

CONCEPT FOR UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK FOR CROATIAN STUDENTS (IN TERMS OF LEARNING A CLOSELY RELATED LANGUAGE)

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Abstract:

In creating textbooks and course books for foreign language education, the starting point is the goal of learning the language – language acquisition either on the level of communication skills for specific purposes (business or daily), or as part of the process of training philology specialists, or more specifically, linguistics specialists. In this, among other factors, authors should take into account the ethno-linguistic characteristics of the audience, so the training process should be organised differently for groups of students who study a language closely related to their native language. In studying a closely related language, a variety of phenomena is observed, such as, for example, interference, cross-language homonymy, the fact that ability to perceive and understand a foreign language always outweighs the ability to reproduce material, etc. These points are important to consider when preparing textbooks and course books, and they should be reflected in the selection of lexical material and presentation of grammar. Existing textbooks for learning Ukrainian as a foreign language are mainly not designed for a Slavic languages-speaking audience, which makes the process of training specialists in Ukrainian in Slavic countries more difficult. On the other hand, the methods of organising the material in a textbook and its structure should be designed for philology students and therefore should feature a complex and comprehensive presentation of the language material and combine various methods of teaching. We propose the principles we follow in creating a textbook for learning Ukrainian designed for Croatian students whose primary field of study is the Ukrainian language.

Key words: teaching methodology, closely related languages, communication skills, teacher's role, philology students

1 *Introduction* Ukrainian language studies at the University of Zagreb have a long and strong tradition. However, one of the constant tasks is to improve the effectiveness of training specialists in Ukrainian as future translators, teachers, and in broader terms – Slavic philologists with a high level of expertise.

In classes, there is an obvious lack of appropriate teaching materials, handbooks and textbooks that could best meet the students' needs.

2 *The objective* of this paper is to lay down for consideration and discussion the conceptual principles of such a textbook, its main characteristics, structure and methodology that are built into its basis.

3 *Specific characteristics of materials used in teaching Ukrainian.* In working with students whose field of study is a foreign language, special textbooks are commonly used, developed for the purpose of acquiring the language at the appropriate level, as well as grammar books, dictionaries and other academic publications that enable a deeper and more detailed study and research of certain linguistic phenomena.

The existing textbooks of Ukrainian for foreigners partially cover our needs. In particular, teachers in our department use in their work Ukrainian language textbooks designed for foreigners who are not speakers of Slavic languages (Zhluktenko, Ju. O., & Toc'ka, N. I. (1973). *Pidruchnyk ukrajins'koji movy*. Kyjiv.; Zajchenko, N. F., & Vorobjova, S. A. (2004). *Praktychnyj kurs ukrajins'koji movy dl'a inozemciv: usne movlenn'a*. Kyjiv.; Jeshchenko, N.O. (Bojchenko) (2010). *Praktychnyj kurs ukrajins'koji movy: usne movlennja. Navchaljnyj posibnyk dlja inozemnyh studentiv*; Palins'ka, O., & Turkevych, O. (2011) *Krok-1(ukrajins'ka mova jak inozemna)*. L'viv), and among the existing textbooks that take into account the needs of speakers of related languages, there are only those designed for students who speak Russian. Therefore, it is necessary to create a textbook that would successfully combine approaches to teaching Ukrainian for “distant” and “close” foreigners.

In addition, the textbooks mentioned are designed to help students master Ukrainian in order to develop active communication skills and to master grammar structures, or for specific professional purposes (for example, foreign students learning Ukrainian at a basic level to be able to study at other, non- philological faculties in the Ukraine – medical, technical, natural sciences,

etc.). This approach, which can roughly be referred to as “*communicative*”, is generally prevalent in modern foreign language teaching, although it is not fully appropriate for philology students. In this case, the foreign language itself becomes the object of students’ study. Accordingly, students must not only develop the skills of expressing themselves in the foreign language (“surface” knowledge), but also understand the core of the language and linguistic phenomena (“deep” knowledge of the foreign language). Therefore, if we talk about training linguists in broader terms, we should use the “*conceptual and functional*” approach to teaching, and to the preparation of textbooks (Jarmak, 2001), since the training of philology students involves the introduction of a strong theoretical basis with numerous exercises. The aim of teaching in this case is to train expert philologists; they should gradually acquire both grammar and orthography, have a wide vocabulary and the ability to express themselves and even to “think” in the foreign language, i.e. acquire the cultural image behind the words. Hence, all language levels, and preferably in aspects that are as broad as possible, should be taken into account.

