



RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD

РУССКИЙ ЯЗЫК В МИРОВОМ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ

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Research article

The Bulgarian voice in the world Russianists' choir

Antonia Pencheva 

*University of National and World Economy,
8th Decemvri St, Sofia, 1700, Republic of Bulgaria*

 apencheva@unwe.bg

Abstract. The author thoroughly examines the emergence, formation and development of the Russian studies in Bulgaria as a scientific field, both in retrospect and in the context of its current state. The author traces the influence of historical, political and socio-economic factors on teaching Russian to Bulgarians. Keeping in mind the changes in the political and socio-economic orientation of the Republic of Bulgaria and of the Russian Federation in the last three decades, it appears relevant at the present states of development of the two countries to comprehensively describe the various development trends of the Russian studies and Russian language teaching in Bulgaria. Representative material from scientific publications and collective monographs on heterogeneous aspects of the Russian studies (linguistic, literary and applied) has been used in the research. Traditional methods of analysis and evaluation of scientific literature, observation, description and generalization of pedagogical experience are applied in this study. It also includes analysis of data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria on the number of schoolchildren studying Russian at different stages and in different types of secondary schools. The official statistical data show a stable interest in the Russian language among Bulgarian pupils and students, regardless of changing attitudes in the society. The Russian language remains the second most frequently chosen after English. The pragmatic attitude of pupils and students, a combination of subjective and objective factors contribute to their choice to study Russian. The specific feature of the Bulgarian model is teaching Russian at all levels: preschool, school, university and continuing education in accordance with the European policy of lifelong learning.

Keywords: Russian studies, Bulgaria, Russian studies history, Society of Russianists in Bulgaria, motives for studying, Russian language, Bulgarian model

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Introduction

In today's globalized, multicultural world, the role of world languages in intercultural communication is becoming increasingly important and significant. The Russian language occupies a firm place among other global languages. This is evidenced by the results of the Global Competitiveness Index (GC-Index) of the Russian language in the world in 2021,¹ according to which the Russian language ranks fifth among the twelve world languages. The monitoring has been conducted by the experts from the Pushkin Institute of the Russian language.

The present article attempts to create a comprehensive picture of Russian language teaching and learning in Bulgaria, to highlight the most important aspects of the current state of Bulgarian Russian language studies, to point out the historical background of the interest in the Russian language and outline the prospects of its development. The urgency of the topic stems from the state of modern Russian studies in Bulgaria on the one hand, and on the other hand, from the lack of a summary study combining the historical aspect of Bulgarian Russian language studies, its present state and prospects for its development. The author emphasizes the position of teaching and learning the Russian language, literature and culture in the last three decades which coincide with the period of changes in the socio-political system of the Republic of Bulgaria. The study is a further step in studying Bulgarian Russian language studies, its place in the national scientific and educational environment and world Russian language studies.

In the world literature on Russian language studies, the reviews of national peculiarities of the study and promotion of the Russian language are often published. The Pushkin Institute's project "World Russian Studies" is illustrative in this respect, which aims to "give each country where Russian is loved, taught, and researched the opportunity to speak out about its unique scientific school."² Since 2015, in special issues of country-specific journals, the authors have been outlining the specifics of Russian language studies in each country. In the analytical article "Russian studies are more alive than all living things," E.N. Strelchuk and V.M. Shaklein (Strelchuk, Shaklein, 2018) offer an overview of Russian and foreign scientific journals publishing articles related to the spread of the Russian language, the actual processes taking place in it.

In Bulgarian science, the interest to genesis, formation and modern state of Russian studies in Bulgaria has existed for many years, at different times scientific papers described certain aspects concerning historical periodization (Babov, 1969, 1976; Peycheva, 2007), key stages of its formation (Lesnevskaya, 2017; Lesnevskaya, Lesnevskaya, 2018), its modern state (Pochekanska, 2018; Avramova, 2017; Radkov, 2018; Shamonina, 2018 and others), certain problems of Russian language functioning (Stoyanova, 2017; Ivanova, 2012; Petkova, 2011; Dimitrova, 2019;

¹ Arefiev, A.L., Gorbatova, D.A., Zhiltsov, V.A., Kamysheva, S.Y., Koltakova, E.V., Maev, I.A., Osadchii, M.A., Rusetskaya, M.N., Khechtel, A.S., & Yaskevich, M.I. (2020). *Russian Language Index in the World: Global Competitiveness Index (GC-Index), Sustainability Index in Post-Soviet Countries (RS-Index)* (M.A. Osadchii, Ed.). Moscow: A.S. Pushkin State Institute of Russian Language. (In Russ.)

