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L. V. Shcherba: A ‘New Slant’ on Modern Foreign Languages in the School Curriculum?

Olga Campbell-Thomson

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, The University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

60 Albert Road, Clydebank, G81 3BQ, Scotland UK E-mail: olga.thomson@siu.edu;
olga.campbell-thomson@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Olga Campbell-Thomson is an affiliate faculty member at the University of Glasgow, teaching language and research skills courses at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures and Glasgow International College.

Corresponding Author: Olga Campbell-Thomson

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In this paper, I offer a critical reflection on the thesis of the general educational value of foreign languages developed by Russian linguist Lev Vladimirovich Shcherba. I do so against the background of current debates on the positioning of foreign languages in the school curriculum in the United Kingdom (UK). I argue that Shcherba’s thesis, which was developed almost a century ago, retains its currency and can make an important contribution to the ongoing discussion on the value of foreign languages in UK schools. The paper outlines Shcherba’s scholarly explorations in general linguistics which underpin his arguments in favour of the inclusion of foreign languages in the basic school curriculum. The conception of language as a system immanently positioned in social experience assigns the foundational role to language in the literacy project. The conscious analytic processing of language phenomena is viewed as an essential pre-condition of literacy, and foreign languages are shown to be instrumental in developing such an analytic capacity of mind. Shcherba’s argumentation reflects a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, both to foreign language education and to curriculum matters, and merits the attention of language practitioners, educationalists, and policy-makers alike.

Keywords: school curriculum; modern foreign languages; literacy; Shcherba

Subject classification codes: modern foreign languages

Introduction

In 1942, the journal *Soviet Pedagogy* [*Sovetskaya Pedagogika*] published an article by Lev Vladimirovich Shcherba (1880-1944) entitled *The General Educational Value of Foreign Languages and their Place in the School Curriculum* (henceforth, *General Educational Value*). Shcherba, who was already well-established as a linguist, turned his full attention to the matter of foreign language studies at school in the beginning of the 1940s when working in the Institute of Schools of the Commissariat of the Enlightenment [*Narkompros*]. His unfinished book, commissioned by Narkompros, *The Foundations of the Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages*, and a number of articles published at that time, were a systematisation of the views on language and on language education that he developed over three decades of intense scholarly and pedagogical work. In his article *General Educational Value* he revisited his conception of philology-based education and argued for the inclusion of foreign languages in the basic school curriculum. Through a number of detailed examples, Shcherba demonstrated in his article how the study of modern languages helped to develop skills at close reading with careful attention to the stylistic features of the literary norm, and critical reflection on thought and its verbal representation. Shcherba (1974b) claimed to ‘put a new slant’ (p. 344) on the matter of modern foreign languages in the school curriculum

because he was approaching the issue from the position of a theoretical linguist and a language practitioner. In addition to his scholarly and practical engagement with language, Shcherba was also a pedagogue and, as well as teaching and organising language courses, he also worked as a school administrator and was involved in curriculum design and the writing of textbooks for schools. This is why Shcherba had a good understanding of the restrictions of school curricula in terms of the time and scope permitted to every subject. Thus his approach to the issues related to the positioning of foreign languages in the school curriculum was not only rooted in rigorous scholarly argumentation but was also informed by the practice of schooling.

It is argued that Shcherba's detailed elaboration of the reasons in favour of including modern foreign languages in the school curriculum, articulated back in the 1940s, retains its currency and merits further exploration. Relative unfamiliarity with Shcherba's scholarship in the English-language world prompts inspection of his ideas in the context of current debates on the value of foreign languages in the school curriculum. The United Kingdom is a relevant site for such inspection as the country's ever-changing policies towards foreign languages are indicative of the continuing search for the justification of their placement in the education structure (Mitchell, 2003; White, 2004; Hunt et al., 2005; Crichton & Templeton, 2010; Peiser & Jones, 2012; Legg 2013), and for the theoretical underpinnings of language policies and practice (Swarbrick, 2011; Peiser & Jones, 2012).

The English translation published in this journal of Shcherba's text, *General Educational Value*, together with this critical reflection on the key points raised in the text, are brought into the discussion with the hope that a 'new slant' from a theoretical linguist, a language practitioner and a pedagogue, can contribute to the understanding of why modern foreign languages deserve a more protected status in the school curriculum than they currently enjoy. It is also hoped that Shcherba's insights into the general educational value of modern foreign languages will generate interest amongst educationalists, language practitioners and policy-makers alike, and will receive further development in the context of UK-based debates on language education.

This paper will first review the current debates on foreign languages provision at school in the United Kingdom. The following section will show how common concerns expressed by the UK-based scholars are rendered in Shcherba's review of the aims and purposes of language studies at school. Shcherba's thesis on the general educational value of language studies will then be related to his broader conception of language and literacy. The

merits of Shcherba's possible contribution to the on-going debates on the foreign languages provision in the UK will be discussed in relation to curriculum requirements that correspond to the overall task of the school to provide 'a sound general education in line with subject-transcending aims' (White, 2004, p. 14).

Foreign languages in school curricula in the UK

The growing interest in the matter of foreign languages provision at school in the United Kingdom can be testified by the growing number of the relevant policy documents, government reports and scholarly debates (The Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2000; QCA, 2001; Boyd, 2001; DfES, 2002; Hunt et al., 2005; DCSF, 2007; Dearing and King, 2007; British Academy, 2013; Ofsted, 2011, 2016; Legg, 2013; DfE, 2015; Long & Bolton, 2016; Cambridge SRI, 2015). At the centre of these debates have been the issues of compulsion and 'entitlement', and these have been reflected in policies on foreign languages in all four home nations in the UK.

Foreign languages became compulsory in the secondary level curriculum for the 11-14 age group (Key Stage 3) since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. The Language Strategy in 2002 made a statutory provision for the post-14 age group in England and Northern Ireland, only to be made optional for over-14 pupils in England in 2004 (British Academy, 2013; Evans and Fisher, 2009). The Green Paper, 14-19: 'Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards' (DfES, 2002a) spoke of an entitlement for all primary school children to learn a foreign language by 2012 in England. The National Languages Strategy, 'Languages for All, Languages for Life' (DfES, 2002b), reiterated the promise of the entitlement to learn a foreign language for every pupil in Key Stage 2, but shortened the time to 2010. The National Curriculum Framework 2014 for England set out that languages were required to be taught at Key Stages 2 and 3 (i.e. at ages 7-14), but would remain an entitlement after the age of 14.

