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Scientific article

Teaching Russian in a closely-related Slovak environment

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Abstract. The article discusses features of studying Russian as a foreign language in schools in Slovakia. The relevance of the research is determined by the fact that the new socio-political conditions in which Russian is studied as a second foreign language competing with other languages have brought about changes in the status, goals, motives for study, content, approaches to selecting, grouping and presenting material, the methodological concept of teaching. The aim of the work is to identify the features of teaching Russian as a second foreign language in a closely related Slovak language environment. The authors drew on the method of comparison and collation, the method of application (overlying fragments of language systems), method of component analysis, method of word-formation analysis, methods of analysis of official statistical, sociolinguistic data. In the course of the study, the data of the State Institute for Education Statistics and Forecasts of the Slovak Republic, the peculiarities of Slovak students' motivation for learning the Russian language were analyzed, a comparative analysis of the main lexical and grammatical phenomena of the Russian and Slovak languages was carried out. The research resulted in identifying the specifics of Russian as a Slavic language in the status of a second foreign language, the extent of its demand in school practice in Slovakia, reviewing the motives for studying it, and, on the basis of this, developing requirements for selecting, grouping, and studying lexical and grammatical material. The authors see the prospects for teaching the Russian language in Slovakia in combining the system-structural and linguoculturological approaches.

Keywords: teaching Russian as a foreign language, Russian as a Slavic language, Slovak language environment, vocabulary, grammar, ethnocultural specificity

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Introduction

Teaching Russian as a foreign language at all levels in Slovak educational system has significantly changed in recent decades. In order to show the specifics of the Russian language in Slovakia, everything that preceded the current situation with the Russian language in this country, the authors refer to the history of its study in Slovakia.

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The Russian flourished in Slovakia in the post-war period. According to the educational program of 1948, Russian became a mandatory foreign language in all types of primary, secondary and higher educational institutions, and teaching of “Western” foreign languages experienced a certain decline. During the forty years of its functioning as the main foreign language, Russian had significant achievements in terms of its study and spread. Russian language textbooks for each type of school with audio aids, magazines, newspapers in Russian, various competitions in reading literary texts, a large number of well-trained teachers, school and student exchanges testified to the fact that in the Soviet era a very strong methodological, linguistic and organizational base for learning the Russian language was formed.

Russian language teaching was based on deep cultural and economic relations between Slovakia (at that time Czechoslovakia) and Russia (at that time the Soviet Union). During this period, a whole galaxy of remarkable Slovak linguists and methodologists appeared. M. Sotak, M. Rogal, A. Sopira, A. Chervenjak, J. Sabol, M. Miklush, G. Balazz, M. Chabala, E. Kucherova, J. Svetlik, E. Sekaninova, Fetsaninova, Y. Rybak, M. Shvagrowski, N. Shchipanskaya, P. Shima and many others studied the Russian language in comparison with Slovak.

After 1989, a period of so-called stagnation in foreign language teaching and a sharp drop in interest in the Russian language began. The position of the Russian language changed dramatically. Russian lost its leading position among foreign languages, and although it remained in Slovak schools as an elective subject, almost no one chose it (Žofková, 2004). Russian language textbooks and teaching aids were no longer published, Russian language teaching programs were closed in some universities, and the number of cultural events related to the Russian language significantly reduced. Specialists in the Russian language were forced to re-train to teach their native (Slovak) language. “At the turn of the XX–XXI centuries, in connection with the growing influence of globalization on all spheres of society, new directions in education system development around the world were outlined” (Gallo, 2010: 15). English has become the single mandatory foreign language.

The situation with the Russian language is changing for the better only at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the Russian language is beginning to regain its position. An important factor in increasing the number of Russian language learners was the policy of multilingualism adopted by the Council of Europe and the European Union, according to which every European needs to know at least two foreign languages. Russian has been a compulsory second foreign language (Spanish, Italian, German, French, or Russian) since 2011, and the number of Russian language learners in schools increased dramatically. Despite the wide choice of second foreign languages to learn in Slovakia, the Russian language now competes only with German.

The subject “Russian language” belongs to the educational field “Language and language communication”. The main goals of education in this area are, first of all, “the development of a positive attitude towards multilingualism and respect for cultural diversity”, as well as “mastering the rules of interpersonal communi-

cation of this cultural environment and the development of a positive attitude to language in the framework of intercultural communication”¹.

New aims of learning the Russian language, its new status, the competencies which it forms, the new conditions in which the Russian language is studied and its functions in the Slovak environment, put forward the tasks of studying, understanding and describing the situation with the Russian language in Slovakia today, developing the concept of its study for successful competition with other foreign languages. The study of Russian as a second foreign language in the Slavic environment requires revision of some established views on the study of the vocabulary and grammar of Russian as a foreign language, a special approach to grouping, presenting, training of lexical and grammatical material.