² Portal "Education in Russian". Retrieved from <https://journal-rla.pushkininstitute.ru/>

Cherneva, 2019), Russian literature (Bozhankova, 2001; Petkova, 2021), teaching methodology (Mavrova, 2018), translation (Khuntov, 2020), etc.

Despite the differences in the periodization of the formation of Bulgarian Russian studies proposed by some authors (Peycheva, 2007; Lesnevskaya, 2017), in general, we can identify the following stages of development: the period before liberation from the Turkish yoke (1846–1878), the period after liberation until the end of World War II (1878–1944), the post war period until 1989 and the modern stage, covering the early 1990s until the present time. Considering the dynamics of the process since its origins, the stages of formation, the periods of rising and falling interest in the study of the Russian language, it is possible to build a reliable dynamic picture, according to historical, economic, cultural and political factors. Until now, a complete picture has not been presented by the Bulgarian Russian language specialists. It is necessary not only from the point of view of the history of Russian language studies, but, above all, as a reference point for the future.

The aim of the study is to provide an insight into the genesis and formation of Bulgarian Russian language studies against the background of cultural-historical and socio-political factors. In order to achieve this goal, the following tasks are set:

- to determine the historical background of the emerging interest in the Russian language;
- to reveal the dynamics of interest in studying the Russian language in different periods of socio-economic development of the country;
- to study the degree of demand for the Russian language in Bulgaria;
- to analyze the factors of sustainable “demand” for it at school and in university;
- to describe the peculiarities of the Russian language in the Bulgarian cultural and linguistic environment, taking into account all-Slavic roots.

Methods and materials

The study is conducted with the traditional linguistic methods: studying scientific literature on the topic, description, comparative analysis and generalization. The material for the study is the works of Russian-speaking teachers of different generations, in particular, the works of the founder of the methodology of teaching Russian in Bulgaria, Professor Kirill Babov (Babov, 1969, 1976), who generalized the methodological experience of the first generations of school teachers. The two issues of collective monographs titled “Bulgarian Russian Studies. Almanac” published by the Society of Russianists in Bulgaria in 2007 and 2017, as well as in a special issue of Bulgarian Russistics (2018) and a number of other publications (see: Gradinarova, Lipovska, 2007; Raleva, 2012; Aleksieva, Vacheva, 2017). Data on Russian language learning in secondary schools of the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria for the period 2015–2019 were also involved in the analysis.

Results

Based on the analysis of literary sources describing the picture of Russian language learning among students of different levels for more than a 150 years in a changing socio-political environment and taking into account official data, we came to the following conclusions:

1. Traditionally, the Russian language in Bulgaria occupies a significant place in school and university practice. Although undoubtedly socio-political changes in the country affect the demand for the study of the Russian language, there is still a steady interest in it, and it is studied in all periods.

2. The changes in the political and socio-economic orientation of the country over the past three decades have not caused a loss of interest in the Russian language, it is still in demand. Although for the last 30 years Russian does not have the status of a compulsory foreign language, a large number of students continue to choose it for study.

3. Official statistics show a stable dynamic of interest in the Russian language in the Bulgarian audience. This is confirmed by the statistics of studying Russian as a foreign language in certain types of schools for 2015–2019. The Russian language steadily holds the second position by the number of those who choose it after English, which is in wide demand in the last three decades, with a confident lead over German, Spanish and French.

4. The specificity of Bulgarian model consists in teaching Russian at all levels: preschool, school, university and additional education in accordance with the European policy of lifelong learning. A vertical system of formal and informal teaching of Russian is built.

Discussion

Initial stage of Russian language teaching

The teaching and learning of the Russian language in Bulgaria has its own long history. It is considered to begin in the middle of the 19th century, when certain Bulgarians, still under the Ottoman Empire's dependence, are looking for an opportunity to be educated in Russia, taking advantage of the historical circumstances and the help of Russian social activists.

Historical sources testify that Atanas Cholakov and Dobri Chintulov graduated from the Odessa Seminary, returned to Bulgaria and worked in Bulgarian schools in the 1840–1850s (Anchev, 1981). Nayden Gerov, a Bulgarian Renaissance figure, graduated from the Richelieu Lyceum in Odessa, in 1846 began to teach Russian in the school of his native town of Koprivshtitsa (1846–1850), and later in the Diocesan School “Saints Cyril and Methodius” in Plovdiv. The curriculum included a practical study of the Russian language, the teaching was based on translation.

