



RESEARCH PAPER

Analytic Review of Russian Languages Courses Implemented in Various Academic Institutions of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The objective of research is to conduct an analytical review of Russian language courses held in various academic institutions of Pakistan. The research is survey based and three institutions engaged in Russian language teaching were selected for data collection. The research framework identified for analysis and comparison includes general characteristics of courses, formal status of courses, location, timing and duration of courses, facilities (materials, material provision and appropriate staffing), course content and course audiences. Accordingly, a questionnaire was prepared, and data was collected from selected institutions. The analysis and findings give a brief description of the status of the Russian language courses in Pakistan and problems faced by the teachers and audiences regarding course contents, learning problems, facilities, and many others. Recommendations have brought into light some important aspects of Russian language courses in Pakistan, if implemented can improve the learning process.

KEYWORDS

Course Teaching, Learning Environment, Pakistan Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL)

Introduction

Language is the tool of communication through which messages are effectively transmitted to the listeners or participants of the communication. Familiar ease and fluency with which we communicate from one idea to the next in our first language is constantly shattered by some gap in our knowledge of a second language. Communication among the participants in any multicultural environment may apply special methods of communication, which differ from conventional ones for interacting within the same society or culture with a single language (Gavrishyk). To study effective intercultural communications, a deep knowledge of the language, culture, and traditions of the country is required. Assimilation of specific features of thinking and national communication of its representatives is necessary for establishing relationships for socio-cultural structures, which are the basis of linguistic structures (Kambaralieva). In the attempts to overcome these gaps, it is important to learn a language to overcome the difficulties and barriers in international communication about trade and commerce, diplomacy, studying, business, and others between two countries.

There has been a constant increase in the number of students and aspirants learning Russian, due to the growing role of the Russian language in the academic environment and to the development of international relations in this area. The current geopolitics of Pakistan aims to search for the import of energy sources from Russia. Moreover, there are many bilateral agreements underway between Pakistan and Russia from transportation of oil and gas to wheat and other agricultural products. Pakistan also seeks a market for the

consumption of manufactured goods produced in the country, and that is the Russian market in this regard was seen as the ideal one. Addressing these issues, it is required knowledge of the Russian language. For a long time, Russia remained closed to other countries, but through globalization, Russia is opening diplomatic relationships and becoming closer to many countries including China, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Middle to Far Eastern countries to generate influence in the region.

Pakistan had weak diplomatic relations and lesser formal trade and commerce with Russia in the past. Now Pakistan is looking at Russia as the market for its industries particularly sports, surgical instruments, pharmaceuticals and many other products, and interest in the Russian language is increasing day by day. Moreover, Pakistanis are also interested in Russian culture, history, and the Russian language. Except Russian Center for Science and Culture (RCSC), Karachi, there is no cultural center in Pakistan. A few decades back, there was no formal center from where residents of Pakistan could study Russian as a foreign language (RFL), moreover, there were no relevant departments in the universities that existed, if existed they were not in the limelight and not known by many people. Due to advancements in information technology, global institutes and instructors are available to teach Russian as well as Urdu language through Zoom or Teams. Moreover, language institutes already existed in Pakistan are revamped and strengthened keeping in view modern teaching and pedagogical requirements. But still, these language centers and institutes do not consider Russian as a foreign language (RFL) as a subject of study and only in a few universities, corresponding departments have been established. Interest in the Russian language is only starting to develop, but a shortage of Russian language teachers and the absence of bilingual Russian-Urdu textbooks are exacerbating the situation.

In this regard, it is very important to analyze, review, and evaluate Russian language courses being taught in Pakistan. It is also necessary to identify and highlight the features of methodological work in the Russian language courses and a Pakistani audience. In this paper, the implementation of Russian language training programs in Pakistan are analyzed with the reference to the framework developed by Pushkin State Russian Language Institute for evaluation of Russian languages courses.

Literature Review

The ultimate purpose of teaching Russian to international non-philology students is to speak Russian fluently to express their thoughts, to understand their interlocutors, to reproduce and interpret written and oral information. Learning Russian for professional purposes for non-philology university students is not only a means of mastering their future professions but also a possibility to competently communicate in the professional environment and easily adapt to constantly changing working conditions. (Ismailova 2014)

At present, almost every Russian university has Russian language programs in the Humanities and other fields of study. The Russian language is, along with the other academic disciplines, a compulsory course for international students taking university preparatory courses, for students pursuing specialist, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees, and for trainees. As a means for international and professional communication and the language of Russian science and technology, the Russian language is of great interest, first of all, to international students taking courses in non-humanities disciplines (Mets). This field of study is referred to as "teaching the Russian language and other disciplines to international students, depending on their professional interests and needs in the Russian language and on the length of study" (Shtchukina, 1990).