In Northern Ireland, foreign languages have not been part of the primary curriculum. A statutory provision for the post-14 age group introduced by The Language Strategy in 2002 was changed into an optional provision in 2007 (British Academy, 2013; Evans and Fisher, 2009).

In Wales, foreign languages have never been compulsory for pupils over 14, but in 2010 the Welsh Assembly Government issued a document entitled 'Making Languages

Count’, which supported the development of alternative language qualifications to GCSE level (British Academy, 2013). Key Stage 3 is the only phase in which foreign language is compulsory. Statutory guidance on Modern Foreign Languages in the National Curriculum for Wales for Key Stage 3 was launched in September 2008, and non-statutory guidance for Key Stage 2 in Welsh schools was issued in the same year.

In Scotland, ‘Languages for All’ guidelines (1989-2001) created ‘compulsion by consensus’ for foreign languages, but from 2001 language learning was reduced to ‘entitlement only’ (Grove, 2012). Introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence in 2010 for Scotland included foreign languages in one of eight curriculum areas, but as entitlement only. The ambitious agenda ‘Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach’, set by the Scottish Government in 2012, envisioned that from 2020 every child would be entitled to learn a first additional language from primary one and a second by primary five, and that this entitlement would continue until the end of Level 3 (Scottish Government, 2012).

Since the first common framework of curricular aims was introduced in 2000 (DfEE/QCA, 1999; White, 2004), the aims and purposes underpinning policies in foreign languages in the school curriculum have undergone several revisions. Despite regular alternations in the formulation of the aims and purposes, a number of recurring themes emerge across a range of policies issued at various dates. These include employment in the global marketplace, communication for practical purposes, global citizenship, intercultural understanding, and reading literature in the original language (DfEE/QCA, 1999; DfES, 2003; DfES, 2005; DCSF, 2009; DfE, 2007, 2013, 2014; Scottish Government, 2010, 2012, 2013; Welsh Assembly Government and Young Wales, 2010).

The purposes of practical utility seem to dominate the agenda, and these are invariably supplemented with a hopeful aim for a better cultural understanding resulting from speaking a foreign language. The following is an example of how the aims and purposes of foreign language studies for both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are formulated in the Statutory Guidance of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013):

Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures. A high-quality languages education should foster pupils’ curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world. The teaching should enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in speech and in writing. It should also provide opportunities for them to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and read great literature in the original language. Language teaching should provide the foundation for learning further languages, equipping pupils to study and work in other countries. (p. 226)

A similar rationale for the learning of foreign languages is articulated in Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government, 2010), which aspires to expand and improve language learning by 2020:

Learning other languages enables children and young people to make connections with different people and their cultures and to play a fuller part as global citizens...It is important for the nation's prosperity that young people are attracted to learning a modern language and that they become confident users of a modern language, well equipped with skills needed in the new Europe and in the global marketplace. This framework of experiences and outcomes is intended to help to address this national need. (pp. 1-2)

The national need and the economic case for learning foreign languages is further supported by reports providing statistical evidence of losses to the UK economy as a result of a language skills deficit (Grove, 2012; Foreman-Peck & Wang, 2013; CfBT Wales, 2015), leading to 'unfilled' vacancies in administrative and clerical roles in the UK (British Academy, 2013, p. 4).

The educational benefits underpinning the purposes of foreign language instruction at school also feature in a number of documents. The most detailed rendering of these can be found in the report and recommendations of the Scottish Government's initiative 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach':

Learning another language has positive educational benefits which contribute to the overall cognitive and linguistic development of children and young people...Research evidence indicates that learning another language can foster a deeper understanding of one's own language and can assist young people's cognitive development in a variety of ways. These include enhanced mental flexibility, increased ability to deal with complexity, improved problem solving, greater learning capacity, an increase in interpersonal skills and improved academic achievement and attainment across a range of subjects. (Scottish Government, 2012, p. 11)

The 'Modern Languages Excellence Report' further notes that 'the cognitive benefits, though well researched and documented, are not widely known or appreciated' (SCILT, 2011, p. 4). This lack of understanding and appreciation is still widespread, and references to a possible contribution of language learning to cognitive development in relevant literature are merely incidental (cf. DfE, 2013; Cambridge SRI, 2015).

Key issues and challenges

Notwithstanding the promises of the better chances of employment, and of economic, social and cultural mobility in a global space, modern foreign languages remain a poor relation at every level of schooling in the UK (DCSF, 2007; British Academy 2013; CfBT Wales, 2015; EDTBC, 2016). It was noted by Quality and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2001) that the non-statutory provision of modern foreign languages would always keep them at risk unless there

is strong demand in society to maintain the provision. As the level of demand for modern foreign languages at school continues to vary (The Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2000; McLachlan, 2009; Legg, 2013; Estyn, 2016), their precarious existence continues. An illustrative example of the capricious nature of personal demand for foreign language learning can be seen in the reaction to the change from compulsory to optional provision of language studies at Key Stage 4 in 2004. Swarbrick (2011) provides statistical evidence showing a dramatic decrease ‘almost overnight’ (p. 228) in the numbers of pupils studying language at Key Stage 4, and further evidence of the continuing trend of decline in foreign language learning over the period of 2005-2010, once languages at Key Stage 4 became optional. Worton (2009) and Swarbrick (2001) explain that the removal of compulsion at higher stages of schooling were justified by the intended shift towards the expansion of foreign languages provision at primary level, hoping that this would motivate pupils to learn languages at later stages. Although The Dearing Review (DCSF, 2007) suggested the re-introduction of compulsion at Key Stage 4 if anticipated motivation did not materialise, neither motivation nor compulsion has become a reality at the time of writing.

Reports on the sporadic efforts by teachers and isolated schools to expand the provision of foreign languages at the primary level of schooling revealed that there remained ‘the lack of opportunity for growth’ (Hunt et al., 2005, p. 379). Hunt et al. (2005) indicated that the shortage of curriculum time and the introduction of national literacy and numeracy strategies permitted even less time to the subjects lying outside the scope of these strategies. Reluctance to allocate curriculum time to foreign languages was confirmed by a later study of McLachlan (2009) which highlighted that the priority of core subjects left little space for languages in the timetable.