The rise of interest in the Russian language, arisen in the first half of the 19th century thanks to the national liberation aspirations, was observed later. In the first decades after the liberation from the Ottoman yoke (1878) the Russian language was studied in the first two forms of secondary schools as a compulsory subject. A few years later, at the end of the 19th century, the first textbooks on the Russian language by D. Nikolov, P. Gybev, A. Velkov, O. M. Georgiev appeared.

In the late 1890s, the beginning of Bulgarian Russian language studies as a scientific direction in higher education. The Russian language takes an important place at the History-philology department of the High school in Sofia (1888) and later at the History-philology department of Sofia University since the first years of its existence. During those years, the courses were read by Professors

M.G. Popruzhenko, P.M. Bitsilli, N.S. Trubetskoy, and others. For quite a long period (1878–1944), governments, political orientations, and regimes in Bulgaria were dynamically changing. All this affected the attitude to the Russian language and culture. However, under the influence of the Bulgarian people and especially intellectuals, the teaching of the Russian language with a small exception (1892–1984) was not interrupted, although there was no official support from the state. The first teachers at schools were mostly Russian university graduates, although they did not have a philological education. After the October Revolution, emigrant White Guards who came and settled in Bulgaria became teachers at Sofia University and many schools in the country (Peycheva, 2007).

The foundations of the scientific school of Russian language studies

It is possible to speak about genuine formation of Bulgarian Russian language studies in the beginning of the 20th century, when the foundations of the scientific school of Russian language studies began to be formed. In the late 1930s – early 1940s the Russian language became a compulsory discipline for the students of Slavic studies at Sofia University. Teaching its practical and theoretical aspects did not stop even during World War II. In gymnasiums, Russian has been studied as a compulsory subject since the 1940s. In order to solve the problem with training specialists and writing the programs the Ministry of Education set up a commission which included famous Bulgarian Slavists. The academic specialty for training highly qualified specialists in the Russian language and literature and teachers for secondary schools was created in the autumn of 1946, when the chair of the Russian language and specialty “Russian philology” were established at Sofia University. It happened thanks to N.M. Dylevski, the internationally renowned scholar, the profound researcher in the field of Slavic studies, historiography, and theology, who had a fruitful influence on the development of philological science in Bulgaria (Gradinarova, Lipovska, 2007; Raleva, 2012; Aleksieva, Vacheva, 2017).

Thus, from the post-war 1950s to 1960–1970s, there was a “golden age” of Russian language teaching in Bulgaria. During this period, in addition to the Russian language department at Sofia University, Russian language departments were opened at Veliko Tarnovo University (1963) and Shumen University (1973). At the Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski,” since 1961 there has been a section of the Russian Language in the Department of Foreign Languages, which in 1973 became a separate chair of Russian Philology. The main task of the chairs is training teachers for secondary schools, where at that time the Russian language was studied on a compulsory basis since the third or the fourth year of study. In addition to fundamental theoretical knowledge and practical skills in Russian language, literature and culture, students got practical translation skills. In 1989, the New Bulgarian University founded “New Bulgarian Studies” department and in 1991 the department of Slavistics was established at the South-Western University. Both universities train specialists in Russian language and literature, history and culture of the Russian-speaking world, and offer specialized courses in translation or pedagogy.

The role of professional organizations in the development of national and international Russian language studies

Academic Russian language studies in Bulgaria originated within the walls of Sofia University at the end of the 1970s. At the first forum in July 1967 university professors, teachers, and translators decided to found the Society of Russianists in Bulgaria (SRB). Professor Simeon Rusakiev, head of the department of Russian and Soviet literature, becomes its first chairman. The founders faced the task not only to develop a national organization, but also to be united with like-minded people from other countries.

As you know, in the same year an initiative group was created in Prague, uniting teachers of Russian language and literature from all over the world. It consisted of representatives of Russianists from many European countries (Avramova, 2017). The initiative group, which included representatives from Bulgaria, developed a draft program and charter and decided to hold a constituent assembly in Paris.

Thus, the SRB stands at the origins of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature (MAPRYAL) and becomes the most active participant in its work. Since then, Bulgarian Russianists have been cooperating with MAPRYAL in all educational, scientific and research projects. Thanks to the fruitful partnership with MAPRYAL, Bulgarian Russian language studies has gained notable international prestige and recognition.

