

The Problem of Russian Reading Training for Chinese Students: State and Prospects

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Abstract: The article aims to discuss the main features of teaching reading in the lessons of RFL (Russian as a foreign language) in the Chinese audience. Foreign language reading is significant speech activity because it is the basis of developing other speech activities. The article analyses the phonetical and methodological barriers, which may meet Chinese students while improving their reading skills, and provide some methods of removing the difficulties in reading. When teaching Russian to Chinese students, especially outside the linguistic environment, teachers do not pay due attention to practicing various types of reading, and, consequently, automating verbal forecasting. In the methodological literature, to overcome oral speech problems, the need to focus on spontaneous oral speech is noted, directly related to reading as a resource for expanding vocabulary and grammatical structures. Using system analysis, comparison, typology, theoretical and methodological forecasting, the work compares the most popular types of reading in China and Russia when teaching international students, analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of using these types of reading. Based on Chinese students' most frequent difficulties, a developed balanced type text is proposed that considers the most problematic phonetic cases. Also, a system of various exercises is proposed, aimed at developing the skills of oral speech. The exercises and use of phonetically balanced texts might contribute to the further enrichment of RFL methodology.

Keywords: reading technique, Chinese interference, Russian as a foreign language, words indentation

Introduction

The appeal to the analysis of the types of reading in the lessons of RFL in the Chinese audience outside the linguistic environment is explained by the fact that today there is a steadily increasing number of students from China who experience particular difficulties caused by insufficient attention to certain types of reading.

The aim is to analyse the most used types of reading and those that need to be paid attention to in the lessons of RFL in China, the development of a balanced type of text, considering the phonetic characteristics of the Chinese language and systems of exercises for it.

The problem of teaching foreign languages (including Russian), considering ethnopsychological factors and ethnocultural characteristics of the learners, is devoted to the works of many researchers: Bobrysheva I., Budnik E., Krotova T., Nevmerzhitskaya E., Pugachev I., Tikhonova V., Fedyukovskaya M., Zhao Yujiang, etc. The results of these studies are an important factor in optimising the teaching of foreigners in RFL, including students from China, which is relevant for our work.

There are many years of partnership between Russia and China. In this regard, the number of Chinese students coming to Russia to study Russian and culture is steadily increasing. However, one cannot but consider that the learning process is complicated by radically different methods and leaving the country of teaching. Teaching methods in China are aimed at developing the skills of memorising material, working out grammatical constructions. Various forms of work are focused on mechanical memorisation, repetition, and control work. This is because China's linguistic situation in the diachronic aspect demonstrated the impossibility of oral communication between residents of different provinces: communication took place in writing. This fact was the reason for the dominance of written forms of communication in the modern teaching system. Also, there is a

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great distance between teacher and student in China due to the philosophy of Confucianism - a teacher is more than just a teacher, he is an example to follow and has power. Therefore, it is necessary to give specific instructions, without which the student will be inactive. Such difficulties make it necessary to slightly adjust the teaching of Russian to Chinese students in China.

Discussion

In this paper, we have used a systematic analysis of the leading teaching methods, based on this; we compared the phased subkey Nia various types of reading.

Speech activity is an object of study in various sciences. Traditionally, a special place is given to reading as one of the types of speech activity. In the professional preparation of Chinese students studying RFL, learning to read causes the expected difficulties, which is quite explainable by the significant difference between the language's sound-letter design. Reading skill automation affects directly speaking skills. Academician V. Kostomarov wrote: "Intensive reading, in addition to the general expansion of linguistic knowledge - enrichment of the vocabulary, consolidation of grammar - stimulates oral speech" (Kostomarov, p. 112). Different languages require a shift in emphasis when working with teaching techniques for reading techniques.

Azimov E. and Shchukin A. in the "New Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts" give the following definition of reading: "One of the receptive types of speech activity aimed at the perception and understanding of the written text; enters the sphere of people's communicative activity and provides in it one of the forms of (written) communication " (Azimov and Shchukin, p.346). Reading consists of the process of simultaneously perceiving and understanding written text. Moreover, understanding the text is based on subject and linguistic competence. Consequently, teaching to read is focused not only on deciphering the graphic signs of the language but also on understanding its central idea.

However, when teaching Russian to Chinese students, especially outside the linguistic environment, teachers do not pay due attention to practicing various types of reading, and, consequently, automating verbal forecasting (Ming). In the methodological literature, to overcome problems with oral speech, it is noted that it is necessary to focus on extemporaneous oral speech, which is directly related to reading as a resource for expanding vocabulary words and grammatical structures.

