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**WAYS TO USE RHYMING TEXTS WHEN STUDYING RUSSIAN  
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Alena Babrouskaya (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Belarusian State University, Minsk, Belarus, bobrovskaya.elena.olegovna@gmail.com

***Abstract***

Russian language teaching methodology finds itself at such a stage of its development, where there is a shortage of textbooks that use rhyming text as a unit for learning Russian. We feel the need for such educational and methodological tools, because poetry can affect the soul — it opens students up, gets them interested in their work, and stimulates cognitive activity. We have made an attempt to make such a selection of rhymed texts that will correspond to the program thematically, lexically, grammatically, syntactically, as well as encourage students to be creative; that will be interesting to them and, furthermore, that will reflect the non-linguistic reality. As a result of our work, we have established that rhyming texts in Russian can cover all the topics fixed in the teaching Russian as a foreign language curriculum. In this article, we present different ways and techniques for including poetic texts in the educational process as exemplified by teaching first-year students. The purpose of our research was also to demonstrate the potential ability of rhyming texts to serve as a means of practice not only in phonetic skills, which alone can have entire manuals devoted to. We believe it to be necessary to continue the research to create a textbook based on poetic texts on Russian as a foreign language.

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**Keywords:** Poetry, rhyming texts, Russian as a foreign language.



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## 1. Introduction

When teaching a foreign language, text is the main object of study; in the process of working with the text students master a new discipline immersing in it, as reading or listening to a native speaker's work written or read for a native speaker is the very inclusion of a student in the language situation. The adapted texts are intended to prepare for this process.

## 2. Problem Statement

To date, there is a large number of textbooks that include writings on various fields of study (for biologists, lawyers, doctors, etc.), as well as a significant amount of methodological materials that engage adapted or original literary works for foreigners with different levels of language proficiency. However, most textbooks include prose texts, while the situation with poetic works is slightly different. Only a few textbooks were published where the process of studying is built on poems with a coordinating system of tasks and methodological recommendations. Moreover, rhyming texts corresponding with the curriculum should be added to the methodological piggy bank of the topic.

First of all, I would like to mention the book by N. V. Kulibina *Reading Poems of Russian Poets* (Kulibina, 2015). Kulibina selected works of Russian literature classics, where each author is represented by one work: A. Blok *The Girl Sang in the Church Choir*, A. Pushkin *I loved you*, M. Lermontov *The Sail*, A. Akhmatova *The Dark-Skinned Lad Roamed the Alleys ...* etc. In our view, these wonderful works should be introduced in a structured, consistent and appropriate way into the educational process, adding other works and defining priority areas for studying texts. In the textbook *Poems. Rhymes. Verses*, Olga Stelter (Stelter, 2014) selected poems by both classics of Russian literature and contemporary authors, with modern poetry prevailing. Texts are intended primarily for level A1 and A2, but there are poems provided for level B1 as well. The tasks are designed only for some of the works. A big advantage of the textbook is the fact that certain poems can be used in the classroom when following the curriculum.

Articles written about rhyming works in the last decade are primarily devoted to either poems for the A1, A2 level of language learning, or to literary analysis and country studies analysis of texts (Animchuk, 2017; Martynova & March, 2018; Pavlova, 2017; Razyvaeva, 2017; Sabaeva, 2017; Talalova, 2018; Tolstova, 2016; Vasileva & Zolotich, 2017). These works highlight teaching of English/German as a second language (Uspenskaya, 2011). And, of course, Russian as a foreign language for different nationalities, including Chinese, Vietnam and ect (Glebova, 2016; Saidov, 2020; Wu Thuong Lin, 2018). Belarusian authors also consider it necessary to study poetry in the Russian As Second Language classes, and suggest to devote five minutes of every class to poetry even as early as at the initial stage of learning. Furthermore, Belarusian methodology specialists have also been including song lyrics as well (Kuzmina & Rodina, 2011).

## 3. Research Questions

In this article we will talk about how we can get foreigners interested in poetry and how we can use poetry when we want curriculum accordingly.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Our article is devoted to the description of methods, principles, and types of implementation of rhyming texts in the educational process. Usually, teachers work with poetry in philology classes, as well as at electives with students of non-philological fields in preparation for various extracurricular activities: literature nights, public speaking contests etc. The process of teaching a foreign language is quite time-consuming. It requires taking into account a set of factors starting from age, nationality, hobbies of students to providing the lesson with tasks that mix students of various levels of language competence and of different abilities to produce and perceive texts, without losing sight of the study specialization of students, as well as the level of mastering oral and written speech skills of students. .