More recent reports on the results of visitations of primary schools by Ofsted inspectors in England indicated that languages suffered from a lack of allocated teaching time and were ‘pushed to the margins of the curriculum in many primary schools’ (Long & Bolton, 2016, p. 14). The main explanation for this was the difficulty in finding time for foreign languages in an ‘already tight curriculum’ (Ofsted, 2016). These latter observations on a continuing trend of disregard for foreign languages in the school curriculum are significant in view of the introduction of compulsory teaching of foreign language at Key Stage 2 in England in September 2014. It should be noted that this compulsion does not contain a requirement to teach languages in all years in Key Stage 2, as long as the content of the programme of study is covered by the end of the stage (DfE, 2014). This leaves room for

manoeuvre with respect to locally-made decisions on the allocation of teaching time to foreign languages in the basic curriculum. Whilst the Language Trends 2014/15 survey report acknowledges that most schools who have responded to the survey had ‘formalised or strengthened existing provision in response to the introduction of compulsory language teaching’ (EDTBC 2015, p. 35), it confirms that ‘this does not necessarily mean that pupils receive language teaching throughout the four years of Key Stage 2’ (ibid., p. 35). The report also indicates that the extent of foreign language provision, as well as time allocation, varies substantially across the schools surveyed. The commitment of The Scottish Government to enable all young people by 2020 to learn two languages (as well as their mother tongue) at primary school does not seem to instil much confidence across the learning community. According to the report on the implementation of the initiative ‘Language Learning in Scotland: A 1 + 2 Approach’, there are fears that

with so many other competing priorities from central government (for example raising attainment, closing the attainment gap, numeracy, developing Scotland’s young workforce, science and technology subjects, early years, etc.), the long-term commitment to languages might reduce, resulting in a reduction in the level of resources available. (ADES, 2016, p. 6)

It seems that in the absence of a strong case for the inclusion of foreign languages in the compulsory curriculum, ‘the fragility of language provision’ (British Academy, 2013, p. 4) will remain the reality in the UK education structure. A possible impediment to building a case for positioning foreign languages in the compulsory curriculum at all levels of schooling may be the fragility of the aims, which have been challenged on a number of points. The criticisms voiced have included doubts as to the long-term benefits of foreign languages, and specifically as to the positive impact of foreign languages upon learning, as well as of ‘real attainment in language learning itself’ (McLachlan, 2009, p. 200). The deficiencies of the utilitarian reasons were explored in detail by Williams (2000, 2001, 2004). His findings of ‘the relative absence of vocational reasons for learning other languages’ (Williams, 2004, p. 117), and the consequent challenge of motivating pupils to learn languages, prompted his assertion that foreign languages provision should form part of the entitlement with a limited (one-year) compulsion. His proposal to consider the alternative aims of individual enjoyment and fostering cultural openness resulted in the conclusion that when individual well-being was not promoted by foreign language studies, pupils ‘should not be obliged to continue their studies’ (Williams, 2004, p. 118). The claims to foster intercultural understanding have been further criticised by Peiser and Jones (2012), who indicate that while policy-makers appear to have placed increased emphasis on intercultural understanding, ‘they seem to have paid more

attention to the need to complement a wider set of broader policy goals' (pp. 173-174). The authors also note the absence of theoretical underpinning behind policy and potential curriculum development, and question the possibilities of the realisation of intended policy aims in practice.

The issues that emerged from this review are not unique to the UK context. The discussion on the need of foreign languages at school, and on their aims and purposes, have been on the agenda of various education systems. Noting that this can be partially explained by the fact that modern foreign languages have no traditional placement in the school curriculum, Shcherba (1974b) highlights that '...the list of school subjects should by no means be random or merely follow tradition' (p. 344)]. When stating that 'there should be a carefully considered programme of studies' (Shcherba 1974b, p. 344)], Shcherba renders the matters of foreign languages in the school curriculum by carefully dissecting the traditional curriculum, as well as drawing a line between school subjects and the corresponding fields of studies. A number of his propositions address the same concerns of the utilitarian approach to language, of motivation, and of the perceived long-term benefits of foreign languages, that have been on the agenda of the UK-based debates on foreign languages. Shcherba builds the case for the inclusion of modern foreign languages in the basic school curriculum by demonstrating that foreign languages, apart from being of practical utility, are of general educational value. Although pre-dating these debates, Shcherba's writing can be viewed as responding to current issues and concerns. His thesis on the general educational value of foreign languages is also deemed relevant to the UK context, as it responds to the educational task of schooling of 'providing a sound general education in line with subject-transcending aims' (White, 2004, p. 14) rather than in 'the preparation of specialists' (*ibid.*).

Subject-transcending aims of foreign languages

A note that school education, as 'its first duty' (White, 2004, p. 14), aims to provide general foundations, and not to train specialists in narrow fields, is an important point. Shcherba discusses this point prior to examining the value of each school subject, and of foreign languages among them. He makes a distinction between school subjects and corresponding fields of study, and also between school subjects and specialist training in post-secondary education. He highlights that school subjects present the matter in a simplified form and that it is hardly possible to expect the level of sophistication of specialist training at school. Shcherba also draws attention to the specific nature of language as a live system that needs to be in constant circulation in order to develop language skills that could be of practical use.

This argumentation leads Shcherba to conclude that the expectations of foreign language proficiency that would permit fluent communication or the reading of specialist literature are idealistic aims at school level, and are frequently unjustified since the conditions for meeting these aims are not in place.

Shcherba (1974b) underlines that it would be more realistic to expect that foreign language studies, like other subjects in the basic school curriculum, lay firm foundations for further specialised training. What constitutes these firm foundations requires an understanding that the acquisition of language, like the acquisition of any skill, develops over time, and projected learning outcomes should relate to achievable outcomes at every level of gradual and continuous progression in the course of language training.

These observations are of relevance in this context, and they challenge a common tendency to measure the usefulness of foreign language instruction by the level of pupils' communicative fluency. A frequently quoted pessimistic report by Burstall (1974) is just one historical example of such tendentious expectations in the UK-based context, when the disparaging evaluation of pupils' attainment in a foreign language (French) led to a gradual abandonment of foreign language education in the primary curriculum in British schools. As there have been efforts to reinstate languages at school, expectations of attainment of language fluency persist, which is shown by later studies and policy documents in the UK (Mitchell, 2003; McLachlan, 2009; Erler & Macaro, 2011; Graham et al., 2016; DfE, 2013; Curriculum for Excellence, 2010; Scottish Government, 2010, 2013).