The aim of the research

The purpose of our research is to identify the specifics of the Russian language in the Slavic (Slovak) audience. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set:

- to study of the level of demand for the Russian language in Slovakia;
- to analyze the factors of its sustainable “demand” in school and university practice in Slovakia;
- to describe the peculiarities of the Russian language in the Slovak cultural and linguistic environment, taking into account its general Slavic character and the status of a second foreign language.

Methods and materials

The methods of analyzing sociolinguistic literature and official statistical data, the comparative method, the method of application (overlapping fragments of the language system), word-formation analysis, the method of component analysis of vocabulary were used. The authors relied on the materials of the curriculum documents regulating teaching various disciplines, including the Russian language, in different types of Slovak schools, on the data of the State Institute for Statistics and Forecasts of Education of the Slovak Republic.

Results

1. Official statistics show a stable interest in the Russian language in Slovak primary and secondary schools. The statistics below show the study of a second foreign language by individual types of schools in 2015–2019. Russian sustainably holds a second position in the number of students who chose it after German (which is traditionally widely in demand among Slovaks), while confidently ahead of French, Italian and Spanish.

¹ *Inovovaný Štátny vzdelávací program pre primárne vzdelávanie – 1 stupeň základnej školy.* (2019–2020). Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav Publ. (In Slovak.); *Inovovaný Štátny vzdelávací program pre primárne vzdelávanie – 2 stupeň základnej školy.* (2019–2020). Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav Publ. (In Slovak.); *Inovovaný Štátny vzdelávací program pre gymnáziá so štvorročným a päťročným vzdelávacím programom.* (2019–2020). Bratislava: Štátny pedagogický ústav Publ. (In Slovak.)

2. In Slovakia, the Russian language holds a special position, as evidenced by the consistently high percentage of students who studied it in different periods in different types of Slovak schools, as well as, according to Slovak researchers, the variety of motives for studying it today. Contrary to the current opinion that the main factor in choosing Russian as a second foreign language is the obligation to study it, official statistics show that, despite the fact that in 2015–2019 Russian was not compulsory, it continued to be chosen by a large number of students.

3. The opinion that one of the main reasons for the active study of Russian in Slovakia, as well as in other Slavic countries, is the genetic proximity of the native and Russian languages and it is easier to learn than other languages, is not absolutely true. The fact of language proximity can “work” in favor of choosing Russian at the initial stage of study. However, very soon students realize that mastering Russian is not less difficult than others, because of the strong interference from the native language. The closer the languages are, the greater the interference is at all language levels. At the same time, the stable interest in Russian in schools in Slovakia, confirmed by official statistics, indicates the effect of other factors in its choice, which together determine the stable motivation for learning Russian in this country.

4. The linguistic proximity of the native and the studied languages is insidious due to many facts of false similarity that prevent the rapid acquisition of another Slavic language. Because of this, in the case of closely related bilingualism, a special grouping of lexical and grammatical material is necessary, which differs from grouping it in the course of Russian as a foreign language in a non-Slavic environment, other ways of presenting vocabulary and grammar based on a systematic comparison of the native and studied languages, and the proposed techniques and exercises for forming skills should take into account the already formed skills in the native language and the first foreign language.

Discussion

Official statistics on the number of Russian language learners at schools in Slovakia indicate a constant interest in it, which distinguishes Slovakia from other Slavic countries. In the 2008–2009 school year, 36,000 students were taught Russian in all types of Slovak schools, and in the 2009–2010 school year there were more than 44,000 (Kvapil, 2014). This trend has continued: over 50,000 students are currently studying Russian in all types of Slovak schools. Currently, there are nine Russian-Slovak gymnasiums in Slovakia², in which some subjects are taught in Russian.

Until 2016, a favourable situation with the Russian language in Slovakia was often explained by the obligation to study a second foreign language (Koryčenkova, 2016: 90). According to some authors, in such a situation, weak students preferred Russian expecting easy learning of a related language. However, Z. Kulichová, for example, in her research claims that Russian as a second foreign language is often chosen by students with extraordinary abilities (Kulichová, 2018: 58).

² Vefvyslanectvo Ruskej Federácie v Slovenskej Republike. (2019). *Russian language: Usable links*. Retrieved February 24, 2021, from <https://slovakia.mid.ru/russkij-azyk-poleznye-ssylki>

Slovak researchers note that “parents played the main role in choosing a foreign language at school, students make a choice in favor of a particular language under their influence” (Radkova, 2017: 127). The Russian language is still often spoken by the representatives of the older generation of Slovakia, and they have a positive attitude towards Russia and Russian culture.

