

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****FEATURES OF TEACHING FOREIGN STUDENTS IN THE
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

Ivan Alekseevich Pugachev (a)*, Natalia Stepanovna Novikova (b),
Marina Borisovna Budiltseva (c), Irina Yurievna Varlamova (d), Yuliya Arturovna Tugova (e)

*Corresponding author

- (a) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 3, Ordzhonikidze St., Moscow, Russia, pugachev_ia@pfur.ru,
(b) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 3, Ordzhonikidze St., Moscow, Russia, novikova_ns@pfur.ru,
(c) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 3, Ordzhonikidze St., Moscow, Russia, budiltseva_mb@pfur.ru,
(d) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 3, Ordzhonikidze St., Moscow, Russia, varlamova_iyu@pfur.ru,
(e) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 3, Ordzhonikidze St., Moscow, Russia, tugova_yua@pfur.ru

Abstract

The article is about the implementation of the principle of continuity in teaching Russian as a foreign language, which is an indispensable condition for ensuring the gradual accumulation of knowledge by students and the successful development of their speech skills and abilities following the goals set. Continuity in learning should be traced both in the interaction between old and new knowledge that students acquire at different stages of learning and in the work to deepen this knowledge in practice in different types of speech activity. Continuity in learning involves awareness, consistency, and strength in the acquisition and assimilation of knowledge. Nevertheless, the continuity of education turns out to be quite difficult to implement in practice, because despite studying at the pre-university stage, when entering the main faculties, the students have serious difficulties. In the proposed papers, the authors attempt to figure out what is the nature of these difficulties, as well as the causes that give rise to them. Using the student questionnaire form, the authors identified and analyzed the difficulties that foreign students face when moving from the pre-university stage to the first year of the main faculties. The article states that a necessary condition for the implementation of the principle of continuity is the orientation of training on the independence of students and the use of modern information and communication technologies.

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Keywords: Russian as a foreign language, pre-university stage of preparation, communicative and speech competence, academic adaptation



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1. Introduction

Many years of experience in teaching the Russian language to foreign students has shown that one of the main conditions for the effectiveness of interaction between the system of pre-university training and higher vocational education is to ensure the continuity of its components.

In Russian as a foreign language methodology, continuity is usually understood as a properly debugged connection between parts of the educational process at various stages of its implementation (Konyaeva & Pavlova, 2012). Thus, the well-known methodologist Ananyev (1953), analyzing the continuity in training, emphasizes that at each stage of training, some knowledge is support for obtaining and assimilating others.

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To enter a Russian university, a foreigner must speak Russian at the B1 level. These requirements in Russia are enshrined at the legislative level and meet the requirements of the State Educational Standard for Russian as a Foreign Language (hereinafter referred to as the Standard) (Pticyna, 2015). However, as the work with students at the main stage of training had shown, the knowledge of Russian by students who have come to the first year of basic faculties does not always meet the requirements of Certification Level 1 (B1). And the teachers are faced with a dilemma: either build further education in accordance with the educational standards and regulatory documents developed in the framework of the Bologna Process or build on the real knowledge of students. The situation is further complicated by the fact that study groups are always very heterogeneous: they contain both poorly prepared students and students who have perfectly mastered the program of the previous stage and are ready to study in accordance with the requirements of the state standard (Pugachev & Yarkina, 2009; Smith et al., 2010).

2. Problem Statement

It is known that the problem of continuity in teaching language to foreign students in the transition from the pre-university stage to the university stage is periodically raised by methodologists (Ball & Pelco, 2006; Tsay & Brady, 2010), but has not yet found a scientific and methodological solution. According to some researchers (Bednall & Kehoe, 2011; King, 1992; Rinehart et al., 1986), a certain gap in the continuity of learning is associated with some methodological failures in the existing language levels. In particular, there is no systematic approach and methodological guidelines when organizing the goals and content of training at its various stages. The lack of a systematic approach does not allow us to clearly delineate the levels of training, especially if we take into account not only the language material (as in the created standards) but also the stages of the formation of skills and abilities for different types of speech activity, as well as the internal dynamics of the development these skills and abilities (Gapochka, 2008). That is when creating the language standards of the first and second certification levels, “psychological and psycholinguistic factors were neglected, which led, in one case, to the redundancy of content components, and in the other, to their insufficiency” (Stewart et al., 2010).

