

RLMSEE-2020
The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment
GRAMMAR OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND TEACHING IT
TO FOREIGNERS (CONFLICT ISSUES)

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Abstract

The article examines the phenomena of the Russian language that generate conflicts between academic grammar and communicative grammar. The article analyzes ways to eliminate incorrectness in explaining grammar to foreign students. In the field of morphology, this concerns the case endings of nouns. It is noted that the methodological literature often ignores phonetic processes in the morphemic component of an ending. Much attention is paid to controversial syntax issues. When considering the construction of belonging "у кого есть что" the mental reasons for using the verb "есть" instead of "иметь" are identified. In the form of a scientific hypothesis, a position is put forward about the iconicity of the structure of belonging in the Russian language, which determines new approaches to its study. It also raises the question of the morphological status of the word "поэтому". It is proposed to consider it not as the antonym of the conjunction "потому что", but as its analogue. Methodological recommendations for explaining this hybrid word to students are given, as well as types of didactic tasks and exercises are proposed for the purpose of its practical use in oral and written speech. The article examines the morphological and syntactic status of the word "это", which causes greatest difficulties in mastering it by foreign students.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Communicative grammar

The relevance of this article is explained by the need to identify the problems of the grammatical content of textbooks. Errors in students' speech are often provoked by insufficiently correct presentation of grammatical material. "One-sided preference for the communicative method of teaching RFL" is called the cause of these errors (Dohnal, 2016, p. 38). It is known that communicative grammar "describes the language from the outside, as if through the eyes of foreigners" (Velichko, 2018, p. 38). This is how it differs from academic grammar. This means that communicative grammar itself cannot be blamed. However, it is worth agreeing with the scientist that "interest in the grammatical system, which, oddly enough, exists in the language, has abruptly dropped" (Dohnal, 2016, p. 39). Interestingly, this trend is prevalent in scientific research that offers a radical model of language acquisition at an unconscious level: "The presented abstractions, be they formal rules or categories of prototypes, do not work" (Ambridge, 2020, p. 509).

1.2. Morphology and syntax issues

In the field of morphology, difficulties arise in the study of case endings. The main reason is the complex functional and semantic structure of the Russian case system (Kryuchkova, 2018; Kosareva et al., 2019). In many languages, the role of the case regulator is taken over by prepositions, while the cases are becoming obsolete (Beytenbrat, 2017; Protasova et al., 2017). In the Russian language, the matter is complicated by the morphemic component of the ending, where phonetic processes associated with the vowels *e*, *ě*, *ю*, *я* are observed. Among the syntactic problems, much attention is paid to the construction *кого есть что* that express belonging and possession. Science has done a lot to establish the features of this syntactic construction (Radbil, 2010). The question of the difference between this construction and similar constructions in other languages has been clarified, the coding classifier of which is either the verb *to be*, as in Russian, or the verb *to have*, as in most European languages (Fromm, 2016). But foreign students are able to understand the mental features of this construction through the idea of the isomorphism of the structure of the world, consciousness and language, that is, through understanding the iconicity of the structure, which reflects the similarity of language and object. The problem of iconicity of the construction of belonging has not been considered in the scientific literature, which determines the novelty of the ideas expressed in the article. Another syntax problem is cause-and-result relationships in complex sentences. In science, the issue of hybridity of the word *ноэтому*, which constantly changes its morphological status and its syntactic role, has been sufficiently studied (Odintsova, 2018). Despite this, most textbooks persist in calling it as a conjunction. The reason, apparently, in the obvious paronymic similarity of the conjunction *ноэтому что* and the words *ноэтому*. The word *эмо* not easy to explain, which can be either a pronoun or a particle (Shimchuk & Shchur, 1999). Here are some examples of recent research (Berezina, 2020; Kustova, 2020; Paducheva, 2019; Pekelis, 2019). However, this experience is poorly reflected in teaching practice. The word is studied in the classroom without reference to grammar. The puzzle for the student is that in the sentence *Эмо емол* the word *эмо* is the subject.

Further on, students often confuse the word *это* as a subject with the demonstrative pronoun *этом* neuter as an attribute: *этот журнал, это письмо*.