Having indicated that the attainment of advanced communicative fluency is hardly possible at school level, Shcherba does not dismiss communicative fluency as the desirable aim of foreign language learning. He merely points out the limitations of the scope and depth permitted to foreign language instruction at school, and also emphasises the importance of the careful planning of gradual and continuous input that will allow the development of language skills towards desirable aims. Shcherba makes an important point when he remarks that not all instances of language learning are immediately observable. This means that any decision on the usefulness of foreign language instruction at school cannot be based on observable measures of communicative fluency. Assessment criteria should consider the possibilities of each level of progression in the critical path of skill construction, and the placement of foreign languages in the school curriculum itself should be carefully validated on criteria other than the immediately demonstrable attainment of long-term goals.

Shcherba (1974b) calls for a careful validation of the entire programme of studies in terms of the aims, content and scope of individual subjects, and specifies practical utility and general educational value as two basic requirements for the placement of a school subject in the school curriculum.

Practical utility

When discussing the practical utility of foreign languages, Shcherba (1974b) mainly focuses on the reading of specialist literature, and this needs to be related to the historical and political context of his writing. Shcherba's article, *General Educational Value*, and other relevant texts, were written and published during the period of the political isolation of the Soviet State. Private citizens did not have direct contact with the speakers of other languages, but there was a dire need for knowledge of foreign languages. Since the end of the 1920s, the country had been undergoing rapid industrialisation and subscriptions to foreign technical literature were abundant (Choldin, 1991). Shcherba (1974b) notes that the specialist literature in foreign languages 'remains unopened' (p. 348) as hardly anybody can make use of it. Hence, Shcherba (1974b) specifically refers to the necessity of restoring 'wide-scale knowledge of foreign languages' (p. 348) through basic schooling to ensure that 'every Soviet intellectual' (p. 347) would have the ability to make use of specialist literature.

Although Shcherba (1974b) demonstrates through a number of instances that modern foreign languages are of practical use to individuals, he argues that it is unrealistic to expect an understanding of the future usefulness of foreign languages at school age, and that 'practical utility is not an ample incentive for a school subject to fulfil its function' (p. 346). This observation needs to be considered in the context of language studies in the UK, where students' motivation to study foreign languages is consistently reported to be low (CfBT, 2015; EDTBC, 2016; Estyn, 2016; Ofsted, 2016). The demands of the economy and the country's need for cadres proficient in foreign languages, put forward in a number of documents (Scottish Government, 2010; DfE, 2013; British Academy 2013; Cambridge SRI, 2015), may not constitute 'ample incentives' (Shcherba, 1974b, p. 346) for school children to enrol in foreign language courses. The same can apply to the promise of personal benefits and enjoyment from the ability to read or speak in a foreign language.

This suggests that it is unrealistic to expect stable enrolment in language courses in the absence of compulsory provision. Language proficiency that could be of practical usefulness, in turn, is unlikely to develop in the absence of a continuous and well-planned programme of logical and timely inputs throughout the course of schooling. Thus, if there is a

serious intention to develop language proficiency to the level of practical application, or at least, to lay firm foundations for further development, there should be compulsory (and continuous) provision of foreign language tuition across a number of years of schooling. Shcherba (1974b) insists, however, that determining the necessity for the subject's placement in the basic school curriculum requires consideration of general educational value, even when practical utility is evident.

General educational value

Shcherba (1974b) admits that the notion of 'general education' itself is complex and changes with time; however, he ventures to outline a few aspects that appear as 'evident' (p. 348) in terms of the educational value of languages. In his article *General Educational Value*, Shcherba demonstrates that foreign language studies make a unique contribution to the foundations of educational structure and that this contribution lies in the development of literacy and capacity for cultural understanding.

Shcherba, the theoretical linguist, clearly indicated that his entire approach to foreign language studies was rooted in his 'own analysis of language phenomena in their three aspects' (Shcherba 1974e, p. 325). This was his programmatic view of language and it will be outlined next in order to gain a basic understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of Shcherba's thesis on the general educational value of foreign languages at school.

Three aspects of language phenomena

In the 1920s, Shcherba formulated his conception of language as a system immanently positioned in the social experience of people. Rather than using the term language, Shcherba (1974a) refers to language phenomena [*языковые явления*] throughout his theorising, and this underlines his general view of language as a complex living system that cannot be abstracted from the social organisation of any concrete group of people at a specific point of time. He proposes to distinguish three aspects of language phenomena: speech activity [*речевая деятельность*], language system [*языковая система*], and language material [*языковой материал*].

The first aspect of language phenomena, speech activity, encompasses the processes of speaking and of comprehension. Shcherba (1974a) points out that the process of comprehension, and of the interpretation of the linguistic code, is an active component of the composite of 'language', where both comprehension and speaking are operated through the same mechanisms.

The second aspect of language phenomena, language system, is a gathering of all (in theory) the instances of acts of speaking and comprehension that are traditionally systematised in language grammars and dictionaries. Thus, ideally, properly compiled grammar and dictionary texts should cover the language system in its entirety.

The third aspect of language phenomena, language material, is viewed by Shcherba (1974a) as ‘an aggregate of everything being said and comprehended in a specific concrete context at a certain period of existence of a given social group’ (p. 26).

Shcherba indicates that this threefold division is to some extent artificial, since ‘language system’ and ‘language material’ are merely different facets of speech activity, which is the only experiential application of language phenomena. Speech activity, which includes the processes of speaking and comprehension, is preeminent. Speech activity becomes possible only due to the existence of the language system, i.e. the lexical and grammatical composition drawn from language material. Shcherba (1974d) writes:

If our linguistic experiences were not regulated in some system, which we call grammar, we would have been prehensile parrots who can only repeat and understand what they have already heard (p. 48).

Command of a language system enables the production and comprehension of texts (oral or written) in accordance with rules, albeit all too often in a most inexplicable way. Shcherba consistently emphasises the importance of semantic element in the process of text production and comprehension. He indicates that the knowledge of the rules of syntax is not sufficient. Speakers and listeners always strive to discern meaning out of infinite possibilities of syntactic combinations and this implies knowledge of the rules of meaning production (Shcherba 1974a).