#### **5. Research Methods**

The following methods were used in the study: contextual analysis, description, comparative analysis..

#### **6. Findings**

At this stage of development of teaching a foreign language methods, educational textology has become one of the branches of this science.

Scientists have noted an increased interest in the literary text, and they have allocated a certain place for it in the educational process back in the 80s: "Once, literary text was pushed to the background by a scientific text that came first in the search for the optimal balance of different functional styles in teaching Russian as a foreign language" (Shukin & Frolova, 2015, p. 442). This is justified by the fact that the main task of the educational process, ultimately, is to teach a student to understand authentic works, primarily texts related to the professional sphere.

The main problems of this area of linguistic and methodological theory are recognized as follows: «1) the typology of educational texts; 2) selection and presentation of scientific, 3) socio-political and artistic texts in textbooks; 4) instructional text commenting; 5) immersion of the educational text into lessons of Russian; 6) creating a book for reading in Russian» (Shukin & Frolova, 2015, p. 428).

Of course, one of the positive aspects of the text is the demonstration of "the use of the studied morphological-syntactic and lexical-grammatical constructions in their natural environment", which "acts as a sample of monological and dialogical speech, serves as a basis for building an independent statement, and is an example of the functional style" (Shukin & Frolova, 2015, p. 429)

In this article, we will outline approaches to solving some of the problems noted, and we plan to present the results of our work in a textbook that will include selected rhyming texts with a set of tasks for each work, as well as for groups of texts with methodological recommendations for teachers.

It should be noted that, on one hand, the methodological problems of including text in the educational process, and on the other – the recognition by many practitioners and theorists of the text as the leading unit of study provide the teacher with a wide field for multi-dimensional analysis and multifaceted activities. The literary text is beautiful in its depth, even though it often seems simple.

Based on the already developed typology of texts, we made an attempt to close the gaps of literary texts of different types and genres with works in rhyming form. Poetic texts may well cover a wide field of works of different types and genres.

So, what texts can be read in class? First of all, let's address oral folk art, which is abundant with rhyming texts: nursery rhymes, rhymes, teasers, tongue twisters, folk songs, etc. It is these texts that accompany the celebrations, which are usually told to students, and often even get them involved in such interesting events. For example, students of Belarusian State University like to celebrate spring very much. The second group of texts – works of art of various genres: poem, ode, pamphlet, epitaph, elegy, etc. The third type of works — rhymed greetings, poems written by non-professional authors, amateurs, on set topics for various competitions or literary evenings organized by professional groups or announced on the Internet. The fourth source of texts is the works of Internet sites like samizdat, since most of the authors at these Internet resources are members of the Union of writers or Russian and Belarusian poets (who write in Russian), but high-level amateurs also publish their works there, and out of those publishers select their authors. Engaging non-professional texts in the educational process will help students realize that writing rhyming texts is not scary. Besides, such creativity helps to express feelings, emotions, attitude to events, phenomena of the surrounding reality, develop a sense of rhythm, learn to combine words, etc. Thus, addressing non-professional texts in the classroom can urge students to try to compose their own rhymes, and will also contribute to the emergence and consolidation of the skill to distinguish "professional" poetry from amateur.

The principle of expediency helps to select texts according to the topics and sub-topics of the curriculum, taking into account the interest of students, the level of knowledge, national mentality, etc. The validity of the selection of the material depending on the tasks of the teacher is very important even when preparing materials for seemingly small stages of work. Even when preparing an epigraph for a lesson or quotes that reflect the attitude of representatives of different eras, faiths, etc. to connect those the issue under study, it is necessary to pay very close attention to the preparation of appropriate tasks and the preparation of the necessary material or selecting it from the manuals available to the teacher. So, for example, after students get acquainted with poetry, feel it, we can talk about what poetry means in human life, first of all, according to great people. The stronger the reference to the gravitas, the more standing the authors of the quotations become to students. Thus, the authors of quotations can be politicians, lawyers, historians (profession), Chinese, Turkmen, etc. (nationality), representatives of Islam, Christianity, etc. (religious beliefs), and so on. Also, we would like to pay special attention to students' hobbies. For example, students from Central Asia, in particular Turkmen students, are fond of boxing and football. They even take part in competitions playing for the university team in national and sometimes international competitions. Therefore, quotes by famous athletes are better to attract to studying, since their authors are authorities for students. In addition, it is worth mentioning the years of life of thinkers to note the significant duration of the time period when the importance of reading was evaluated highly.