Accordingly, in considering what exactly the kind of the textbook required is, it should be noted that this is a textbook for 1) philology students for whom the Ukrainian language is the major field of study, and 2) students who study a closely related language.

To solve this problem, our goal was to prepare a Ukrainian language textbook for students studying Ukrainian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb, which would fit the education needs of philology students.

The planned textbook is designed for students of the 1st and 2nd years of study, and is intended to be used during 4 semesters – the time required for a more or less full basic mastering of the language studied.

4 *Conceptual principles*

The first of the conceptual principles in the Ukrainian textbook preparation is its focus on the professional education of philologists.

This means that the presentation of material will cover the conceptual instruments and categories the philology students should know. Therefore, it is our task to prepare a textbook that would:

- propose lexical and grammar material in accordance with the professional level of students;

- develop active language skills that ultimately form linguistic knowledge;
- develop skills of appropriate language use depending on communicative situations;
- fully cover the basic Ukrainian grammar system;
- include wide but systematically framed lexical material, the mastering of which would allow students to freely use texts (both oral and written), in most everyday situations and in special texts, that is, which would constitute the basis for the further expansion of the lexical fund and the deepening of vocabulary in highly specialised fields;
- contain a sufficient amount of exercises and practical tasks, which will provide a good drill and mastering of lexical and grammar structures at the appropriate level;
- include a sufficient amount of texts related to the culture, history and geography of the country, etc., which are an obligatory component in the formation of professional competence of specialists in a foreign language (and beyond: in literature and culture).

Therefore, this would be a single integrative foreign language textbook, which would develop various language skills in students, at the levels of both understanding and expression (Kljuchkovs'ka, 2009).

5 Textbook *structure*

The overall textbook material can be divided into two parts: a) the beginners level, intended for the first two semesters of the language study, which would include grammar and lexical structures that allow students to express themselves grammatically correctly in basic everyday situations, and be able to construct simple syntactic structures (this refers to the knowledge of all cases, their forms and basic functions in a sentence, basic grammatical categories of verbs, such as tense and aspect, etc.); and b) the intermediate level that would continue the expansion of linguistic knowledge, building on the already acquired material, which will allow students to construct syntactically and lexically more complex structures (for example, the emphasis on individual case functions, verb categories such as aspect, voice, certain rules of word formation, etc.)

The textbook consists of the main book and a workbook with exercises accompanying each unit.

In considering the structure of the main part, we concluded that it is most appropriate to divide it into units (not lessons), each of which includes:

- 1) the main text;

- 2) vocabulary from the text with translations into Croatian;
- 3) orthoepy and orthography rules with exercises;
- 4) grammar rules and exercises;
- 5) speech structures;
- 6) lexical, grammar and communicative exercises;
- 7) translation exercises;
- 8) additional material for optional work (or self-study).

More precisely, the *main text* should include lexical tools for a certain lexical topic (e.g., “family”, “house”, “food”, “clothing”, etc.). The text should also take into account the grammar structures dealt with in the unit, and repeat them several times, but it should not be loaded with other structures that are unknown to the student at this stage of language learning. However, it should be noted that such forms are allowed, as well as more complex structures. After all, the speakers of Croatian will more or less understand the majority of Ukrainian grammar forms from the context. For example, for students whose native language is Croatian, the meaning and grammatical characteristics of the Ukrainian sentence: “*Я буду читати*” should be clearly understandable already at the beginning of learning the language, without indicating that this is the future tense form of the verb (as in similar structures *Вона читала* – past tense; *Ми пишемо* – present tense), while for students who are native speakers of e.g. English or German, the introduction of such structures without explanation and multiple repetitions will aggravate understanding. Therefore, we allow the inclusion of more complex texts already at the initial stage of language learning compared to the texts in Ukrainian language textbooks for foreigners that are currently available. Croatian students will understand most material from the context, and more complex structures or complicated words are accompanied with comments or direct translation into Croatian. Therefore, students will immediately be provided with the entire logically complete text, expand their vocabulary more intensively and acquire expression skills more quickly.

To this end, it seems appropriate to provide some additional vocabulary after the text that is related to the topic.

A set of *phonetic and orthography exercises* is introduced to develop the skills of correct pronunciation of Ukrainian language sounds and stress. It should be noted that accentuation rules

are one of the main problems for Croatians who learn Ukrainian due to fundamental accentuation differences, whether it is the understanding of the nature of stress as a linguistic phenomenon, or mastering the Ukrainian “floating” stress. Special attention is paid to the pronunciation of certain sounds, especially those absent in Croatian, such as /z/, differences in pronunciation of hard and soft consonants, etc.

We consider it useful to include exercises of expressive reading, tongue-twisters, etc. in phonetic exercises.

