LANGUAGE GAMES IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Olga Iermachkova
Katarína Chválová

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Abstract
The paper is devoted to the language game in teaching Russian as a foreign language. The research aims to examine the phenomenon of the language game in journalistic text and show its effective implementation in the study processes. Language games are considered at different language levels (word-formation, graphics, paremiology and etc.). The article analyzes the definitions of the examined phenomenon and its main functions in journalistic text.

Key terms
language game, Russian, journalistic text, headline, students

Introduction
Today’s era of postmodernism has not only affected teaching processes but also foreign language teachers in selecting appropriate teaching methods, conventional approaches and looking for new teaching solutions-forms. Therefore, the language game has brought innovations into science in 21st century and taken an honourable place in different language discourses. The emergence of the phenomenon of language games has resulted in liberation from the censorship – democratization of the language. Due to its prominent position in language it has become a powerful indicator of prestige and tribute of a linguistic fashion. Besides that, language games and slang represent the brightest manifestation of language in a creative way, aimed at creating additional effects (comic, humourous etc.). In an era dominated by anthropological tendencies, the language game has appeared to be a true reflection of human nature.

Our research aims to investigate the phenomena of the language game in teaching Russian as a foreign language that has become a prominent feature of journalistic, advertising, political and communicative texts. Learners are given examples during the lessons with a focus on analysing the examples of the language game, assessing the level of assimilation in the particular topic and implementing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The study aims to analyse the forms of the language game on various language levels in the contemporary journalistic texts in practical language, stylistics and lexicology courses. Resarch attention has also been allocated to the language phenomenon of functioning language games in the journalistic text.


The most significant works in terms of the language game are the monography of E. Zemskaya, M. Kitaygorodskaya, N. Rozanova (1983), dedicated to the structure of the language game; another work “Language game: stereotype and works” (1996) by T. Gridina, in which the language game is analysed from the semantic perspective; the book “Russian language in the mirror of the language game” illustrating a multi-level approach to teaching a language game by Sannikov (1999); the book “The language game in the communicative space of the Media and advertising” by S. Ilyasova & L. Amiri (2015) manifesting the tools incorporated in the language game.

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The Russian newspaper in the period of 2019-2020 “Kommersant” (K) serves as the main language material resource in our research. The subject of study in this thesis comprises the techniques of a language game in the journalistic text aimed at manipulation, pragmatism and expression. The research sample consists of playful newspaper headlines reflecting a vivid language game.

To the definition of a language game

The linguistic concept of the language game was coined in 1985 as a result of the philosophical research of L. Wittgenstein, associating a language game with any activity concerning language. Thus, this phenomenon was mostly seen as an experiment, a disruption of the norm or a reflection of creativity. Implementation of the language game indicates a desire to gain an aesthetic, comical effect consciously violating the perception mechanisms of language units.

There is no single definition of this term in linguistics. The language game is mostly seen through conscious disruption of linguistic norms: “the language game manifests a deliberate violation of the norms of the general literary language” (Bakina, 1977, pp. 93–94), as a “result cases of language game should be inferred in terms of regulatory organized linguistic devices” (Lapteva, 1976, p. 74).

Most linguists are aware of the fact the language game manifests a creative potential, non-standardisation and improvisation. T. Gridina, representing one of the ancestors of linguo-creative approaches, asserts that this creative process is enabled due to linguo-creative thinking, such as the ability to recognize a game code in communication. The recipient must be able to solve this peculiar linguistic “enigma”. This principle is also adhered to by B. Norman who sees “a language game as something non-traditional, non-canonical use of language, this creativity is in the language with hidden esthetic possibilities of the linguistic sign” (Norman, 1987, p. 168).

Some linguists define a language game as reevaluating relationships between the form and content. As the first definitions of the language game emphasized the form of the language, the language games were, therefore, defined as such “phenomena when a speaker manipulates the form of the speech and when the free attitude towards free speech receives an aesthetic task. This can be reflected through simple jokes, harsh language, puns or different types of trails (comparism, metaphor, periphrase and etc.)” (Zemskaya, Kitaygorodskaya, Rozanova, 1983, p. 172).

