

FRENCH PRESS IN THE METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

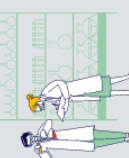
The author considers the role and possibilities of using the French press in the methodology of teaching French. Leaving aside a whole layer of general French language teaching literature, which in one way or another includes excerpts from French newspapers and magazines, the author turns directly to books that focus on the language of the French press. The most famous Russian textbooks on the language of French media are analysed because they are oriented to the Russian-speaking student and include, for example, materials on translation (from Russian into French and vice versa). The analysis allows us to present a general typology of manuals devoted to the French press, depending on their objectives. First of all, the author singles out the manuals aimed at studying the specifics of the French printed word itself, its history and current state. It is argued that the largest share is made up of books where the press is used as a material for acquiring and consolidating practical skills, for actively expanding the vocabulary of French language learners, and manuals on abstracting in French (composing the three main types of retelling, called in the French methodological tradition *résumé*, *compte rendu*, *synthèse*), based on the material of French periodicals and gaining popularity due to the need to pass the international examinations DELF / DALF.

Keywords: French press; French as a foreign language; teaching methods; typology; history of French press; lexical exercises; abstracting in French.

Introduction

1. The French press in French language textbooks

Nowadays, it is difficult to imagine a textbook or a French language textbook that does not include the French press in one way or another, and we are not talking about specialised textbooks focused on the press, the language of the press and so on. First of all, press materials are included in textbooks for learning French as a foreign language, which in the French methodological tradition is usually called FLE (*français langue étrangère*). As a rule, the articles are selected by level, literally from the A2 level the first extracts of newspaper texts are introduced, at first they can be adapted or abridged, then the degree of their complexity, both lexical and grammatical, increases with each new stage of language learning. When the text material of a textbook includes authentic articles, it is considered to reflect the current state



of the French language along with contemporary works of French authors (XX- XXI centuries), which in itself is true and shared by many authors.

It is well known that in French textbooks, newspaper/magazine texts are the starting point for practising various grammatical phenomena, and they also determine the topic of the lexical block of the lesson. Some lexical units are recorded in thematic dictionaries, as they are necessary for active learning by students; the vocabulary lists are usually accompanied by various kinds of lexical exercises, tasks for writing one's own text using the learnt vocabulary, etc. In other words, for many French textbooks (e.g., [Moshenskaya et al., 2016a; Moshenskaya et al., 2016b]), French press articles become the core of all further lexical and grammatical content of the lesson, during which students practice translating not only from French into Russian, but also from their native language into a foreign language, taking into account the new grammatical phenomena under study.

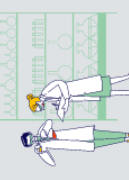
Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the articles chosen by the authors of the textbooks are examples of neutral style, reflecting the linguistic norm, since the main aim of this kind of textbooks is to master standard French (français de référence). That is why the authors avoid using materials from highly specialised periodicals, which are full of professional vocabulary, jargonisms, etc.

To summarise the intermediate result of the use of French press texts in foreign language textbooks, we should not exaggerate its role, because, despite its relevance and "vividness" of the language, firstly, this is not the only way to present vocabulary, as there are many textbooks based on texts compiled by the authors themselves (e.g. [Aleksandrovskaya et al., 2014; Moshenskaya et al., 2017]) or solely on literary texts (e.g. [Gromova et al., 2017]). Second, the ability to draw from authentic texts is not always potential in itself, as it presupposes a certain level of language proficiency. Apparently, such work is more effective at advanced stages of learning, when a sufficient lexical and grammatical stock has already been accumulated and the specifics of journalistic speech do not hinder a holistic perception of the text.

2. Typology of French press studies literature

In the following we will speak directly about manuals on the French press and their types, but before we proceed to the review, we would like to comment on one important point. For the purposes of this article, we turn to Russian publications, and this is not accidental. We deliberately give examples of manuals and textbooks that are oriented towards Russian speakers because, as it has already been mentioned, the study of the press is often associated with translation tasks, searching for equivalents, etc. Accordingly, textbooks covering French-Russian language interaction are published mainly by Russian authors. We will discuss the main editions.

Among the many textbooks on the French printed word, at least three types of publications can be distinguished, depending on the form of presentation and the tasks to be accomplished.



2.1 French vocabulary and translation aids based on French press material

The vast majority of manuals on French-language periodicals are aimed at enriching students' vocabulary. Thus, authentic texts of the periodical press are used here as material for acquiring socio-political vocabulary (e.g., [Bodko et al., 2002; Glukhova et al., 2005; Zharkova, 2017; Kislinskaya et al., 2007; Kondratenko et al., 2000; Shumilova, 2017]).