When working with students who have completed the course of teaching the Russian language in China, there has been a stable, successful completion of tasks such as "learn by heart ...". However, significant difficulties arise when it is necessary to retell, formulate a statement in one's own words, or rearrange a sentence's members.

Such cases are explained by the difference in teaching methods and the structure of languages. Chinese teachers of the Russian language approach teaching from the habitual position of teaching Chinese to native speakers. When studying their native language, students need to learn by heart a complex of traits, keys, hieroglyphs and their meanings. Accordingly, China's usual teaching methodology pushes to memorise the material when studying RFL, ignoring the automation of pronunciation skills, which entails difficulties in mastering reading types.

When teaching to read in China, schoolchildren first study the Latin alphabet, write and read texts without using hieroglyphs. Next, a teacher needs to master the correct spelling of the traits and keys that make up the hieroglyph, and only after that, do the students move on to hieroglyphic writing. After graduating from school, no one uses the Latin alphabet anymore. An exception is a situation when a Chinese person does not know or has forgotten how to spell a hieroglyph correctly. Then the so-called pinyin letter is used, which means sound writing. However, when reading a text, an adult Chinese speaker immediately perceives the hieroglyph without pinyin. It is important to note that the sound practically does not exist separately; it always goes along with other sounds. That is, in China, native speakers are taught using syllabic reading.

In Russia, the following methods are considered as the most popular in teaching reading.

Junction of letters methods are built on the initial memorisation of the letters' name, then memorising syllables, learning to read individual words and, as a result, reading the whole word. It is one of the oldest methods of teaching reading. When using analytical-synthetic methods, the path from sound values and their systems to letters is meant. This is because the letter has several sound meanings (for example, most consonants have two forms - soft and hard). Initially, the student gets acquainted with the sound composition of the word, learns to distinguish sounds by ear, and then designates them with letters.

As we can see, a fundamentally distinctive feature is that the Russian letter must be learned separately. Thus, an RFL teacher in China is faced with a mismatch between the Russian and Chinese syllable systems.

Outside the linguistic environment, it is challenging to master speaking and writing; therefore, the importance of the types of reading used and the form of working with them should be reconsidered. Let us list the most popular types of reading in RFL lessons in China.

When studying the Russian language in China, the translated form of reading is the most popular. Translated reading is based on the student's native language. This type of reading contributes to developing independent work skills with the text; the student learns to work with dictionaries and reference books. Also, teachers of RFL in China actively use translated reading to master new vocabulary and grammatical constructions at almost all levels of language proficiency. However, it is generally accepted that too frequent use of this reading negatively affects the skill of linguistic guessing, intuitive perception of the text's content. Also, an adult Chinese reader has the potential to read Russian at high speed. However, a good understanding of Chinese-language texts does not automatically carry over to understanding Russian-language texts. These factors should be considered in the practice of teaching reading at the initial stage (Chzhao Cyue, 1999).

Analysing the methods of teaching RFL in China, we noted the dominance of the learning type of reading. When studying reading occurs, most detailed work with the text, as the student must absorb the text's entire contents and remember on - to save long-lasting memory. This format implies a frequent reference to the dictionary since it is necessary to understand the text at its meaning and meaning accurately. This reading proceeds rather slowly, the student repeatedly turns to read the text to independently overcome language difficulties and as best as possible to explicate the communicative situation.

The reading teaching model's monotony is that RFL teachers use this type of speech activity only to learn new vocabulary and grammar, ignoring reading techniques. In a Chinese university, only two academic hours per week are allocated for a separate reading technique development discipline. As a result, many RFL teachers in China do not find it necessary to actively practice various reading types to develop phonetic and abstracting skills. Consequently, some types of reading in teaching RFL in China are less popular. Let us consider the most important of them.

Perceptual reading differs in that it is enough for students to read only the heading or a separate paragraph in order to get a general idea of the content of the text, what is the purpose of this type of reading: the reader wants to understand whether the text contains necessary or useful information. When practising this type of reading, the teacher must monitor the timing of the assignment. The use of pre-text and post-text exercises in combination with peer reading promotes speech development. However, sight-reading cannot be used at the initial stage of language proficiency.

When teaching unprepared reading, in most cases, lightweight adapted texts are used. Readiness is general and special. In this case, there is no preparatory work with the text - there is no need to remove the language and content difficulties of the text. This type of reading is as close as possible to the real situation of text perception.

Abstract reading means working with the structure and content of the text to write a report or abstract. The main task is to understand the meaning with subsequent analysis and identification of the structure. This type of reading becomes the least popular when studying Russian outside the linguistic environment, so Chinese students have difficulties with this type of work.