B. Norman believes that the language game arises due to the disruption of the structure of the sign and system relations among them. “Disruption of the linguistic sign is seen as the change of relations between two sides. This is understood as the plan of content and a plan of expression. In particular, the „old“ content can show a „new“ supplementary form of the expression. On the other hand, the „old“ form can bring „a new“ figurative meaning” (Norman, 1987, p. 174).

Passing the time, the language game adapts the status of the “language manipulation” underpinned by peculiarities (violation of orthography, figurative poems, bright and „overused“ metaphor, metonymy and periphrases etc.” (Sannikov, 1999, p. 376).

Functioning a language game in a journalistic style


Nowadays the media forms a global communicative environment, functioning and developing in terms of its laws, reflecting specific mechanisms influencing public opinion, social institutions and culture. Within the discursive environment, there exists steady supply and demand for the language game as one of the instruments of mass communicative impact (Negryshev, 2006). The language game becomes a powerful assessment mechanism, managing the public consciousness, “virus”, which
“penetrated into informational and analytical materials of television and printed media” (Smetanina, 2002, p. 177).

The emotive (expressive) function seems to be one from the most significant functions. “The editor is determined to look for expression, and is irresistibly tempted to construct a paradox, a game of words” (Kostomarov, 1971, p. 153).

The expressive function of the language game is related to the emotive and entertaining functions, which could “serve for a more precise and subtle transmission of thought, a figurative and expressive transfer of a message” (Zemskaya et al., 1983, pp. 174 – 175).

The most expressive pattern in the journalistic text is the headline, the main purpose of which is to attract the interest of the reader to read the entire article by providing the addressee with certain directions, it can also enable him to make predictions of the content of the text. The journalist selects a headline that simultaneously conveys dual information about the subject and its social context. The battle for reader’s attention begins precisely with the headline, which often promises more than it can actually give. V. Kostomarov calls such an advertising header function (Kostomarov, 1994).

Besides the above functions, the language game performs a camouflage (euphemistic) function. V. Sannikov sees the function of a language joke in its pragmatic basis, thus concerning not the described content, but the relations between the speaker and the addressee (addressees), agreed by them, so that the language joke supports the circumvention of the “censorship of culture” (Sannikov, 1999, pp. 27-28).

Word-formation games

Nowadays, word-formation games experience great popularity in mass media discourse. Thus, journalists are driven by the desire for expression to create occasional headlines, as an extraordinary headline not only grabs the attention of the publication but also motivates the reader to read it.

Occasional nouns

The anthropocentric direction of modern linguistics explains the productivity of noun names. As E. Zemskaya pointed out, “the human represents the main character of modern word formation” (Zemskaya, 1996, p. 103). The newspaper pages often accompanied by the names of politicians, celebrities and geographical objects give us the evidence about a language game, as proved in following headlines:

Спела под инстаграмму [Spela pod instagrammu] (К, 6.8.2019) – the headline of the article refers to the arrival of J. Lopez in Moscow, by combining words Инстаграм [Instagram] + фонограмма [phonogramma];

Лунопожатие крепкое [Lunopozhatie krepkiye] (К, 7.5.2020) – the title of the article about the exploration of the Moon. The words are overlapping: the truncation of the second Луна [Luna] + рукопожатие [rukopozhatiye];

Перезагрузка Украины [Perezagruziya Ukrainy] (К, 15.5.2019) – is an article about the policy of M. Saakashvili. Here we record the words перезагрузка [perezagruzka] + Грузия [Gruzia];

Путеводястество из Петербурга в Москву [Putevodyestwye iz Peterburga v Moskву] (К, 23.10.2019) – an article dedicated to the Northern Railway. Occasionalism is formed analogically with a word путеводствие [puteshestvie], by the inclusion in the middle of the word бюджет [budzhet]. In the headline there is a game with a precedent text, the work by A. N. Radishchev Travel from Saint Petersburg to Moscow (Путешествие из Петербурга в Москву);

Еврофутболь [Evrofutbol] (К, 18.12.2019) – an article dedicated to the failure of Russian football. In the title the overlapping words Евро + футбол + боль [Evro + futbol + bol] are noted.
Playful word-formation based on adjectives