The authority and international recognition of Bulgarian Russian language teachers was confirmed by two congresses held in Bulgaria: II Congress “Theory and practice of Russian as a foreign language textbooks and teaching aids” (Varna, 1974) and XI Congress called “World of Russian Word and Russian Word in the World” (Varna, 2007). While the second congress set the goal of “elaborating the complex scientific and practical fundamentals of teaching Russian language and literature,”³ the eleventh congress discussed, in addition to the topics of “structural, semantic and functional aspects of language units of different levels,” the issues of word formation, terminological vocabulary, modern pragmalinguistics, theory and practice of translation as a means of intercultural understanding, innovations in teaching and learning methods of the Russian language and literature, the content of educational programs, textbooks and manuals, also “analyzed the changes in the Russian language at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries,” “the prospects of Russian language functioning in new discursive spaces,” “analyzed the differences of conceptual and linguistic pictures of the world, generating and stimulating a dialogue of cultures” (Verbitskaya, 2018). Even then, the scholars discussed the effectiveness of electronic educational programs, the need to combine face-to-face and distance learning - topics that have become very actual and are widely discussed by Russianists all over the world in today's environment.

At the initiative of Bulgarian Russianists in different cities of Bulgaria periodical conferences and symposia with international participation are held, which become a forum for discussion of the Russian language, Russian literature, comparative-typological description of Russian and other languages, methodological

³ International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature. Retrieved from <http://mapryal.org>

problems of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Every four years since 1971 an international symposium under the auspices of MAPRYAL has been held at the University of Veliko Tarnovo, its subjects traditionally include all aspects and topical problems of world Russian studies. The scientific works of Bulgarian Russianists are presented in the collections published on various anniversaries, scientific forums and projects.

An important role in popularization of scientific achievements of Bulgarian Russianists is played by SRB organ “Bulgarian Russistics,” published since 1974, with some interruptions in 1994–2000 due to changes in socio-political situation in Bulgaria and financial problems. The journal is a continuation of the monthly bulletin “Russian Language,” which was published in 1968–1973. On the pages of the journal the studies of Bulgarian and foreign Russians are popularized in the sections “Linguistics,” “Literary Studies,” “Cultural Linguistics,” “Methodology,” “Questions of Translation,” “History of Russian Language Studies in Bulgaria,” “Reviews,” “Chronicle.” Despite difficulties in recent years, the journal is published regularly with the financial support of the “Slavians” Foundation, in printed as well as in electronic form.⁴

The Russian language teaching and learning in the new socio-political conditions

The position of the Russian language in Bulgaria for a long period before the changes that occurred in the early 1990s can be defined as “privileged,” because it is part of the mandatory curriculum in secondary schools and universities. Changes in the socio-political and economic course of the country radically changed the situation. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, “in the 1990s the Russian language ranked only 14th in secondary schools” (Pochekanska, 2007). The joint efforts of Russianists with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science took measures to restore and expand Russian language learning sites: the Bulgarian National Network of Basic Schools with Russian Language Studies was created (2003). It cooperates with Russian organizations that support the professional qualification of school and university teachers (Moscow Government, the “Russkiy Mir” Foundation, etc.).

A new informal structure – the Bulgarian National Network of Teachers of Russian Language and Culture (BNSPRYAK), which unites professionals of all levels: pre-school, school and higher education – is involved in the struggle for preserving the Russian language at schools and universities. It cooperates with both the Ministry of Education and local authorities. Both bodies hold an annual national school Olympiad as part of the “School is Pupils’ Territory” program. The Olympiad, as well as creative competitions, a children's theatre and song festivals are designed to maintain interest in studying the Russian language.

As a result of comprehensive efforts of a pleiad of professionals supported by professional organizations as well as the relevant structures of the Ministry of Education and Science and regional inspectorates, the interest in the Russian language in Bulgaria has increased in recent years. A vertical system of formal and informal teaching of Russian has been built, which covers pre-school, school, university le-

⁴ Bulgarian Russistics. Retrieved from https://bgrusisty.com/?page_id=23

vels, as well as courses of additional education. It is important to note that the interest in the Russian language in kindergartens has recently increased, so methodological manuals for teaching in preschool age have been created.⁵ The school programs of the Ministry of Education and Science offer Bulgarian schoolchildren a choice of 25 foreign languages. As the data of the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria shows below, in secondary schools Russian is studied as the first or second foreign language, with a stable second place after English (Figure 1).