An important factor in choosing a language is a fairly large number of well-trained and creative teachers. The Association of Slovak Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (ARS), headed by Professor Eva Kollarová, is also very strong here. It regularly gathers teachers for seminars, round tables, and the famous “Bratislava Meetings of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature”. There are other factors for maintaining interest in the Russian language: generally positive, friendly attitude towards Russia, towards Russian people due to their common character and behavior (the Slovaks are as open, friendly, warm-hearted, frank, capable of empathy, as the Russians are). Knowledge of languages increases the prospects of finding an interesting and well-paid job. Despite the proximity of Austria and Germany, which are attractive for finding a good job and motivating to learn German, pragmatic motivation (Radkova, 2017: 128–129) plays an important role in choosing the Russian language at school and university: Slovakia has many resorts, historical sites and ski centers, where there are traditionally many tourists from Russia.

The political factor plays a decisive role. Cooperation in cultural and humanitarian spheres is an important part of Russian-Slovak relations. The countries cooperate both at the level of interstate relations and interdepartmental agreements, as well as direct contacts. The Slovaks highly appreciate Russian science, Russian art, and Russian culture: the Alexandrov Ensemble and the Russian Ballet perform frequently in Slovakia. Slovakia is one of the European countries that bought the COVID vaccine in Russia, and many people here consider it to be the best, which confirms the authority of Russia.

All these factors are the basis for the strong position of Russian as a second foreign language in Slovakia, its special importance for the Slovaks, as evidenced by a large number of students who choose it for study.

In the statistics below (Tables 1–3 and their corresponding graphs 1–3), the key years are 2015 and 2019. Since 2015, the second foreign language has become optional, and as a result there has been a decrease in the number of the second foreign language students in general by about one third. So, in 2015 more than 70 thousand people were learning Russian, but by 2019 their number decreased by almost 20 thousand. In such a way the decline in interest in the Russian language reflects a general trend in the dynamics of learning second foreign languages (including German and French), but not the decline in interest in the Russian language itself.

The 2019–2020 academic year has brought positive changes in the field of teaching a second foreign language in primary schools, which has affected the study of Russian: no foreign language is now mandatory, and students can choose any foreign language, including Russian, from the 3rd grade.

However, the fact that the Russian language has not been taught at schools and universities in Slovakia for ten years, and the interrupted methodological tradition has had a negative impact on the level of Russian language teaching.

The Slovak book market still has a shortage of textbooks on the Russian language. Textbooks published in Russian publishing houses and written by native speakers do not take into account the language characteristics of the Slovak audience, and therefore are unsuitable for it.

Table 1

Number of foreign language learners in basic schools³

Years	Total	Foreign language				
		French	German	Russian	Spanish	Italian
2015	359 283	2395	106 791	45 106	769	94
2016	362 736	2207	87 107	36 213	737	92
2017	368 848	1619	80 498	33 627	766	115
2018	375 063	1565	74 136	30 895	990	151
2019	382 430	1232	67 272	29 505	959	151
2020	388 240	1149	68 277	30 883	1074	158

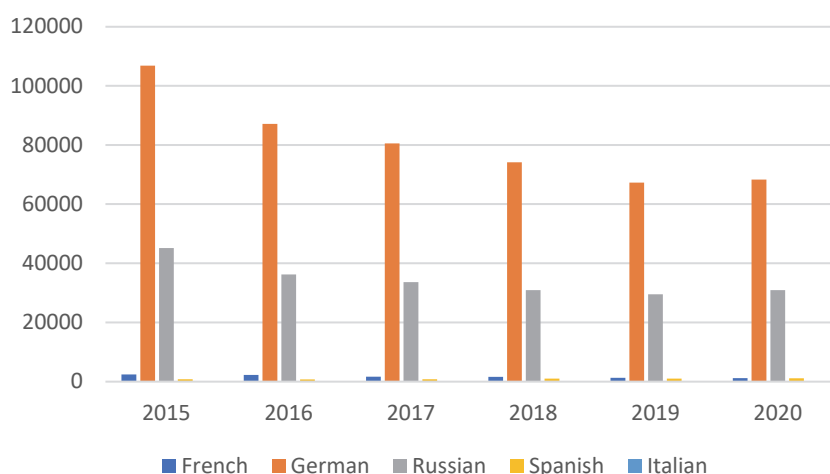


Figure 1. Number of foreign language learners in basic schools

Table 2

Number of foreign language learners in gymnasiums⁴

Years	Total	Foreign language				
		French	German	Russian	Spanish	Italian
2015	73 433	7216	44 325	12 462	7202	762
2016	71 978	6228	44 035	12 527	6624	699
2017	73 631	6381	44 612	12 487	7204	760
2018	72 664	6144	43 576	12 351	7786	662
2019	71 098	6096	42 513	11 795	7971	530
2020	70630	6043	41 385	11 030	8544	547

³ According to State Institute of Statistics and Forecasts in Education of the Slovak Republic. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-zakladne-skoly.html?page_id=9601