Word-formation of occasional adjectives is a very productive process. On the other hand, the word-formation of new nouns by analogy can be observed in playful titles:

Шпионская правда [Shpionerskaya pravda] (K, 27.12.2019) – an article about a fight with a foreign interference. The imposition of the words шпион [shpion] and пионерский [pionerskij] is observed;

Футболезенное состояние [Futbololeznennoe sostoyanie] (K, 2.8.2019) – an article dedicated to the burden of players. The title is formed in terms of the infliction of the words футбол [futbol] and болезненный [boleznennij];

Неутешительный прогноз [Neutushitelnij prognoz] (K, 30.7.2019) – an article about Sibirian fires. Occasionalism is formed with the adjective неутешительный [neuteshitelnij], applying the analogy;

Запарижская сечь [Zaparizhskaya sech'] (K, 20.8.2019) – an article dedicated to the holidays of presidents on The French Riviera, applying the toponym Париж [Parizh] in the middle of the the word. The occasional title is formed analogically applying the expression Запорожская Сечь [Zaporozhskaya Sech'].

Play-based word-formation through the prism of verbs

Verbs are not excluded in the word-formation process, as they are very common in the titles:

Плодитесь и разграждантесь [Plodites' i razgrazhdantes'] (K, 6.11.2019) – an article about citizenship in Latvia. The occasional verb is formed with a precedent expression Плодитесь и размножайтесь [Plodites' i razmnogzhajtes'];

Побрексили и хватит [Pobreksili i khvatit] (K, 1.2.2020) – an article dedicated to Britain’s withdrawal from the EU. The occasional title is formed analogicaly applying the expression Поплакала и хватит [Poplakala i khvatit];

Реджеп Эрдоган вдоволь наукраинился [Redzhep Erdogan vdoval' naukrainilsya] (K, 4.2.2020) – an article is about Ukrainian visit of a Turkish president. Occasionalism is derived analogically from the toponym Украина (Ukraine) using verbs, reflecting the finished activity напился, наелся, натанцевался [napilsya, naelsya, natancevalsya].

Language game and graphics

The language game with graphics presents a fairly new way of grabbing a reader’s attention. In the early 1980s and 1990s, isolated examples of graphic games were recorded. Nowadays, games with graphics are a frequent occurrence, perceived as one one of the most effective ways to increase expression, grasp the interest of the recipient in advertising, in the media, in ergonomas and in blogs. Linguists emphasize that a new trend of graphic games has already been established.

By a graphic game “different techniques of word reduction, use of spaces between words, capital letters, indents, a variety of underlying the text, printed reproduction of text and font extracts are understood” (RAE, 1997, p. 102).

Dissemination of graphic games in the publicist discourse testifies about their powerful role of attracting attention, thus pointing at their important function – compressing the meaning. Therefore, graphic selection contributes to excluding unneccessary content of the message.

Despite the increasing interest in using language games and their implementation in graphic word-formation, there is not yet a single common name for this phenomenon. This process is mostly known as graphic derivation, one of the occasional ways of word-formation, based on the principle of disruption and playfulness of the graphic and ortho-graphic form of a word (Pertsov, 2001), graphic fixation – a way of forming words, where a word-forming operator is represented by
ortho-graphic tools (graphical selections, punctuation marks, etc.) (Popova, 2007). Some linguists call these phenomena as „graphic occasionalisms“ (Krivenko, 1993), „graphic puns“ (Kostomarov, 1994), „visual neologisms“ (Marinova, 2005). In terms of this perspective, all of these phenomena are related to graphic modification of the word.

Graphic games can be illustrated in the following examples in the media:

КоронОРВИртс [KoronORVirus] (K, 17.4.2020) – an article about compulsory self-isolation. ОРВИ [ORVI] – an abbreviation Acute Respiratory Viral Infection (Острая респираторная вирусная инфекция);

ПолМЕйный учёт [PolMEnij uchet] (K, 29.4.2020) – is an article about the control of smartphones. IMEI is an abbreviation (International Mobile Equipment Identity);

ВИЧиницированные [VICHinicirovannye] (K, 22.2.2020) – is an article concerning the control of infection. ВИЧ [VICH] – an abbreviation Human immunodeficiency virus (Вирус иммунодефицита человека);

«Локо» мотив не спел [“Loko”motiv ne spel] (K, 7.11.2019) – an article about defeating the team. Quotation marks enable to read this headline ambiguously.