The Russian language training is now designed in line with international requirements of teaching foreign languages: language learning goals, students' needs, learning conditions, duration of course, curriculum requirements and others. At present, learning goals and objectives in RFL courses are determined precisely by the needs of the learners. Learning Russian as a means of pursuing a specific academic program constitutes the main distinctive feature of the Russian language courses offered to non-philology students. The students' prime goal is to acquire professional knowledge and skills in a language other than their own (Dubinskaya).

According to the report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation "Russian Language in the World", the Russian language course profile operates in more than 70 countries of the World (Russian Language in the World). A.A. Leontiev noted the flexibility of language courses when only final requirements are strictly fixed, but ways to achieve targets are not regulated (Leontiev, 1981). P.G. Chebotarev points out to multifaceted nature of Russian language courses, that "this form of a foreign language training is one of the most complex methodological terms both for descriptions and for working" (Chebotarev).

Factors influencing the popularity of course training in the world, as per the opinion of A.N. Schukin, include the following (Shchukin, 1990)

- a) the short duration of the training, intensity of classes, and their impact;
- b) close relationship of language learning with learning the history and culture of the country;
- c) the adaptability of the syllabus to the interests of students and the level of language proficiency;
- d) ability to address better language needs of the audience,
- e) practical-oriented teaching

Material and Methods

Objective and scope

The objective of the research was to review and analyze the existing Russian language certificate and diploma courses in Pakistan in the well-established framework of Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, Moscow. To achieve the objective, it was first analyzed where the Russian language certificate courses are officially held and taught. Many private institutes and centers are available in Pakistan that start Russian language courses on a need basis, but they are not formally and properly institutionalized. Therefore, for this research, only formal and established institutions are considered to be part of this survey-based research. For this purpose, the following institutes/organizations were selected for survey participation and data collection.

- i. Russian Center for Science and Culture (RCSC), Karachi working under the Government of the Russian Federation as part of their International Russian culture program.
- ii. The National University of Modern Language (NUML), Islamabad where the Russian language department has been working since 1971.

- iii. The University of Punjab, Lahore that was established in 1876 where the Faculty of Oriental Learning has been working for more than one hundred years, and the Institute of Languages and Linguistics was established in 2010 under the Faculty of Oriental Learning which includes Russian language teaching besides many other national and international languages.

Research Framework

Teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL) to non-philology students has been an active area of research for the last several decades. Short-Term Educational Sector of Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, Moscow, back to 1975-1978 identified the following characteristics of educational course profile:

- General
- The formal status of courses
- Location
- Timing and duration
- Facilities (presence or absence of some factors), including a range of available materials, material provision, and appropriate staffing
- Course content
- Audience

Above mentioned parameters will form the basis of the analysis of the main features of teaching Russian language courses in Pakistan.

Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

According to a discussed framework, a questionnaire was prepared which included all the mentioned aspects. A total of 28 questions were finalized. The questionnaire had 3 sections, i.e., demographic section, course section, and facility section. The questionnaire was prepared both in Russian and English languages since RCSC was more comfortable to respond questions in the Russian language. Pilot testing of the questionnaire was made and a mock questionnaire was sent to all three selected institutes for data collection. Accordingly, some questions were edited, updated or deleted to make the final questionnaire of 28 questions. The final questionnaire was again sent to the heads of all three institutes for data collection. The comprehensive and desired response was received from all three institutes and accordingly, data was analyzed. Data analysis and findings are given in the ensuing paragraphs.

Results and Discussion

General

In this section general characteristics of the Russian language courses in all three institutions have been discussed. Concerning the start of Russian language courses, it was observed that RCSC was established in 1974 and Russian language certificate courses were started in subsequent years. In NUML, a certificate course in Russian language was initially started in 1971 and a diploma in Russian language was started in 1974. At Punjab

University which is considered to be one of the oldest universities in Pakistan, a one-year Diploma course in the Russian language was started in 2007. However, there is no certificate course in the Russian language under consideration at Punjab University.

