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**ОБУЧЕНИЕ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ ВТОРОГО ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА:  
НЕМЕЦКИЙ КАК ПЕРВЫЙ ВТОРОЙ ИНОСТРАННЫЙ**

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***Аннотация.** С введением в 2015 году второго иностранного языка в российских школах, появилась острая необходимость в обучении учителей второго иностранного. Зачастую именно университеты стали центрами подготовки и переподготовки учителей. В данной статье мы рассматриваем разработку и реализацию курсов повышения квалификации, проводимых в Тюменском государственном университете при сотрудничестве с Гете-Институтом (Москва) в 2016-2018 годы для учителей немецкого как второго иностранного языка. Путем проведения опросов и интервью участников курсов и мультипликаторов Гете-Института, мы ставили своей целью выявить, как именно проводились*

*данные программы и как они воспринимались участниками, а также, в общем, с какими проблемами сталкиваются участники в ходе своей профессиональной деятельности, чтобы выявить специфику внедрения второго иностранного языка как обязательного предмета в российских школах.*

**Ключевые слова:** *немецкий как второй иностранный, Гете-институт, обучение учителей.*

## **SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING: GERMAN AS THE FIRST SECOND LANGUAGE**

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**Abstract.** *With the introduction in 2015 of the second foreign language (FL2) as a mandatory subject in Russian schools, the need to train the teachers became apparent. In Russia's regional centers, outside of big cities like Moscow and St-Petersburg, Universities often became the venues where teacher training programs were developed and offered to high school teachers. The article examines teacher training programs for German language high school teachers organized in 2016-2018 at Tyumen State University under the auspices of Goethe Institute Moscow.*

*By conducting questionnaires and in-depth interviews, we seek to explore how exactly such programs are organized and run, and how they are viewed by the participants. We hope to contribute to the debate on the specifics of FL2 instruction in Russia as well as problems and prospects of teacher training programs.*

**Key words:** *German as a second language, Goethe Institute, teacher training.*

## **Introduction**

European countries have long integrated second language (FL2) instruction into the school curricular and have designed and implemented programs to train teachers in FL2 instruction [21]. For Russia, this process has begun relatively recently with the introduction of mandatory FL2 classes in 2015. With this, the need to develop educational materials and train the teachers became more apparent. The discussion about the necessity to introduce the second foreign language in schools as a mandatory subject began in 2006 when Russia's Ministry of Education mentioned "linguistic pluralism" in its letter entitled "On Foreign Languages Learning in Public Educational Institutions". On 7 August 2015, the Ministry recommended schools to introduce second language instruction starting from 1 September 2015. A transitional period (until 2020) is envisaged for schools to adapt to these new requirements. The document mentions that, "The school subject 'Second Foreign Language' is expected to create and develop the communicative skills and linguistic abilities, necessary for further school and professional education." Students are expected to reach a certain level of competence that would enable them to communicate (both orally and in a written form) with native speakers and foreign learners of this language on the topics covered by the school program.

While our background literature includes, *inter alia*, extensive research undertaken by Polish scholars under the auspices of Adam Mickiewicz University, such as, for instance, "Extending the Boundaries of Research on Second Language Learning and Teaching" that came out in 2011, we must remark from the onset that the biggest bulk of literature on the topic of second foreign language teaching concerns the English language (with emerging literature on the instruction of Chinese). Thus, we believe that discussing the specifics of the German language teaching might contribute to the general debate on the specifics of second foreign language instruction (other than English).

Even though the idea of introducing FL2 as a mandatory subject has been regarded as a step in the right direction, Russia faces very similar problems in this domain that other countries have been grappling with, and which are discussed in literature at quite some length. One of the key challenges has been how to motivate children to learn languages other than English which remains in great demand. Traditionally, Russian schools offered German, French and Spanish as foreign languages, with the first two being historically very popular for at least two centuries. Traditionally, foreign language teachers were trained at the departments of Romanic and Germanic languages, and the majority of the students preferred to study one language from the Romanic group and one language from the Germanic one. However, with growing popularity of the English language in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was significant decline in the number of students willing to learn other languages. Thus, for example, even though German was traditionally popular among Russian students, a significant decrease in German language learners from 4,07 million to 1,71 million took place since the early 1990s [1]. A similar trend can be observed in relation to French and Spanish. In addition, it was necessary to convince both students and their parents to accept the increasing workload that the introduction of the second foreign language (two extra classes per week) would necessarily entail.

Teaching materials and students' text-books for FL2 have been a problem as well that the country has been trying to address. Several teaching and learning sets have been published by Russia's major publishing house "Prosvetstanie" for German ("Horizonte"), French ("L'oiseau bleu"), Spanish ("Mañana"), and Chinese language instruction ("Time to Learn Chinese").