The use of Latin in Russian graphic games is not rare: Близко уходит далеко [BliTko ukhodit daleko] (K, 26.2.2020) – an article about the closure of the enterprise.

Language game with abbreviation

Language game with abbreviation is a fairly new phenomenon in language. The use of abbreviations in a media title represent an effective and non-standard way of grabbing the reader’s attention. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, it is important for the reader to be familiar with this abbreviation.

С ПАСЕ и сохрани [S PASE i sokhrani] (K, 1.2.2020) – is an article about a round in Russian in PACE. The abbreviation PACE stands for Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The headline is formed analogicaly from the expression Спаси и сохрани [Spasi i sokhrani];

Это не ТЭК просто [Eto ne TEK prosto] (K, 30.1.2020) – an article about the sector approaching the president. The abbreviation ТЭК [TEK] – Fuel and energy sector;

Не ЦСК единым [Ne CSK edinym] (K, 25.9.2019) – an article dedicated to the football champions of the season. ЦСК [CSK] – The Central sport club. There is a language game in the title concerning the quotation from the Bible: Не хлебом единым жив человек [Ne hlebom edinym zhiv chelovek];


VAR в законе [VAR v zakone] (K, 27.12.2019) – an article about Russian football. VAR – a video assistance system for referees. The game with an expression вор в законе [vor v zakone] is recorded;

Сунул ГРЕКО руку в Думу [Sunul GREKO ruku v Dumu] (K, 6.11.2019) – an article about a battle with corruption. ГРЕКО [GREKO] – The Group of States against Corruption. In the title there is a language game – a tongue-twister Сунул Грека руку в реку, рак за руку Греку – цап [Sunul Greka ruku v reku, rak za ruku Greku – tsap];

Хождение по МАКам [Khozhdenie po MAKam] (K, 27.11.2019) – an article about exporting aircraft. MAK – Interstate aviation commitee. The title refers to Tolstoj’s novel The Road to Calvary (Хождение по мукам);

ЕГЭ беда начало [EGE beda nACHalo] (K, 14.5.2020) – an article about retaking exams. ЕГЭ [EGE] is Unified State Exam. The headline uses a proverb Лиха беда начало [Likha beda nACHalo] as a language game.
Language game with precedent texts

The use of allusions, citations, quasicitations in the headlines testifies about the peculiar features of the contemporary language of the media, evoking the reader's associations with texts that already exist. Addressing the background knowledge and the “cultural memory” of the nation in linguistic science is therefore associated with the names of the precedent text (hereafter referred to as PT), precedent phenomenon, text’s reminiscence, precedent cultural sign, logo epistem etc. The concept of a precedent text was introduced by Y. Karaulov in 1986 who characterized such texts as “significant for a particular person in cognitive and emotional relations, while having a superpersonal character. This can be illustrated as being well-known to the wide circle of a given personality, including its predecessors and contemporaries, and addressing expressions that are repeated in the discourse of this linguistic personality” (Karaulov, 1986, p. 216).

The most frequent sources of precedent texts are: literature, cinema, music, folklore, mythology, idioms, aphorisms, biblicalisms, statements of real people, slogans of the Soviet era, proverbs and sayings, phraseological units, tongue twisters, riddles, counters and etc.

Examples of the language game with the PT source sphere “Literature” are very numerous on the newspaper page, as illustrated in the following example: Горе от бума [Gore ot buma] (K, 26.7.2019) – an article about the stock market (cf. Woe from Wit/ Горе от ума by A. Griboedov); Ночь перед торжеством [Noch pered torzhestvom] (K, 12.10.2019) – an article about participants in the Normandy format (cf. The night before Christmas/ Ночь перед Рождеством by N.V. Gogol); 50 оттенков серы [50 ottenkov sery] (K, 29.11.2019) – an article about new IMO rules (cf. 50 shades of grey by E.L. James); Платье или не платье [Plit ili ne plit] (K, 26.7.2019) – an article about a new film (cf. To be or not to be from The Tragedy of Hamlet by W. Shakespeare); Давка древности [Davka drevnosti] (K, 28.11.2019) – an article about the opening of an antique salon (cf. A tale of two cities/ Лавка древностей by Ch. Dickens) and others.