Regarding admission criteria and the bare minimum educational qualification requirement to be enrolled in a Russian language course or diploma, it was observed that in RCSC, anybody can get admission to a Russian language certificate course. In NUML, for various programs admission criteria is different. For Certificate courses in the Russian language (one semester), the required minimum qualification is matriculation or equivalent. However, for Diploma courses in the Russian language (two semesters), the required minimum qualification is matriculation or equivalent with a basic certificate course in the Russian language. At Punjab University, the minimum qualification requirement to be admitted to Diploma courses is matriculation or equivalent.

At Punjab University, a one-year Diploma in the Russian Language is granted to students completing/passing the exams of two semesters. In NUML, Certificates of Russian Language are granted to the students completing/passing one semester. However, a Diploma in the Russian Language is granted to the students who complete/pass the exams of two semesters and have a minimum of 80% attendance. In RCSC, two types of certificates are issued i.e. Certificate of Basic Course and Certificate of Basic Course (with exam). Award of Certificates and Diploma are contingent on passing the exam (s) and fulfillment of minimum attendance requirement in all three studied institutions. The minimum attendance requirement is 50%, 80%, and 80% in RCSC, NUML, and Punjab University respectively. In case of not fulfilling of minimum attendance requirement, learners can apply for readmission in all three institutions.

Regarding the mode of communication or teaching in Russian courses and diplomas, it was analyzed that the mode of communication between teacher and learners in RCSC is Urdu and English language. In Punjab University and NUML, it is Urdu, English, and Russian.

Formal status of courses

Before considering the status of state educational institutions it is necessary to analyze the situation associated with the functioning of the Russian language courses executed in various institutions of Pakistan. The Embassy of the Russian Federation is located in Islamabad and does not conduct Russian language training or certificate courses. NUML is a federally chartered university. At NUML, there is a department of the Russian language, however, it exists only at the main campus in Islamabad even though other regional campuses of NUML also exist. The University of Punjab is located in Lahore and it is the only state educational institution where there is an opportunity to learn Russian for students all across Punjab. The university itself was established in 1876 and it is the oldest, largest, and most prestigious high education institution in the country. Therefore, students prefer to be enrolled in Russian language courses, organized by this university.

While considering the legal status of certificates and diplomas, it is analyzed that in Punjab University and NUML, the certificate course and diploma are authorized by the university governing bodies such as the Board of Faculty as well as the Academic Council, being public sector universities. In RCSC, the certificate courses are authorized and implemented by Govt. of Russia as part of the diplomatic program and national agenda of teaching the Russian language to foreign nationals.

Location

Location is very important for learning a foreign language. Learning a foreign language is much easier and more effective if the learner is located in the same country and the majority of the people speak the same language hence generating a language learning environment. In terms of location, we deal with courses, functioning in the students' native country. The main problem, therefore, is the absence of a Russian language cultural and learning environment. But, on the other hand, course participants are representative of the same culture, and they speak the same language, and hence face the same difficulties while learning the Russian language. In this regard, the methodological principle of considering the students' native language is obvious.

The absence of the Russian language and Russian culture environment is partially offset by the use of technology-enhanced learning tools (mainly computer, audio, video, etc). These tools not only help develop listening and reading skills but also can be useful for demonstrating videos of the cities of Russia, museums, galleries, streets, markets, etc.

Timing and duration

The frequency of admission for a Diploma in the Russian language at Punjab University is once a year and starts in August every year. In NUML, admission is offered and advertised twice a year in February and September every year. In RCSC, admission is open after completion of every course till the fulfillment of the desired vacancy of learners.

The duration of training in the Russian language courses in Pakistan, organized by the University of the Punjab is one academic year (from October till June every year), i.e., 39–40 weeks. The duration of each class is 3 hours per day three times a week. Thus, the total number of hours varies between 300-350 per course of training. With these parameters, we can call such classes regular, i.e., lasting from 4 to 8 hours per week (Chebotarev). In Punjab University Russian language classes are taken in the afternoon.

In NUML, the duration of learning the Russian language per day is four hours, five days a week. There are two types of programs of teaching Russian language i.e., Certificate and Diploma. The duration of the certificate course is six months, whereas the duration of the diploma course is one year. Both these programs are executed in the Islamabad campus of NUML. In NUML, the classes were held in the morning.