Another challenge (and, perhaps, the most important one) relates to professional development of foreign language teachers who very often lack the necessary skills in second foreign language instruction (and, frequently, need additional training since even if they were trained to be teachers of two foreign languages, often, due to the increasing demand, they chose to teach only English). As Warner and Dupuy note, when they speak about professionalization of foreign language teachers, "Yet through many years of observation as FL learners, they come to the classroom with deep-seated notions of language and culture, of language learning, and of teaching practices, and tensions often arise between their beliefs, those reflected in instructional materials, and those of multiliteracies pedagogy" [18, p. 121]. Due to heavy workload and an enormous amount of paper work, teachers do not always have time and energy to re-evaluate their teaching techniques. This is especially unfortunate in the field of foreign language teaching,

since language is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that requires cultural sensitivity and awareness on the part of the teachers. As researchers remark, “Reflectivity is required in all areas of our life, professional and personal. It is my deeply-held belief that teachers who think of themselves as continuously developing learners become more successful and in the long run can avoid the well-known ‘burn-out’ stage in their career” [17, p. 271].

In addition, while integrating technologies into a FL2 classroom has generally been seen as beneficial since Internet removes certain barriers that occur in face-to-face interaction [20], however, educating older generation of teachers to use technologies in classroom has remained a rather challenging task as well.

Speaking about the specifics of teaching global languages, Terrence Wiley observes that language programs need to be tailored to meet the needs of particular linguistically diverse communities. “The need to communicate with others in global contexts will require that language teachers better understand the need for languages to function as bridges in multilingual contexts, that some learners may resist implicit cultural discourses, and that languages will be indigenized and code-mixed for local or regional communicative purposes without following the conventions of the so-called target cultures” [19, p. 238].

Thus, in the contemporary reality, foreign language teachers are expected to not only be fluent and competent in a foreign language and pass on certain skills to their students, they are also supposed to adequately address the link between language and culture and to comprehend the realities of a globalized world [5].

**The purpose and objectives** of our research, therefore, would be to try to examine the following questions: What is the overall objective of FL2 teacher training programs in a regional University? Who operates them? How exactly do they work in a regional setting? While research on English language teaching (ELT) is extensive, and covers a variety of topics of how English is taught as the first or second (and even third) language in a multitude of environments [4], and there is also burgeoning literature that discusses teaching of Chinese as a foreign language [8], works on the specifics of German language instruction are not so numerous. Moscow, St-Petersburg and other big cities in Russia certainly benefit from a variety of language programs, smaller and distant cities like Tyumen are constrained in the choice of their options. It is hoped that this study will provide insights into how FL2 teacher training can be organized in a regional University when the choice of options and resources is limited.

We have chosen to examine Tyumen Region since German continues to be the most popular second foreign language in the region putting Tyumen Region on

top in Western Siberia [1]. In addition, our own involvement in various Goethe Institute projects allows self-reflection and critical evaluation of the activities. As teachers of German and English, we have been exposed to a variety of teacher training programs, as well as participated in organizing some of them.

**Method.** We adopt an interpretative approach that focuses on the process of instruction and learning [9]. In doing this, we hope to identify complexities and challenges that teachers face. As Dorota Potocka remarks, “Broadly speaking, until the 1970s, knowledge of the language, both as proficiency in the target language and knowledge about its structure, phonology, and so on, was considered sufficient for teaching it. Knowledge about teaching was gained through the study of language teaching methods and/or training in discrete teaching skills. Context in which teacher-learners would teach was paid little attention to” [13, p.173]. Later, however, a shift occurred (in the 1990s-onwards), when it was recognized that language could not be regarded *in abstracto*, detached from social practices. Consequently, the focus shifted from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction, which posed numerous challenges to the language instructors as well as teacher trainers. We agree with Potocka that further studies are necessary to comprehend trends in teacher training programs to be able to explain the shift from positivist-type research to interpretative paradigm, “Since new knowledge, skills and awareness are required in order to implement changes in teacher educational programs it would be useful to see how teacher educators cope with these challenges and what assistance they need (e.g. teacher educator development courses)” [13, p.178]. We believe this is especially true for FL2 teacher training programs, since this is an unexplored area when it comes to the German language as the second foreign language. We are not aware of any systematic study of FL2 teacher training programs in Russia offered to teachers of German as FL2. Stemming from this is our choice of **methodology**: we have conducted questionnaires and in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with the training courses’ participants and the multipliers. We believe that qualitative inquiry and analysis of the data will enable us to contribute to the discussion of the nuances of second foreign language learning that has enormous theoretical and practical significance (in light of the on-going public debate in Russia whether the second foreign language is necessary at all as a school subject) [2].

