



**Russian abbreviations as a linguodidactic problem In the slovak audience**

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**Abstract**

The contracted words in many world languages are intricate for linguodidactic practice. It is determined by the peculiarities of their etymology, semantics and functioning, the branched typology, an ambiguity of the status in lexical and grammatical subsystems, the difficulties in getting on to their phonetics and orthologically correct use in speech. Nevertheless, abbreviation has fortified its positions among productive ways of word building for the last hundred years. And numerous significant extralinguistic factors are indicative of this tendency to have been kept in future. In this connection the task to teach the students to competently use abbreviations in different communicative situations comes to be essential. This problem assumes the nature of a special acuteness in foreign audience as familiarization with the abbreviations of a studied language for a foreign speaker is not simply an introduction to new vocabulary but revelation of the culture-specific concepts encoded in them.

Abbreviation as a linguistic phenomenon have been studied quite good from different positions, though on the basis of the material of Latin languages than of Slavonic languages. As for the use of this knowledge in linguodidactics, the situation concerning the Russian language leaves much to be desired. This fact determines an important topicality of our investigation. We make the solution of the problem how to organize an effective work in learning Russian abbreviations by Slovak students in the classes of RFL our aim. To achieve it, we used the methods of analysis of linguistic and didactic material offered in Slovak manuals in RFL, observed the students learning abbreviations in different teaching situations, marked the difficulties being arisen and mistakes. The material presented in the article can be useful for preparing for courses in lexicology, grammar, specialized translation, as well as in compiling manuals and dictionaries.

**Keywords:** Russian as foreign language, linguodidactics, abbreviation, orthology.



## **Introduction**

Training a proficient philologist, a teacher or a translator implies student's familiarization with the most ways of Russian word formation and their stylistic potential. Among such ways it is abbreviation that cause the most difficulties the students (Russian and foreign) and practicing translators meet with. In this article, backed by the traditions of the teaching of Russian in Kazan and Prešov universities and by some general methodical theses given in the articles [Varlamova M., Miftakhova A., 2016; Egorov D. et al., 2016; Varlamova M. et al., 2016; Ostroumova O. et al., 2015], we made an attempt from the standpoint of linguodidactics to analyze Russian abbreviations being actual for Slovak university audience. We took into consideration the results of the papers dealing with the problems of semantics and pragmatics of abbreviations (see [Zerkina N. et al., 2015; Kostina N. et al., 2015]). We focused on the ways of presenting abbreviations in Slovak manuals on speech development, as well as teaching techniques used by the teachers when working with this material during practical Russian and specialized translation training. The need for science-based comprehension is due to, first of all, incommensurably varying degrees of productive efficiency of abbreviation in the Russian and Slovak languages, in the second place, many extralinguistic factors making for its growth in the studied languages and, in the second place, pedagogical experience of the authors of the article in the teaching of Russian as a foreign language at Slovak university.

## **Methods**

Our article zeroed in on the abbreviated words, or abbreviation in the broad sense of this term, that is, not only initial but also syllabic, mixed type (abbreviated words), and graphic abbreviations. When attributing the units to either of the types, we followed the classification suggested by V. N. Yartseva and N. Y. Shvedova [Yartseva V. N., 1998; Shvedova N. Y., 1980].

The main methods of investigation are the analysis of contracted words and the materials that contains them in the RFL manuals by Slovak authors, monitoring of phonetic and grammar peculiarities of using the Russian abbreviations by the students in different speech situations, linguistic and orthologic analysis of typical mistakes and difficulties when Slovak students' working with the given material.

## **Results**

Our investigation has shown that when teaching the Slovak students to the Russian language, the teachers neglect the work with abbreviations. The Slovak University textbooks for development of Russian speech communication skills do not contain special phonetic, grammatical and lexical tasks oriented towards easing of acquisition this actual and complex linguistic material by the students.



