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Language of sports journalism in teaching Russian as a foreign language

Abstract. The paper deals with the use of mass media texts for the development of communicative and professional competencies of students studying Russian as a foreign language. Based on the Web-publication dedicated to the 2018 FIFA World Cup, the features of the language of sports are described. The attention is focused on the challenges students face when working with specialized texts. The article reveals the criteria for selecting the content and methods of teaching, provides recommendations for choosing activities for new language material assimilation.

Key words: Russian as a foreign language, techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language, language of mass media, language for special purpose, sports discourse, specialized texts.

Any professional sphere uses its own complex research vocabulary, so teaching the language for special purposes is one of the most challenging tasks in teaching the Russian language to foreign students. Working with specialized texts gives students great opportunities in mastering their language for special purposes and moves their communication from everyday sphere to professional one.

Sports discourse takes a significant place in communication. Sports and physical culture reflect the characteristic features of the way of life of society, its mentality. Sports are constantly developing with new types appearing. It is obviously reflected in the language through the borrowing process and adaptation of new words and set phrases to the rules of the target language. As K. V. Snyatkov mentions, sports discourse “enters into heterogeneous interactions (thematic contact, conceptual interaction, inclusion)

with other discursive varieties” [7, p. 6]. There takes place a mutually directed transformation of linguistic units: on the one hand, vocabulary from different spheres of human activity receives new meaning in the sports context, on the other hand, units initially used exclusively in the field of sports receive semantic development outside the sports discourse. The degree of intertextuality of sports discourse turns out very significant. The researchers [3, p. 111] note a close connection “with scientific, pedagogical, business, legal, political, military, theatrical institutional discourses and everyday personal discourse”.

The process of working with specialized texts involves, first of all, introducing new lexical units and set phrases as well as studying stylistic peculiarities of a text genre. It is also necessary to encourage students to use the language units in various types of speech activities and communication situa-

tions actively. Working with specialized texts, students get the opportunity to expand their active and passive vocabulary, master grammatical rules, develop skills of word selection and collocability rules in various contexts.

The first introduction of the basic sports vocabulary traditionally takes place at an elementary / basic level and includes learning the nominations of the most popular sports, basic actions, and ways to describe them along with the rules of making up appropriate dialogical and monological statements. The choice of lexical units is carried out taking into account students' level of language competence, the frequency of words usage, their significance for understanding academic / non-academic texts. Studying the language at the faculties of sports requires more in-depth and versatile practice with authentic texts: news, reports, interviews, texts of specialized literature, viewing video materials that contain current terminology and live conversational vocabulary.

The difficulty of studying sports discourse is due to a number of reasons.

First of all, it is due to great variety of sports and their participants. Currently the intensity of sports vocabulary development is very high: new sports appear, and, accordingly, new nominations, descriptions of new rules, actions, etc. Even a native speaker who is not specialized in physical culture and sports is not always ready to determine the lexical meaning and contextual use of some language units.

The second reason is synonymy that takes place while naming sports and sports disciplines. It occurs due to the borrowing of names from different languages.

Besides, the basis of Russian sports vocabulary is terminology, which makes up 96 % of the entire vocabulary of the field [4, p. 6]. The standard ways of word formation prevail: affixation, zero affixation, compounding, as well as derivation from the word stems of the international language fund, which are words and morphemes of classical languages.

Moreover, the stylistic composition of sports texts is replete with variety: nomenclature, idiomatic expressions, professionalisms and jargonisms. According to I. G. Kozhevnikova, it is associated with the peculiarities and specifics of the nominations of actions and movements that are not common to people in their everyday life, the need to coach these movements [4, p. 7].

Finally, studying sports discourse involves the development of a journalistic style of speech to a greater extent. The language of mass media is a mixed-type sign system that combines verbal and audiovisual codes. The media language reflects changes and fixes new concepts, professionalism, slang. Authors of publications, bloggers, and sports commentators emotionally and vividly describe ongoing sports events.

Taking into account all these factors indicates the need to optimize the learning process. Methodological practice in this case implies close cooperation between a teacher of the Russian language and specialists from a university department where students defend their graduate research. This cooperation should involve the joint development of educational and methodological materials. Such interaction provides a conscious perception of terms (professionalisms, jargonisms) from the position of their semantics, the reasons for nomination, derivational and morphological features of the word and its functioning.

While selecting specialized texts for lessons of Russian as a foreign language, one should take into account many factors: the level of students' language competence, the text genre, the usage field, the popularity of the sport in a particular country, etc.