Often the texts of articles selected from different French-language press sources are organised thematically. In addition to working directly on the text itself, including its translation, it is important, even for advanced students, that the corresponding dictionary contains Russian equivalents, which, as practice shows, are well-established in the Russian-language press. Even for advanced students, it is important that the corresponding dictionary contains Russian equivalents, which, as practice shows, are well-established in the Russian-language press. As for the lexical tasks themselves, they have a variety of forms: combinations, statements, small newspaper summaries are translated both from Russian into French and vice versa. Sometimes the thematic block is supplemented with texts on an identical topic, and in these texts, in one way or another, the authors emphasise the vocabulary and specific expressions under study. At the end of some editions are keys to all or almost all exercises, as well as exercises for repetition.

For practising teachers, annexes containing, for example, geographical names that students need to memorise or a list of the most common abbreviations so beloved by the French and, of course, French journalists, are particularly valuable. In a successful, in our opinion, book of this kind [Spynou et al., 2012], each thematic block is preceded by several articles in French (three or four) of minimal length, literally 1-2 paragraphs, placed in the left column, while in the right column they are accompanied by a translation into Russian. It should be noted that we are not talking about a footnote translation, but a literary translation in the appropriate stylistic register. We believe that such a presentation of material, although small in size, allows students to be introduced to the relevant topic; it clearly shows the level and quality of translation that students should achieve after studying a particular section. The mini-summary can be used, if desired, to teach consecutive and simultaneous translation, and, interestingly, this training can be done by translating from the foreign language into the native language at the first contact with the text, and in the opposite direction at subsequent times.

As a result of working with the first type of manuals, students learn a certain amount of vocabulary, mainly social and political, acquire skills of translation from foreign to native language and vice versa, acquire new knowledge about the culture and civilisation of France through the prism of French periodicals. However, perhaps the main merit of such aids is the active expansion of the vocabulary of those learning French.

2.2 Textbooks on the history and current state of the French press

The second set of textbooks covers works devoted to the French press itself, see: [Burnatseva et al., 2012; Tarasova, 2016]. These are books of a more theoretical nature, such as M. V. Tarasova's "Le journalisme à la française: la presse écrite / Journalism in French: the printed press" [Tarasova, 2016]. [Tarasova, 2016]. These may also contain a large corpus of authentic

French-language texts, but have different objectives. Firstly, the main task is to describe the specifics of the French press, its history and current state, and only secondly - through the study of a large number of articles the level of foreign language knowledge is improved. As can be seen, the lexical aspect, the enrichment of students' vocabulary, comes second, as we will see in the future.

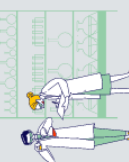
M. V. Tarasova's book opens with a history of the French printed word, which is interspersed with test questions and small tasks related to the content of the relevant paragraphs. This is certainly useful information for students interested in journalism; it gives an idea of the history of the formation of media resources in France. This section includes short articles on the topic, practical exercises aimed at differentiating between periodicals in terms of presentation, geographical, temporal, content and other characteristics. One of the advantages of this manual is, in our opinion, the summarisation of each section in the form of charts, tables and figures, which present the basic concepts and factual data in the most concise form.

Since the main target audience of this publication is still journalism students, the third chapter is intended more for specialists. The composition of a newspaper issue and a newspaper strip is described here. The reader can find answers to the following questions: How is the layout of an article organised so that even without reading it we can extract the main meaning? What is the peculiarity of the first page of a newspaper/journal, the so-called "front page" (la une)? Working with the huge number of newspaper and magazine articles in this section is not a subset of classical word processing, translation and so on. On the contrary, students are required to work creatively and in a group, writing projects, creating, for example, your own version of the front page of Le Figaro in accordance with its canons.

Finally, the last, large section will be of interest not only to journalism specialists, but also to any student of language (philological) specialisation. It characterises the different genres of the printed press and provides a large number of examples on the basis of which students will be able to distinguish one genre of article from another on the basis of a certain set of specific features (for example, the genre of reportage, chronicle, interview or investigative journalism). The author of the manual does not want to teach students to write like a professional French journalist, but as a result of this course, the student will develop an experienced reader of periodicals who knows their roots and can categorise them. In parallel with gaining a general understanding of the French press, the student indirectly covers a whole layer of specific journalistic vocabulary and enriches his/her vocabulary with the common vocabulary that he/she encounters in each example and article.

2.3 Tutorials on abstracting in French based on French press material

The third type of manuals includes works also based on the material of French periodicals, but pursuing other goals, namely, teaching the technique of abstracting texts. As we can see, the question of studying the press itself and its language is not raised here, and the familiarisation with its features and characteristics takes place indirectly, during familiarisation with newspaper and magazine articles.



This kind of work with periodicals is now particularly demanded, since the preparation of various types of retelling, called résumé, compte rendu, syn- thèse in the French methodological tradition, is included in the list of compulsory tasks for the DELF / DALF international certificates.

