**УДК 378.1:81’243(045)**

**CONCEPTUAL TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATORS**

**WHEN DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

Svitlana Grynyuk, Ph.D,

*National Aviation University, Kyiv, Ukraine*

*Svetmoy7@mail.ru*

This article represents the Finnish approach to the future of foreign language teaching, studying and learning. It provides the general overview of the key instruments or conceptual tools for foreign language teachers and educators to be used and profit from when developing foreign language education (FLE) and envisioning its future.

The key futuristic instruments, such as vision, strategy, scenario and mission are described and analyzed in order to better understand, visualize and formulate the future in the field of foreign language acquisition.

*Keywords: foreign language education, foreign language teachers and educators, vision, strategy, scenario, mission, conception of learning.*

У статті здійснюється аналіз фінського підходу до сучасного стану розвитку іншомовної освіти з урахуванням сучасних тенденцій та кардинальних глобальних перетворень і трансформацій, які у контексті світової економіки впливають на процес розвитку окремо взятого суспільства чи спільноти і, тим самим, вимагають відповідно скоординованих дій щодо успішного вирішення нагальних питань у будь-якій галузі. Освітня галузь, як інтегральний компонент цілісної системи, адаптується до процесів ззовні і вибудовує свій «сценарій» необхідних впроваджень та розв’язків, які відповідно трактуватимуться як доцільні з огляду на перебіг подій та їх можливі ефекти.

У статті здійснено аналіз концептуальних інструментів іншомовної освіти у ході навчання, вивчення та викладання мови як другої іноземної в системі фінської освіти. До концептуальних інструментів або так званого футуристичного інструментарію віднесено: концепцію «бачення», концепцію «стратегії», концепцію «сценарій» та концепцію «місія». Усі означені одиниці досліджено за алгоритмом, який передбачає аналіз теоретичної та практичної значущості кожного у ході розвитку іншомовної освіти. Особливу увагу зосереджено на перспективах, які є потенційно можливими та вкрай необхідними для розвитку позитивної динаміки мовної освіти сьогодні.

Запропонований аналіз концептуального інструментарію іншомовної освіти у ході навчання, вивчення та викладання мови як другої іноземної першочергово спрямовано на забезпечення викладачів іноземної мови, педагогів та освітян у галузі іншомовної освіти науково обґрунтованими стратегічними знаннями у системі мовної політики, урахування яких допоможе візуалізувати та сформувати майбутнє у сфері вивчення іноземних мов.

*Ключові слова: іншомовна освіта, освітяни та викладачі у галузі іншомовної освіти, бачення, стратегія, сценарій, місія, концепції навчання.*

Данная статья представляет финский подход к преподаванию, изучению и обучению иностранному языку в будущем. Статья предоставляет общий обзор ключевых инструментов или концептуального инструментария для преподавателей иностранного языка и всех педагогов в области иностранного образования, которые могут быть использованы для развития иностранного языка и прогнозирования его будущего. Футуристические инструменты, такие, как видение, стратегия, сценарий и миссия описаны и проанализированы, с тем, чтобы лучше понять, визуализировать и сформулировать будущее в области иностранного языка.

*Ключевые слова: образование в области иностранного языка, педагоги в области иностранного образования и преподаватели иностранного языка, видение, стратегия, сценарий, миссия, концепции обучения.*

***Stating a problem***

There is a widespread international consensus that, if modern societies are to flourish, if they are to strengthen their economic productivity, and if they are to ensure that all their citizens lead satisfying personal lives, they need to cultivate the skills and capabilities of all through their educational systems. That same consensus affirms that the quality of teaching is the most crucial in-school and-high school factor in raising the level of students’ achievement and furthering their educational progress and cumulative potential.

In the light of education, foreign language teachers not only in Finland but all over the world face, more than ever, the challenge of visualizing future language teaching, studying and learning.

In educational parlance, revision, division and supervision may have been used more often than vision. In teacher education at least, the educators often face the challenge and demand of having all teachers act as visionaries, able to actively visualize future language teaching, studying and learning, while, at the same time, encouraging future teachers to follow suit.

***The rationale of the article***

To understand better the development processes in foreign language education and have a better comprehension in visualizing futuristic perspectives, some theorists have suggested certain key instruments used when foreseeing and envisioning the future, such as vision, strategy, scenario and mission. This is very much the heart of the matter in this article and also the main rationale for exploring this relatively uncharted territory.

***Overviewing the material***

Predicting the future is always a hazardous business. But we can make reasonable predictions. The future won’t just suddenly happen; the nature of the future exists in our present. In regard to education, however without going into detail or discussing the future from the deepest sense as seen by many futurologists, the future is not to be foreseen, and yet, on the other hand, it is feasible to see and anticipate different kinds of futures. Even if we cannot predict the future precisely, it is generally accepted among future researchers that we can affect the future and future developments through our own decisions, our actions, and our ways of behaving [6; 7; 8].

There are different approaches or views towards the future. The first classification is based on three diverse attitudes:

1. There are people who are driven to the future, as they believe, by “greater forces”, such as legislators and political decision-makers who are thought to be in the critical position to design the future.
2. There are people who adapt to the future, who take the future as something inevitable but understand that future needs the potential to be looked into in advance, and these people can be flexible enough when facing these needs.
3. There are people who make the future. These individuals are convinced that their own future is − at least partly and to some extent − up to them themselves to create, to shape, to design. This kind of attitude calls for predictive behavior, which is often also called strategic thinking [6].