2. Problem Statement

As you can see, the article raises 4 important problems of teaching Russian as a foreign language:

- How to optimize the study of case endings of nouns with vowels *е, ё, ю, я*?
- How to bring students to an awareness of the mental characteristics of the structure *у кого есть кто/что*? How can the iconicity of this construction help us understand why we use the verb *to be*, and not the verb *to have*?
- What is important for finding out the grammatical status of the word *поэтому*? Why can't this word be qualified as a conjunction in subordinate clauses?
- How does the morphological and syntactic variation of the word *это* affect the analysis of subject-object and attributive relations? These four problems were not previously combined in a single study. This explains the novelty of the questions posed.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Case endings of nouns

In most textbooks, the endings of masculine nouns with *-ий* (*планетарий*), neuter nouns with *-ие* (*решение*), feminine nouns with *-ия* (*история*) in the prepositional case, for example, are denoted as *-ии*. Students perceive them as noun endings. However, the ending is only *-и*. What's the matter here? In the words *решение, история* of the sound [й'] is not indicated by a letter. This is a hidden consonant. It is hidden in the letters *е, я*, which come after the vowel *и*. This means that the sound [й'] enters the base of the word and closes it. The teacher's task is to indicate the sound [й']. Litnevskaya recommends to designate the sound [й'], hidden in iotated vowels, as *j*. It is important that you write it without parentheses in the right place (Litnevskaya, 2018, p. 207). Let's follow the advice and write *решениj-е, историj-я*. It is clear that in a word *в истории* the ending is *-и*, not *-ии*. The problem is the same with the genitive plural endings. Typically, textbook tables tell the student that in the words *зданий, лекций*, the ending is *-ий*. Feminine nouns have even more problems with the ending *-ей*. The tables do not differentiate the endings of the words *тетрадей, семей* (Laskareva, 2012, p. 16). Whereas the words *семей, статей* have zero endings. The algorithm of actions is simple: if, when the word changes, the sound [й'] disappears, then it enters the ending: *площад-ей, площад-ями*. However, if the sound [й'] remains in all cases, then it forms the basis of the word: *семьj-я, семьj-ями*. A similar situation arises when studying neuter nouns that end in *-ие*. Textbooks persistently write that there is a suffix *-ни* in Russian. However, it should be said that there is no such suffix. There is a suffix *-ниj*: *реше-ниj-е, упражне-ниj-е*. Here, too, the consonant *j* is not expressed in any way by a letter. At the center of teaching efforts should be the morphemic analysis of the word, the search for the basis of the word. The stem is defined by clipping the ending and / or the shaping suffix. Otherwise, students will believe the textbook table where the ending *-ий* is highlighted in the word *упражнений*. Realizing that when the

word is declined, it is the ending that changes, they mistakenly decide that in the nominative case it is necessary to write *упражнене* and not *упражнение*. The same erroneous train of thought will also occur with the formation of such ugly words as *семя*, *статья*, *общезите*. Well-organized methodical work with case endings of nouns assumes that the teacher will teach foreign students to see and write the sound [й'], if it is indicated by the letter *й*. For example, *герой*. Secondly, it is necessary to teach how to write the sound *j*, if it is hidden in a word and is not expressed by a letter, for example, *решениј-е*, *историј-я*. It is sad that we see errors related to the sound *j* even in reputable publications. For example, in an article on the alternation of sounds in Russian, the word *pilot* is transcribed [p'jilot] instead of [p'ilot] (Tomas et al., 2017, p. 453).

3.2. The grammatical construction of belonging

In native languages, students use the verb *to have* express the meaning of belonging. And in Russian, they meet with a strange for them regularity of using the verb *быть* to mean *иметь* (*У меня есть/был смартфон*). Foreigners find it difficult to accept the idea of Russian sentences that reflect the idea of having, but are formed on the basis of the verb *to be*. Therefore, the teacher's task is to explain the literal meaning of such phrases, relying on the preposition *-y*. Students are well acquainted with the direct meaning of the preposition in such phrases: *у окна*, *у метро*, that is, *рядом с окном*, *около метро*. Thus, the sentence *У меня есть смартфон* literally means: next to me is a smartphone, and therefore I have it. By revealing the initial image, the teacher will lead students to the realization of the mental characteristics of the Russian language. It is a language of being. The phrase *у меня есть* means that the object does not belong to you completely, but only is nearby. Comparing the concepts of possession in Russian and Western languages, where the verb *to have* prevails, the famous philosopher wrote that "the word 'have' is associated with the development of private property" (Fromm, 2016, p. 158). Of course, one can agree with the researcher who is sure that in Western languages "the idea of property is mentally active" (Radbil, 2010, p. 146). On the contrary, in Russian "to be" - language, it is weakened and has negative connotations. Russian culture testifies to the fact that the idea of hoarding is alien to it. The state of *быть* is a passive state. The state *иметь* is an active action. It is not for nothing that Western languages have displaced *быть* even from those spheres of life where the idea of possession and belonging is absent. For example, the Russian sentence *У неё были заплаканные глаза* literally translates as *Она имела заплаканные глаза*. The idea of ownership is so strong that often the relationship of belonging and having is replaced by other relationships using the possessive pronouns *мой*, *моя*. Instead of the word *у кого* a foreign student usually uses the nominative type of utterance, where the semantic subject is expressed in the nominative case: *Моя память хорошая*. The particular linguistic problem of expressing belonging and possession becomes the linguo-philosophical problem of the isomorphism of the structure of the world and natural language (Radbil, 2017). This idea is developed in another study, which suggests that ownership relations in society can have their own linguistic correlates. (Aikhenvald, 2019). Is it any wonder that in Russian the word *иметь* is actively used in expressions that have not a direct, but a figurative meaning: *иметь зуб*, *ничего не иметь против*, *иметь в виду*. It is important that the verb *иметь* practically no direct meaning of possession and belonging. Let us make an assumption that the noted feature of the Russian language to use the verb *есть* with the preposition *-y* in the meaning