Precedent texts are genetically ascending literature with its synchronous outlook, appearing in a close connection with other cultural spheres, such as “Cinematography” (e.g.: Гвозди из будущего [Gvozdi iz budushego] (K, 13.2.2019) – an article about the Taganka Theater (cf. Guests from the Future/ Гости из будущего) and the “Songs” (e.g.: Вставай, страна аграрная [Vstavaj, strana agrarnaja] (K, 14.2.2019) – an article about inspecting the farmers (cf. Get up, the country is huge!/ Вставай, страна огромная!).

Antiproverbs

The language game involves all language levels, including the paremiological one, that are characteristic of the modern Russian language. This is manifested in the game with proverbs, replacing components, thus giving them a completely different meaning in the media headline: Чем дальше в лес, тем больше версий [Chem dal'še v les, tem bol'she versij] (K, 25.2.2020) – an article about the Network case; Чем дальше в лес, тем больше пармезанов [Chem dal'še v les, tem bol'she parmesanov] (K, 12.7.2019) – an article about politics in Italy (cf. Чем дальше в лес, тем больше дров [Chem dal'še v les, tem bol'she drov]).

Analysis of language games in the classroom

After analyzing and discussing the definition of a language game in the classroom, students expressed positive sentiments towards the development of their creative potential, which testifies about the accenting function of the language game in the journalistic text.

Upon examining word-formation games, it can be concluded that older students do have difficulties determining from which words a particular headline were formed. Students did not have difficulties finding the meaning of language games in the headlines in online publications.
Students learning Russian can easily decode a graphic game, while more time has to be allocated to the particular activities. Although the examples with abbreviations and precedent texts were not difficult at the beginning, all of them were unfamiliar to students, as only some of them are included in the syllabus. Moreover, allusions concerning the world classic literature (W. Shakespeare, Ch. Dickens, E. James, J. Rowling) were easily recognized. Furthermore, active implementation of precedent texts in the Russian publicist discourse is closely and significantly linked with Russian public consciousness concerning literature and its high status in the world.

The participants associated the dominant number of abbreviations in the examined examples with the impact of scientific and technological progress on the modern pace of life, and the tendency of being economic in speech. The following game abbreviations perform not only expressive, appealing functions but also informative ones, thus enhancing the value of the headline and significantly saving space.

Conclusion
The analysis of examples of language games in Russian language classes at the university shows the level of linguocultural thinking of students and their ability to decode the author's intention. Furthermore, the correct interpretation of examples concerning language games and their independent identification in the newspaper page testifies about their high degree of comprehensibility of this problem. It reminds them of a similar analysis, i.e. reflecting an original examination of knowledge and competences acquired at the university, secondary school, thus depicting a test of knowledge and competence that they acquired during their studies at the university, secondary school or somewhere else. Therefore, analysing examples of language games makes classes more interactive and informative, as decoding a language game gives students pleasure and broadens their horizons. Examining the examples of language games at different foreign-language levels in the contemporary publicist text in practical language, stylistics and lexicology classes provide us evidence of a great dominance of antiproverbs and transformed precedent texts, which are obvious to students due to correctly formed questions.

This analysis might not only be implemented into linguistic disciplines, but might also be beneficial for history, culture or literature seminars. Due to the postmodern times in which we are living, this topic seems to have a great perspective in foreign-language teaching.

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**Contact information**
Olga Iermachkova
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5430-7898
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Faculty of Arts
Department of Russian studies
Herdu 2, Trnava 917 01
Slovakia
olga.iermachkova@ucm.sk

Katarína Chvalová
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9221-8821
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
Faculty of Arts
Department of British and American studies
Herdu 2, Trnava, 917 01
Slovakia
katarina.chvalova@ucm.sk