The second classification speaks of reactive and proactive attitudes towards the future. The reactive behavior is grounded on the questions like: How can we adapt to the future? How can we achieve our goals in the predicted world? The proactive attitude encourages us to ask: How do we influence the characteristics of all possible worlds? How will we achieve our aims in these possible worlds? The latter perspective does not see the future as monolithic; rather, the future becomes a spectrum of different options and opportunities that are open to all of us.

In the light of the stated above concepts, the main instruments or conceptual tools to work with used when looking into the future in regard to foreign language education and acquisition, such as vision, strategy, scenario and mission are to be discussed further.

The first instrument that helps educators to cope with the future is vision. According to one English-language dictionary, a vision implies the “power of seeing or imagining, looking ahead, grasping the truth that underlies facts”. This meaning is very close to how many Finnish scientists see the vision: looking forward, foreseeing and anticipating. Some theorists worldwide have suggested an even broader interpretation. So Liebermann [2] points out such aspects as leadership, professionalism, reform, teaching incentives, social realities, and teachers as colleagues. On the other hand, visions can also be interpreted through various and sometimes even contradictory concepts of teaching: engineering and apprenticeship as well as a developmental, nurturing or social reform according to Parr [5].

Visions are closely related to futuristic thinking, to the idea of doing something in order to affect the future. In this sense, creating visions, or visualizing the future, is needed at all levels, including those of the institution, its principal, the teachers themselves, as well as student-teachers.

All in all, a vision is defined as a view geared towards the future, an abstraction of some sort, which can then be made more concrete with goals, aims and objectives. A vision is something projected relatively far into the future, while goals and aims are more concrete, often measurable and chronological, so that they can be achieved by the end of a specified period of time. A vision always contains the idea of a better and more desirable future. The vision accepted by an organization should form the basis for everyday action, because the conceptions related to the future promote a state of self-directedness.

In the context of our study, the notion of the second instrument that is strategy will be presented as a number of different facets adding something to a rather established discussion.

Thus, strategies consist of those paths that are geared towards creating and enabling visions. The vision defines the limits within which the strategies are being implemented. In a learning organization, the strategy is changed if something unexpected is faced. If an organization has a vision but no strategy, then, the whole deal can collapse when something completely unexpected occurs.

Strategies are often divided into competition strategies and visionary strategies. The first category of strategies aims in increasing the commercial competitivity, and are usually expected to come true within several years, this can be five years, often even much sooner. A visionary strategy, on the other hand, aims at coming true in the future as it will appear 10 or 15 years from today. Naturally, visionary strategies are more difficult to create, even if they are exactly what we would need now.

Strategies usually consist of decision-making rules and practices, which help people to run the organization and to guide its behavior in the future. The rules and practices regarding the management of different organizations can be divided into four categories [3; 7; 6]:

1. Rules that are used to assess the present and future capacity to perform. Goals, aims and objectives are some of the instruments used to “measure” these kinds of rules.

2. Rules that determine the relationship between the organization and its external environment.

3. Rules that determine the internal relationships of the organization and the different quality support mechanisms of the working order.

4. Rules that govern the daily working policy of the organization.

Sometimes, the different strategies needed to develop and assess an organization are gathered into a “strategic cross” as Meristö, Määttä, Helakorpi stated. So called “strategic cross” contains four different kinds of knowledge linked to organization [1; 3; 4]:

* knowledge related to aims: shared reflections concerning the future and the aims which an organization, such as a school, needs when developing into a networked or team school;
* situational knowledge: analysis of the status quo and the action environment;
* methodical knowledge: an organizational analysis and a survey of what the staff know, with a view to deciding about the methods that are needed in developmental work;
* strategic knowledge: a concrete plan of development or an implementation plan to be carried out jointly between different individuals and units of the organization.

In strategic thinking and planning, the typical mistake is not taking all four of these types of knowledge into consideration, but contenting oneself with one or two out of the four. In that way, not enough adequate information is gathered to work on.

One more instrument that helps educators to cope with the future is a scenario. Generally speaking, scenarios are optional or alternate images of the world or worlds of the future; possible worlds. They are powerful instruments that can be used to shape and visualize change, as well as all the ingredients and chains embedded in it.

Scenarios are often used to assess all of the weak signals that the future sends to this day. One could summarize the meaning of scenarios by saying that they are the future’s manuscripts based on the knowledge we have at present.

The last instrument to be mentioned when considering futuristic planning on an organizational level is mission. Mission is usually preceded by a vision. Mission, briefly, means all the tasks that are required when advancing towards a vision. Mission links a vision situated somewhere in the future with the present state of affairs, which is also the level of know-how as we experience it. In order to see mission implemented in the future become concretized as vision, we need an adequate level of know-how and a certain number of resources, as well as a certain level of purposiveness for all of this to come true. Briefly, for mission to manifest itself as vision, quite a few criteria or prerequisites must become tangible. Yet, both mission and vision are essential to be explicated, because otherwise we will not know the paths we are heading towards or the targets we should be aiming at. Vision is the futuristic state of the art, while mission is the way to proceed onwards from the present state of affairs [6; 8; 9].

***Summary***

To sum up, despite the drastic and radical changes that the humankind is experiencing now all over the world, the question of having welfare states satisfying the needs of all is the background and basis of any country. We clearly understand that only the highly qualified human resource niche can cover this issue successfully and productively. Thus, naturally to have attempts in investigating the best ever-existing examples we have at present on the world scale.

In the field of education, Finland is one of the worth alternatives. It has proven to be the top country in education nowadays and the educators are very eager to study and to analyze their successful pattern and to implement relevant and appropriate integrals into their own national systems. The Ukrainians don’t set themselves aside the changes currently taken place in the global sense: we have a precise look in this direction, keep pace following the contemporary tendencies that the world community has been absorbed with and are persistent in building and rebuilding our prosperous national system of education.

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