⁴ Ibid. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-gymnazia.html?page_id=9599

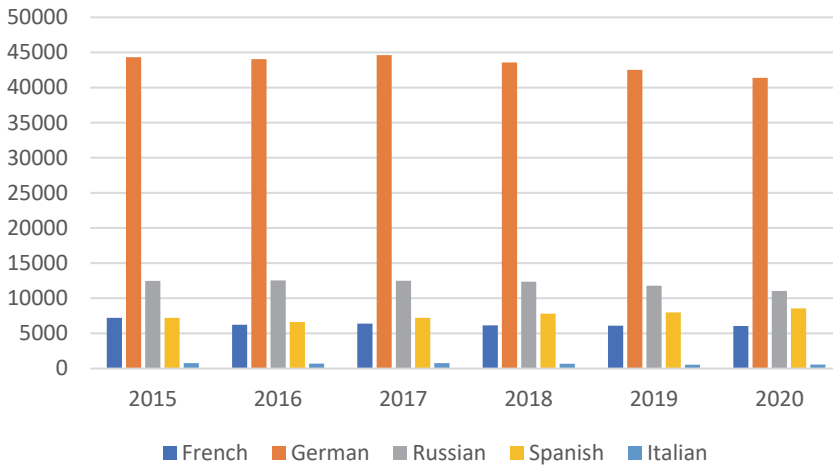


Figure 2. Number of foreign language learners in gymnasiums

Table 3

Number of foreign language learners in secondary schools and vocational schools⁵

Years	Total	Foreign language				
		French	German	Russian	Spanish	Italian
2015	134 130	3130	52 306	14 389	1454	615
2016	129 973	2289	43 908	12 371	1252	479
2017	125 648	2213	39 581	11 888	1272	425
2018	120 945	1739	35 427	10797	1246	355
2019	117 648	1601	31946	9805	1305	265
2020	117 995	1728	29 600	9524	1353	210

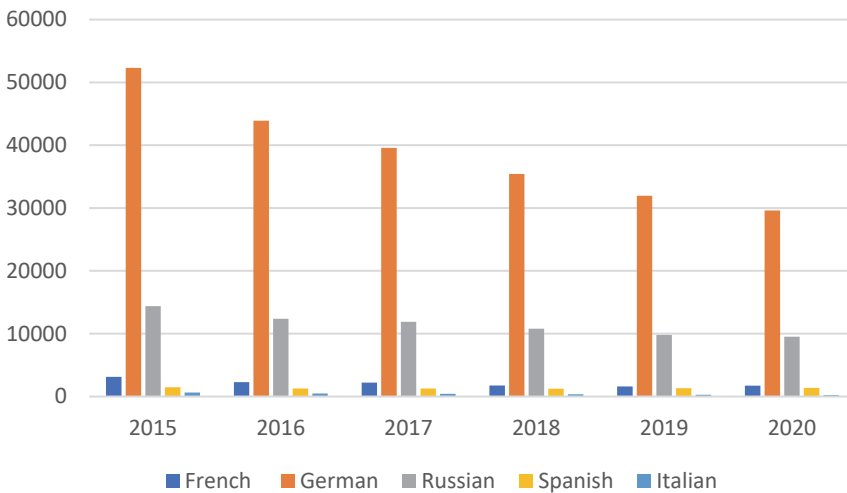


Figure 3. Number of foreign language learners in secondary schools and vocational schools

⁵ According to State Institute of Statistics and Forecasts in Education of the Slovak Republic. Retrieved March 10, 2021, from https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia/statisticka-rocenka-stredne-odborne-skoly.html?page_id=9597

In the context of closely related bilingualism, we can agree with L.V. Shcherba that it is possible to banish the native language from the audience, but it cannot be banished from the students' minds. "The path of conscious repulsion from the native language" (Shcherba, 1957: 57), of course, contributes to a more effective assimilation of another language, especially if we are talking about a closely related language.

This is also pointed out by the well-known Slovak methodologist: "the acquisition of new knowledge and skills in all areas, including language, does not occur in isolation (with the exception of children of preschool and primary school age, who acquire basic vocabulary and basic communication skills in a foreign language in the form of games and memorizing idioms). Also, the rules for building and using a language are not adopted automatically, but in accordance with pre-existing knowledge and ideas that arise primarily from knowledge of the principles and functions of the native language" (Adamka, 2010: 7).

It is indisputable that the Russian language, which is studied as a foreign language by those for whom another Slavic language is their native language, has its own linguistic and didactic features. Methods of teaching Russian as a non-Slavic language (a working term introduced by the well-known Serbian-Russian scholar B. Stankovic for the name of the subject "Russian as a foreign language" in conditions where the native language is another (different) Slavic language (Markova, 2018; Dognal, 2018)) is more than in cases of unrelated bilingualism, based on comparative studies of Russian and native languages. In conditions of their close kinship, not only transposition (positive transfer) can take place in the study of any aspect of the language, but also interference "as a result of the interaction of language structures" (negative influence of the native language) is manifested to a greater extent at all language levels, and mainly in the lexical and grammatical sphere (Sverdlova, 2019: 606).