## Results

“German: the First Second Foreign Language” was introduced by the Goethe Institute in 2016, and was implemented in 44 regions of Russia. In 2016, the

Resource Center for German Language and Culture was set up at Tyumen State University to facilitate cooperation with the German Embassy in Moscow in the implementation of this project. The Center maintains links with local schools and participates in the organization of training courses and distribution of educational materials. In the period of 2016-2018, fifteen face-to-face and eight long-distance teacher training seminars for German language teachers were organized at Tyumen State University (short-term courses included 16 hours of training, long-term courses- 72 hours), with a special emphasis on German as a second foreign language. All schools participating in the project received start-up packages, demonstration materials, information brochures and books for home reading. In 2017-2018, teachers were offered free distance courses and participation in the professional re-training program "Teaching methodology: German as a second foreign language", distance courses under the DLL (Deutsch Lehren Lernen) program, and expert seminars on teaching methodology. At the end of the training course, participants received a Tyumen State University certificate and a certificate of the Goethe Institute. The Department of Education of the Tyumen Region jointly with the Department of Strategic Communication of Tyumen State University helped with outreach and media support. Information was disseminated through official communication channels, as well as social media. All activities were held free of charge which ensured active participation of high school teachers not only from Tyumen city, but also from small towns and villages (overall, 43 schools took part in the project). German language teachers from local colleges and vocational schools also participated in the organized activities. Summer academies for children, language contests, puppet theatre performances and children's writers' meetings were organized as well. According to the University news release, there was a 43% increase in the number of German language learners in the Region [16].

The training courses pursued several aims, including to train the teachers to use games and other interactive activities in the process of developing learners' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills; to increase learners' intercultural communicative competence; to be able to analyze pitfalls and gaps in learners' knowledge; to familiarize the teachers with contemporary language teaching materials designed specifically for children taking German as the second foreign language with English as the first one, and to improve practical skills in such fields as curriculum design. Various methods were used during the training courses, including online learning. Teachers who lacked experience due to a certain time gap in their work were offered special training. Participants were

encouraged to closely cooperate with their more experienced colleagues to learn about various modes of teaching German: from mandatory courses to extra-curricular modes. Group projects were presented as a form to increase learners' motivation.

We have conducted questionnaires and in-depth interviews with the project's participants and Goethe Institute multipliers to find out strengths and limitations of the project, as well as the participants' general observations and recommendations. We have received 35 responses via e-mail and conducted 5 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the participants and multipliers in the period of 2016-2018 (the list of questions is given in Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1

Questionnaire questions

- 1) Why have you made a decision to take part in this teacher training course? Why is it important to you?
- 2) What aspects of the course have you found interesting and useful? Which skills do you plan to use in your work?
- 3) For how long have your students been studying German? Do they plan to continue studying it at a University or other institutions of higher learning (or at a post-graduate level)?
- 4) What do you think of events organized by Goethe Institute in Tyumen? Do you consider them useful to you and your students?
- 5) What motivates school children and University students to choose German as a foreign language, from your point of view?
- 6) Has the students' opinion about the German language and Germany changed after they took part in various activities?

Table 2

In-depth interview questions

(a list of discussion topics for teachers and multipliers):

- 1) What is the most difficult aspect of your job?
- 2) What is necessary to motivate school children to study German?
- 3) What do you think of the teacher training programs currently offered in Tyumen?
- 4) What can motivate students to consider German as a carrier choice?

All participants noted the difference of this course and the courses offered previously in that this time, the emphasis was on the specifics of German language teaching (not on foreign languages more generally), which was seen as beneficial. The majority of the participants (90%) noted the rapid changes taking place in foreign language teaching which makes it necessary to keep up with new methods and technics. The most useful skill, they mentioned, was learning how to use digital technologies to develop practice-oriented classes and plan specific projects. They also remarked the importance to develop new, interesting web-sites for German language learners, exchanging of ideas with colleagues and obtaining expert opinions of Goethe Institute multipliers. Of particular importance was the educational on-line platform of the Goethe Institute, where an exchange of opinions took place between course participants from different cities in the process of planning and implementation of joint projects. Goethe Institute multipliers noted that despite the fact that the participants normally had already taken various teacher training courses, this course was seen as timely and practice-oriented. The respondents (80%) also noted that they would consider using media resources in their work, as well as try to plan and run practice-oriented projects. Some participants (20%) remarked that it was important to them to learn about new online resources for high school children with different levels of language competence and different interests.