Thanks to the ability of a literary text to perform an aesthetic function, the teacher can organically bring an educational aspect to their class. One of the advantages of attracting poetic texts into studying is their volume, which allows you to read or listen to the work for the first time in the classroom, rather than offering to read the text as homework. In addition, for the first time it is better for students to hear an

expressive reading by the teacher, or by the poet on the record (if any of a kind are available), or actors (a significant amount of such videos can be found on Youtube). The reader's emotions can evoke certain emotions in the audience, which will create a genuine interest in the text of the work.

In addition to training professional competencies, the program also pays sufficient attention to general language and communication skills. In this article we want to demonstrate the study of poetic texts at the intersection of the following approaches: taking into account the topic of the section and a specific lesson; the list of grammatical questions studied, in addition, orientation to the stage and type of lesson if necessary. When selecting texts, one can be guided by different aspects. We have identified several aspects, the combination of which helps to select a variety of works: 1) topics and sub-topics of the curriculum; 2) conversations on topics for communication; 3) topics that are mandatory for study; 4) seeing the lesson as a process included in the surrounding reality, which allows you to talk about the days of the week, months, seasons, etc.; 5) different types of speech: text-narration, text-description, text-reasoning; 6) types of reading (introductory, studying, viewing); 7) forms of speech etiquette that are included in the program.

We were able to find rhymed works in all thematic and grammatical sections of the curriculum. In this article, due to the limited scope, we will provide an overview of the first-year program.

Ways of expressing a subject and predicate is a rather difficult topic. It is very convenient to use the example of some poems to show how short sentences can be, and how it can be aesthetically beautiful, emotional and informative. Not only classical works can be attributed to poetic works that meet this goal (A. Fet's *Whisper. Timid breathing. Trilling of a nightingale*, A. Block's *Night. Street. Lamp. Drugstore*), but also works of our contemporaries.

Topics about the weekend and working day can be started with a review poem by Samuel Marshak *Quickly The Days Of The Week Flew By...* (about all the days of the week). For the purpose of unobtrusive adjustment of students to work on any day of the week, you can use poems by famous poets or modern novice authors to update previously acquired linguistic and country information or language competence, speech skills. Tasks of this type can be given immediately after the greeting as follows: "Who remembers what day of the week it is?» If it is Monday, the conversation can continue in the following way: "Is it hard for you to start studying again after the weekend? We often say that "Monday is a hard day". Do you agree with this statement? What day of the week do you consider to be the most difficult and why? What is the easiest day of the week for you?» And then the expression "Monday is a hard day" can be expanded into a whole poem. For example, *Monday. Morning. Torture* by Y.Vihareva. In such a way, it is possible to discuss other days of the week from time to time, not forgetting about proverbs and sayings as a national and cultural component (he has seven Fridays in the week (they say one thing one day and another thing the next day), Saturday looks out from under Friday (it's snowing down South); who is happy on Saturday, they cry on Sunday, etc.): *Sunday* by V. Tushnova, *Forgiven Sunday* by E. Asadov, *On Tuesdays Over The Pavement* by D. Harms, *Tuesday, Friday, Wednesday...* by L. Miller, *From Tuesday to Saturday* by O. Mandelstam, etc. It is also possible to discuss humorous poems that update the vocabulary of the specialty, for example, the work of Valentin Katarsin *Legal Week*, which contains a sufficient number of explanatory sentences, and raises the problem of how a student feels after being expelled from the university due to an irresponsible attitude to study at the figurative and semantic level.

In a class that is dedicated to a conversation about family, previously studied materials when students describe their family can be revised. When discussing what kind of families they want to have themselves, you can talk about student families whilst connecting poetic texts. Thus, the discussion of the topic Family will take place in an unusual way. Getting into a new environment, gaining both freedom and a lot of responsibilities, students can gain a different perspective on their families. E. Asadov's poem *They Were Students* presents a narrative about the life of a young family (grammatical themes: adverbial; genitive case; character (according to others)). What is more, after reading the work, students will be able to look at the complexities of family life and discuss domestic responsibilities from a national point of view, to suggest in what situations it is possible or impossible to challenge traditions.