Selecting special lexical units, scientists suggest following several principles: the principle of systematicity, frequency, collocability, and accessibility. The principle of systematicity implies an indispensable link between professional language units and their systematic study "at the level of reflection, understanding and acquisition". [2, p. 80]. The principle of frequency is to choose the most used and representative

language units that reflect professional communication and at the same time correspond to the goals and objectives of the course, sufficiently ensuring the development of speech skills and abilities of students. The principle of collocability involves the choice of such professional language units that have the greatest compatibility and have a significant potential for use. The principle of accessibility is based on taking into account the communicative expediency of choice regarding the students' language competence.

Researchers give different classifications of the spheres of sports language usage. Khlebda V. indicates the functioning of four sub-languages [9, p. 90]:

- Terminology in the proper sense (names of people, objects, actions, processes, etc.). It includes the nomenclature as “a system for designating classes of items that are included in one homogeneous series based on consciously selected features of these items (cargo universal expander TU 248-71, boxing trampoline TU 62 4294-72, universal; etc.)” [4, p. 12].
- Jargon of athletes, coaches and service personnel.
- Language of sports commentators, columnists, journalists of the press, radio and television.
- The language of sports fans.

Each of these sub-languages has its own specifics. Depending on the tasks and the time range available, each of them can be considered. However, it is impossible to cover the immensity in several lessons or even in a special course. Therefore, the teacher faces the task of choosing the most frequent and representative examples that will allow students to get acquainted with the peculiarities of sports discourse and form the basis for further study. In our opinion, mass media publications will be the most suitable for these purposes, since “the sphere of sports communication is mostly “fused” with the sphere of mass media and is determined by it” [5, p. 25]. Mass media reflect

current language changes; operate with both jargon and terminology. At the same time, the publicistic style is characterized by a certain standard, which is expressed in the use of repetitive elements, language clichés.

This article aims at describing methods and techniques of teaching Russian as a foreign language on the example of mass media texts of sports discourse for the development of communicative and professional competencies of foreign students. The language material analyzed is taken from the site “Let’s talk about Football”, abridged version [8]:

Финал Чемпионата мира 2018 года

Вывеска финала XXI чемпионата мира получилась неожиданной – до решающего матча мундиаля добралась команда небольшой европейской страны с населением чуть более четырех миллионов человек.

Путь к финалу

Если сборная Франции накануне турнира наряду с командами Бразилии, Германии и Испании была в числе главных его фаворитов, то от хорватов выхода в финал никто не ждал. Лично я предполагал, что они выигрывают свою группу, но дальше четвертьфинала не пройдут.

Франция

Сборная Франции на протяжении всей турнирной дистанции показывала очень рациональный футбол, затрачивая ровно столько сил, сколько требовалось для победы. В первых двух турах французы одержали минимальные победы над сборными Австралии (2:1) и Перу (1:0), а затем откровенно расписали выводившую их на первое место ничью с датчанами.

В матче 1/8 финала против сборной Аргентины французы забили быстрый гол и в целом контролировали ход матча, а когда в их ворота влетело два шальных гола, тут же взялись за дело и в течение 11 минут исправили цифры на табло с 1:2 на 4:2. Третий гол аргентин-

цы забили очень поздно, и он уже ничего не решал.

В четвертьфинале с Уругваем «трехцветные» держали все нити игры в своих руках, позволив сопернику создать лишь один по-настоящему опасный момент. А в полуфинале со звездной сборной Бельгии перетерпели первый тайм, реализовали свой момент в самом начале тайма второго и спокойно довели матч до победы.

Хорватия

Сборная Хорватии одержала победы во всех трех матчах группы, последовательно обыграв команды Нигерии, Аргентины и Исландии, причем аргентинцы были разгромлены со счетом 3:0. А вот их победный ход до финала во многом обусловлен двумя факторами: удачно сложившейся турнирной сеткой и везением, ведь сборную Дании и России хорваты прошли только по пенальти.

С другой стороны, после вылета Испании в 1/8 финала, сборная Хорватии выглядела лучше других команд из этой части сетки, а сборную Англии в полуфинале они победили вполне по делу.

(2018 World Cup Finals)

The sign of the XXI World Championship finals turned out to be unexpected – the team of a small European country with a population of just over four million people reached the decisive match of the World Cup.

Path to the finals

If the French national team on the eve of the tournament, along with the teams of Brazil, Germany and Spain, was among the main favourites, then no one expected the Croats to reach the finals. Personally, I assumed that they would win their Group, but they would not advance beyond the quarter-finals.

France

The French national team played very rational football throughout the entire tournament distance, spending exactly as much effort as it took to win. In the first two rounds, the French won minimal victories over the national teams of Australia (2:1)

and Peru (1:0), and then frankly painted a draw with the Danes that brought them to the first place.