From the respondents' point of view (40% of the answers), school children see German as an attractive option due to the projects and contests organized by Goethe Institute jointly with Tyumen State University, among which they mentioned a translation contest and a readers' contest, which are visible on social media and seem attractive to young people. All participants (100%) agree that visibility and media coverage of the projects increase the likelihood that students will later choose German as a career choice and will either start a BA degree program in German Language (a 4-year University program) or choose to study German during their MA studies (which can in total sum up to 10-12 years of German language studies). For University students, such projects are also interesting, and, as a result, the students take extra classes of German (since German is only taught for two years at non-linguistic departments). While they all agreed that German can hardly beat English in its popularity among high school students, some participants (mostly, University professors who also participated in the training course) remarked that in recent years, students tend to start a BA program in German even with zero knowledge of the language, from the

beginners' level, and continue studying it up to the post-graduate level. What motivates such students, is first of all, the possibility to continue their education in Germany (and Germany's image as a friendly, open, and multicultural society is to a large extent sustained by various projects, including the ones by Goethe Institute).

Among the challenges, the participants most frequently noted the difficulty to keep their students motivated to pursue their studies of the language in a consistent manner. For University students from non-Linguistics departments German is just one subject out of a multitude of other subjects, thus, maintaining a certain level of interest in language learning among the students should be a long-term priority for teachers. Learner autonomy [11], the capacity of the language learners to take responsibility for his/her learning process, has also been mentioned among the long-term challenges.

Some participants lamented (15% of the respondents) that in Tyumen there are no internationally recognized German language exams for school children who want to pursue their studies in Germany after they finish school. Children have to travel to Yekaterinburg, a five-hour trip by train, or take a three-hour flight to Moscow, which can be time-consuming and financially unaffordable (even if the exam costs *per se* are not very high). In general, the participants expressed willingness to receive more information about German language contests organized in Russia and abroad and have regular information exchange meetings with Goethe Institute and DAAD representatives. On a critical note, they remarked rather weak cooperation with German Universities and insufficient information about educational opportunities for school children in Germany. They regretted that Tyumen Region does not take part in Goethe Institute's project "Schulen: Partner der Zukunft", that unites more than 2000 schools worldwide, including over a dozen Russian schools from St-Petersburg, Moscow, Kaliningrad, Novosibirsk, Ufa, and other cities. This project not only offers support to schools that have German language instruction, but also supervises language exams. Moreover, scholarship programs to study in Germany and various exchange and partnership projects are envisaged as well. During interviews, the participants noted the rigidity of Russian academic curriculum, in that the second language instruction is often very difficult for some children, especially for children from rural areas where language instruction as such is often not of very high quality due to under-qualified teachers, the lack of exposure to authentic German speech, and lack of interesting projects that Tyumen schools participate in. Pupils' linguistic heterogeneity is not very well addressed in the academic setting as well: for some

pupils Russian is not the first language and its acquisition might represent significant hurdles for children from ethnic or migrant communities, which in turn makes foreign language learning even more complicated. In addition, the final exam at the end of the school studies (currently optional, though talks have been going on to introduce compulsory foreign language exams at public schools) is seen as extremely difficult and, as a result, very few students opt to take it (which limits their career options: this exam is mandatory for some University streams like Linguistics and International Relations). This criticism brings to light the necessity to expand the projects' outreach and the projects' scope to include school children from rural areas, and to adapt the projects to their needs.

Overall perception of "German as the First Second Foreign Language", however, was favorable. Participants believed that such teacher training courses enable the teachers to keep updated on the changing pedagogical environment and to communicate more effectively with colleagues and students.

## **Discussion**

Language has been long recognized as an important tool for promoting the states' foreign policy goals [19]. Drawing on Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power", researchers have attempted to demonstrate how culture became an integral part of German foreign policy [13], and how educational programs (with German being an indispensable part of them) operate in various geographical locations [10]. Among European languages offered to school children, German held firmly the first place as the most popular choice of a second language, which can be explained by the attractiveness of Germany as a destination of college or University education and availability of various scholarship programs for both students and professors, that include, *inter alia*, programs offered by DAAD, Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (MPG), Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung (AvH), Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (PAD), and others. Germany remains an attractive choice of higher education for Russian students: in 2017, the number of Russians in German Universities comprised 11,413 people, putting Russians on the second place after Indian students (13,537) (Germany International Student Statistics). For Russian students, Germany remains the most popular destination, followed by the United States, France and the United Kingdom [3].