Series of topics *In The Dean's office, In The Office of An Establishment, At The Schedule Of The Activities In The Classroom, At The Lesson; At The Dormitory, In The Library; At a Restaurant, In The Dining room, In a Buffet, At a Café, At The Shop, At a Stall, At The Cashier* match the appropriate poems: *At The Stall* by E. Asadov, *In The Store, Train Car* by E. Yevtushenko, *A Hospital Library Reading Hall Is Open ...* by Sergey Mikhalkov, *It Happened On The Train, On The Bus, On The Subway...* by Valentina Katarsina, etc. Considering the latter two poems, it is worth asking students to predict the content judging by the name and then compare their ideas with the actual themes and problems of these works.

We want to offer a series of questions on Maximilian Voloshin's poem *In The Train Carriage*. The first question: have you ever taken a train? If students have not used this type of transportation, they can turn on the recording of the sound of wheels and then, after reading the poem, ask what adjectives (epithets) the author chose to describe the sound of train wheels? Then you can offer to divide the text into semantic parts, defining the theme of each of them. According to the content of the poem, the following questions arise: Why is the prairie characterized as infinite, the wanderer as eternal, the knocking as monotonous, the night as unfriendly, and the world as bottomless? What characteristics would you choose for these nouns? Name of the participle and describe their grammatical characteristics: determine the time, the voice? How do the appropriate grammatical parameters of the participle help to characterize the people and objects that are described by the participles? Compare this work to the poem *Train Car* by Yevtushenko.

The topic *In The Library* contributes to the presentation of a poetic form known as an acrostic: "The banks are open to infinity, / And to the alien world of the galaxies, / In a serene, mysterious, ever-flowing way / Books fall down from / High above the ground. / And when the distances become clear, / Opening the fateful writings for us, / The patient reader / learns about the only right way. / Books generously inspire a person, / the keeper of books is a librarian" (the Author is unknown). (The first letters of the poem anagram for the word "**library**" in Russian)

Presentation of the topics of the second semester of the first year can also be diversified with interesting works. For example, let's have a look at the section *My Specialty*. The teacher's introductory speech: "The poet's view of different things can be unique. Could you imagine that the profession has a smell? No? But there is also such an opinion." Next, the teacher introduces students to the poem *Crafts* by Gianni Rodari. Questions after reading: "What synonyms do you know to the word profession? What additional connotations does the word "craft" have in relation to the profession?»

A conversation about mail can be started by watching an excerpt from the cartoon *Winter In Prostokvashino*, where from the second minute to the fourth, the postman Pechkin explains in detail how

to communicate using postal services. After viewing, the teacher asks the following question: "Why were telegrams needed when it was possible to send letters?» Mark Lisyanko's poem *Telegram* is very interesting. When first listening or reading, we suggest paying attention to the emotions experienced by the main character when he received a telegram. The next question: "Why does the hero of the poem experience these emotions? In what cases, was a person sent a telegram instead of a letter? What upcoming event did the hero of the poem learn about from the telegram? Is this a good reason to send a telegram? Explain your answer."

The study of speech communication forms begins in the second semester. The structures used in expressing greetings and wishes, advice, requests, etc. are supposed to be studied. First of all, greetings, often in verses, are spread like viruses on the Internet on various occasions. Students, of course, should understand what is happening, and sometimes respond with congratulations to congratulations. Thus, in a class dedicated to the etiquette of greetings, you may not only bring various postcards from the Soviet period, but also the modern ones, with or without inscriptions, and also study holiday rhymes in order to determine the holidays that these words can be used to congratulate people on.

On the topic *Countries. People. Trips. Travel* you can prepare a rich variety of materials of different types. For example, a conversation about cities can be started with a small conversation about countries. Let students remember the sights of their countries, plants, animals, birds, natural landscapes that are typical of their country and are national and cultural property. It can be assumed that these categories are the ones that poets will include in the poem, and then remind them of the works about their country translated into Russian. You can continue reading and comprehending Mikhail Mukhamedzhanov's beautiful poem *Tajikistan* and then listen to the song performed by the author (the materials are freely available).

We are committed to the idea that a non-linguistic situation can be used as an incentive to study educational materials when involving relevant texts. Early morning classes are simply meant to discuss the morning as such. The questions can be such as follows: 1. Name associations (words or phrases) for the word "morning" (from 3 to 5). What is the symbol of morning for you? 2. Name the word associations of the authors of the following passages (the words are in bold). What associations do the authors repeat? Did your associations coincide with the authors' ones of the following rhymes? 1) " Strong **coffee** smell, / The **city in the sun**, a **bread / loaf** on the table, **oatmeal**, / morning in city houses! / Good morning, Wake up, / smile and stretch, / have a wonderful and beautiful Day / enjoy it to the full!"( <http://lovefond.ru/stihi/dobroe-utro/3.htm>) 2) " the **Sun** is knocking on the window, / the **birds** are singing merrily, / All dreams have come true, / Happiness has chosen the **route**. / **Coffee** in a Cup, a **sandwich**, / a good morning to you, / I wish you a good Day, / do All you need to!"( <http://lovefond.ru/stihi/dobroe-utro/5.htm>) 3. Suppose, what time of the day is the most favourite among poets and why?