Russian abbreviations are not included by the authors of the manuals into basic dictionary and often given without transcription or Slovak equivalent, are listed without any transcription of correct variant of pronunciation. The problem of grammar learning of abbreviations are not being solved – determining their gender and possibility of declining them, as well as the problem of abbreviation homonymy. There are no references how to reproduce Russian graphical abbreviations in speech. The difficulties that are unsurmountable in the study of the basic course of the Russian language, the students are to overcome, working with the documents of the official business style in the classes on special and notarial translation. The best strategies for mastering Russian abbreviations by the Slovak students are, in our opinion, the semantization of these units, as well as the search and memorization of the equivalents. The preparation of training tasks that are meant to make Russian abbreviations for the Slovak students more understandable and simpler seems to be practical perspective of the application of the obtained results.

### Discussion

Abbreviation is alive and constantly stretching its expansion in all spheres of knowledge and functional styles of speech by way of word formation. Therefore, it is impossible to avoid working with them in the process of teaching the Russian language to students in a Slovak university. They are found in a variety of materials, ranging from simple texts for reading in textbooks to special texts from the sphere of economics, finance, law, documents of the official business style.

The first students' encounter with Russian abbreviations can occur already at the initial stage of language acquiring, since not all the authors of textbook tend to avoid graphic abbreviations. The most frequent among them are: *и т. д.* – и так далее (and so on), *и т. п.* – и тому подобное (and the like), *и др.* – и другие (and others), *т. е.* – то есть (that is), *т. к.* – так как (as), *им.* – имени (named after), *см.* – смотри (see), *ср.* – сравни (compare). The practical grammar textbooks use short notations for the names of parts of speech (*сущ.* – имя существительное (noun), *нар.* – наречие (adverb), *предл.* – предлог preposition) or grammatical features (*м. р., ед. ч., Дат. п.* – мужской род, единственное число, Дательный падеж (gender, singular, Dative case)). We do not mind using such contractions in the educational literature, since it is not a problem for a student to determine their meaning independently using the list of abbreviations given in the book. However, a common mistake is the desire of foreign learners to read graphic contractions as abbreviations of the initial type. The teacher's task is to teach the students to pronounce such abbreviations as full words, pointing to the context-dependent variability of their recording and interpretation: *г.* – год and город (year and city); *п.* – посёлок and пункт (settlement and point); *в.* – век (century), but *вв.* – веков



and веках (centuries). Similar abbreviations can vary graphically (*гл. / глаг.* – глагол / verb), but never grammatically. In our opinion, within the framework of the basic course of the language, it is worthwhile to introduce the students to the conventional symbols of measures of length, weight, volume, speed, time, etc., adopted in Russia.

Practice has shown that the most difficult material for Slovak students is the initial abbreviations, which are characterized by all types of variability: **phonetic** (КФУ – normative [ка-эф-у] and colloquial [кэ-фэ-у]: Казанский федеральный университет / Kazan Federal University), **grammatical** (no ГОСТy or no ГОСТ / according to State Standard), **graphic** (ВУЗ, Вуз, вуз / University). Unfortunately, in the Slovak textbooks that we have analyzed, there are no special tasks for the development of the above-mentioned problem aspects. Moreover, the manuals do not often contain frequency abbreviations that are not in lexical minima. It is not surprising, therefore, that this material remains difficult for the students throughout the whole course of studying and must be dealt with already within the framework of special courses on translation. All the more valuable now are the materials of “Abridged Idioglossary of Modern Russian Abbreviations” [Khovanets M., 2015], which Slovak teachers can use during classes.

The articles [by Belyakova G.V., Gavrilkina T.Yu., 2016; Khovanets M., 2015] deal with the problem of pronunciation of acronyms by Russians and Slovaks. The materials they present can serve as the basis for the preparation of training assignments and phonetic warm-ups that will allow Slovak students to memorize the current Russian orthoepic norms for the pronunciation of abbreviations and typical deviations from them, which are found in the spoken language of native speakers., we recommend to use modern dictionaries of abbreviations for checking the cases of graphic variability, for example, [www.sokr.ru](http://www.sokr.ru).