17. Ученици в общообразователните училища по брой и вид на изучаваните чужди езици и по групи класове
Students in general schools by number and kind of the foreign languages studied and by grade groups

| | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 ⁶ | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | (Брой) (Number) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Общо Total | | | | | |
| Общо | 605729 | 587836 | 581267 | 572504 | 565023 | Total |
| Неизучаващи чужди езици | 45612 | 42340 | 39432 | 44159 | 37448 | No foreign language |
| Изучаващи 1 чужд език | 423959 | 414825 | 412415 | 403924 | 401716 | At least one foreign language |
| Изучаващи 2 чужди езика | 134600 | 129720 | 127993 | 123538 | 125113 | At least 2 foreign languages |
| Изучаващи 3 и повече чужди езика | 1558 | 951 | 1427 | 883 | 746 | At least 3 and more foreign languages |
| | | | | | | |
| Според изучаваните чужди езици | | | | | | By studied foreign languages |
| Английски | 507575 | 494288 | 496423 | 486348 | 486393 | English |
| Немски | 65581 | 65724 | 64141 | 60548 | 60487 | German |
| Френски | 21552 | 19397 | 18417 | 17200 | 17528 | French |
| Испански | 17066 | 17297 | 18292 | 18758 | 19074 | Spanish |
| Италиански | 3515 | 3804 | 3804 | 3643 | 3797 | Italian |
| Руски | 76072 | 71467 | 66422 | 62185 | 60782 | Russian |
| Други езици | 6472 | 5141 | 5183 | 4967 | 6119 | Other languages |

Figure 1. Russian language among other languages studied

Source: National Statistical Institute. (n.d.). *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021*. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/publications/education2021.pdf>

This trend is evident in the elementary general (grades I–IV) and basic general (V–VII/VIII in school year 2016/2017) phases of education (Figures 2 and 3).

| | I–IV клас I–IV grade | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Общо | 263218 | 262476 | 256618 | 248157 | 237556 | Total |
| Неизучаващи чужди езици | 44600 | 40584 | 38100 | 40774 | 36408 | No foreign language |
| Изучаващи 1 чужд език | 213271 | 216705 | 212848 | 202354 | 196346 | At least one foreign language |
| Изучаващи 2 чужди езика | 5093 | 4950 | 5400 | 4964 | 4746 | At least 2 foreign languages |
| Изучаващи 3 и повече чужди езика | 254 | 237 | 270 | 65 | 56 | At least 3 and more foreign languages |
| | | | | | | |
| Според изучаваните чужди езици | | | | | | By studied foreign languages |
| Английски | 199616 | 202793 | 200818 | 191617 | 186738 | English |
| Немски | 6244 | 6631 | 6966 | 5416 | 5249 | German |
| Френски | 2480 | 2199 | 1900 | 1968 | 1794 | French |
| Испански | 652 | 727 | 916 | 689 | 662 | Spanish |
| Италиански | 368 | 519 | 501 | 587 | 501 | Italian |
| Руски | 12812 | 12555 | 11681 | 10723 | 9596 | Russian |
| Други езици | 2047 | 1892 | 1676 | 1477 | 1466 | Other languages |

Figure 2. The Russian language among other languages studied in grades I–IV

Source: National Statistical Institute. (n.d.). *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021*. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/publications/education2021.pdf>

At the higher stage (VIII/IX–XII grades) of complete secondary education Russian loses the second place and goes to the third place after English and Ger-

⁵ Birova, I., & Deyanova-Atanasova, A. (2013). *Russian as a foreign language in kindergarten: A manual for teachers*. Sofia: Bulgarresurs–7 Publ. (In Russ.)

man. This fact can be explained by the fact that many Bulgarian pupils continue their higher education in Western Europe, including Germany. However, this is not true for vocational secondary schools, where Russian still takes the second place (Figure 4).