Croatian students used to the Latin alphabet need orthography exercises primarily because of the different graphical system. Therefore, such exercises will enable a faster development of correct writing skills in Cyrillic. In addition, they will also help them master certain features of Ukrainian orthography, such as the apostrophe and the specific rules of its use, the implementation of morphological orthographic principle to a greater extent than in Croatian, change of sounds, etc.

Grammar rules should be presented sufficiently broadly and comprehensively and must take into account similarities and differences of certain grammar forms in the foreign and native languages.

For example, we believe that each case should be dealt with individually, not in the paradigm or declination. In this way, what is equal and different in the two languages is better observed – functions of cases in the sentence, specific formal forms, and links with verbs are taken into account, as is the presence of prepositions in structures. For example, 1st year students often make mistakes in the instrumental case, which, in addition to almost identical endings for masculine and neuter, has different endings for the feminine: masc. *studentom*=*студентом*, *učiteljem*=*учителем*, neutr. *selom*=*селом*, *suncem*=*солнцем*, but femin. *sestrom*–*сестрою* (not **сестром*). Frequently there will also be errors in selecting the correct case in structures such as *торт з малиною* (instr.) – *сік з малини* (gen.), because in Ukrainian the same preposition is used with different cases (compared to Croatian – *s čime* instr. // *od čega* gen.).

Special attention is given to certain verb categories, for example, reflexive verbs: differences in forms but also in expressing the reflexive category itself. In some cases a Ukrainian reflexive verb corresponds to a non-reflexive verb in Croatian (*uživati u čemu* – *насолоджуватися чим*, *koristiti što* – *користуватися чим*).

To the same end, i.e. in order to detect differences between the two languages, we include

translation exercises from Croatian into Ukrainian, which also help understand, raise awareness of the differences between the native and the foreign language, in addition to, of course, contributing to the acquisition of translation skills.

In the translation exercises students can visualise the characteristics of meaning, the nuances of the semantic structure of lexemes. Thus, it is appropriate to include exercises that would provide for the selection of several translation variants, search for synonyms (in foreign and native languages), and translation exercises containing proper names (especially toponyms).

This is why *lexical material* is so important in the process of selecting material for the preparation of exercises. These are the words and phrases which represent the core of the language itself, but at the same time they are the basis for practising grammar structures. As for vocabulary, it should be noted and emphasised that closely related languages in their vocabularies have a large number of the same or similar words in terms of pronunciation and semantics. In the process of language learning, this phenomenon is at the same time facilitating and aggravating: on the one hand, it makes it easier to understand and master the language faster, but on the other hand it is often confusing (at the level of understanding if the same pronunciation has different meanings, the so-called cross-language homonymy; at the level of expression it can create a habit among students to use Croatian words, phonetically and morphologically adapted to the Ukrainian language, which is quite often the case, from our experience, for example **ормарик* for *ormarić*, or **ніджама* for *pidžama*, etc.).

By *speech structures* we mean various formulas, phrases typical of certain communicative situations that are introduced into example dialogues. These exercises are primarily intended for the acquisition of speaking skills which are the primary task for anyone who learns a foreign language. Such structures should take into account the different communication tonalities, both the formal, characteristic of official communication, and the purely conversational, typical of everyday situations, and even some forms of slang, since a philologist as a foreign language specialist should master the clear stylistic differentiation and have the ability to select linguistic resources in accordance with actual communicative situations. Therefore the use of multi-style language material in foreign language learning helps to achieve a more successful professional communication.

Developed communicative exercises help the teacher to create communicative situations

that encourage students to speak actively. This is facilitated by dialogue exercises, as well as games (e.g., role-playing).

We consider it appropriate to include in the structure of each unit *additional material for optional use*, or for self-study. These can be literary texts related to the topic learned (lexically or grammatically), or folk poetry, non-fiction texts, advertisements, jokes, etc., accompanied by exercises for individual work (e.g. “Answer the questions...”, “True or false?” – exercises to check understanding; “Write down synonyms/antonyms...”, “Write the meaning of words/idioms” – vocabulary exercises, etc.). Such or similar material is preferred in foreign language study, as it contributes to faster progress in learning. Therefore, its inclusion in the textbook facilitates primarily the work of the teacher as it builds on the vocabulary and grammar structures learned within the units.

6 As the *conclusion*, it should be pointed out that in teaching a foreign language to philology students a textbook is needed with the informative, developing, communicative, motivating, systematising and formative, in addition to instructive and control functions, i.e. a textbook that would “integrate” in its structure several aspects of training language professionals.

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