иметь is a reflection of the iconicity of linguistic units. Iconicity is considered to be such a property of a linguistic sign, which manifests itself in the similarity of a sign and an object. In the iconic image, you can always see the form, which is explained by the similarity with the referent. The iconicity of images is the assimilation of signs to the physical properties of their objects. There is another iconicity - the iconicity of diagrams. This is a structural assimilation of a sign and an object. Note that in linguistics iconicity is studied mainly in the field of phonetics, word formation and morphology. In the field of phonetics, the relationship of similarity between the form of a linguistic sign (word root) and the sound sign of the signified object (onomatopoeia) is traced. In the sphere of word formation, the length of a sign reflects the complexity of its semantics (*учитель* - *учительница*). Diagrammatic iconicity manifests itself more in morphology. It is expressed in the analogy of parts of the sign and parts of the denotation. Form and meaning play an important motivating role in establishing diagrammatic iconicity. For example, the meaning of plural forms is more complex than singular forms. The long form reflects the semantic complexity of the plural (*журнал* - *журналы*). The same pattern is observed in the formation of indirect cases. There are more phonemes in them than in the nominative case (*журналы*- *журналов*-*журналам* - *журналами*). Where there is more form, there is more meaning. At present, iconicity in language at the phonetic and lexical levels is even tested experimentally. It has been determined that in most of the world's languages, a significant part of the 100 elements of the basic vocabulary have strong associations with certain types of sounds in human speech (Blasi et al., 2016). Another study established the relationship between phoneme form and word meaning (Diatka & Milička, 2017). Against this background, the article of Krivochen and Lackova (2020) looks completely innovative, in which the issues of iconicity are considered not in phonetics and morphology, but in the field of syntax. This is what our research is devoted to. Our idea of iconicity in the grammatical construction *у кого есть* is based on the postulate of cognitive grammar, according to which iconicity directly depends on associative thinking. Language always strives for the ideal, so that one form corresponds to one content. Iconicity is based precisely on this property of language. Polysemy (and the preposition *-у* is polysemantic), it would seem, contradicts iconicity, but all the meanings of polysemy are reduced to one invariant value. Various functions of the preposition *-у* are known: a) location (*Я буду ждать тебя у метро*); b) living with someone (*Брат живёт у бабушки*); belonging and possession (*У меня есть брат*); c) sensations (*У меня болит горло*). However, all values of *-у* include a common component – *быть рядом*. Consequently, the revealed iconicity of the grammatical construction of belonging confirms the conclusions about the mental uniqueness of the Russian construction.

4. Purpose of the Study

4.1. The grammatical status of the word *поэтому*

In almost all textbooks, aberration appears: the word *поэтому* is called a conjunction, opposed to the conjunction *потому что*. In the scientific literature, the question of transitivity, syncretism of linguistic phenomena has long been raised, the grammatical hybridity of the word *поэтому* can be considered a particular manifestation of this (Odintsova, 2018). Can *поэтому* be called a full-fledged conjunction? For example, in a sentence *У него было много работы, поэтому он пришел домой*