The absolute primacy of sense-making, i.e. of meaning-production, lies at the foundation of Shcherba’s view of language. This is encapsulated in his statement: ‘It is crystal clear that the entire existence of language amounts to sense-making. If there is no sense, no meaning, there is no language’ (Shcherba, 1974f, p. 153). This means that a language system is ‘some sort of social value or currency, common and obligatory for all members of a given social group’ (Shcherba, 1974a, p. 27), since its mastery permits infinite combinations of language material for meaningful language production and comprehension.

Literacy

The notion of literacy emerges when Shcherba elaborates on the necessity of meaningful communication in any social organisation. Literacy, in this view, is a mastery of the socially

shared language phenomena and the ability of individuals to relate to one another in a comprehensible manner. This requires mastery of systematised language material, which allows comprehension despite individual speech variations.

Acknowledging that speech activity is individualised, Shcherba (1974a) notes that considerable divergence in the speech organisation of a particular individual 'removes this individual from society' (p. 27), and uses dyslalia and mental deviation as illustrative examples. These are indicated to be extreme examples. Nevertheless, they identify the requirement of social organisation for some form of unity, or shared language phenomena, in a given society. Querying whether language material can be principally the same within a specific group of people, Shcherba notes that in terms of vocabulary, particularly in speaking, language is fragmented into small units up to the level of a family. In terms of grammar, he notes, there is a unified (standardised) language across wide groupings (Shcherba 1974a). A similar unifying function is performed by standardised orthography (Shcherba 1927a). Furthermore, literary material processed by the members of the community maintains shared language material in a cultured society (Shcherba 1974b, p. 280). This is why it is important to master grammar, orthography and literary material, as prerequisites of literacy. Shcherba challenges views on the mechanical acquisition of the rudiments of writing and speaking. Thus, for example, in his article *Illiteracy and its Causes*, published in 1927, he indicates that literacy does not merely mean correct spelling but also requires clarity of expression (Shcherba, 1927a). He insists that although writing is an automated process, it requires consciousness, and that mere mechanisation based on motor or visual memory results in semi-literacy, since it does not develop the habit of quick analysis of language forms during the process of writing. The same applies to speaking. Mere imitation of the patterns of speaking will never result in literate forms of expression. Articulacy and clarity of expression in speaking, as well as in writing, requires a conscious processing of language material.

Modern foreign languages are thus drawn into a discussion on literacy development. Shcherba presents his detailed examination of the significance of foreign language learning in developing the analytic processing of language material in a number of articles: *On the General Educational Value of Foreign Languages* (1926); *Towards the Subject of Modern Languages in Unified Labour School* (1927b); *On Bilingualism* (1930); *On the Relationship between Native and Foreign Languages* (1934). In the article *General Educational Value*, which refines and summarises a number of issues addressed in the earlier texts, Shcherba

(1974b) extends his views on literacy as embedded in serious language studies by stating the following: ‘it is not possible to train truly literate individuals (in the broadest sense), in whatever specialism they may pursue, by any means other than the properly organised teaching of foreign languages’ (p. 356).

‘Properly organised teaching of foreign languages’ (Shcherba, 1974b, p. 356) entails conscious engagement with languages. Conscious engagement requires the comparison of grammatical and lexical norms in different languages, as well as an understanding that similar notions can be realised by different linguistic means in different languages. Shcherba (1974b) explains that the realisation that thoughts and ideas can be expressed by a variety of terms and forms in different languages enables learners ‘to uncover a variety of expressive means in [their] own language and weans [them] off the habit of confusing a verbal expression with the essence of things’ (p. 354). He suggests that meaningful analysis of the language system compels learners ‘to notice the various undertones of thought’ (*ibid.*) rather than gliding over familiar language stream. Such meaningful engagement with language(s) relates to skills in focused reading, stylistically literate writing, critical thinking and a generally analytic approach to one’s surroundings.

Foreign languages provide ample material for such meaningful analysis by ‘overcoming the mother tongue’ (Shcherba, 1974b, p. 353) and breaking the unity of verbal representation and thought. Through a number of instances drawn from different languages (e.g. German, French and Russian), Shcherba demonstrates how conscious engagement in rendering ideas in different languages mobilises analytic processing. He remarks that any learning is always based on comparison of known and new information. When learners systematically compare language systems, ‘the illusion created by knowledge of only one language - that there are inviolable notions which remain the same for all times and all people - is destroyed’ (Shcherba, 1974c, p. 316). The outcome of this process is the liberation of thought and cognition from the ‘imprisonment of words’ (Shcherba, 1974c, p. 317). Shcherba (1974b) writes:

When learning a foreign language, we soon realise that every new foreign word makes us ponder upon its meaning and over the meanings of the corresponding words in one’s own language; it makes us ponder upon human thought itself. (p. 353)

Articulatory and clarity of expression in speaking, as well as in writing, require a conscious processing of language material. Shcherba (1974b) notes that it is difficult to draw children’s attention to the specific language points within the sole boundaries of one’s own mother tongue because ‘everything is straightforward and familiar’ there and ‘mostly does not

provoke any doubts' (p. 354). This is why it is not a paradox that individuals can master their own language, i.e. its literary norm, and to appreciate 'all its richness and all its expressive means...only by studying a foreign language' (Shcherba 1974, p. 354).

Shcherba links foreign languages to general philological education. When indicating that the study of philology teaches learners to inspect words, fosters aesthetic appreciation, and impacts on the formation of a worldview, he reiterates that the full appreciation of one's own language and literature 'are unimaginable without terms for comparison, i.e. without studying a foreign (second) language' (1974b, p. 363). Shcherba (1974b) emphasises the following:

...the mother tongue and a foreign language comprise a closely interlinked pair of subjects which serve as a philological foundation for the entire educational enterprise, where one subject is inconceivable without the other (p. 363).

This argumentation leads Shcherba (1974b) to conclude that foreign language studies at school make a unique contribution in terms of their general educational value in that they are essential for training 'truly literate individuals' (p. 356).