| (Продължение и край) (Continued and end) | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 ¹ | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | (Брой) (Number) |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| | V - VIII клас V - VIII grade | | V - VIII клас V - VII grade | | | |
| Общо | 213488 | 189459 | 190033 | 191572 | 194412 | Total |
| Неизучаващи чужди езици | 612 | 1009 | 891 | 2985 | 655 | No foreign language |
| Изучаващи 1 чужд език | 180746 | 160773 | 163171 | 165603 | 173639 | At least one foreign language |
| Изучаващи 2 чужди езика | 31940 | 27448 | 25658 | 22775 | 19834 | At least 2 foreign languages |
| Изучаващи 3 и повече чужди езика | 190 | 229 | 313 | 209 | 284 | At least 3 and more foreign languages |
| Според изучаваните чужди езици | | | | | | By studied foreign languages |
| Английски | 191483 | 171218 | 173790 | 174774 | 178676 | English |
| Немски | 12579 | 11777 | 11001 | 9594 | 9641 | German |
| Френски | 4275 | 3069 | 2665 | 2583 | 2597 | French |
| Испански | 3302 | 3535 | 3957 | 4008 | 4004 | Spanish |
| Италиански | 713 | 999 | 634 | 525 | 539 | Italian |
| Руски | 31301 | 24784 | 22506 | 19266 | 17343 | Russian |
| Други езици | 1543 | 974 | 873 | 1030 | 1359 | Other languages |
| | IX - XII клас IX - XII grade | | VIII - XII клас VIII - XII grade | | | |
| Общо | 129023 | 135901 | 134616 | 132775 | 133055 | Total |
| Неизучаващи чужди езици | 400 | 747 | 441 | 400 | 385 | No foreign language |
| Изучаващи 1 чужд език | 29942 | 37347 | 36396 | 35967 | 31731 | At least one foreign language |
| Изучаващи 2 чужди езика | 97567 | 97322 | 96935 | 95799 | 100533 | At least 2 foreign languages |
| Изучаващи 3 и повече чужди езика | 1114 | 485 | 844 | 609 | 406 | At least 3 and more foreign languages |
| Според изучаваните чужди езици | | | | | | By studied foreign languages |
| Английски | 116476 | 120277 | 121815 | 119957 | 120979 | English |
| Немски | 46758 | 47316 | 46174 | 45538 | 45597 | German |
| Френски | 14797 | 14129 | 13852 | 12649 | 13137 | French |
| Испански | 13112 | 13035 | 13419 | 14061 | 14408 | Spanish |
| Италиански | 2434 | 2286 | 2669 | 2531 | 2757 | Italian |
| Руски | 31959 | 34128 | 32235 | 32196 | 33843 | Russian |
| Други езици | 2882 | 2275 | 2634 | 2460 | 3294 | Other languages |

Figure 3. The Russian language among other languages studied in grades V–VII/VIII and VIII/IX

Source: National Statistical Institute. (n.d.). *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021*. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/publications/education2021.pdf>

9. Ученици в професионалните паралелки и училища по брой и вид на изучаваните чужди езици
Students in vocational classes and schools by number and kind of the foreign languages studied

| | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 ¹ | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | (Брой) (Number) |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Общо | 131436 | 142021 | 136229 | 135117 | 138656 | Total |
| Неизучаващи чужди езици | 5438 | 6840 | 7167 | 6782 | 4652 | No foreign language |
| Изучаващи 1 чужд език | 61750 | 73109 | 70944 | 71848 | 57791 | At least one foreign language |
| Изучаващи 2 чужди езика | 64047 | 61838 | 57960 | 56370 | 76100 | At least 2 foreign languages |
| Изучаващи 3 и повече чужди езика | 201 | 234 | 158 | 117 | 113 | At least 3 and more foreign languages |
| Според изучаваните чужди езици | | | | | | By studied foreign languages |
| Английски | 109694 | 118620 | 115155 | 115278 | 122128 | English |
| Немски | 30562 | 29424 | 27216 | 26073 | 33061 | German |
| Френски | 7790 | 7207 | 6560 | 6284 | 8577 | French |
| Испански | 2063 | 2079 | 2244 | 2124 | 2229 | Spanish |
| Италиански | 1083 | 1304 | 1053 | 1072 | 2182 | Italian |
| Руски | 38720 | 38003 | 34597 | 33518 | 41890 | Russian |
| Други езици | 535 | 850 | 513 | 590 | 263 | Other languages |

Figure 4. The Russian language in vocational schools

Source: National Statistical Institute. (n.d.). *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria 2021*. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/publications/education2021.pdf>

Unfortunately, Bulgaria does not gather official statistics on students who study Russian as a foreign language in higher schools. The Society of Russianists

in Bulgaria plans to conduct an annual questionnaire among teachers of higher education institutions about the number of students who choose to study Russian. According to our observations, besides students of philological specialties, students of economic, political, technical, medical and other specialties choose Russian as their first or second foreign language. These students outnumber philological students.