The "ease" of learning a related language is actually imaginary. Numerous "pitfalls" in vocabulary and grammar in the form of false similarities, inconsistencies in declension and conjugation systems, differences in the form, semantics and compatibility of prefixed verbs, in general in the syntagmatics of lexemes, in the construction of complex sentences – all this significantly slows down the study of a related language, causing even stronger interference than in the study of an unrelated one. To overcome it and to master the lexical and grammatical system of the Russian language more effectively in the Slavic audience, it is advisable for the teacher to take into account the following, in our opinion, defining elements of pedagogical tools ("a set of tools that are necessary for a teacher in the process of teaching and upbringing, i. e., his professional activity") (Strelchuk, 2019: 7).

When explaining the grammatical phenomena of the Russian language, the Slavs always need to proceed from the grammatical system of their native language, since they are grammatically arranged in the same way, but have numerous particular differences. This applies to: 1) the gender of nouns; 2) the case system; 3) verb government; 4) conjugation systems; 5) the formation of aspect forms; 6) verbs of movement; 7) the structure of sentences, especially complex ones, etc.

In all Slavic languages, nouns belong to a particular gender, so the gender of Russian substantives and the declension in gender of adjectives, possessive pronouns, ordinal numerals is a phenomenon that is understandable and close to the Slavs. However, the gender of some common words does not always coincide, which leads to numerous errors in their agreement. So, in Russian *bank*, *university* are masculine, and Slovak *banka*, *univerzita* are feminine, Russian *program* refers to the feminine gender, and Slovak *program* – to masculine, etc. Such cases should be the object of active training in exercises to coordinate them with the adjectival forms.

In the Slavic audience, the functional principle of mastering the case system of the Russian language, according to which individual meanings of different cases are studied, is not effective. In conditions of closely related bilingualism, it is more expedient to study case endings paradigmatically, i.e. with the help of so-called declension patterns (for example, masculine nouns of the hard type (*stol* ‘table’, *drug* ‘friend’) and soft type (*korabl’* ‘ship’, *sanatorij* ‘sanatorium’), feminine nouns of the hard type (*lampa* ‘lamp’, *podruga* ‘girlfriend’) and soft type (*dver’* ‘door’, *auditorija* ‘audience’), as well as the *doch’* ‘daughter’ type, neuter nouns of the hard type (*okno* ‘window’) and soft type (*more* ‘sea’, *zdanije* ‘building’), as well as the *vremya* ‘time’ type), taking into account this method of teaching nouns in the native language. “Although the functional approach contributes more effectively to the development of communicative competence, the Slavs find it difficult and unsystematic, since they already have a stable skill of mastering the declension of nouns, formed at their native language classes” (Rozboudova et al., 2019).

All Slavic languages are characterized by the category of the verb aspect, so it is not as difficult for Slavs as for speakers of non-Slavic languages. However, perfective verbs are often formed in the Russian language with the help of other prefixes, for example, Russian *dumat’* – *podumat’* ‘think’ / Slovak *mysliet’* – *rozmysliet’ si*, *premysliet’*. These verbs should be presented in comparison with the corresponding forms of the native language.

Speaking about the verbs of movement, we should mention that in the Slovak language they do not differ depending on the nature of the movement: on foot or on transport. Unlike the Russian verbs *idti* ‘to move on foot’ and *ehat’* ‘to move on transport’, in the Slovak language, in all contexts they use the verb *isst’* ‘to go’ (in the past tense *šel, šla, šli*). Therefore, in the speech of Slovak students, wrong phrases are frequent: “When did you come from Moscow?” The verb *ezdit’* ‘to ride’ in all meanings, except for ‘ride a bicycle, motorcycle’, where the Slovak equivalent of *jazdit’ (na bicykli)* is used, corresponds to the verb *cestovat’* ‘to travel’. Therefore, the differentiation of verbs denoting movement on foot and on transport, and the active training of constructions with the verbs *ehat’* – *ezdit’*, should be given great attention in the Slovak audience.