At RCSC, the duration of each class is two hours that is held twice a week. In 2012, a four-month Russian language certificate course was offered for basic knowledge, that can be further extended to another four months to deliver advanced knowledge of the Russian language. In 2023, three modules of course each having three months duration were designed and offered. In RCSC, paid classes are held in the evening on working days i.e., Monday to Friday. Free classes are held in the afternoon on working days.

Speaking of the duration of training courses, one cannot ignore the question of frequency of admission. Teaching the Russian language in Pakistan is an ongoing learning process. It means that any student starting a course cannot cut short a course at any stage, otherwise, he/she will have to start the course from the beginning.

Facilities

In general, the facilities for teaching Russian as a foreign language include the following components:

- a) range of available published/printed materials on the subject (books, magazines, periodicals, etc);
- b) appropriate staffing (Qualified human resource);
- c) equipment provision (multimedia, audio-video facility, and others).

The *range of available materials* includes methodological guidelines and documents that organize the process of teaching. The complexity of work at courses in Pakistan is that there was no proper course curriculum, absence of contact hours for each topic in the course content and lists of suggested teaching materials for course participants. The curriculum that existed at Punjab University in 2009, did not meet current requirements and was also outdated and inadequate. It was not related to the Russian language course training as such but served as the focus for bachelors and masters who must study the Russian language on their own and take the exam in it if they choose Russian as an optional examination. Thus, formally, the curriculum existed, but it was impossible to use it in the educational process. Further an adequate curriculum for the Russian language was prepared and currently, the process of teaching is based on it. The advantage of a new curriculum is that it considers features of the native language of students – Urdu, and local culture.

In 2012, RCSC used officially published material facility/books, while in 2023 video audio techniques were introduced besides multimedia and published books. In NUML, blackboard and conventional teaching tools are used for teaching besides audio-video teaching aids and group discussions. At Punjab University, audio-video material was used besides printed and electronic published material available on the internet in PDF form.

In addition to dictionaries, one could find in the library only a training package "Russian Language for Everybody" edited by V.G. Kostomarov at the University of Punjab. However, it was published in 1987, and therefore contains educational material that long ago ceased to be relevant, and modern culture-oriented linguistics and regional information cannot be found in these books.

Nowadays at the University of the Punjab, an intensive communicative course "Once Upon a Time" 28 Lessons of Russian for Beginners by Miller L.V., Politova L.V., Rybakova I.Y. is used which is accompanied with MP3 audio. The principle of use of visual aids is reflected in the book «Eyewitness Books: Russia», written by Catlin Burton Merrell, which is also used in the Russian language classes. This illustrated book contains cultural information presented with the help of bright and colorful pictures accompanied with detailed comments in English, which is very useful since Pakistani students usually can read English easily. Also, the book "Teach Yourself Beginner's Russian" by Rachel Farmer is used in Russian language courses, the main advantage of which is presenting thematic (topic) vocabulary with practical activities (dialogues) used to introduce and reinforce new concepts and skills of subjects studied in the class. The book comes with a CD with recorded voiced texts and vocabulary to them.

Currently, RCSC has been using different types of books for Russian language course as mentioned below:

1. "Russian is Simple" by G. Useinova. Russian language course for beginners, St. Petersburg, Zlatoust, 2000.

2. "Speak correctly!" by N.B. Karavanova: The course of Russian colloquial speech (for English speakers), 7th ed., Moscow, Russian language, 2007
3. "Matryoshka" by N.B. Karavanova: Conversational course of the Russian. Basics of Russian Grammar, Saratov, IPR Media, 2021.
4. "A Road to Russia" by V.E. Antonova, M.M. Nakhabina, St. Petersburg, Zlatoust, 2019.

In NUML different books are used for certificate and diploma programs as mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1
Description of books for certificate and diploma courses at NUML

Type of Program	Book Description
Certificate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Textbook of Russian for Foreigners" Part-I, E.G. Bash, E.U. Vladimirovsky et al. Moscow, Russian Language, 1976. 2. "Russian in Exercises" S.A. Khavronina, Moscow, Russian language. Courses, 2019. 3. "Russian Express" S. Hachaturova, Moscow, Moscow ling. Centre, 1999. 4. "A Road to Russia" by V.E. Antonova, M.M. Nakhabina, St. Petersburg, Zlatoust, 2019.
Diploma	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. "Textbook of Russian for Foreigners" Part-I, E.G. Bash, E.U. Vladimirovsky et al. Moscow, Russian Language, 1976. 6. "Russian in Exercises" S.A. Khavronina, Moscow, Russian language. Courses, 2019. 7. "Russian Express" S. Hachaturova, Moscow, Moscow ling. Centre, 1999. 8. "Road to Russia" Part-II, V.E. Anatova, M.M. Nahabina et al St. Petersburg, Zlatoust, 2021

In RSCS, during the academic year, various events such as memorable evenings, exhibitions, film screenings, open lessons, etc. are regularly held for the guests and course participants.