Mastering a foreign language today is of particular importance and is a necessary component of the educational system at non-philological higher educational institutions. Communication in a foreign language is a pledge of future successful scientific and professional activities of university graduates regardless of their profile. In the epoch of globalization, Russian for special purposes and business Russian is in demand among students of many Bulgarian universities, including economic profile (University of National and World Economy, Varna University of Economics, Varna Free University, Faculty of Economics of Sofia University, Faculty of Economics of Thracian University), technical profile (Technical University – Sofia; Forest Technical University – Sofia; Technical University – Varna, Ruthenian University named after A. Kanchev), medical specialties (Medical University of Varna), tourism colleges in Varna and Bourgas, the Military University, the Higher Art Schools and the National Sports Academy.

At non-philological universities the Russian language is a part of the basic curriculum on foreign languages. For example, at the University of National and World Economy, Russian has been studied since the university opened for over 100 years. “As early as the first year of study, the study of French, German, Russian and English begins, which is part of the university's compulsory academic disciplines” (Veselinov, 2019). The first teachers of Russian were Professor M.G. Popruzhenko, L.A. Bolotova, S.S. Levitskaya, I.P. Nilov, I. Raev, Professor G.St. Pashev.

Teaching Russian to non-philological students is not easy because it is connected with the need to form students' linguistic and communicative competence, the ability to participate in professional communication (in oral and written forms).

Bulgarian Russianists are proud of the results of the theory and methodology of teaching Russian for special purposes at different stages of education. Teaching takes place in a non-linguistic environment, and though Russian and Bulgarian are closely related languages with common Slavic roots, their language systems differ essentially (we mean analyticism and syntheticism). The main principles of classroom work on Russian as a foreign language include communicative character, activity-based Russian language acquisition, “dialogue of cultures,” the use of contrastive methods of analysis, taking into account students' native language. Modern educational technologies of situational learning are widely used, including methods of project work and case studies, which introduce students into real life situations, where they participate in managerial communication.

In the era of the electronic revolution, a new concept of education – lifelong learning – is gaining momentum. This is an open system of education, requiring more and more specialized knowledge and continuous improvement of professional skills. In times of active intercultural communication, business Russian as

a foreign language goes beyond the scope of academic discipline in high school. Knowledge of business Russian expands the opportunities for business communication and professional contacts. A specialist, who speaks a foreign language, is ready for self-education and self-realization, which manifests a new, personality-oriented paradigm of education.

It is logical that the question arises about the motivation to choose Russian. Yu.E. Prokhorov rightly notes the rational basis for the choice, the awareness of the fact that the Russian language “will help to make a good career, to succeed in the chosen profession” (Prokhorov, 2014). A combination of subjective and objective economic factors, such as job search, tourism and service, investments, lead to a sustained interest in studying Russian in Bulgaria.

The role of the “*Russkiy Mir*” foundation in increasing interest in the Russian language and its dissemination is significant. The organisation supports multi-vector work of Russian centres in Varna, Plovdiv, Sofia, Pleven and a number of classrooms in secondary schools and universities established after 2007. The International Qualification School “*Modern Pedagogical Technologies in Teaching the Russian Language,*” held annually in the Russian Centre of the Free University of Varna, has gained wide popularity not only in Bulgaria but also abroad. Students from both European countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine) and Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) participate in the methodological school (Shamonina, 2018: 40). Traditionally, Bulgarian universities with Russian language philological departments are also represented in the school: Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv, Sofia, Shumen, and Southwestern. The main goal of the school is to “develop the scientific and creative activity of young Russianists” and to equip aspiring teachers with “concrete knowledge and practical skills” (Shamonina, 2018: 42). The Centre for Russian Language and Culture at the Plovdiv University named after Paisiy Hilendar annually organizes students’ seminars on translation. The Centre of the *Russkiy Mir* in Sofia organizes professional development schools for school and university teachers, Russian language courses for children and adults, scientific and methodological conferences and seminars on topical problems of Russian language and literature studies.

We should note that with the financial support of various European programs in recent decades Bulgaria has developed projects aimed at teaching foreign languages (including Russian) to adults in the field of tourism. Among them, we can mention the projects that brought the greatest added value. People working in the hotel and restaurant business can participate in “*Be My Guest: Russian language for the hospitality industry.*”⁶ The project is supported by the European Commission. Learning foreign languages through songs at level A2–B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is offered in the project “*Learn Russian with songs.*”⁷

In our opinion, “the improvement of communicative skills of adults working in the market of tourist services represents an important element of human re-

⁶ Be My Guest. Retrieved from <http://elrusoenespana.com/russianonline/>

⁷ Languages & Integration through Singing. Retrieved from <http://www.languagesbysongs.eu/>

sources development, therefore the training materials in Russian language intended for this category of workers should facilitate the development of language skills and mastering intercultural features using innovative methods of interactive learning” (Pencheva, 2017: 644). Innovative educational resource for teaching Russian language “RETOUR – Russian for tourism”⁸ fits into the strategy of orienting the educational process not only on the requirements of professional and educational standards, but also on modelling the professional culture of specialists, forming their desire for continuous self-improvement with the help of digital content.