For uninterrupted reading, the text's intuitive perception in the target language with a direct understanding of the content is characteristic. The difficulty in mastering this type of reading is a natural desire to turn to the dictionary when an unknown vocabulary appears. This type of reading also develops linguistic guesswork, predicting and drawing conclusions about unfamiliar vocabulary meaning based on the context.

At the initial stage of learning RFL, it is recommended to practice reading aloud actively. Loud reading requires external dubbing of graphic text. At this stage, the student simultaneously develops both the visual perception of the text and the language's sound system. Also, loud reading helps to achieve the automation of pronunciation skills and intonation. Chinese students have difficulty learning the Russian sound system. In Chinese, the letter represented in pinyin as (t) is pronounced aspirated (aspiration). If there is no aspiration when pronouncing, a Chinese speaker perceives this phoneme as (d). This opposition is inherent in most paired consonants. However, there is no aspiration in the Russian language; accordingly, a Chinese student of Russian has difficulty distinguishing sounds. Another difficulty is the absence of the (r) sound in Chinese. Therefore, many students mix the sounds (r) and (l) in oral speech. In this regard, a RFL teacher needs to select texts for loud reading to emphasise working out these sounds.

One of the main criteria for choosing reading when working with Chinese students should consider the inclination towards concrete symbolic thinking. The Chinese people are one of the few people who use hieroglyphic writing. Consequently, they do not tend to think abstractly conceptually. Considering this, the teacher should understand that those phenomena and objects that are lacunae and are inherent only in Russian culture carriers will be difficult for a student with specific symbolic thinking to imagine and understand. Therefore, for example, when teaching students with a similar type of thinking, it is necessary to focus on clarity: when working with a text of a culturological nature, it is recommended to rely on non-verbal material; also, pre-text and post-text exercises will help prepare students for new cultural information.

Chinese and Western cultures are different in their origin and form of expression; these essential characteristics also determine how to think. In this regard, many researchers were interested in the question of the peculiarities of thinking, the Chinese's cognitive style, since a large number of Chinese students who come to study Russian require a different approach to teaching than students from Europe.

To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching Russian to Chinese as a foreign language, it is essential to consider the dominance of the right hemisphere; how the Russian language is learned; how it is stored; what kind of procedure requires the speaker (the Transferring) for its function.

Besides, scientists Peng and Nisbett (Peng and Nisbett, 1999) suggest that the Chinese cultural tradition, and thus the way of thinking, contradictions are perceived dialectically as China is considered to be that the whole is, it contains a contradiction.

In this regard, exciting data were obtained by Markus and Kitayama (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Many studies on the concept of "ego" in Chinese and European traditions have led to the following results. Ego in the Eastern tradition is based on relationships and includes parents and other close people. Consequently, relationships with others are fundamentally meaningful in Chinese culture. Simultaneously, the European concept of the ego is based on a whole and independent person who has independent characteristics.

Thus, the type of thinking of Chinese students is characterized as spatially-shaped, "right-brain", holistic (a concrete view of the world, which is not characterized by the decomposition of the whole into parts). Here,

holistic thinking is opposed to analytical thinking: analytical thinking is a representation of symbolic systems, a reflection of the structures of rules; holistic thinking is an associative reflection of similarity and contiguity. On the basis of this, a contradiction arises in nationally-specific differences: European thinking is characterized as analytical, includes analysis and reasoning, the left hemisphere dominates. Chinese thinking is holistic, it includes synthesis and artistry, "right-brain". Based on various studies' materials, a phonetically balanced text can be developed for native speakers of any language who are learning Russian.

Considering all the listed difficulties and data from the field of cognitive linguistics, we have developed a text of a balanced type, aimed at Chinese students studying Russian. However, a fundamentally significant difference of the text developed by us is that it is used not as a test material, but as teaching material. In our opinion, a phonetically balanced text can be a useful tool for mastering speaking skills since it is characterised by a high concentration of phonetically complicated combinations for native speakers of a particular language. Many complicated sound combinations lead to the automation of pronunciation skills and tuning of the articulatory apparatus. When reading aloud, the student practices productive speech activity types and hears the voice layer, which also tunes phonetic hearing.