The grammatical difficulties that arise among the students are connected with the definition of the gender of the initial abbreviations and the questions of their coordination with other words in the utterance. Here it is important to learn how to distinguish between letter and sound initial abbreviations, because in the first ones the grammatical gender is determined by the reference word in decoding, while in the latter it depends on the phonetic aspect: the abbreviations with the consonant at the end tend to be changed according to the masculine gender (*МИД постановил /the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided*, though the reference word *министерство* belongs to the neuter).

The solution to the problematic of functional stylistics is the solution of the problem of declining the sound initial abbreviations with the reference word of masculine gender (*Сотрудник ЗАГСа or ЗАГС?* (The official of Civil Registry Office)). The dictionaries of grammatical variants and



difficulties of the Russian language do not recommend to decline such abbreviations in a written business language. The only exception are БАК (The State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles), ГОСТ(National State Standard), МХАТ(Moscow Art Theatre), ВГИК(the All-Russian State Institute of Cinematography), ТЮЗ(Youth Theatre), СПИД(Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), ОМОН (special purpose police unit). This should be borne in mind when preparing teaching materials.

Next, consider some of the features of working with abbreviations in the classes for special translation in Slovak university. Within the disciplines of *Judicial Translation* and *Special Translation* the students, are offered various Russian official business documents to work with: certificate, power of attorney, diploma, license, summons, court order, application for recovery of alimony and so on. All of them contain the abbreviations of different types. The students translate most of the texts on their own at home, and then analyze their translations, justifying the solutions found, at the seminar. The teacher assesses the adequacy of the techniques chosen by them and the result obtained. Note that in terms of the notarial translation Russian abbreviations are usually translated into the Slovak language in the following ways:

- a) the rendering of the Russian abbreviation equivalent to Slovak (substitution);
- b) the translation of the Russian word combination, which served as the basis for creating the abbreviation, into the Slovak language because of the absence of an equivalent abbreviation in it;
- c) a descriptive translation of the Russian abbreviation motivant, which calls the phenomenon which is culture-specific in relation to the Slovak language, accompanied in some cases by borrowing the Russian abbreviation by transliteration.

Let us give the examples of Russian abbreviations, with translation of which into the Slovak language the students have difficulties:

□ ОГРН (основной государственный регистрационный номер / main state registration number)

The students using the dictionary of abbreviations deciphered this abbreviation in the certificate of state registration of a legal entity correctly, but instead of substitution of the Russian term abbreviation for Slovak equivalent unit, they used a descriptive translation of the Russian original phrase, having recognized the Russian abbreviation to be culture-specific: *hlavné štátne registračné číslo*. When analyzing the translation, the teacher should help the students to find an adequate solution using the methods of non-translation semantization - the attraction of the context (pay attention to the name and content of the translated document) or the revelation of the meaning of abbreviation by its



definition in Russian: «Данная аббревиатура является сокращённым названием номера/кода, присваиваемого организации при государственной регистрации» /This abbreviation is an abbreviated name of the number / code assigned to organization at the state registration. Thanks to a minor prompting, the students will remember the required well-known Slovak equivalent IČO (identifikačné číslo organizácie).

Non-translation semantization enabled the students to adequately translate the following Russian abbreviations into Slovak language: ИНН (индивидуальный номер налогоплательщика / Taxpayer Identification Number) – DIČ (daňové identifikačné číslo); ИП (индивидуальный предприниматель / sole proprietor) – SZČO (samostatne zárobkovo činná osoba).

When working with the abbreviation КПП (check-point), the students had an unlooked-for semantic shift when translating, caused by improper interpretation of the homonym-abbreviation. In general, homonymy is quite common in the abbreviation of the modern Russian language. So, the Internet dictionary of the Russian language abbreviations ([www.sokr.ru](http://www.sokr.ru)) offers more than 40 expansions for КПП. However, this fact does not justify the students' wrong approach to its interpretation and the subsequent use of an inadequate "source" word combination that gave rise to an incorrect translation into Slovak: контрольно-пропускной пункт / checkpoint – hraničný prechod, комплексная подготовка производства complex preparation of production – komplexná príprava výroby. When it is considered that this abbreviation in the translated document was together with the abbreviation ИНН, which is well-known to the students, with the title of the document column (ИНН/КПП), the use of the above expansion seems even more so strange. To help students, the teacher applied culture-based semantization - reference to the context, as well as explanatory translation. As a result, this abbreviation, which is partially culture-specific in relation to the target language, is borrowed from the Slovak language by transliteration, expanded by a descriptive translation of the original composite name: КПП (špeciálny daňový kód).