Cultural understanding

Capacity for cultural understanding develops alongside conscious mastering of language systems. Shcherba emphasises that in learning a foreign language an individual acquires a completely new conceptual framework, a system of notions which represents the functional relations of culture. Culture is a historical category which is intricately linked with society and its activity. This system of notions is not static; it is a product of social relations and is acquired by means of language material (i.e. unsystematic linguistic experience), which is regularised into refined (i.e. systematised) linguistic experience, that is language. Naturally, the systems of notions in different languages do not coincide, because they reflect different social, economic and cultural functions of different societies. Hence the development of a capacity to operate across different linguistic systems also develops a capacity to operate across different cultural systems. Shcherba (1974b) writes:

...I will reiterate what I have already said earlier: a person who has not studied foreign languages has great difficulty moving outside a limited circle of notions, ideas and tastes; it is difficult for them to develop into an individual with a broad worldview. (p. 357)

Shcherba notes that cultural understanding does not necessarily imply an understanding of different national cultures but rather a critical understanding of one's own surroundings. He explains that

when breaking free of the bondage of their mother tongue, pupils will become accustomed to viewing things as they really are and will, in any case, gain solid foundations for a critical stance towards what is happening in real life and what they read. (Shcherba, 1974b, p. 356)

Shcherba indicates that the development of literacy itself relies on a broad cultural base of historical and literary production. He insists that linguistic training, and philology-based education in general, are essential for developing such a cultural base. Language is not an abstraction and linguistic references always relate to social, historical and literary contexts, which require an understanding for proper comprehension (and use) of linguistic expression. Shcherba's overall conclusion is that the removal of foreign language instruction (he uses the term *обезъязычивание* in Russian) from the school curriculum lowers the general cultural level of schooling.

Shcherba (1974b) proposes that basic schooling, as an ultimately social enterprise, should have at its foundation serious language studies. Modern foreign languages are shown to be of practical utility. More importantly, they are vital to the development of general literacy and cultural understanding, which are essential prerequisites for a functional and culturally cohesive society. This is why modern foreign languages should have place in the basic school curriculum at all levels of the educational structure.

Methodological issues

Although questions of methodology are outside the scope of this article, it is important to view Shcherba's thesis on the general educational value of foreign languages as linked to methodological issues. Shcherba emphasises that the value of any language instruction is always dependent on 'properly' organised language education. This means that the mere allocation of curriculum space does not by any means lead to gainful results.

One prominent theme that weaves throughout Shcherba's writing is the necessity of conscious engagement with language. Elsewhere he indicates that language acquisition relies on a conscious processing of the lexis and the grammatical rules of a given language (Shcherba 1974e, 2003). He differentiates between lexis (a lexical system comprised of notional and of functional units) and grammar (a repertoire of means which allows for the formation of linguistic structures for meaningful expression of thoughts and ideas, and the formation of new lexical units). When addressing the matter of the lexical system, Shcherba indicates that all language systems have a limited number of functional units and an infinite number of notional units. Functional units are required 'always and everywhere' (Shcherba, 1974e, p. 330) but the presence of notional units depends on the needs and focus of specific

content matter. Thus, drilling pupils in thematic content comprised of notional units alone might not lay firm foundations for the independent expansion of language proficiency, and the learners' repertoire of functional lexical units should remain at the centre of any theme-related lexical material.

Apart from distinguishing between notional and functional language elements, Shcherba makes a clear distinction between active and passive grammar. Passive grammar deals with the functions and meanings of the structural components of a given language. Active grammar studies the use of these forms. He insists that there must be separation between the two when planning the programme of instruction. The explicit teaching of grammar is required for acquiring a conscious awareness of the language structure; it enables learners to produce meaningful statements beyond mimicked language segments. Active grammar is an important component in developing skills for the meaningful construction of language in accordance with the rules of the language system. Oral and written practice in the meaningful structuring of language material is essential for the development of communicative fluency, and the focus should be on accuracy rather than on the speed of production. An automated habit of fluent language use can develop over time and it is important that this automated habit is based on accurate and meaningful patterns of language use. Otherwise, there is a danger of developing fluent production of 'gibberish', or of fluent recycling of a limited number of memorised language chunks. The analytic processing of language and communicative engagement reinforce one another and thus, grammar per se should not be viewed in opposition to communicative approach to the teaching of foreign languages.

Shcherba does not reject imitation and memorisation as such, since they are essential for the accumulation of language material. Nevertheless, he insists that mere imitation, or the intuitive acquisition of language material, does not build solid foundations for the conscious processing of language. He acknowledges that it is not an easy task to develop a conscious comprehension of the complexities of different linguistic systems at a young age, and whilst advocating for the placement of foreign languages in the basic school curriculum, he does not insist on its early commencement. He proposes that the introduction of foreign language tuition can commence in the fourth/fifth grades (the fourth and fifth grades of Russian schooling correspond to 10 and 11 years of age) because at that point school children commonly acquire a rudimentary literacy in their first language. When language tuition commences at earlier stages of schooling, Shcherba recommends the 'recycling' of language

material, where intuitive imitational learning at earlier stages of schooling undergoes conscious analytic processing at later stages. This parallels the gradual and methodical work on developing literacy skills when pupils master the literary norms of their own mother tongue.

Shcherba insists that it is not possible to remove one's mother tongue from circulation when teaching foreign languages at school. He calls for the categorical abandonment of 'traditional practice of isolating a foreign language from the mother tongue' (Shcherba 1974b, p. 358). The mother tongue is a base for the conscious comparison of language systems. To turn it from foe to friend and accomplice, it is necessary to develop an arsenal of rules which would not just be the rules of English, rules of French, or rules of German, but English-French, English-German rules, and the like (Shcherba, 1934, 1974b, 2003). In the early stages of foreign language learning, the mother tongue is the only medium available to teachers and pupils for the meaningful delivery of language tuition. The requirement of conscious engagement with languages suggests that foreign language teachers must not only have an excellent command of the language they teach, but also be 'theoretical linguists in the full sense of this word' (Shcherba 1974e, p. 323]). Shcherba explains that when tutoring others in skill acquisition, one must not only have mastery of the skill but understand the mechanisms of its development.

The success of the entire programme of foreign language teaching will ultimately depend on the sufficient allocation of hours. Shcherba (1974b) views 'no less than one hour per day' as a sufficient allocation of hours in order 'to get things moving' (p. 360). He emphasises that 'mastering speaking proficiency will entirely depend on the number of hours at school' (Shcherba 1974b, p. 356) and, further, proposes 12 hours per week when supplementing speaking with development of independent reading skills in junior school (*ibid.*, p. 360).