3. Research Questions

We understand continuity as a necessary component of establishing relationships between the pre-university and university stages of education, in which a new stage based on already existing knowledge, proceeding from the fact that every process of development and assimilation of new language material involves the analysis of the knowledge and acquired skills. Therefore we consider it necessary to control the level of Russian language proficiency achieved by foreign students at the pre-university stage of the study. The purpose of such a test is to identify the degree of formation of the communicative-speech competence necessary to provide university studies in Russian.

4. Purpose of the Study

A survey in the form of a questionnaire was carried out by us in the first semester since this is the most difficult period for the academic adaptation of foreign students at the main faculty. To find out the problems associated with academic adaptation at this stage of training, a special questionnaire was drawn up. Students were asked to answer questions about the main difficulties they experience at the new stage of education. 118 students from the Academy of Engineering, Faculty of Physics, Mathematics, and Natural Sciences, Faculty of Ecology took part in the 2019 survey. For comparison, we drew materials from a similar poll taken in 2006, in which only foreign students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America participated (Dunlosky, 2010; Serova & Skyeva, 2007).

It is important to point out that in the last 13 years the contingent of students has changed significantly: the bulk of foreign students today are citizens of the CIS countries and the Middle East. Accordingly, the nature of the difficulties associated with the academic adaptation of the new contingent of students has changed. For example, in 2006, when answering the question: "What subjects were the most difficult for you in September – October?" the students gave the following responses: 34 % of foreign students considered mathematics the most difficult subject; 26 % – chemistry; 24 % – physics; 21 % – computer science. Note that the participants in the survey studied these subjects at the pre-university stage therefore, they are required to possess knowledge of these disciplines. In 2019, when answering the same question: "What subjects were the most difficult for you in September – October?" the students gave the different responses: 32 % of students indicated that physics was the most difficult subject to study. In the second place in terms of complexity was computer science – 28 %. And chemistry and mathematics were recognized as difficult subjects only by 14 % of students. Changes in the students' opinions regarding the study of special subjects in 2006 and 2019 are presented in Figure 01.