Regarding teaching facilities and tools to teach Russian as a foreign language, all the necessary teaching aids and tools are available in RCSC. In NUML, the Russian language department is provided with proper facilities inclusive of computers, teaching aids, printing and internet facilities, etc. At Punjab University, modern teaching tools including multimedia etc., are not available for teaching Russian language. Russian department does not have a facility to watch Russian movies and other educational videos on multimedia, which negatively affects the process of learning.

In the University of Punjab, regarding *appropriate staffing*, it was noticed that specialist teachers are available in permanent faculty stream for teaching foreign languages who have relevant degree and experience of teaching foreign languages. However, in contract appointments of teachers, the requirements of exact relevant degree and experience of teaching foreign languages is not strictly considered. For teachers appointed on contract basis, a native speaker is preferred regardless of degree and experience requirements. In RCSC, there is no professional Russian language teacher, working in certificate courses. However, all the teachers taught in RCSC were native Russian speakers but not professional Russian language teachers. In NUML, there are five Russian language

teachers, out of which three are native Russian language speakers. At Punjab University, the teacher is not only a native Russian language speaker but also professionally qualified to teach Russian as a foreign language. As far as the qualification of teaching staff is concerned, in all the institutions teachers hold higher education degrees. In NUML, out of five, two graduated, two had master's degrees in mathematics and engineering respectively, and one Ph.D. in Russian linguistics and languages. At Punjab University, Russian language teacher is a Philologist having PhD in the Pedagogical sciences (Methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language).

The third above-mentioned parameter is *material provision* (lecture rooms and teaching equipment). In the University of Punjab, the size of the lecture room is small; the number of students is not more than 20. Small room on the other hand gives positive and friendly learning environment called "audience cohesion effect", which ensures a positive psychological atmosphere in the class.

Since the lecture room is owned by the university, students do not need to move from one building to another (as it can be in the case of rented premises). Because of that, the teacher has the opportunity to decorate the classroom with various photographs of Russian cities and famous people, to place matryoshka dolls, unique ceramic made in Gzhel, Russian painted lacquer boxes, etc. on the bookshelves, to hang a map of the Russian Federation or any other useful training materials.

A huge problem all over Pakistan and, in particular, at RFL courses, is found to relate to insufficient electricity supply: light can be off every hour. The most difficult period is in October and from mid-March to July, when the indoor temperature may be above +40 °C, fans stop working and generators are sometimes out of order. In the last 8 years, the situation somehow has improved since an air conditioner was installed in the Russian department in Punjab University and this helped to create comfortable conditions for the learning process when there is a power supply. In summers problems are related to heat and in winter season (November to January) are associated with cold. Because Pakistan is a country with a hot climate, there is no proper heating system. As a result, students have to wear outer garments since the electric heater does not help much.

After 90 minutes of study, learners have a break of 10-15 minutes when they can go outside and go to the university dining room or cafeteria. It helps to avoid overworking and tiredness.

Course content

The syllabus of Russian language certificate courses and diplomas is fixed and does not vary with the requirement of a variety of students and learning goals in all three studied institutions. In NUML, there is a well-defined course outlined which is followed by all teachers. In RCSC, the syllabus of the certificate course of Russian language is followed which is developed by teachers based on the books they are teaching. In Punjab University, a proper syllabus was developed only in 2010. Before that, it was the teachers who decided the specific course contents they were supposed to cover. Four types of speech activities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are taking place according to modern teaching requirements based on the communicative method of teaching. Moreover, in NUML, the students are introduced to the basic knowledge of Russian culture i.e., festivals, national day, etiquette, and others. Russian literature is also introduced through short stories and poetry of classical writers of various periods. Russian arts through biographies of famous artists are part of the course. Furthermore, Students recite poetry during lessons and farewell parties, etc. At Punjab University and RCSC,

while learning new topics (shopping, transport, holidays, etc.) students are getting acquainted with the cultural and social life of people who live in Russia as well as their communicative behavior. The ultimate objective of the Russian language courses is to form and develop knowledge, skills, and abilities (competencies) of students within the basic level of language proficiency – A1 (Survival level) and A2 (Waystage), according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

NUML offers two levels of Russian language courses. The certificate is for beginners' level and the Diploma is for intermediate level of language proficiency. In RCSC, two levels of Russian language proficiency are offered i.e., for beginners and continuing learning courses.