поздно the word *поэтому* can be considered as an adverbial modifier. So, there can be no question of a conjunction. All the more so about the subordinating conjunction adding the adverbial clause of result. There is only one known conjunction of this kind - *так что*. Note that you can't attach the conjunction *и* to the conjunction *так что*. But to the word *поэтому* you can add the conjunction *и* (*и поэтому*). The logic of reasoning requires that the word *поэтому* be called an adverb, and therefore a connecting word. But it is known that the connecting words are formed from relative pronouns and adverbs (*кто, что, какой, где, etc.*). Any relative pronoun or adverb corresponds to the same interrogative. But *поэтому* cannot be interrogative. Hence, *поэтому* is not a conjunction or a connecting word. Before us is an asyndetic sentence. The word *поэтому* acquires the status of a full-fledged adverb in it. In numerous studies, we find mutually exclusive characteristics: connecting word and adverb (Morkovkin et al., 2020), conjunction (Litnevskaya, 2018). An unsurpassed study comes to the rescue, where it is written that sentences with, *поэтому* "can be brought closer to complex sentences with adverbial clauses of result and conclusion." (Babaytseva, 2000, p. 349). For this, the researcher proposes to carry out the following manipulation: replace the hybrid word *поэтому* with the connecting word *отчего*. Continuing this thought, we come to the conclusion that *поэтому* is better attributed to the analogs of the conjunctions of which there are many in the language. They can be particles, modal words, adverbs, in other words, meaning concreters. Such structural components are often used to express reason, condition, concession. This happens when sentences are grammatically independent of one another: in a compound sentence or an asyndetic compound sentences. However, these words cannot be called conjunctions, because they do not fit into a single scheme of three types of compound, complex and asyndetic sentences. Means of connection can be either coordinating conjunctions, or subordinate conjunctions, or intonation. Here are some thoughts on this. Considering, in a contrasting pair, complex sentences with adverbial clause of cause with a conjunction *потому что* and complex sentences with adverbial clause of result, a single conjunction should be introduced *так что*. Do not be deceived by the paronymic similarity of the words *потому что* and *поэтому*. If the relationship of result and conclusion are important, you can enter the conjunction word *отчего*: *У него было много работы, отчего он пришел домой поздно*. The word *поэтому* is better to use in unity with a copulative conjunction *и* (*и поэтому*), forming a compound sentence: *У него было много работы, и поэтому он пришел домой поздно*. Two simple sentences are in independent relationship, and this eliminates the need to ask a question from one sentence to another. You have to understand that in the sentence *У него было много работы, поэтому он пришел домой поздно* the structure of asyndetic sentence is being implemented. Therefore, it is necessary to protect students from unsuccessful attempts to find the principal sentence and from it to ask a specific question to the subordinate clause. The student should ask a general question to the second part of the asyndetic sentence – *Он пришел домой поздно, потому что у него было много работы?* – *Да, поэтому*. This answer to a general question clarifies the status of the word *поэтому*. It is an adverb that is an adverbial modifier in a sentence.

4.2. The grammatical status of the word *это*

The word *это* occurs literally on first lessons in sentence: *Это стол*. Even then, students learn to define subject-object relationship in a sentence, which is facilitated by both general question *Что это?*

and concretizing question: *Это стол?* However, textbooks often ignore exercises for determining the morphological features of the word *это*. The word is studied only from the side of its pragmatic use in speech. If the teacher drew the students' attention that by asking the question *Что это?* we appeal to the predicate of the sentence, then the sentence *Это стол* would not cause any difficulties. It is clear that the word *это* is a subject, and the word *стол* is a predicate. In fact, we are dealing with a compound nominal predicate, where the link verb *есть* is missing (Paducheva, 2019, p. 341). So, this word in these examples is a neuter form that does not change according to gender or number. This is its morphological feature. In a sentence, it is the subject. This is its syntactic attribute. We are dealing with the word form of the pronoun *этом* - *это*. The pronoun *этом* which indicates the attribute of the object, is introduced to students at the same time as the word *это* in the role of the subject. As you can see, the word *это* is a grammatical form of the neuter gender, the singular of the demonstrative pronoun *этом*. The teacher must show the difference between the semantics of the pronoun *это*, which indicates a feature of the subject, and the word form of the neuter pronoun *это*, which takes on the features of a noun, replaces the subject, and performs the role of a subject or object. It is useful to offer students exercises to differentiate the syntactic role of this word: *Это книга. Это книги. Я получил это письмо*. Students are introduced to the question *Какое?* and they learn to use the word *это* in the syntactic role of an attribute. In the future, students will be able to expand the range of syntactic constructions: *Делайте это задание (какое?); Мне это кажется не так весело (что?); Я просто закрываю глаза на это (на что?)*. Also, students come across the word *это* in the syntactic role of a particle: *Париж – это столица Франции*. When studying the language of the specialty, such sentences appear as: *Филология – это гуманитарная наука*. Any student can have an aberration of consciousness, since he is used to using this word in other syntactic roles: either as a subject, object, or as an attribute. As a result, there are cognitive errors. In these examples, the word *это* can't function as part of a sentence. It is important that in most European languages there is no analog of such constructions (Shimchuk & Shchur, 1999). The teacher explains that this particle is placed before the predicate. The predicate can be expressed a noun in the nominative case, an infinitive verb or a predicative adverb: *Учиться – это трудиться; Путешествие – это всегда интересно*. Students get acquainted with this syntactic function of the word *это* against the background of syntactic roles already studied. This means that you need exercises and tasks of a differentiating plan. For example, find the subject and predicate in these sentences: *Я хочу купить это пальто. Это мне не нравится. Любовь – это верность*. Other meanings of the word *это* as an emphatic particle can be explained to students on a lexical level. The particle *это* is used to amplify the meaning of an interrogative pronoun (*кто, что, etc.*) or an adverb (*где, как, etc.*) – "*Кто это вам сказал правду?*" (Pekelis, 2019, p. 495).