It is well-known, that the skills and abilities developed in the native and first foreign language are particularly strong at the syntactic level: “Syntactic phrases, connections, constructions constantly ‘invade’ the Russian speech of students” (Rozanova, 2015: 36). In this regard, the importance of working on syntactic structures is massively reinforced in the Slavic audience. The difference in verbal

government between the Slovak and Russian equivalents is also overlaid by English variants, leading to interference not only from the native language, but also from the first foreign one. Therefore, it is advisable to use trilingual comparisons of verbs with different government, which can be trained, for example, in the “game of translators”:

Russian: *interesovat's'a* (what?) *literature*,
 Slovak: *zaujímať sa* (o čo?) (o *literaturu*),
 English: *be interested* (in *literature*);

Russian: *ždat'* (who? what?) (a *friend, salary*),
 Slovak: *čakať* (na koho? na čo?) (na *priateľa, na mzdu*),
 English: *wait* (for a *friend, for a salary*);

Russian: *dumat'* (about whom? About what? (about *brother, about family*),
 Slovak: *myslieť* (na koho? na čo?) (na *bratra, na rodinu*),
 English: *think* (about *brother, about family*);

Russian: *voiti* (where?) (in *classroom*), *poiti* (where?) (to *library*),
 Slovak: *vstúpiť* (do čeho?) (do *posluchárni*), *pôjdu* (do čeho?) (do *knižnice*),
 English: *come in* (into the *lecture-room*), *go* (to the *library*).

There are differences in the structure of simple and complex sentences in Russian and Slovak. For example, speaking about constructions of belonging, we should remember that Russian and Slovak languages belong to different types: Russian is a language of the “to be” type, and Slovak is a language of the “to have” type. Therefore, the Russian construction: *U menya* (‘me’) *est'* (‘is’) *brat* corresponds to the Slovak: *Mám bratra* (lit. ‘I have a brother’), while the subject of the action is expressed using the personal form of the verb. So Slovak students have difficulties with using the subject in the indirect case: *u menya, tebya, ego*, etc. (‘me, you, him’). Russian constructions for expressing the desire to drink and eat also present difficulties, and they also differ in the Russian and native languages. In the Russian version: *Ya hochu est'*. *Ya hochu pit'* (‘I want to eat. I want to drink’), in Slovak they are built on a different model: *Mám hlad* (‘I have hunger’), *Som smädný* (‘I’m thirsty’).

Among complex sentences, it is necessary to distinguish sentences with subordinate explanatory clauses with a *li* (‘if’) particle. In Slovak, the equivalent construction is used here with the conjunction *čí*, which corresponds to the Russian conjunction *esli* of condition (‘in case’). As a result, there are errors like: *Ya ne znayu ESLI* (condition) *on pridet zavtra* ‘I do not know IN CASE he will come tomorrow’ (instead of the correct *Ya ne znayu pridet LI on zavtra* ‘I do not know IF he will come tomorrow’). To form a strong skill of using this model, you can offer various exercises: a) to convert direct speech into indirect one (*Ona sprosila: “U vas est' vremja?”* – *Ona sprosila, est' li u menja vremja* (She asked: “Do you have time?” – She asked if I had time)); b) to translate (*Opýtal sa, či zajtra bude chladno* – *On sprosíl, holodno li zavtra budet* (He asked if it would be cold tomorrow)); c) to choose the right options, etc.

Among the important Russian lexical phenomena that require bilingual description and constant methodological attention, we can name the following:

1) derivatives with a common Slavic root; 2) the “internal form” of derived words; 3) various facts of “false similarities”, qualified in linguistics as inter-language homonyms, and in linguodidactics – as quasi-equivalents; 4) words common with the native language from the syntagmatic point of view; 5) secondary names.

When studying the Russian language in a Slavic audience, the “internal form” of words is of great linguodidactic importance. It is a feature that forms the basis of nomination, which helps not only to comprehend its cognitive basis, but also to remember the word due to the strength of the mnemonic connection between it and the sign that motivated it. The image served as the motive for the name appears both in the process of perception (decoding) of the word, and in the process of its production (encoding). “It is specific for a non-Slavic audience that the internal form of the word, which is unmotivated from the point of view of native speakers of the Russian language, is motivated from the point of view of a different Slavic linguoculture, where the Proto-Slavic lexemes that have been lost by the Russian language are still preserved” (Markova, 2011: 72). For example, the word *koshelek* ‘wallet’ is easy to remember in the Slovak audience, because there is its motivator – the word *koš* ‘basket’. In this case, it is effective to compile bilingual word-formation nests that demonstrate the derivational capabilities of the common Proto-Slavic root in the native and studied languages, for example: Slovak *koš* – ‘basket’, *košela* ‘shirt’, *košelový* ‘shirting’; Russian *koshelek* ‘purse for storing money’, (col.) *koshelka* ‘rough wicker basket’, as well as their inclusion in sentences.

