

# The Evolution of Linguistic Guess While Teaching Chinese Students Reading in Russian

## La evolución de la conjetura lingüística mientras se enseña a los estudiantes chinos a leer en ruso

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#### ABSTRACT:

The focus of the paper is an intensive training of Chinese students to read texts in Russian with the help of linguistic guess. The material for the study is based on the specially designed and tested (during 2012-2014) tutorial "Famous Russian names. XXI Century. (Bolshakova and Nizkoshapkina 2012; Bolshakova and Nizkoshapkina 2014). The tutorial is accompanied by the educational website <https://sites.google.com/site/imenarossii3> (Nizkoshapkina 2014a; Nizkoshapkina 2014b). The website makes it possible for Chinese students to develop phonetic, listening comprehension and communication skills, as well as the skills of independent work with a text, using a linguistic guess.

**Keywords:** text, ethno-methodological system, linguistic guess, lingua methodological national tradition, ethno-psychological factors, website.

#### RESUMEN:

El enfoque del documento es una capacitación intensiva de estudiantes chinos para leer textos en ruso con la ayuda de adivinanzas lingüísticas. El material para el estudio se basa en el tutorial especialmente diseñado y probado (durante 2012-2014) "Nombres de rusos famosos. Siglo XXI. (Bolshakova y Nizkoshapkina 2012, Bolshakova y Nizkoshapkina 2014). El tutorial va acompañado del sitio web educativo <https://sites.google.com/site/imenarossii3> (Nizkoshapkina 2014a; Nizkoshapkina 2014b). El sitio web hace posible que los estudiantes chinos desarrollen habilidades fonéticas, de comprensión auditiva y de comunicación, así como las habilidades de trabajo independiente con un texto, utilizando una suposición lingüística. Palabras clave: texto, sistema etnometodológico, conjetura lingüística, lingua, tradición metodológica nacional, factores etnopsicológicos, sitio web.

## 1. Introduction

Chinese students are known as one of the most difficult students' body contingents in Russian universities, which is largely explained by the fact that they do not only speak a

different language but also have a different culture, different education traditions, family, school and university training. Nowadays methodologists and teaching practitioners are looking for new possibilities of teaching the Russian language to the Chinese, which may be realized in modern ethnically oriented textbooks using modern informational communicative resources. In this study we propose a special model of teaching Chinese students the Russian language. This model is based on the attempt to integrate ethnomethodologically new texts into the educational process. The approach inspires the development of linguistic guess among students. The innovativeness of the research is reflected in the urgency of the topic under discussion and the need to add new textual materials and working methods into a learning process, to stimulate the students' interest to read texts and to increase their level of comprehension. In contrast to the existing textbooks the proposed ethnomethodologically innovative system of teaching reading texts in Russian, our approach includes specially structured educational materials (texts, assignments, exercises, comments, quizzes, etc.), selected with the help of modern information and communication resources to ensure the successful formation of the Chinese students' communicative competences in reading.

The authors took into account the specifics of the Chinese language in order to maximize the potential of their approach. Namely, we understood it that the hieroglyphic writing laid the foundation for the special symbolic focus of Chinese thinking, which is different from the conceptual and abstract thinking, typical of alphabetic writing. Chinese hieroglyphic writing makes students clarify, detail and specify the material they study. According to modern methodologists and researchers (Balykhina T.M. (2010), Vladimirova T.E. (2004), Pugachyov I.A. (2011), Bobrysheva I.E. (1996), et al.), "Chinese thought is based on the artistic shape, rather than conceptual foundation" (Bobrysheva, 1996). Back in the 60s North American scientists (neuropsychologist Roger Sperry, neurosurgeon Joseph Bogen, neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga etc.) found out that each of the cerebral hemispheres is responsible for different types of processing information: the left sphere processes the information analytically, the right - holistically. While the left brain processes the information verbally, the right is involved in visualization. When reading and writing Chinese texts, the right hemisphere is activated more, "a Chinese character represents the meaning of a whole picture, because its semantic meaning cannot always be deduced from the analytically dismembered set of features or grapheme, of which it is composed" (Pugachyov, 2011, pp. 69).