5. Research Methods

Since the article is aimed at identifying painful points of discrepancy between academic and communicative grammars, the main research methods were comparative and analytical. It is also important to use a method of explaining grammatical phenomena in order to generalize them, systematize them, and apply them in the practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Since the idea of the iconicity of the grammatical construction of belonging in the Russian language is framed as a scientific

hypothesis, we allow ourselves to consider the hypothetical method important. Together, this research methodology has led to interesting results that are very promising in scientific and practical terms.

6. Findings

6.1. The Need for transcribing sounds when studying case endings

The result of the study of the problem of case endings of nouns is the conclusion that it is necessary to teach foreign students the rules of transcribing sounds. Students should distinguish between the sound [й'], indicated by the letter *й*, and the visually indeterminate sound [j'], so as not to make mistakes in the endings of the words *статей, зданий, аудиторий*, etc. It is recommended to use Table 1 with correctly highlighted endings.

Table 1. Genitive. Plural. Endings of nouns

Gender	Endings	Examples
m.	-ов/ев	студент[ов] иностранц[ев]
	-ей	словар[ей] песен[ей]
	-[]	лекций[] статей[]
f.	-ей	тетрад[ей] писем[]
	- []	зданий[]
n.	-ей	мор[ей]

6.2. The need to understand the structure *у кого есть...* through the prism of its iconicity

The result of the study of the problems associated with the construction of belonging, we can consider the conclusion that it is necessary to clarify the mental difference between the Russian language and European languages. The teacher is invited to use the idea of iconicity to explain the semantics of the construction *у кого есть...*

6.3. The need to explain the hybridity of the word *поэтому*

When studying the issue of presenting the word *поэтому* in a foreign audience, we have come to the conclusion that its morphological and syntactic hybridity is ignored. In the 14 textbooks we analyzed, the word is called only a conjunction. However, it is not specified in which subordinate clause is the word *поэтому* used. It seems strange that none of the textbooks introduce a subordinate conjunction so that. It is proposed to differentiate the analog of conjunction *поэтому* and the adverb *поэтому*.

6.4. The need to consider the word *эмо* as a pronoun and as a particle

Although the word *эмо* introduced already in the first lessons in the Russian language, at level B1 students still cannot understand the subject-predicate, subject-object and attributive relationship in sentences where this word is used. As a result, when studying the construction *Чмо – эмо чмо*, students cannot realize that the word *эмо* is used as a particle. The article provides recommendations for drawing up didactic materials to distinguish between these phenomena.

7. Conclusion

The scientific novelty of the research is that the most conflicting points of competition between academic and communicative grammars are revealed. They concern case endings of nouns, morphological-syntactic problems associated with the use of the construction of belonging *у кого есть чмо*, as well as the words *ноэмоу* and *эмо*. Despite the apparent heterogeneity of these phenomena, they are connected by one thing – the presentation of these structures and words begins with the first lessons of teaching the Russian language. The article attempts to show the real complexity of these grammatical phenomena and outline ways to overcome errors, inertia and stagnation in the content of textbooks, tables, and didactic materials. Of particular importance is the idea of iconicity of the structure of belonging, which opens the way for an accessible explanation of it in the classroom. The scientific significance of the research results is that they contribute to the methodology of Russian as a foreign language. This means that the research has both theoretical and applied significance. Many conclusions and recommendations can be a great help for teachers in organizing work with foreign students. We hope that the research will help to update the content of textbooks on Russian as a foreign language.

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