We suggest students to make a prediction based on a name what the difference is between the following works: *The Beginning Of The Day* by Samuel Marshak; *December Morning* by Fyodor Tyutchev. *Meeting The Dawn* by Mikhail Dudin; *The Dawn Be Foggy...* by Andrew White, *When The Dawn Glimmers...* by Samuel Marshak; *At Dawn* by Eduard Asadov; *At Dawn* by Veronica Tushnov; *Wake Up At Dawn...* by Anna Akhmatova, *Petitot* by Igor Severyanin; *The Dawn in Finland*; *The Unexpected Dawn Outside The window*, by Samuel Marshak; *The Dawn and The Rain. There Is A Thick Fog In The Garden...* by Georgy Adamovich, *Daybreak*.

The next non-linguistic situation is the correspondence of seasons and the themes of texts in the classroom. In Eduard Asadov's poem *Autumn Lines*, very interesting figurative paintings are written out, built on a combination of visual means. Comparison as a figure of speech is based on different ways of expression: *as if* + noun in the nominative case, *exactly* + noun in the nominative case, Etc. of the noun; *almost* + noun. Students should be asked the following questions: "What is a comparison and what are real objects that the author sees in the following passage: "And grandma-spruce on a stump-pan / Roasts a ruddy sunny pancake"? (when a marker word, an indicator of a comparative construction, is missing, it becomes difficult to find it. In a poem, it is easier to track the language game, so it is easier to look for comparisons)? Why does the author have these particular associations?»

When working with the definition of the concept with different syntactic constructions, depending on the specialty of students, you can choose poems about natural phenomena (geography students), for example, poems about fog: Igor Severyanin's *On a Foggy Day*, N. Agnivitsev's *Misty Story* (a phraseological expression that does not characterize a natural phenomenon), V. Bryusov's *The Whole Day Was Dull, Pale And Foggy* (adjectives), *Autumn Fog*; by A. Block *From The Crystal Fog, The Night Fog Caught Me On The Road, I Will Get Up In The Morning Fog..., In The Hours Of The Evening Fog...* (about the Quran); F. Sologub wrote a series of poems about fogs: *There, Behind The Wall, The Fogs Crawled On Me* (based on *Sleeping Beauty*), *The Fog Is Not Thinning, Fog And Rain. Heavy Caravan...* (it is very interesting to ask students to guess what this poem is going to be about) ect.; *A. Fet's Foggy Morning*, etc. These are not all poems there are about fogs. You can make a selection of poems about other natural phenomena.

Also, from time to time, teachers can pay attention to the culture of everyday manners, including the **wishes** of a good morning, a good meal, all the good, a pleasant evening, a good weekend, a good working day, etc. First of all, children's poems («*Blue Bell/ Bowed To Us With You./ Bells-Flowers /Are Very Polite ... / And You?*» by E. Serov), however, attempts to find poems for an adult audience should be continued (for example, A. Pushkin's *You And You* - a classic poem that is a precedent text and explains one of the aspects of using you (which in Russian has different forms for singular and plural use, as well as a polite and a casual form) in speech as a manifestation of the opposition of your own, close — someone else's).

## 7. Conclusion

Poetic works reveal common features and peculiarities of national perception of broad-based realities: from natural phenomena, architectural structures, to historical events, natural disasters, descriptions of geological processes, human relationships, existential issues, etc.

By comparing texts by authors of different nationalities, meeting points between different eras, different peoples, different generations can be identified; which is of utter importance even if just to attract the attention of students to universal values, also show a solidarity among nations of native speakers and those studying the language.

Together with our students, we have started publishing a series of research papers that we plan to continue. Thanks to these studies, students' interest in poetry will only continue to increase, as translated texts of Turkmen authors will be easier to perceive by Russian-speaking readers, and it will become twice as interesting for Turkmen students to read the texts where explanatory and historical comments, as well as

relevant translations for readers who do not understand the Turkmen language, are made by their friends or acquaintances. First of all, this applies to poetic texts.

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