The same view is held by the Russian researcher Bobrysheva I.E., who states that Chinese thinking is characterized by "intuitive, associative holism, and focused on the analogy of the last axiom - a synthetic, i.e. holistic thinking" (Bobrysheva, 1996, pp. 50).

The Russian scientist Vladimirova T.E. also believes that "in the process of perception of the Chinese character brain forms synthetic images, requiring an intuitive level of thinking and hemispheric mechanisms of thinking" (Vladimirova 2010, pp. 153).

Describing analytical and intuitive types of mind, the British researcher of intuition Sadler-Smith, said that experimentally it had been proven that the best results of thinking occurred when analytical thinking and intuitive thinking were balanced and harmonious (Sadler-Smith, 2011, pp. 20).

The English scientist and researcher of intuition problems, Philippe Bomar, emphasized that "throughout China's history there have always been philosophers who recognized the importance of knowledge based on guesswork" (Bomar, 2014, pp. 126). However, the accuracy of determining the value of the phenomenon, based on a guess, as indicated by Bomar, depends "on the reflection of mental actions and the control of their accuracy" (Bomar, 2014, pp. 126).

All the foregoing leads to the conclusion that teaching the Chinese how to do a guesswork in Russian is a necessary prerequisite for a deep comprehension of a Russian text. Thus, guessing in Chinese philosophy is of great importance. As pointed by P. Bomar, the Taoist tradition is based on "looking for a way to wisdom in aphorisms about the actions that are close to the intelligence, based on guesswork" (Bomar, 2014, pp. 126).

Guesswork or insight has been grabbing the attention of scientists, trainers, teachers and

practitioners for a long time. The studies of psychophysiological mechanisms of insight in Russia (Bekhtereva and Schukin 2003; Bekhtereva 2008; Chet 1998; Titkova 2011; Kochergina 2011; Milovanova 2013; Shubin 1972, et al.) show that its occurrence is associated with various forms of thinking: comparison, generalization, analysis, synthesis, etc. An insight includes a number of logical operations of semantic character. Based on the already established connection, the student in the course of allocation, redistribution, and various combinations of familiar elements in a word gets an opportunity to form new connections, determining the exact meaning of the word. In this case the student must understand well what actions and in what sequence should be performed in order to get a positive result.

Thus, although there is an intuitive link element (the basis of an insight is scholastic), it is possible to identify general rules, according to which the "linguistic guess needs to be specifically taught to students to develop their feel for a language" (Bolshakova, 2014, pp. 14; Bolshakova 2012; Bolshakova 2005).

Thus, the students' understanding of the specifics of the Russian language, the laws of its derivation, the ability to produce morphemic and word-formation analysis and carry out the necessary transfer, to a large extent, simplifies and accelerates the development of guesswork.

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## **2. Methods and methodology**

Before the introduction of ethnomethodologically relevant approach to teaching linguistic guess, we started with the selection of topics for educational texts. For this purpose, in 2011-2014 Nizkoshapkina O.V. conducted a survey of Chinese students studying Russian at Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The Chinese students came from the Shandong State University, Xi'an Petroleum State University and Harbin State Polytechnic University. The purpose of the survey was to identify texts' topics, which would be interesting for the Chinese audience.

The result of this work laid a foundation for a system of texts, exercises and tasks for teaching Chinese students how to read in Russian. These exercises formed the contents of the book "Famous Russian names. XXI Century" (Bolshakova and Nizkoshapkina 2012; Bolshakova and Nizkoshapkina 2014). The work with the text in the book is based not only on the system of exercises, which came before the text, in the text itself and after the text. The exercises and tasks are aimed at the development of forecasting text content skills, much emphasis is also put on the key units that facilitated the formation of linguistic and communicative competences.

To adequately understand the main concepts of the texts, the texts were strictly structured into paragraphs, which highlighted the main focal points, such as: the subject, the event, the time, the place.

Special attention, within the ethnomethodologically relevant approach, was paid to special exercises that developed the ability of Chinese students to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words. These exercises were based on:

- word-formation analysis
- context
- themes and situations of the text
- past experience

The ethnomethodologically relevant approach of teaching how to read in Russian includes the use of fresh innovative teaching methods, modern information technologies, multimedia, the Internet. For the purpose of formation of communicative abilities and activation of independent work in teaching the Russian linguistic guess, we developed and implemented in the educational process the multimedia e-course "Famous Russian names. XXI Century", which involves the following modules: "Listening Comprehension", "Movies", "Dictionary", including the sub-module "Audio dictionary", "Texts and tasks" (sub-module "Culture", "Science", "Sports") and "Tests".