Experiment

We have developed a phonetically balanced text, which we offer to use as educational material at the A2-B1 level, not for practicing grammatical structures, but for developing pronunciation skills. Phonetically balanced texts are traditionally used as material for studying the phonetic characteristics of spoken speech. The advantage of using phonetically representative texts is, first of all, in their compactness along with information richness. On the one hand, such texts are usually small in volume. On the other hand, they reflect the language's phonetic diversity no worse than the texts of more significant volume. This is achieved by scrupulous work on constructing the text - filling it with words containing the required phonetic units and reducing its volume by removing elements with low information content. The result is easy-to-read material (usually no more than 600 words), which allows you to explore the nature of the implementation and variation of significant phonetic characteristics in the speech of native speakers of a particular language and form a full-fledged speech portrait of the speaker.

A group of first-year students read two texts: phonetically balanced text with potentially difficult sounds and the text from the textbook they use at RFL classes.

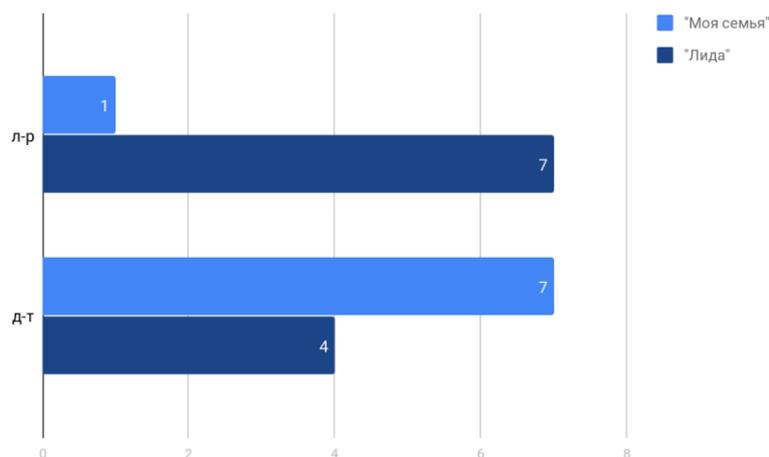


Figure 1. Number of mistakes while reading the text from the Student's book vs phonetically balanced text.

All phonetic features that are problematic for Chinese students are observed in the text “Лида”: Russian phoneme (r) occurs the most times - 19, (l) - 16, (t) - 15, (d) - 10, and soft consonants - (l') - 9, (p') - 8, (q') - 7, (t') - 4.

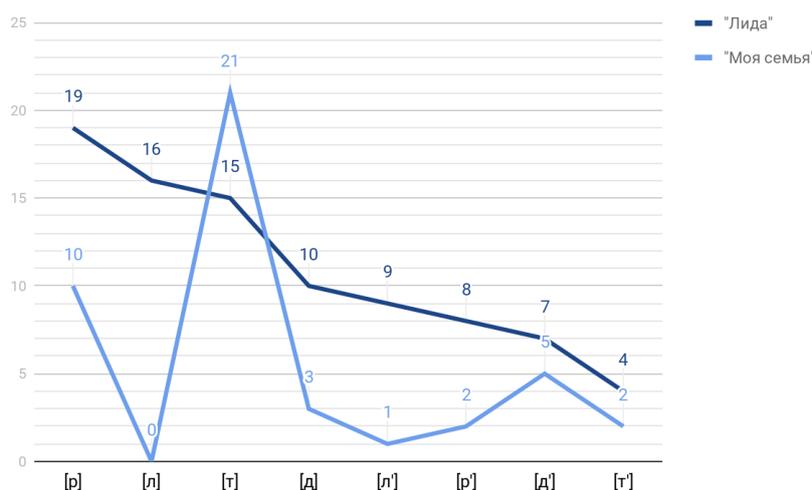


Figure 2. A number of problematic phonemes in the text “Лида” vs “Моя семья”

Thus, we have observed the fundamental characteristics of a phonetically balanced text. The volume of the common textbook is 71 words, while the number of phonetically complex sounds equals 88 distributions in the text “Лида”. For this reason, phonetically balanced text in combination with loud reading, in our opinion, should be used to automate pronunciation skills and adjust phonetic hearing of students whose native language is Chinese. A small volume in combination with the presented phonetic diversity of the Russian language system are undoubted advantages when choosing an educational text by an RFL teacher.

The set of exercises also consists of tasks related to all types of exercises about the text.

Exercises

Задание 1. Замените конструкцию «начала плакать» глаголом СВ.

第一题. 请用完成体动词替换词组“начала плакать”。

Задание 2. Найдите однокоренные слова в тексте.

第二题.请在课文中找到同根词。

Задание 3. Подумайте, почему в предложении «сестра вернулась с работы» использован предлог «с».