Conclusion

The formation and development of Bulgarian Russian language studies represents an important page in the European and global understanding of bilateral and multilateral contacts of Russianists. A study of the dynamics of Russian language demand at school and university levels in Bulgaria shows the relative stability and independence of interest in the Russian language from the changes in society. The reasons for this phenomenon are rooted not only in tradition, but also in the pragmatic attitude of today's youth and participants of the labour market to their professional training and qualifications.

In spite of the difficulties caused by going online during the pandemic and the insufficient number of teaching hours in some higher education institutions, the motivation of teachers and professors has not diminished. Bulgarian Russianists participate in symposiums, conferences and congresses of IAPRNL, cooperate in projects with Russianists from Russia and other countries, publish articles in prestigious international journals, publish monographs, textbooks and teaching aids. The most popular Russian fiction is published in Bulgarian.

The results of this study seem important because they reveal a steady trend of interest in studying the Russian language. The modern era, however, presents us with challenges. Despite the seeming stability of processes in Europe and world, sometimes events occur whose impact and influence on international communication, integration processes and the dialogue of cultures is difficult to foresee and take into account. The two-century tradition of teaching and learning Russian in Bulgaria gives hope that, regardless of political and economic fluctuations affecting the interest to Russian language, culture and literature, the steady trend will continue and the voice of Bulgarian Russianists will still sound confidently in the world choir.

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⁸ YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLn6xjVtH88T1aje6TLE0Dg>; RETOUR – Russian for tourism. Retrieved from <http://www.l-pack.eu/retour/>

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Bio note:

Antonia Pencheva, PhD, senior lecturer, Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics Department, University of National and World Economy, 8th Decemvri St, Sofia, 1700, Republic of Bulgaria. She is lecturer of Russian in the Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria. *Research interests*: comparative linguistics, text linguistics (more specifically the text of international treaties and documents), business Russian language, intercultural communication, problems of translating artistic and specialized literature. She participates in university and international scientific projects. ORCID: 0000-0003-0709-9712. E-mail: apencheva@unwe.bg

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Научная статья

Болгарский голос во всемирном хоре русистов

А. Пенчева 

Университет национальной и мировой экономики,
Республика Болгария, 1700, София, ул. 8-ми декември

✉ apencheva@unwe.bg

Аннотация. Всесторонне рассматривается вопрос о возникновении, становлении и развитии болгарской русистики как научного направления в исторической ретроспективе и в контексте ее современного состояния. Прослеживается влияние исторических, политических и социально-экономических факторов на преподавание русского языка в болгарской аудитории. Актуальной на современном этапе состояния отношений между Болгарией и Россией представляется цель предложить комплексное описание разнообразных направлений развития болгарской русистики и обучения русскому языку на фоне произошедших за последние три десятилетия изменений политической и социально-экономической ориентации государств. Исследование проводится на репрезента-

бельном материале научных публикаций и коллективных монографий, посвященных разнородным аспектам русистики (лингвистические, литературоведческие и прикладного характера). Используются традиционные методы анализа и оценки научной литературы, наблюдения, описания и обобщения педагогического опыта. Представлены данные Национального статистического института Болгарии о количестве школьников, изучающих русский язык на разных этапах обучения и в разных типах средних школ. Анализ официальных статистических данных показывает стабильную динамику интереса к русскому языку в болгарской аудитории независимо от наступивших в обществе перемен. Русский язык устойчиво занимает вторую позицию по количеству выбравших изучать его после английского языка. Выбору изучения русского языка способствует прагматическая установка учащихся, сочетание субъективных и объективных факторов. Специфическая особенность болгарской модели заключается в преподавании русского языка на всех уровнях: дошкольном, школьном, университетском и дополнительном образовании в соответствии с европейской политикой о непрерывном обучении в течение всей жизни.

Ключевые слова: болгарская русистика, история болгарской русистики, Общество русистов Болгарии, мотивы изучения, русский язык, болгарская модель

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