together with those for whom Kazakh and Russian are second languages (secondary language personalities), are exposed to learning foreign languages, which is indispensable in the global world of today, acting, in the author's parlance, as mediators of intercultural communication.

On introducing the national scale for assigning levels of language competency in Kazakhstan, which contains five positions, Prof. S.S. Kunanbayeva first summarizes the stages of cultivating the learners' intercultural communicative competency (from preparatory stage through the stage of modelling typical communicative situations to intercultural communication proper – p. 209), and then moves on to modelling the MFLE content (p. 222). Further on, relying on the context-based approach to FL teaching, the author defines a scope of communicative teaching resources for developing the so-called metaskills and competencies, among them meta-linguistic, meta-speech, meta-pragmatic and meta-context-based ones (p. 229), which adds a new vista to the suggested MFLE conception.

The book concludes with a set of exercises related to the three stages of cultivating the learners' intercultural communicative competency (nine basic types, three for each stage – p. 238) and a detailed description of forms and functions of MFLE assessment (optimal, higher, average and lower grades), oriented towards evaluating the quality of acquired competencies, or wider, the educational quality.

Thus, the multidisciplinary comprehensive approach to the modernization of foreign language education, taken and thoroughly elaborated by Prof. S.S. Kunanbayeva, can be regarded as an integral part of her well-thought-over educational conception grounded in anthropocentricity, personality-orientation, cultural and social environmentalism, as well as heuristics of cognitive processing in foreign language acquisition. That is why the book contributes a lot not only to the field of FLT methodology and didactics; it might be of interest to linguists, and particularly cognitive linguists, scholars in the area of cultural studies and experts in language policy.

I am fully convinced that Prof. S.S. Kunanbayeva book “The Modernization of Foreign Language Education : The Linguocultural-Communicative Approach”, with all its theoretical gains and practical applications, deserves a warm acclaim of the global educational community.

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