One of the ways of the students' mastering Russian frequency abbreviations, which are comprehended in the active vocabulary of an ordinary native speaker of the language, is complete learning. For the purposeful memorization, students can be suggested the following words (along with the Slovak translation of the original unit and the equivalent Slovak abbreviation):

ВС РФ (Верховный Суд Российской Федерации/ Supreme Court of the Russian Federation)–  
Najvyšší súd Ruskej federácie,  
ЗАО (закрытое акционерное общество/ Closed Joint-Stock Company)– súkromná akciová spoločnosť,



КС РФ (Конституционный Суд Российской Федерации /The Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation) – Ústavný súd Ruskej federácie.

НДС (налог на добавленную стоимость value-added tax) – DPH (daň z pridanej hodnoty),

ОАО (открытое акционерное общество Open Joint Stock Company) – verejná akciová spoločnosť,

ООО (общество с ограниченной ответственностью / limited liability company) – s. r. o. (spoločnosť s ručením obmedzeným),

УК (Уголовный кодекс / Criminal Code) – Trestný zákon,

УПК (Уголовно-процессуальный кодекс / Code of Criminal Procedure) – Trestný poriadok,

ФЛ (физическое лицо / physical body) – FO (fyzická osoba),

ЮЛ (юридическое лицо / artificial body) – PO (právnická osoba).

Within the scope of the educational material there are well-known abbreviations that cause difficulties for the students to expand in Russian, but also in the Slovak language. In order to eliminate such problems, the teacher uses short exercises aimed at re-translating not only abbreviations, but also their motivant, thus triggering unconscious memorization of these units by the students [Grishechkina A.M., Pichevskaya A.I., 2014]. Such pairs can be:

ОБСЕ (Организация по безопасности и сотрудничеству в Европе / the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) – OBSE (Organizácia pre bezpečnosť a spoluprácu v Európe),

ООН (Организация Объединённых Наций / United Nations Organization) – OSN (Organizácia Spojených národov),

СНГ (Содружество независимых государств / Commonwealth of Independent States) – SNŠ (Spoločenstvo nezávislých štátov),

СССР (Союз Советских Социалистических Республик / The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) – ZSSR (Zväz sovietskych socialistických republík).

Among the abbreviations that cause difficulties when expanding them under the influence of the interference of the Slovak language, one can call:

□ РФ (*Русская Федерация / Rus Federation* instead of *Российская Федерация / Russian Federation*) – RF (Ruská federácia) – this objectionable phenomenon is caused by the presence in the Slovak language of a common translation equivalent *ruský* for the adjectives *российский / Russian* and *русский / Rus*,

□ США (*Соединённые Штаты Американские* instead of *Соединённые Штаты Америки / the United States of America*) – USA (Spojené štáty americké).



A special case is the abbreviation ЗАГС(Отдел/Бюро записи актов гражданского состояния / the Civil Registry Office) – matričný úrad, which is included in the active vocabulary of the students. However, its interpretation in the studied language regularly creates difficulties, even if the Russian original unit is repeatedly found in the translated document, for example, in the birth certificate. In such cases, one also has to resort to memorization.

### **Summary**

Our study confirmed the high importance of the study of Russian abbreviations in respect of the aspect of linguodidactics. The analysis of Slovak textbooks on the practice of speech communication has shown a randomness in the presentation of Russian abbreviations as a teaching material and the lack of due attention to the problems of their phonetic, grammatical and functional-stylistic mastering by the students. The practice of working with this material in special translation courses has proved that the most effective strategies for learning Russian abbreviations in the Slovak audience are their translation and non-translation semantization, as well as the memorization of pairs of equivalent units.

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