REVIEW on Master's thesis by Olga V. Smirnova, St. Petersburg State University,  
“Teaching Portuguese as a Second Foreign Language to Students of Arts Colleges  
Using Synaesthetic Lexical Chunks (the Beginner Level)”

The thesis is devoted to the problem of teaching Portuguese for Specific Purposes (PSP) to students of arts colleges, evidence from Ilya Repin St. Petersburg State Academic Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (henceforward the Academy of Arts). Scientific novelty of this work is in using synaesthetic chunks as an additional source of effectiveness of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. Consideration of students' lateralization of brain function and their leading sensory modality seems essential, since it is ignoring the students’ psychological and cognitive characteristics in the traditional teaching model that leads to lack of their motivation and, as a result, to poor mastery of the course.

The aim of the research is to justify this idea theoretically and to present the detailed set of exercises, based on the phenomenon of synaesthesia, to teach PSP to students of the Academy of Arts. The process of teaching the above-mentioned category of students is seen as the object of the research, and the methodology for using synaesthetic chunks in teaching – as the subject.

The objectives of the study determine the structure of the paper, which consists of the Introduction, two Chapters, the Conclusion, the Bibliography, containing 56 items in Russian and 24 - in foreign languages. 20 items date back to the last decade. There are 10 tables and 12 Appendices to illustrate the text.

Chapter 1 examines the basic principles of teaching a second foreign language for specific purposes in the context of artificial subordinate trilingualism. The chapter consists of 5 sections, which solve the first four objectives of the study. Section 1.1. is devoted to the detailed analysis of the general state of teaching Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, thus justifying the urgency of the research, related to the poor state of knowledge of the topic of teaching PSP. Section 1.2. defines the concept of "trilingualism" and, within the framework of this research, focuses on mixed artificial subordinate individual trilingualism. Section 1.3. examines the influence of students’ cognitive styles and sensory preferences on learning foreign languages, thus justifying the support for the phenomenon of synaesthesia in teaching, as detailed in Section 1.4. Section 1.5. compares the Grammar-translation and the Communicative methods of Teaching Foreign Languages to students of arts colleges and, based on all the above, justifies the prospects of using the "Observation – Hypothesis - Experiment" model proposed within the Lexical approach to Foreign Language Teaching, which makes the work theoretically significant.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the issues of the practice of teaching PSP to the students of the Academy of Arts and provides conclusive evidence for the unconditional practical significance of this paper. Five sections of this chapter solve the remaining objectives of the
study. Section 2.1. gives an exhaustive analysis of the current state of affairs with Foreign Language Teaching at the Academy of Arts based on the data obtained by the author through classroom observations and interviewing tutors. Section 2.2. examines Russian-English-Portuguese trilingualism considered within the context of the international student exchange program between the Academy of Arts and Academia Nacional de Bela Artes in Lisbon, and identifies areas of both language interference and transference. Then, section 2.3. presents the profile of the students’ psycho-cognitive styles and sensory preferences. These have been based on theoretical outcomes of the first chapter and the results of students’ testing conducted by Ms. Smirnova. The author comes to the conclusion that the majority of students have visual sensory preferences (70%) and more than a half are characterized by right-brain dominance (52%), which confirms the initial hypothesis about high sensitivity of such students to synaesthetic lexicon. Section 2.4. presents the results of the analysis of Portuguese teaching resources available to the author with the view of the presence of synaesthetic vocabulary and visual stimuli. Final Section 2.5 proposes a set of exercises devoted to teaching reading in PSP, which has been based on the "Observation – Hypothesis - Experiment" teaching model and uses the synaestemes present in the texts.

The content of the thesis totally corresponds to the topic, which is fully revealed in logically arranged text written in a clear academic style. The paper reflects actual problems of theoretical and practical linguodidactics, and not only does the topic itself make the study relevant and up to date, but also its outcomes are useful in pedagogical activity.

However, there is one practical question that arose while reading the paper. The author describes an exercise system that takes into account the needs of right-brain students. At the same time, according to the tests, that kind of students do not constitute an overwhelming majority. How exactly are the traits of left-brain students being taken into consideration? Could the teaching model proposed in the paper be considered applicable to them? Are the lessons supposed to be taught in mixed or separate groups?

Some comments on the paper have also to do with the given system of exercises: the text of the paper gives some instructions on doing the exercises, but there are no actual exercises either in the paper text or in the Appendixes.

It has to be emphasized that the questions and comments do not detract from the merits of the thesis that definitely meets all the requirements and should be recommended for the defense procedure and, on condition of a successful defense, deserves an "excellent" grade.

June 13, 2017

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