In the 1/8 final match against Argentina, the French scored a quick goal and generally controlled the course of the match, and when two stray goals rushed into their gates, they immediately got down to business and, within 11 minutes, corrected the numbers on the scoreboard from 1:2 to 4:2. The Argentines scored the third goal very late, and it decided nothing.

In the quarterfinals against Uruguay, the “tricolors” kept all the threads of the game in their hands, allowing the opponent to create only one truly high-risk moment. And in the semifinals with the star national team of Belgium they endured the first half, realized their moment at the very beginning of the second half and calmly brought the match to victory.

Croatia

The Croatian national team gained the victory in all three matches of the Group, successively beating the teams of Nigeria, Argentina and Iceland, and the Argentines were defeated with a score of 3:0. But their winning move to the finals is largely due to two factors: a successful tournament bracket and luck, as the Croats passed the Danish and Russian national teams only on penalties.

On the other hand, after the departure of Spain in the 1/8 finals, the Croatian national team looked better than the other teams in this part of the bracket, and they won the England team in the semifinals quite in good faith.)

At the first stage of working with the text, there should be an introduction to the new vocabulary, its development in phonetic, lexical and lexical-grammatical exercises. Semantization of new language units can be carried out in different ways: through visual aids, translation, interpretation, synonyms / antonyms, word-formation analysis, etymological and/or cultural comments. The next step is to develop new vocabulary through warming-up and speech exercises in both reproductive (speaking and writing) and re-

ceptive (reading and listening) aspects. Finally, the control of the acquired knowledge is carried out, which performs the function of feedback and helps to determine the degree of assimilation of information.

The teacher can start by revising the words that students are supposed to already be familiar with: *матч* (eng. *match*), *тайм* (eng. *half*), *турнир* (eng. *tournament*), *финал* (eng. *finals*), *группа* (eng. *group*), *пенальти* (eng. *penalty / penalty kick*), *гол* (eng. *goal*), *фаворит* (eng. *favourite*), *Мундиаль* (eng. *World Cup*). Most of them are internationalisms as they are included in the group of general sports vocabulary. Internationalisms are “lexical units functioning in several (at least three) world languages, similar in sound, graphic and semantic forms, which are the result of language contact; they express concepts common to many cultures from the fields of science, technology, business, politics, art, and means of communication” [1, p. 356]. Being understandable to native speakers of most European languages without special translation, internationalisms make professional communication more effective. When revising these words in the classroom, it is enough to indicate their correspondence, work out their spelling and correct pronunciation. Still there may appear some difficulties for speakers of non-European languages. For example, the Chinese language has its own names even for such popular sports as *football*, *tennis*, *basketball*, and so on. Nevertheless, knowledge of the English language, even at an elementary level, helps to determine / guess the meaning of these units. Of course, the teacher should pay attention to the peculiarities of Russian spelling and pronunciation, as well as point out the difference in the meaning of some words.

Semantization with the help of a word-formation chain gives students an idea of the formation of a word, the functions of word-formation affixes, and the stylistic coloring of the word. In this way, the following units can be considered: *игра* – *играть* – *выиграть* – *обыграть* – *сыграть* – *проиграть* (eng. *a game – to game – gam-*

ing – gamed); *решать* – *решение* – *решающий матч* (eng. *to decide – a decision – decisive match*); *чей/чья* – *ничья* – *сыграть вничью* (eng. *a draw – to draw a match*); *разгромить* – *разгром* – *разгромлен* (eng. *to defeat – a defeat – defeated*); *сборная* – *собирать* (eng. *national team-collect*).

Special attention should be paid to working with expressive means of language. A characteristic feature of sports-related media language is the active use of various figures of speech, which fill the presentation with expressive coloring and sharpen the reader’s perception. “Recreating the atmosphere of reality with the help of live pictures, emotionally and directly perceived by the reader, is an effective stylistic technique. Speech expressiveness is invariably associated with an increase in the cognitive value of the message, with its reliable assimilation and memorization” [6, p.107]. Metaphors, comparisons, contextual synonyms, and descriptive constructions make it difficult for an unprepared foreign language speaker to perceive the information. In the text chosen for the analysis the author uses many synonymic expressions with the meaning “situation of winning” to avoid repetition: *выиграть, победить* (eng. *win*), *довести матч до победы* (eng. *bring the match to victory*), *выйти в финал* (eng. *reach the finals*), *выиграть группу* (eng. *win the Group*), *обыграть* (eng. *beat*), *одержать победу* (eng. *win the victory, gain the victory*), *разгромить* (eng. *defeat*), *пройти сборную Дании и России* (eng. *pass the Danish and Russian national teams*). So it is greatly advisable to work out these words and phrases to the last detail as they are quite frequent for sports journalism. Therefore, working with these language units will help students perceive the analyzed text and will certainly update the information obtained when reading other sports texts.