第三题.请您思考一下,为什么在句子“сестра вернулась с работы”中使用前置词“с”。

Задание 4. Найдите в тексте наречия. Попробуйте подобрать к ним синонимы. Можете пользоваться словарем.

第四题.请在课文中找到副词。并尝试为它们匹配同义词,可以使用字典。

Задание 5. Как вы думаете, что означает фраза «важен не подарок, а внимание»?

第五题.您怎么认为,“важен не подарок, а внимание”这句话是什么意思?

Задание 6. Как вы думаете, когда можно использовать данную фразу?

第六题.您认为什么时候可以使用该句式?

Задание 7. Какой совет вы бы дали Лиде?

第七题.如果是您,您会给丽达什么建议?

Задание 8. Найдите предложение, выражающее главную мысль текста.

第八题.请找到一个表达课文主要思想的句子。

Задание 9. Перескажите текст своими словами.

第九题.请用您自己的话转述课文。

Задание 10. Перескажите текст от лица мамы.

第十题.请用妈妈的人称转述课文。

The first task is the pre-text. This is an exercise for the development of phonetic skills based on the lexical minimum of the studied level.

The tasks three, four and five are aimed at developing grammar skills, as the need to develop language just e is present at all stages of education.

The sixth task develops the skill of word recognition and contributes to the development of lexical material since choosing synonyms is one of the most important in learning a foreign language.

Tasks seven develops the skill of linguistic guessing.

The eighth and ninth assignments require students' emotional participation - it is necessary to express their thoughts about (any fact from the text)... , their attitude.

Task ten is more based on the text, contributes to the definition of the main idea of the text and generalisation. This exercise helps with the eleventh assignment since it is tough to retell the text without understanding its main idea.

This requires some preliminary work with students: since the Chinese are not used to retelling the text, the teacher needs to be given small instructions or set rules. This is because, without special instructions, Chinese students do not understand the task and do not complete it. Also, in China, it is traditionally considered to learn the text word to word, but this method does not guarantee a complete understanding of the original text and does not develop the skill of spontaneous oral speech.

The exercises we have offered consider both the tendency of the thinking of native Chinese speakers to master the syntax, the expression of one's own opinion, which is unusual for the Chinese culture, and the desire for metaphorisation insufficiently developed skills of spontaneous oral speech.

Thus, the phonetically balanced text developed by us is indeed a model of the patterns of the compatibility and functioning of sound units existing in the language. The phonetical interference while reading can explain the distribution of errors in the speech activity of Chinese students of Russian. This text concentrates on the most common phonetic difficulties faced by Chinese speakers. Moreover, texts of this type, when the volume coincides with the usual educational text, almost double the number of complex distributions.

TEXT “Лида”

Лида очень любит рисовать. Однажды после школы Лида рисовала портрет сестры – скоро у неё будет день рождения. Девочка аккуратно выбирала кисти и краски. Сестра на портрете была в голубом платке с большими серёжками. Лиду позвала мама, вдруг кот случайно разлил краски на портрет. Девочка вернулась, увидела свой рисунок и начала плакать. Когда сестра вернулась с работы и увидела портрет, она подошла к маленькой Лиде и сказала: «Важно не подарок, а внимание».

This authors' model was presented at a round table meeting of methodologists at the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute.

Conclusions

The experiment showed that an elementary-level text does not cause severe phonetic difficulties when reading aloud. However, reading a phonetically balanced text showed that pronunciation skills are not automated, and with more complex text, typical phonetic errors appear. In other words, we would expect a decrease in emphasis and an improvement in the quality of reading of the text “Моя семья”/“My Family”, but we do not see this. After examining the models of teaching reading, we noted that in the history of teaching RFL, there were methods that gave preference to teaching the technique of reading. However, to date, the dominant communication method is shifting the emphasis on speaking, ignoring the reading learning models required to automate pronunciation skills. Thus, at the initial stage of learning the Russian language, we recommend focusing on loud reading, viewing, search and translation. For the middle stage and the confident reading skill, further development of oral speech (speaking) is essential, therefore at this stage, we offer prepared, viewing and study reading. At the final stage, we recommend working with introductory, abstract, uninterrupted and quiet reading. At all stages of training, we consider it expedient to use phonetically balanced text in addition to educational texts. For example, at the initial stage, use loud reading combined with such a text for the initial practice of complex sounds, possibly with phonetic charging.

Modern society needs specialists with a higher level of proficiency in a foreign (Russian) language, with an essential indicator of reading as a type of speech activity. For further purposes, we see the involvement of different types of reading using phonetically balanced text for educational needs.

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