The pilot training session was conducted in 2014-2016. It showed that the textbook materials and the website content focused around our project "The famous Russian names. XXI Century ", helped the Chinese students to quickly and effectively get a positive result.

The study noted that the basis of guesswork is the mechanism of probabilistic forecasting. The Russian linguistic guess includes the mechanism of disclosure of a linguistic unit by analyzing its grammatical structure and semantic context of a message, which is an integral part of semantic perception of the text. It is focused on the understanding of the information, which is expressed in grammatically structured lexical units of a text.

The successful development of the linguistic guess, to a large degree, depends on the past experience of a student; as well as any human activity is impossible without reliance on what has been learned previously. We share the view of researcher (Shubin 1972), who believes that an important and necessary step in understanding the text is apperception, which gives "the right to guess." The deeper apperception, the wider and more diverse the student experience is the easier and faster a guess about the meaning of unfamiliar words arises. Accordingly, it is necessary to teach students to analyze foreign language data to compare unfamiliar words with friends, using the analogy and different kinds of transfer.

Given the above, it is important to teach Chinese students to do guesswork about the meaning of words, primarily stemming from the morphological structure of the Russian language. For the Russian language is characterized as a suffix-prefixes' word formation type. Suffix word formation is characteristic of nouns and adjectives, prefixes –of verbs. The suffix method of word formation is implemented in the production of new words by adding a suffix to certain words: *gord-ost'* ('pride'), *pobedi-tel'* ('winner'), *kitai-sk-yi* ('Chinese'), *portrait-ist* ('portrait painter'), etc. The prefix method involves adding a specific prefix to the whole word: *vy-igrat'* ('to win'), *pod-rabotat'* ('to do extra work'), *pere-ehat'* (to override) etc. Derivational elements, especially suffixes that allow to relate the word to a particular part of speech, determine declination and gender. For example, if a student knows that from verbal bases with suffixes **-tel, -tor** Russian native speakers form nouns, denoting a person who performs an action, he will be able to come to a correct understanding of new words, such as *posetitel* ('a visitor'), *predstavitel* ('a representative'), *organizator* ('an organizer').

It is important that while identifying the already known components of an unfamiliar word, students perceive them as organic parts, which do not exist on their own, and make it possible to identify the meaning of a word.

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### 3. Results and discussion

The objectivity and reliability of the main ideas and conclusions of the study are based on the results of pilot training for a number of years (2012-2014).

Based on the results of the experiment, conducted by Nizkoshapkina O.V., it was found that in two groups of Chinese students with the same entrance knowledge of Russian, the ability to comprehend a Russian text was formed faster in the group where we used ethnically oriented methodology and tried to form a linguistic guess.

The above is intended to make the main conclusions:

- thematically adapted methodically structured texts, including a set of exercises aimed at consistent, step-by-step understanding of unfamiliar words, has a significant advantage over reading disparate texts, with non-uniform theme and exercise system, which is not focused on understanding unfamiliar words through guesswork;
- systematic training of guesswork, based on word-formation analysis, context, themes and situations moves away linguistic and psychological barriers in understanding the text information;
- the analysis of the results of the proposed ethnically oriented education system has shown that the use of new modern teaching materials and technologies, involving information technology activates and resources, facilitates the extraction, transformation and combination of text content to Chinese students;
- training and control tests on proposed texts (for the current and final assessment)

contribute to the development of self-control and self-assessment skills. Such skills also improve the level of formation of communicative competence of Chinese students.

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## 4. Conclusion

Thus, experiential learning results confirmed the hypothesis, according to which it is necessary to give maximum consideration to ethnic and cultural specifics and ethno-psychological and cognitive features of Chinese students. The results proved the effectiveness of the proposed system with the ethnomethodologically relevant approach: national-oriented exercises and tasks activate the students' independent work, contribute to the development of skills of combining and transforming texts, they also develop skills of linguistic and semantic information prediction.

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