A number of methodological issues reviewed here have been addressed in various policy documents, reports and recommendations on teaching foreign languages in UK schools. The only consistent finding across a range of documents is that the quality of provision varies widely (ADES, 2016; EDTBC, 2016; Estyn, 2016; Ofsted, 2016). Whilst a number of schools secure properly qualified language specialists, there are common expectations that elementary teachers can be trained *ad hoc* to deliver foreign language tuition (cf. 'A 1+2 Approach in Scotland'). There is a growing recognition of the importance of the explicit teaching of grammar (Swarbrick, 2011; SCILT, 2011), and of the value of the

mother tongue in foreign language teaching (Hall & Cook, 2012). Nevertheless, it is not unusual to find that grammar is ‘too often confined to the wings’ (SCILT, 2011, p. 14), and to encounter overt criticism of the use of the mother tongue as the means of language instruction (Estyn, 2016).

The insufficient allocation of hours is, perhaps, the main impeding factor in meeting the requirements of the general educational value, or the practical utility of foreign language learning. Although Shcherba’s proposal of allocating one hour per day, or a total of 12 hours per week, to foreign languages should not be taken as absolute, the existing recommendations of a minimum of two hours per week to language teaching (Estyn, 2008, 2016; EDTBC, 2016; Scottish Government, 2012; DfE, 2014) cannot be considered sufficient by any means. Moreover, even these recommendations are frequently not met in practice (ADES, 2016; Estyn, 2016; EDTBC, 2016; Long and Bolton, 2016).

Unless modern foreign languages occupy a stable position in the basic school curriculum, with a guaranteed allocation of time that permits long-term strategic planning and implementation of the sound tuition programme, there will remain ‘a challenge in ensuring consistent quality and standards in language learning, and in planning progression and continuity for pupils’ (ADES, 2016, p. 4).

Discussion

Does Shcherba put a ‘new slant’ on modern foreign languages in the school curriculum in the context of UK-based debates? With certain reservations, the answer could be ‘yes’. The issues raised by Shcherba are not entirely new, but the interplay of these issues can be seen as novel in terms of drawing foreign languages into the centre of literacy enterprise, and viewing the goals of utilitarian application and of communicative fluency as ancillary when deciding on the value of languages as a school subject.

A review of UK-based writings reveals attempts to link foreign language studies with literacy; but these have relied on sporadic experimentation or opinion surveys (Cf. The Nuffield Language Inquiry, 2000; CILT/QCA, 2001; Scottish Government, 2012). In Shcherba’s work, links between foreign languages and literacy receive a theoretical underpinning of a well-developed programme of explorations in general linguistics. However, Shcherba’s theorising does not by any means go against practical experimentation. As noted by Larin (1977 [1946]), Shcherba was not a ‘desk’ scientist. On the contrary, he viewed live instances of language use as essential empirical material for his theoretical formulations. His empirical research was informed by an extensive language database. This is

why acknowledgement of the theoretical grounding behind Shcherba's views on foreign languages, as contributing to the development of 'truly literate individuals in the broadest sense' (Shcherba, 1974b, p. 356), can be of value for continuing empirical investigations in the context of UK schooling.

Positioning foreign languages in the centre of literacy enterprise addresses the dilemma of the shortage of curriculum time for language studies (Hunt et al., 2005; McLachlan, 2009; ADES, 2016; Ofsted, 2016; CfBT Wales, 2015). If valued for their general educational merits, foreign languages need to be built into the core of the programme working towards meeting the UK's national literacy and numeracy strategies. In these circumstances, language studies at school should no longer be viewed in terms of whether there are educational benefits but in terms of *how* language instruction should be organised in order to realise the possibilities of meeting subject-transcending educational goals in developing literate individuals.

Shcherba's conception of language as embedded in the social experience of people is a reminder that no language can be viewed as an abstraction, separated from its social, economic and cultural base. This has implications for the viewing of foreign languages not as alien bodies of linguistic systems but as an integral part of socially accumulated wealth across languages and cultures. Such an approach reiterates the need to view language studies as foundational rather than secondary in a comprehensive programme of schooling. It also implies the need for expanding the range of languages outside traditional ones (e.g. French or Spanish), selected on the basis of geographical proximity and possible contact.

Overall, Shcherba's conception of the social value of language, and his viewing of languages and philology as prerequisites of literacy development across the curriculum, constitute an unusual slant in circumstances where foreign languages remain on the periphery at all levels of the education structure.

Shcherba's discussion of the general educational value of foreign languages at school demonstrates a comprehensive approach to designing the school curriculum and to considerations of the purposes and limitations of language studies as a school subject. Rather than chasing the unrealistic expectations of immediately observable attainment, Shcherba draws attention to the foundational role school subjects are deemed to play in developing a general educational base. Related to these considerations is the insistence that the acquisition of literacy skills is a time-consuming and meticulous process that requires in-depth analysis

of language rather than mechanical drilling. Likewise, learning a language is a long and uneven process and there is no quick-fix or an easy measurement of success.

The propositions outlined by Shcherba suggest that there should be an interdisciplinary approach to the entire issue of installing quality provision of foreign languages in the school curriculum, and that linguistic expertise is an important aspect of such an approach. The instance of Shcherba's rigorous scientific grounding of matters of practical interventions into the school curriculum indicates that language scientists can and should have a say in matters of language education at school.

It would be an overstatement to claim that Shcherba provides clear answers to the numerous concerns of foreign languages provision in the UK context. The brevity of this review of his extensive scholarship in this article also limits the opportunity to appreciate the scope and depth of his arguments that could be of relevance to the discussed issues. However, it is hoped that Shcherba's insights can make their entry into the on-going debates on the value and placement of foreign languages in the school curriculum in the UK. This critical review of his ideas seeks to provide a basis for further discussion and is intended for everyone with an interest in foreign language learning in the UK. The first English-language translation of Shcherba's text, which follows, is an attempt to redress the unfamiliarity with his scholarship in the Anglophone world and will allow the English-language audience to engage in their own critical reading of Shcherba's text addressing the matters of modern foreign languages and their placement in the school curriculum.