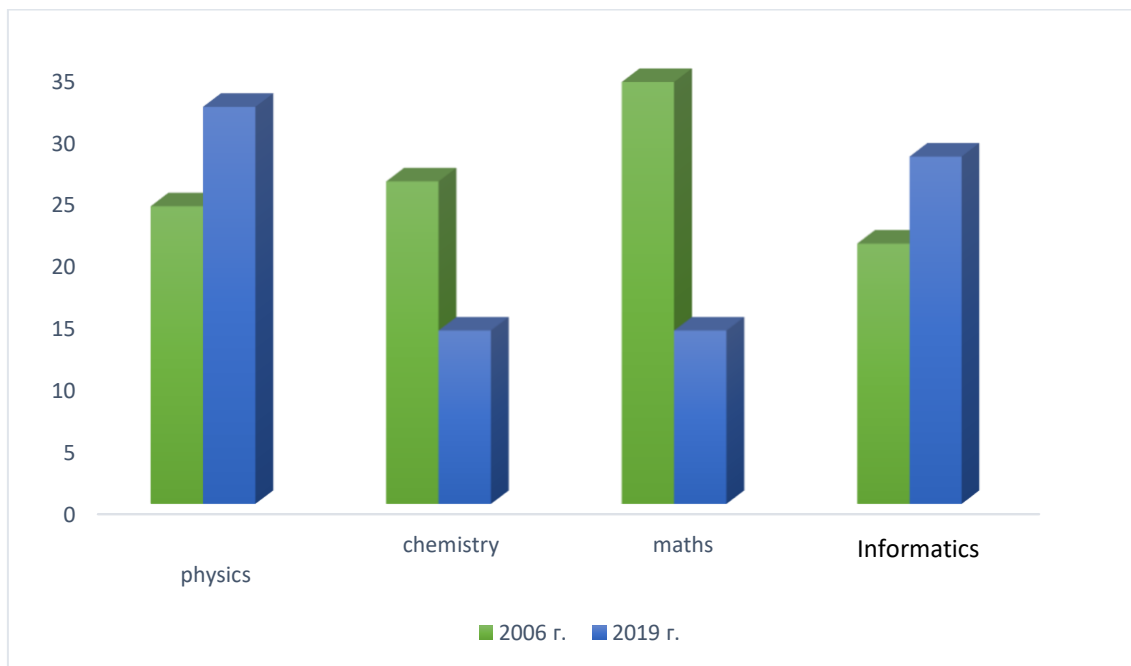


Figure 1. Changes in the students' opinions regarding the study of special subjects in 2006 and 2019

In the 2019 questionnaire, students also listed the main difficulties they encountered in the main faculties: too much information, a fast teachers' speech, lack of proficiency in the Russian scientific style of speech. Pupils faced the same difficulties in 2006. But in 2019, a new problem appeared related to the so-called bilingual students from the CIS countries, some of whom enter the main faculties, bypassing the pre-university stage of training. Poor knowledge of the Russian language, unfamiliarity with professional terminology, and grammar of the scientific style complicates the training of these students at the main stage.

The 2006 survey showed that the most difficult thing for foreigners is listening to lectures on special subjects in Russian: almost 90 % of the respondents noted that they did not understand the subject teachers' lectures, they couldn't write down the information on the lectures.

In 2006, this was mainly due to the lack of printed textbooks on special subjects. Foreign students at that time could read textbooks only with a dictionary. In 2019, the situation has changed dramatically: there are lectures in all subjects in both printed and electronic form. Therefore, it is not difficult for foreign students to open, for example, Google translate and translate the text. In this context, we included in the questionnaire – 2019 the following question: "Can you answer the questions on the lecture materials if they were translated with an electronic translator?" Almost all of the respondents answered that they would not be able to give a fully correct answer to the subject teachers' questions. That clearly shows that the students can understand the information, but they are not able to work on the text on their own.

It should be noted that creating a new generation of textbooks on the Russian scientific style of speech, focused on the changed learning conditions, was an urgent issue in 2006. This was necessary for the successful academic adaptation of foreign students at the main stage. By 2019, both basic science style textbooks and highly specialized textbooks were created. In the questionnaire – 2019, 30 % of

respondents observed that the use of textbooks on the scientific style helps them to master their subject knowledge efficiently, to overcome language difficulties when listening to lectures, reading special literature, and communicating with subject teachers.

However, some of the respondents noted that certain textbooks on the language of their specialty are quite difficult for them. To clarify the reasons for these difficulties students were asked to give their explanation of those reasons (in a free form). The students noted the following:

- 20 % of respondents wrote that at the pre-university stage they studied grammatical constructions, but did not manage to fix them due to an insufficient amount of time allotted for a given grammatical topic.
- 10 % of respondents wrote that at the stage of pre-university training they did not have special classes in the scientific style of speech. Therefore, they do not know the vocabulary presented in the textbooks on the language of the specialty, and constantly have to translate unfamiliar words using their phones. They underlined the complexity of transfer their language skills from the general language area to the language of their specialty.
- 30 % of students noted that they did not have pre-university training therefore they do not know the grammar of the Russian language.

The reasons for the difficulties of academic adaptation given by the respondents are presented in Figure 02.