The problem of high complexity at the advanced stage of training is the understanding of figurative and idiomatic meanings. Metaphorical transfers are a complex thought process based on abstracting the fea-

tures of one object and transferring them to another. With the help of metaphors, the author not only reports information, but also expresses his attitude to events, gives them an assessment. Metaphors are also often associated with the specifics of the national picture of the world and its value component. That is why foreign students should learn to recognize them. Working with metaphorical statements can be based on the following algorithm: 1) establishing the main component of the meaning of the lexeme, which served as a source of metaphorical transfer; 2) identifying the meaning components on which semantic shifts take place (extralinguistic comments are generally required here, as a rule); 3) determining the emotional coloring, axiological component and stylistic marking; 4) interpreting the metaphorical expression in the proposed context; 5) tasks and exercises to consolidate and update the information received. When reading the publication under consideration, it is advisable to pay attention to the following expressions: *держали все нити игры в своих руках* (eng. *kept all the threads of the game in their hands*), *расписали ничью с датчанами* (eng. *painted a draw with the Danes*), *перетерпеть первый тайм* (eng. *endure the first half*). Besides, on the example of the phrases *быстрый гол* (eng. *quick goal*), *шальной гол* (eng. *stray goal*), *победный ход* (eng. *winning move*), *решающий гол* (eng. *decisive goal*), *рациональный футбол* (eng. *rational football*), you can consider the role of epithets, point out their repeatability and invite students to independently supplement these ranks.

Metonymic transfer and simplification of terms is a typical phenomenon for naming teams. In compound terms, contraction occurs by omitting one of the components of a phrase or forming a complex word according to the model: *Сборная команда Хорватии по футболу – Хорватская сборная – сборная Хорватии – команда Хорватии – Хорваты* (eng. *national football team of Croatia – Croatian national team – national team of Croatia – Croatia*

team – Croats). As an exercise, students can independently make similar chains of names of sports teams from different countries.

Football nicknames are an integral part of fan culture. They are received by national teams, clubs, individual footballers and coaches. From the colloquial sphere of use, nicknames also pass into mass media language. The nomination is based on different characteristics: the appearance of the player / coach, external attributes (color of clothing or flag), style of playing, geographical features, cultural stereotypes and symbols. In this publication, the author uses the nickname “Tricolors”, which the French national team players received because of the vertical tricolor on the national flag. As a task, one can give some images of different teams with the names of the countries and make it possible to guess which nicknames refer to a particular team and what characteristics formed the basis of the nomination. For example: “Синие” (eng. “Blues”), “Трехцветные” (eng. “Tricolors”) – France; “Зелёно-желтые” (eng. “Green-yellows”) – Brazil; “Шашечные” (eng. “Checkers”) – Croatia; “Красные дьяволы” (eng. “Red devils”) – Belgium; “Синие самураи” (eng. “Blue samurai”) – Japan; “Фараоны” (eng. “Pharaohs”) – Egypt; “Немецкая машина” (eng. “German machine”) – Germany; “Красная фурия” (eng. “Red fury”) – Spain; “Белые Орлы” (eng. “White Eagles”) – Serbia.

Sports texts are characterized by the active use of clichés and set expressions used in many publications. Mastering such phrases helps to easily understand the main content of an unfamiliar text, even at a scanning stage. The examples are: *решающий матч* (eng. *the decisive match*), *одержать победу* (eng. *gain the victory, win the victory*), *создать опасный момент* (eng. *create a high-risk moment*), *реализовать момент* (eng. *realize a moment*), *выйти в финал/четвертьфинал* (eng. *reach the finals / quarterfinals*), *выйти из группы* (eng. *get out of the Group*), *контролировать ход игры* (eng. *control the course of the match / game*).

There are many exercises for mastering new vocabulary and understanding the text – pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. All of them can be used when working with specialized texts: gap-filling (with or without any words proposed; grammatical and/or semantic aspects), matching, placing words in the correct order, substitution, etc. The choice and number of particular activities are determined by the specific tasks of the lesson and the content of the text. The precondition is the use of exercises resulted in productive speaking.

Thus, the process of working with sports-related texts at Russian as a foreign

language lessons should be based on the specifics of sports discourse. The ways of presenting special vocabulary are to reflect the peculiarities of the language units functioning in professional communication. The activities chosen may vary depending on the level of foreign language proficiency of students and the tasks set. Mastering the sports language allows students to expand their professional vocabulary as well as to get an idea of the national language and value picture of the world, which contributes to the development of linguistic and communicative skills of foreign students.

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