When studying vocabulary in a Slavic audience, it is necessary to pay attention to quasi-equivalents, or false similarities. These include various facts of formally similar, but semantically different lexical units:

a) accidentally coinciding in the form, for example Russian *sporit* ‘argue’ and Slovak *sporit* ‘store up’, Russian *otkaz* ‘negative response’ and Slovak *odkaz* ‘message, note, link’;

b) related lexemes that have lost their etymological connection, for example: Russian *kivat* ‘make a movement of the head down in agreement or greeting’ and Slovak *kivat* ‘wave your hand’, Russian *uima* ‘a large number’ and Slovak *ujma* ‘damage’, Russian *pozdravit* ‘express congratulations on a holiday, an important event’ and Slovak *pozdravit* ‘say hello’;

c) parallel forms such as Russian *razrushenny* (the participle of the verb *razrushit* ‘destroy’) and Slovak *rozrušený* ‘excited’, Russian *elektrichka* ‘commuter train’ and Slovak *električka* ‘tram’, etc.

Despite the opinion of some scientists (for example, D.N. Shmelev) that it is not essential for linguodidactics to distinguish between the true facts of homonymy (the accidental coincidence of lexemes of two languages), parallel forms and polysemy (the different semantic development of a common lexeme in different languages), we think this distinction is important. As a rule, accidentally coinciding lexemes and genetically common words that differ in meaning in the native and studied languages do not present great difficulties for assimilation and memorization: the former – due to the fact that they do not overlap denotatively, and the latter, on the contrary, due to the fact that they belong to the same sphere of extra-linguistic reality and are logically connected (have a metaphorical, meto-

nymic or hypo-hyperonymic connection). This is also true for “false similarities” in non-related languages.

Parallel forms are the most difficult to master and dangerous in terms of interference. It is advisable to work on them in close connection with word-formation, demonstrating the semantics of the common root and the semantics of affixes, which make various semantic changes in the meanings of common roots. This category of “deceptive similarities” requires much more attention in the non-Slavic audience. An effective method of memorizing prefixed verbal formations is compiling bilingual word-forming nests, where all similar prefixed derivatives with their meanings are presented around a non-prefixed dominant verb, better in agreement with nouns, for example:

govorit’ (‘speak’) – hovorit’

– Russian *nagovorit’* ‘say a lot’ (*nagovorit’* 1) *glupostej, derzostej*; 2) *tekst* ‘say a lot 1) silly things, offensive things; 2) a text’) – Slovak *nahovorit’* ‘inspire’ (*nahovorit’ mienku* ‘inspire an opinion’);

– Russian *prigovorit’* ‘to sentence (in the court)’ (*prigovorit’ k dvum godam zaklucheniya* ‘sentence to two years of imprisonment’) – Slovak *prehovorit’* ‘to pronounce’ (*prehovorit’ tekst* ‘to pronounce a text’);

– Russian *sgovorčivyy* ‘a person who is easy to arrange with’ (*sgovorčivyye roditeli, nesgovorčivaja devushka* ‘compliant parents, recalcitrant girl’) – Slovak *zhovorčivý* ‘talkative’ (*má zhovorčivú náladu* ‘she is talkative’).

The differential meanings of quasi-equivalents are also expressed in their different syntagmatic possibilities in different languages. Difficulties in remembering the meaning of such words in a foreign language are removed when they are presented in syntagmatic complexes, which help to outline their different semantics in the native and studied language. In this case, teachers can give play-based tasks: who will make more phrases with this noun or adjective. To fix the semantics of lexemes and display them in speech, you can suggest adding a sentence indicating, for example, reason:

– Russian *uzhasny* ‘very bad’: *uzhasnaja pamjat’* ‘very bad memory’ (“I can’t remember anything”), *uzhasnyj den’* ‘a very bad day’ (“I did not manage to do anything”), *uzhasnyj obed* ‘a very bad dinner’ (“the dinner wasn’t tasty”), *uzhasnaja pogoda* ‘very bad weather’ (“It is raining since morning”), *uzhasnyj fil’m* ‘a very bad film’ (“a boring film, could not see it out”), etc.;

– Slovak *úžasný* ‘amazing, splendid’: *úžasná dovolenka* ‘a splendid holiday’, *úžasná pamät’* ‘a very good memory’, *úžasne vyzeráš* ‘you look gorgeous’.

Additional meanings of common lexemes reflecting the culture of another nation and expressing the national specifics in their associative perception of the world often differ in the Slavic audience. For example, the phytonymic cultural code is often used to characterize a person in different languages, but its specific implementations often do not coincide. So, the Russians call a young slender girl *a birch*, a naive, romantic girl *a daisy*, a small, dry old woman *a dandelion*, a strong man *an oak*. The oak is also a symbol of stupidity for the Russians, which is shown in the expression *as stupid as an oak*. Slovaks have other associations for these meanings, verbalized in other additional meanings: slimness is

transmitted by the lexeme *jedľa* ‘fir’, strength, health is associated with the image of the *beech*: *zdravý jako buk* (lit. ‘healthy as a beech’), stupidity is associated with *a stick*: *trdlo* ‘stupid’, decrepitude – with *a bunch of dried grass*: *ako vechetek* ‘like a bundle of straw’. Thus, the cultural aspect allows to reveal the peculiarities of ethno-cultural consciousness, the specifics of the figurative perception of the world, to discover that the common word in the native and studied language turns out to be a translator of a cultural symbol in another language.