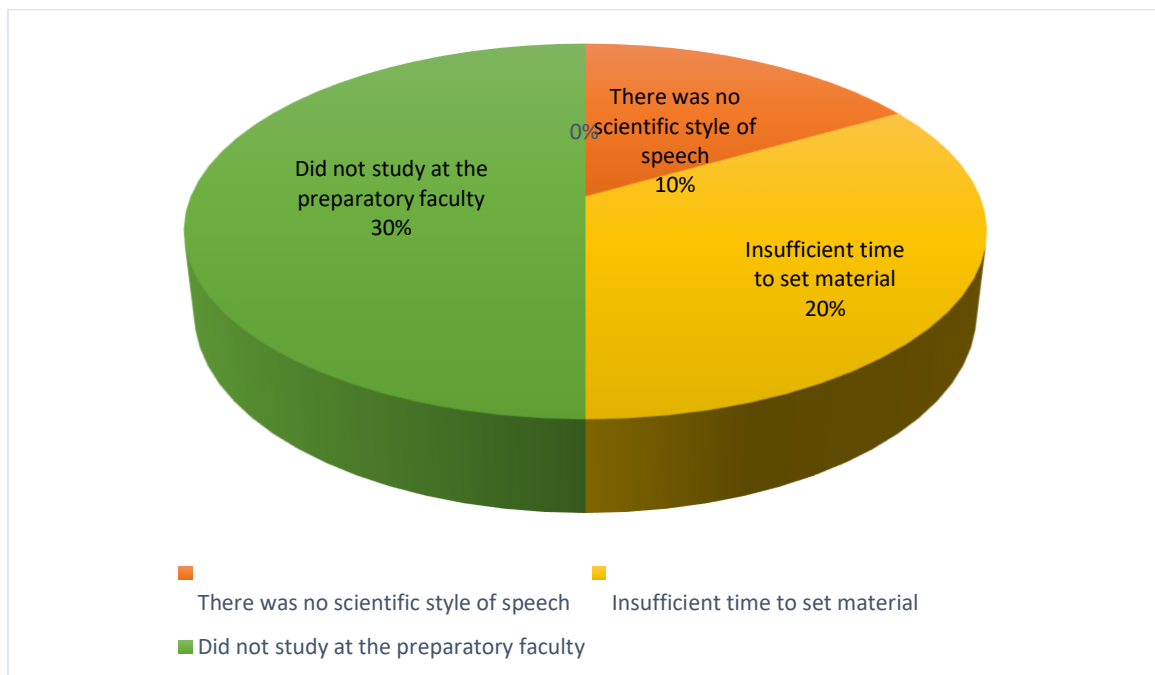


Figure 2. The reasons for the difficulties of academic adaptation given by the respondents

5. Research Methods

The authors used General scientific methods, such as analysis, synthesis, questioning observation. The analysis method involved the selection and study of levels of preparation of foreign

students for intercultural communication, the principals and conditions which are used for the formation of linguocultural competence of foreign students.

6. Findings

Thus, the results of the survey – 2019 show that the issues of continuity have not yet been resolved, and there is no interaction between the knowledge obtained at the stage of pre-university training and the knowledge obtained at the university stage of education. And among the obstacles that negatively affect the process of academic adaptation of first-year students on the main faculties, we may mention the following:

- shortening of the period of pre-university training, when instead of 750–770 academic hours according to the educational standard, students often receive only 550–650 hours and are often deprived of the opportunity to complete a full-fledged science-language course;
- increasing of class sizes (from 6–7 students to 10–12);
- reducing the level of general education of foreign students: it is insufficient for admission to universities in Russia.

7. Conclusion

Many years of experience working with foreign students both at the stage of pre-university training and at the main faculties and our research suggest that the formation of communicative-speech competence when teaching students with poor language and subject level would be effective only through the use of new model training. This new model could be built on the active cooperation of pre-university and university teachers (both Russian language teachers and subject teachers) together with students at all stages of training. Orientation on the development of students' autonomy and the use of modern information and communication technologies is crucial for achieving the desired result.

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