Although no systematic study has been conducted in Tyumen Region as to why German is preferred as the second foreign language over French or Spanish (in schools where such a choice is provided), there are grounds to believe that business relations between the Region and Germany play an important role in this

choice. Germany has traditionally been one of the key trade partners of Tyumen Region (Tyumen Region Official Website). Several German companies operate in the Region, such as "Schattdekor", "Knaufinsulation", "KCA Deutag", and others. Thus, a commonly held belief is that knowledge of English and German will not only improve your prospects of success in further studies, but will also be an asset in your professional career. An additional factor is that due to a sizeable German-speaking minority in Tyumen Region, there are historical reasons to choose German over other European languages. For over 25 years, a regional autonomous organization of ethnic Germans has held regional contests for school children, including translation contests, as well as various other activities that also contribute to the increasing visibility of the German language in the Region. While bigger cities like Moscow saw a boom in the popularity of Eastern languages (first and foremost, Chinese), in Tyumen more traditional language options were favored. It is also worth noting that in smaller towns and villages of the Region German has been traditionally offered as a second foreign language (while English language instruction became a much later phenomenon dating back to the late 1980s-early 1990s), and still remains a popular option.

The city of Tyumen hosts 91 schools, before 2015 German was studied only in seven specialized language schools. However, since 2015-2016 academic year, around 10 000 school children from 81 schools started taking second language classes. While mega-cities like Moscow and St-Petersburg can boast of a variety of educational and teacher training initiatives, including projects offered by embassies and consulates, cities at the periphery are more constrained in the choice of their options. In these circumstances, Universities become the centers of foreign language promotion. Tyumen State University has actively participated in promoting German. The University was set up in 1930, and in the same year, German Philology Department was established (German Language Department until 1973). Regular links with Germany have been maintained since the early 1990s. A Russian-German Cooperation center (Georg Wilhelm Center) was set up to coordinate these exchanges and promote stronger cooperation. The University has maintained close links with DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst- German Academic Exchange Service) and Goethe Institute for over ten years. Deutscher Lesesaal Tjumen (German Reading Room) was opened at the University library to offer various books/audio and video materials about Germany. Several research and educational projects have been implemented under the framework of EU initiatives, including «Tempus», SASCHA, and «Erasmus+».

When it comes to teacher training, however, even if the German Language Department regularly offered teacher training courses for German language teachers, they were not provided on a regular basis and mostly dealt with pedagogics and not the German language *per se*. Teacher training courses were also offered by a Regional Institute of Educational Development in Tyumen, but they were not oriented at German language teachers as such (but rather at foreign language teachers more generally) and did not tackle the specifics of second foreign language instruction. In this regard, Goethe Institute's Project "Deutsch: die Erste Zweite" ("German: the First Second Foreign Language"), introduced in 2016, was seen as timely and vital in the conditions when teacher training programs were inadequate to address the challenge of compulsory second language teaching in Russian schools.

### **Conclusion**

The article discussed a teacher training program for teachers of German as a second foreign language as part of a collaborative effort between Goethe Institute Moscow and Tyumen State University in 2016-2018. The paper contextualized the existing challenges in the field of FL2 teacher training within the broader framework of mandatory second language teaching in Russia introduced in 2015, and historical context of German as a FL in Tyumen. It has long been recognized that collaboration between novices, experienced teachers, trainers and researchers is necessary in foreign language instruction [6], Tyumen State University is only starting to bring together educators from various backgrounds and with different level of expertise and experience. Even FL2 instruction is a recent phenomenon, dialogue between generations of teachers is necessary to bridge the gap between older generation (especially those who already have experience working in second language teaching), and younger generation, as well as University professors and students currently studying Pedagogics and Linguistics. The need to develop new programs for second foreign language teachers is particularly pressing in light of low levels of language proficiency among the teachers and low motivation of the language learners. Supporting teachers from rural areas could involve more active development of long-distance courses and incorporation of modern technologies into the learning process. Communicative and task-based language teaching should be an integral part of the training programs.

While research of the specifics of the second foreign language might seem like an endless task, we believe that in a globalized world with the increasing role of digital technologies, we need a better understanding of challenges and

limitations of contemporary methodologies and teaching practices. Authors of teacher training programs, teacher trainers, as well as administrators need to engage more closely with local communities to adjust the programs to the needs of the children and the teachers. In addition, more intensive interaction between teachers, researchers, experts and foreign partners is necessary to ensure constant inflow of ideas and ways to resolve challenges that are characteristic not just of Russia, but of other European and non-European countries alike. Thus, comparative studies could enrich our understanding of local specifics of teacher training methods and practices provided outside of the target country in situations when immersion in the target language and exposure to the studied culture is not possible.

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