The cultural approach requires that modern Russian textbooks for non-Slavic audience reflect not only the facts of a systematic comparison of the native and the studied languages, but also the culture of the country of the studied language, verbalized in metaphors, idioms, proverbs. Nowadays, Russian language teaching in Slovakia is characterized by its focus on cultural aspects, and the active introduction of the idea of “Language through culture and culture through language” into the practice of teaching Russian.

The idea of foreign language education, its cultural character, put forward by E.I. Passov (Passov, 2013), was supported in the school teaching of the Russian language in Slovakia. Here, the so-called *zážitkové vyučovanie*, which can be translated into Russian as “learning through impressions, through experiences”, has emerged and is currently being actively developed. This is seen in Slovakia as a promising and new opportunity for learning the Russian language, which is called *Russian-language education* here. According to representatives of this direction (Kollarová, 2014: 4; Bu Buinyak, Borisova, 2020: 69–79), modern Russian as a foreign language at school and university should be inextricably linked with Russian cultural values. Learning Russian through culture and learning about culture through language opens the world of spirituality and all-round education to schoolchildren and students.

Conclusion

Russian language teaching in the Slavic audience is characterized by a special linguodidactic grouping of lexical material, which should be reflected in textbooks and at lessons. Methodologists should improve the methods of teaching Russian in a non-Slavic (other Slavic) audience, taking into account the changed research paradigms, new socio-historical conditions, and in each specific Slavic audience – the peculiarities of a particular native language.

The study of the Russian language by the Slavs should be based on system-comparative studies of the native and the studied languages, and in this case it is necessary to speak not only about considering the native language, but about the reliance on the native language of the students. By superimposing language systems, identifying the general and specific in them, universal and unique features are determined. It gives the possibility of transposition (positive transfer) and identifies possible areas of interference (negative influence of the native language). General and peculiar facts, selected with regard to their functioning, should be the basis for presenting, grouping and training language material in Russian language textbooks for Slavs.

Modern textbooks of Russian as a non-Slavic language should reflect not only the facts of a systematic comparison of the native and studied languages,

but also the modern reality, and should be culturological in nature. We see the prospects of the Russian language in Slovakia in combining these two directions: system-structural (based on an effective comparison of linguistic facts in “general” and “peculiar”) and linguoculturological (associated with identifying and comprehending ethno-cultural meanings, using visual synthetic culture). The main goal of teaching Russian according to this approach is to form a person who is capable of a dialogue of cultures, a person who has something to say in this dialogue and who knows how to express it correctly in Russian.

The Russian language in the Slavic environment should serve as an opportunity for spiritual, ethnic, and cultural consolidation of Slavic peoples, and be the key to preserving their identity. That is why the mission of Russian language teachers in Slavic countries is so high, and it is so important to find new forms, techniques and means that help not only to “survive” and improve competitiveness, but also to realise its high purpose.

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Научная статья

Особенности обучения русскому языку в близкородственной словацкой среде

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Аннотация. Рассматриваются особенности изучения русского языка как иностранного в школах Словакии. Актуальность исследования определяется тем, что в новых общественно-политических условиях, в которых русский язык изучается в качестве второго иностранного языка, в ситуации конкуренции с другими языками изменились статус, цели, мотивы изучения, содержание, подходы к отбору, группировке и презентации материала, методическая концепция, что требует осмысления и выработки новой стратегии обучения русскому языку. Целью работы является выявление особенностей

обучения русскому языку как второму иностранному в условиях близкородственной словацкой языковой среды. Применялись сравнительно-сопоставительный метод, методы аппликации (наложения фрагментов языковых систем), словообразовательного анализа, компонентного анализа лексики, анализа социолингвистической литературы, анализа официальных статистических данных. Были изучены данные Государственного института по статистике и прогнозам образования Словацкой Республики, особенности мотивации учащихся словацких школ, выбирающих русский язык, проведен сравнительный анализ основных лексико-грамматических явлений русского и словацкого языков. Определена степень востребованности русского языка в школьной практике Словакии, проведен обзор мотивов его изучения, выявлена специфика русского языка в статусе второго иностранного в Словакии, на основе чего выработаны рекомендации к отбору, группировке, приемам изучения лексико-грамматического материала. Перспективы преподавания русского языка в Словакии видятся в соединении системно-структурного и лингвокультурологического подходов.

Ключевые слова: методика преподавания русского языка как иностранного, русский язык как инославянский, словацкая языковая среда, лексика, грамматика, этнокультурная специфика

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