Let us begin the presentation of abstracting manuals with the book by E. B. Alek-sandrovskaya, N. V. Loseva, E. P. Orlova "Lire et résumer. Manual on abstracting in French" [Alexandrovskaya et al. The third type of manuals includes works also based on the material of French periodicals, but with a different goal, namely, teaching the technique of abstracting texts [Alexandrovskaya et al., 2011], aimed at forming and consolidating students' skills of presenting texts in a concise paraphrased form. It should be said that this book deals with literary and scientific texts in addition to journalistic ones, although the predominant texts are, of course, periodicals, which are easier to retell. From chapter to chapter, the authors systematically guide students through the development of the simplest form of narration, résumé, to compte rendu and synthèse. Each chapter is full of exercises, especially the first two chapters, which describe how to approach the retelling of any kind of text by being able to characterise the text before the first reading (in terms of its typographical features, main sections, etc.) and to identify certain patterns when reading it again, analytically.

The next three chapters are devoted to each of these types of retelling. Using a variety of texts, students practise the stages of abstracting, starting with paraphrasing an expression, then a single phrase, then a paragraph, a short text, a relatively large newspaper text, culminating in the technique of retelling several texts at once (synthèse).

This manual is particularly valuable for its appendices, which provide the teacher and student with a detailed list of logical connectors, special cases of their use, and lists of periphrastic names of cities and countries (e.g. La Perfide Albion - l'Angleterre), famous people (e.g. Le Petit Caporal - Napoléon Bonaparte), historical epochs (e.g. Le Grand Siècle - le XVIIIe siècle français), etc. to assist the teacher and student. As a result of working with this manual, students should have an idea not only about different variants of abstracting, but also about the peculiarities of French punctuation, ways of logical text structure, basic rhetorical figures and others.

K. I. Kurbanova's work "La presse française: analyse discursive et résu- mé. Manual on discourse analysis of the French press and abstracting in French" [Kurbanova, 2017]. [Kurbanova, 2017] is based exclusively on the texts of the French press. The material for the manual is based on the latest journalistic texts from 2013-2017, collected from leading French newspapers and magazines. The purpose of this publication is twofold. Firstly, to introduce students to a significant range of French periodicals, the most important national (Le Figaro, Le Monde, Libération) and regional newspapers (e.g. Sud Ouest), authoritative French magazines (Le Point, Le Nouvel Ob- servateur, L'Express), as well as specialised press sources such as Science et Vie, Historia, Philosophie pratique, etc.

Introducing various resources whose general information can be supplemented by teachers or students in an optional form, the author tries to maintain a balance in the discursive sphere, offering blocks of articles on politics, economics, society, science, ecology, culture, etc. The

author's discourse is not only the discursive sphere, but also the discursive sphere. Thus, by referring to each chapter, students identify the specific features of a particular discourse.

The second important task of the manual is to acquire the skills of abstracting in French, or, more precisely, to compose one of the types of retelling - résumé - in accordance with the given algorithm. Interestingly, readers will not find here a theoretical chapter with methodological instructions on how to write a summary, but will independently outline the stages of work with the text thanks to the tasks that precede each article, which lay the foundations for the future retelling.

In contrast to the above-mentioned manual by K. I. Kurbanova-Ilyutko "Analyser un article de presse. Résumé, compte rendu, synthèse. Manual for analysing and abstracting articles in French" [Kurbanova-Ilyutko]. [Kurbanova-Ilyutko, 2018] is a structured course for teaching all three types of abstracting in French - résumé, compte rendu, synthèse. As already mentioned, these are the best-known forms of retelling texts in the French pedagogical tradition.

The author outlines the general methodology of writing the three types of retellings in a rather concise form, with examples of each type. It is particularly important, in our opinion, to demonstrate the difference between résumé and compte rendu, as students often have difficulties in completing such tasks. Thus, in the theoretical chapter, the same journalistic article is presented in two versions: as a résumé and then as a compte rendu. A summary table of similarities and differences between the two types of retelling is also provided.

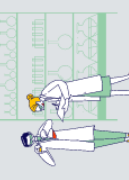
The remaining space of the book is taken up by the practical part, which consists of a selection of articles of a wide variety of style and subject matter, taken from various French press sources and accompanied by corresponding tasks and questions, the range of which is gradually expanded and complicated. Following the model proposed in the textbook, the first two types of retelling - résumé and compte rendu - are written quickly and efficiently.

A special place in the manual is given to writing a retelling of several articles simultaneously, united by a common theme, but written in different genres and borrowed from different sources. Synthèse is dealt with in separate sets of articles specially prepared for this purpose, and additional blocks of articles are offered here to practise synthèse.

The above-mentioned manuals on abstracting in French contain both background information on the different types of paraphrasing required for the international French language examinations and the practical part necessary for practising the appropriate writing techniques.

3. Conclusion

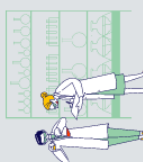
To summarise the analysis of the various textbooks on the French press, I would like first of all to note their diversity, which is due to the different objectives set by their authors. It is obvious that the French press, of course, can be the object of close study itself, but it can also serve as rich, up-to-date material for other purposes in teaching French. This article is by no means intended to be an exhaustive list of these possibilities, but nevertheless identifies the main trends - compilations of lexical exercises based on journalistic texts, translation aids (oral



and written) using periodicals, and French abstracting aids based largely on the work with a journalistic article.

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