

Teaching German as a Foreign Language After English in a Russian-Speaking Context

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Annotation. The article considers the features of teaching German as a foreign language after learning English. It is shown that students who have already mastered English as a first foreign language require less effort to learn German as a second foreign language. The difficulties in learning German as a second foreign language are revealed, and the advantages are noted that should serve as an incentive for students to learn German

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“German is one of the most frequently studied foreign languages. At the same time, it has a real opportunity to be studied as a second foreign language along with French, Spanish, Russian, as well as Chinese and Arabic.” After English, German as a foreign language is now more widely spoken throughout the world than German as the first (and only) foreign language. Even in Russian-speaking countries, German is increasingly being studied as a second foreign language after English. According to modern research, in Russia alone the number of people studying German after English is about 4.7 million. German is studied here as a second foreign language by 34.5% of all students.

Those starting to learn a second or subsequent foreign language tend to be a little older, self-confident and have higher intellectual abilities than when learning a first foreign language. At this age, they are more independent, open and have a different level of responsibility than younger students. In most cases, they have acquired sufficient experience, possess certain communication and language skills, and therefore can navigate a new language faster and more effectively. In addition, their motivation for learning a second foreign language is partly different, as are their interests and communication needs. It should be noted that students have information about cultural differences between different countries. “It is obvious that learning a foreign

language does not always prepare for successful intercultural communication. One of the reasons for this may be the problem of intercultural differences". They are familiar with grammatical phenomena and clearly understand that the structure of sentences in different languages is characterized by significant originality and typical features that differ from the structure of sentences in their native language; individual words or expressions in the native language do not have corresponding equivalents in a foreign language. In addition, the characteristics of national culture play a certain role in the use of language.

The second foreign language in the national school is a new phenomenon. It can be argued that the introduction of a second foreign language into the curriculum of a general education school has become a real step towards multicultural education, towards the formation of a multilingual personality. Despite the fact that teaching a second foreign language has been conducted in schools for several years now, the scientific, methodological and psychological-pedagogical aspects of teaching a second foreign language in a secondary general education school have not been sufficiently studied at the moment, so the choice of the German language for studying in a modern school in as a second foreign language is not accidental and is explained by the intensification of cooperation between Russia and Germany in commercial and professional life, the increase in personal mobility, the expansion of contacts with German culture, the opportunity to exchange students and teachers. German is typically a second foreign language. As practice shows, three out of four learners of German as a second foreign language studied English as their first foreign language and can use the experience, knowledge, skills and abilities that can be transferred to a second foreign language and greatly facilitate its learning.

The current state of research into the role of English as a foreign language at German Gymnasium is anything but satisfactory. There are hardly any up-to-date, valid, reliable, and representative studies on this topic. A first problem is that contributions concerned with different school types and educational programmes quickly go out of date. Then, as Germany is a federal state, there are 16 different states (Bundesländer), which all have their own institutional structures, curricula and guidelines.

Moreover, Gymnasium being a typical German type of school, is not such an attractive area of research for international scholars. Finally, there is a gap between theory and practice, i.e. what official documents state on how English should be taught is not identical with how foreign languages are actually taught and learned in the classrooms. In English, the meaning of a place for physical education was retained, more familiarly in the shortened form 'gym' (Turnhalle). The grammar schools in Britain are comparable to the German Gymnasium. Today, however, only a few grammar schools have survived because most of them were closed by the Labour Party or transformed into comprehensive schools (Gesamtschulen). Some of the more famous grammar schools, such as King Edward's in Birmingham, did not want to give up the selective principle and became independent private schools.

However, people often experience difficulties when learning German as a second (or additional) foreign language. First of all, this concerns its status. While the first foreign language (most often English) is considered a core school subject and ranks alongside subjects such as the native language and mathematics, the second or other foreign languages are usually allocated only a few hours a week. I would like to note that learning any foreign language must begin with a relatively large number of hours. On the other hand, it is important for motivation to know that they can use this language. With only one or two lessons a week, it is quite difficult to awaken and

strengthen interest in the German language and realize its useful value. As practice shows, some teenagers may have a bad experience of learning their first foreign language. Perhaps they perceived previous foreign language lessons as uninteresting or received bad grades and now view German lessons from the perspective that learning a foreign language does not depend on them. All these factors can have a negative impact on motivation to learn. In addition, it is often observed that students of a second foreign language are more critical of the teaching process and the content of educational materials. When they encounter what they perceive to be topically irrelevant and fairly simple learning material that is not related to their interests, they react boringly and often reject it. Another difficulty is that English (the first foreign language) is perceived by most young people as easier than German. The rather complex grammar of the German language (which, unfortunately, still dominates practical classes) can have a demotivating effect on them. From their point of view, English has a somewhat “controlled” grammar and is therefore easier to learn.

Attention should be paid to the fact that in most countries English often plays a much more important role in everyday life than German and is present in many media (eg Internet, music, films, advertising, etc.). Of course, this helps motivate young people. Thus, accessing English through everyday culture is usually much easier than accessing German. Therefore, when young people study German after English, many German teachers are faced with the fact that students constantly compare the “difficult and difficult” German language with the “easy and fluent” English. If German is the first foreign language, then this direct comparison is not possible, and students usually focus on learning German without prejudice.

Those who have studied English as a first foreign language have an idea of the structure of language and know a number of grammatical phenomena and terms. By analyzing English grammar, they deepen their existing knowledge of the system of their native language. We should not forget that transferring the grammatical structures of the native language can lead to errors in a foreign language. “Features at the level of vocabulary also pose a certain difficulty . At the same time, German as a second (or additional) foreign language after English also has a number of advantages. Young people whose first language (eg Chinese or Russian) uses a non-Latin alphabet will already have knowledge and experience of using Latin letters in English lessons. A significant advantage for German language teachers is that they do not need to introduce the Latin alphabet in class, since students already have these skills. Attention should be paid to the fact that as a result of globalization, the share of internationalisms and Americanisms is constantly growing, including in Russian-speaking countries. In the German language, the mixture of English and German is jokingly called “Denglish”. In German-speaking countries, Denglish is found everywhere: in the media, on store signs, on the Internet and even in the spoken language of native German speakers. It is often difficult to correctly understand some inscriptions without knowledge of English. An example of this would be a store labeled “Boot Store,” which does not sell boats at all, but shoes. Play on words “For you. Vor Ort” (an advertisement for a pharmacy chain) or “Burgermeister - Der Grill” (a sign on a snack bar selling hamburgers and cheeseburgers) can only be understood with adequate knowledge of the English language. In advertising, English is deliberately used to give the greatest prestige to the advertised products.

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