The focus of language learning is on day-to-day, informal interpersonal communication with some cultural and historical information.

A.A. Mirolyubov and Z.N. Ievleva highlighted 4 learning objectives (Mirolyubov, 1971):

- 1) (re) productive-receptive;
- 2) receptive-productive with an ongoing process aimed at oral speech;
- 3) receptive-productive with an ongoing process aimed at reading;
- 4) receptive.

Concerning RFL courses in Pakistani universities, the achievement of the second of the abovementioned objectives seems to be relevant. In addition, on the first day of class (orientation class), the teacher must also figure out students' reasons for learning Russian with a view to modifying objectives according to the specifics of the audience concerned.

Discussing about the course contents, it was noticed that they are based on a communicative approach. As stated by Rassudova, short-term courses are characterized by a focus on teaching listening and speaking (Rassudova, 1998). Her views were shared by Motina I.Y. that "on the beginner stage of learning foreign language oral speech should be of prime importance after that reading and writing should be considered important respectively" (Motina). Moreover, building cross-cultural competence and developing communication skills are also important in class. In L.V. Zhidkova's opinion, for effective organization of speech situations, role-plays, competitive games, conversations, and discussions can be used (Zhidkova, Speech situations in short-term Russian language teaching, 1990).

Audience

For identification of the most relevant targets in Russian language courses, it is necessary to analyze the audience (learners), whose importance was emphasized by P.G. Chebotaryov: "Without knowing the learner, the objectives of learning cannot be formulated" (Chebotarev). The audience of the Russian language at Punjab University remained heterogeneous in composition since everybody can be admitted based on the minimum education qualification which is a Secondary School Certificate (SSC). Normally students were Pakistanis, the Urdu language speakers except two foreign students i.e., from Turkey and Afghanistan. Since the learners belong to a single nationality and the same culture it has beneficial effects on the educational process, therefore, a teacher can predict and avoid further mistakes of the learners easily.

In NUML and RCSC, only Pakistani students were enrolled in Russian language programs but all other nationalities can also be admitted in these courses. Concerning age and qualification, the statistics about the audience are given in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2
Age bracket of the audience

The age bracket of students	RCSC (percentage of total students)	NUML (percentage of total students)	Punjab University (percentage of total students)
Under 16 years of age	0	2%	0
From 16 to 30 years old	30%	70%	50%
From 30 to 50 years	60%	35%	45 %
Over 50 years old	10 %	3%	5 %

Table 3
Qualification of audience

Student's Education Level	RCSC (percentage of total students)	NUML (percentage of total students)	Punjab University (percentage of total students)
Under matric	0%	0%	0%
Matric	20%	15%	15%
FA / F.Sc. / ICS (12 years)	35%	30%	40%
B.A. / B.Sc./ BBA (16 years)	40%	50%	40%
> 16 years of education	5%	5%	5%

In RCSC, there is no exact number of graduating students from the time of opening of Russian course. However, on an average basis, around 20 students receive their certificates in the Russian language every year. In NUML, so far as total of 769 have enrolled and completed certificate/diploma courses in the Russian language based on data provided from 1971 to 2012. There are no individual classes for students in all three institutions and teaching is done in groups. In NUML, the group in certificate and diploma courses is around 5 to 7 persons and the student-teacher ratio is 4:1. In Punjab University, there is a focus on group teaching and learning. The average number of participants in a group is 5 to 12. In RCSC the group members are around 6 to 10 persons as per data provided in 2012 but from now onward there are possibilities of individual classes / small group classes (up to 5 persons) that are also available with additional fee.

As investigated from the audience of RCSC, the purposes of learning the Russian language were studying in Russia, personal and business contacts in Russia and CIS countries, diplomacy as military attaché in Russia and CIS countries where Russian is the major language, learning a new language, traveling, etc. The profession of the audience was also investigated. It was observed that the audience was businessmen, entrepreneurs, employees, students, lawyers, journalists, housewives, and others.

At Punjab University, the purposes of learning the Russian language were studying in Russia, personal and business contacts in Russia and CIS countries, learning a new

language, traveling, etc. The profession of the audience was Medical and Pharmacy, businessmen, students, lawyers, employers, housewives, etc.

Particularly in NUML, the three most common professions of learners were Business/Self-employed, Military & security services, and students. In NUML, the purpose of the audience in learning the Russian language was as diplomacy as military attaché in Russia and CIS countries, business in Russia, study in Russia and tourism etc.

Attention should also be drawn to gender spectrum characteristics. In Punjab University, from 2007 (the year of establishment of the Russian department) to 2023, 13 female students and 90 male students were admitted to Russian language Diploma courses making female 12.6% of total learners and diploma participants. In RCSC, females remained 5% of the course participants. In NUML, female enrollment in Russian language courses remained at 2.6%. There was no separate group for male and female students in all three institutions. Females can have either a modern or conservative upbringing, and if we deal with the second option, it can create problems in the learning process. For instance, if a girl/woman wears a burka or hijab, then when she is making Russian sounds (and in the future picking sentences), acoustic distortion in pronunciation is observed. Secondly, articulation is visually hidden from the teacher, and he/she is unable to identify mistakes immediately and to give advice to eliminate them.

Thirdly, if at school a girl studied in a female group/branch, then she psychologically cannot communicate with male students and even avoids looking in their direction at courses. As a result, when the teacher tries to involve her in communication, she will not be able to answer a simple question “Как его зовут?” (What is his name?), since she was not looking at male students when they introduced themselves. This problem would be resolved if at least two girls studied in a group, but for 15 sessions that was not the case in The University of Punjab.

The Russian language course provides classes in the afternoon for 3 hours thrice a week. The enrolled students are usually either working or are enrolled in some other university programs in addition to the Russian language course. Even if their job or study is over by 2 pm they may be overburdened. Taking into account, the teacher should provide a relaxing atmosphere at the first 15 minutes of the lesson to relieve students' fatigue and stress (for example begin a lesson with a conversation unconnected with their studies, talk about yesterday's match, or important event in the world, etc.). If the teacher sees that the learners are over-tired during the lesson, he/ she may suggest playing language games or giving tasks requiring physical activity.

At the end of the first (in January) and the second semesters (in June) course participants must pass the exam, and if in January somebody fails the exam, he will be expelled. After the entire course, a final exam (in June) is conducted and it includes oral (listening, reading, speaking) and written (writing) parts.

Conclusion

Recent trend of trade and commerce, import and export of goods and services, student exchanges and possible business opportunities with Russia is paving grounds for learning Russian language in Pakistan. The situation related to the Russian language courses in Pakistan remains difficult. Learners and teachers face many issues which need due consideration.

First of all, there is a low number of state educational institutions ready to assume the responsibility for organizing foreign language courses and in particular Russian language. Secondly, the lack of well-defined curricula, absence of contact hours for each topic in a course content, and absence of Russian language textbooks in the market, written by Pakistani-Russian authors that could consider the particularities of the Urdu language. Thirdly, the course teaching staff is not necessarily specialists in the field of teaching foreign languages. Fourthly, comfortable environment (air-conditioning, heating system, multimedia, and comfortable furniture) is important and impacts positively on learning process but in majority of the studied institutions it was absent.

The problem propagates in teaching when there are different groups of students in the class with specific interests and expectations of learning the Russian language. Heterogeneous learning groups reduce the efficiency of teaching and learning. Moreover, in some respects, social and cultural differences provide some degree of hindrances of learning Russian language.

Recommendations

All aforementioned issues need appropriate attention and require a solution that determines the effectiveness of Russian language courses in Pakistan. Government of Pakistan should consider enhancing the number of state educational institutions for provision of Russian language courses as a policy decision in context to the current geopolitical scenario. Moreover, curricula and course contents of Russian language courses should be well defined and approved in consultation with relevant experts of Russian language available in Pakistan. Academic institutions should make available Russian language textbooks in the libraries. Academic institutions should hire specialist teaching staff who can specifically teach Russian as foreign languages. Comfortable learning environment (air-conditioning, heating system, multimedia, and comfortable furniture) is important and impacts positively on learning process and should be provided by academic institutions.

For improvement in learning outcomes, it is recommended to improve infrastructure and learning environment of academic institutions. Factors such as age, gender, social and cultural background of audiences, religious and cultural norms, educational level, and background are important for learning process and should be considered while formulating of a learning group for Russian language in particular and for all foreign language in general.

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