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The general educational value of foreign languages and their place in the school curriculum

L. V. Shcherba

*Translated by Olga Campbell-Thomson**

I make so bold as to write on a matter that requires, *inter alia*, a thorough knowledge both of the history of pedagogy in general and of the history of schooling in particular, although I am not an expert on either subject. However, the seriousness of this matter compels me to put pen to paper. I believe that I can put a new slant on this topic due to the fact that I combine the skills of both a theoretical linguist and a language practitioner. Experts in pedagogy will fill in the gaps and correct my errors where necessary. This kind of cooperation is absolutely essential whenever an issue is situated on the boundary of multiple disciplines.

In any case, the issue I advance here is, I believe, of great importance to our entire cultural construction project.

This issue is very complex as it is closely intertwined with a number of other issues requiring consideration, and as it has thus far been neglected by Russian scholars and intellectuals. The task of providing a comprehensive account of this issue in a journal article is therefore an onerous one, not to say impossible. This is why my article is over-satiated and not as focused as it should be.

I. First of all, it should be kept in mind that the list of school subjects should by no means be random or merely follow tradition. There should be a carefully considered programme of studies. It seems to me that this is not being taken into account in the Soviet Union, and that currently all existing fields of study are striving to break into the school programme, with each aspiring, moreover, to gain a larger share of it. This is why there is an urgent need at this time to review the existing school curriculum and to theoretically validate it in its entirety, as well as to inspect the aims, content and scope of every subject within it.

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TN, translator's note. Translator's endnotes are indicated by superscript letters, while Shcherba's footnotes in the text are indicated by numbers, as they appear in the Russian text.

With reference to all that is stated above, it is important to emphasize at the outset the fact that an academic specialism and a corresponding school subject are not equivalent. Academic subjects are studied at university,¹ while school subjects are taught at school. Above all, of course, a school subject is distinguished from an academic specialism in its scope; yet school subjects frequently contain academic findings (cf., e.g., an elementary course in geography). Moreover, school subjects often include information of practical utility which is not confined to any particular academic specialism (one example is elementary arithmetic; another example is Russian language teaching where the lion's share of teaching is allocated to spelling, although there is no such academic subject as "spelling"). Finally, school subjects always present information in a simplified form, and contentious issues are either avoided or are presented as resolved. Contradictions in the content of school subjects used to be rife – and still are, to an extent. They are particularly frequent in primary language instruction, and in grammar teaching in general.

Certain distinctions between traditional school subjects and corresponding academic specialisms are harmful anachronisms. Some of these have been eliminated, and others are currently in the process of being eliminated, but many have to be kept in place for cognitive, pedagogical or cultural reasons. Scope remains the fundamental issue, as was noted earlier. This problem has always caused concern, but in these times of huge advances in learning and unprecedented expansion in human knowledge it has become critical. A very careful selection of material for inclusion in the school curriculum is required, and the naïve attempts of various experts to clutter the curriculum with all their specialist knowledge, to the point of including current scientific theories, should be curtailed. Selection must be made both of the fields of study themselves and of the relevant subject matter. The criteria for selection should be practical utility and general educational value.

II. It is beyond doubt that practical utility has been and continues to be the basic driving force of academic development. The content of school subjects also used to be determined by exclusively practical considerations. However, this situation has become complicated and, increasingly, school subjects are not always of practical utility. For example, the geometry course on the curriculum of the former higher elementary schoolsⁱ had hardly any practical application and was kept in place exclusively for its general educational

¹ However, certain "Introductory courses", "Propaedeutic courses", etc. are similar to school subjects.

value. The same can be said about the cosmography in the old gymnasia,ⁱⁱ the course in natural sciences (apart from human anatomy and physiology), and, essentially, all humanities subjects.

The criterion of practical utility, despite its obviousness, is rather indefinite. Indeed, what could be more definite than the branches of higher mathematics on which all modern technology is founded? And yet, these are not required by those studying the humanities, by geographers, or even by biologists. The practical utility of geography can not be questioned...and yet Prostakovaⁱⁱⁱ has a point [TN: Prostakova is a literary character who dismissed studying geography with the words *But then what are cab-drivers for?*]. Cook's agents [TN: Thomas Cook' travel agents] perform the role of Prostakova's cab-drivers for the majority of ordinary West Europeans. This, of course, does not imply that I am against geography as a school subject; I just mean that the deciding factor should not be the practical utility of geography, and that its general educational value is of no less significance. (The latter, of course, does not exclude a thorough knowledge of the essentials of a map).

Furthermore, what could be more obvious than the utility of proficiency in foreign languages, particularly in the context of our relatively young culture and its paucity of specialist literature? Nevertheless, experience has shown that this understanding has not penetrated the consciousness of student youth, not only at secondary school level but also in higher education. Indeed, individuals in daily life can get along without knowledge of foreign languages. One cannot consider as knowledge of foreign languages the level of language proficiency with which young Russians are graduating higher educational establishments; this level of proficiency does not permit the reading of specialist literature, i.e. it is precisely practical utility that is not being achieved. Only in isolated cases, and even then too late, do some young people realise their inadequacy in this area, and this, unfortunately, is the typical story of many young academic researchers. It follows that practical utility is not an ample incentive for a school subject to fulfil its function: for this, perception of its immediate utility is vital, which is difficult to expect at school age in relation to foreign languages, except in specialised schools. This is why it is important to consider the general educational value of a subject even where its practical utility is evident. Formerly, mathematics was not of any practical significance to most students (apart from those who were progressing to technical universities), but it bore an aura of general educational worth because it required considerable mental agility rather than memory. This is why it was studied, in spite of the programmes not making any reference to the significance of mathematics as a mode of reasoning.

III. Although the matter of the practical utility of foreign languages lies beyond the scope of this theoretical article, its importance necessitates the allocation of a special section to this matter.

In pre-revolutionary Russia, knowledge of foreign languages was commonplace amongst the upper strata of society and was mainly instilled by governesses; even those of the nobility who were in financial difficulties would go to great lengths to procure a governess for their children. The rising strata of intelligentsia could avail themselves of foreign languages in gymnasia, despite all the deficiencies in language teaching. This is why neither the state nor society as a whole felt the need for contingents proficient in foreign languages.

In our own times, the Soviet intelligentsia has been developing without any knowledge of foreign languages. Governesses, naturally, have become obsolete, and the teaching of foreign languages in schools has been reduced to a level that has failed to provide even rudimentary linguistic knowledge.

Many Soviet factories subscribe to all relevant foreign literature; however this literature remains unopened because the engineers have no knowledge of foreign languages and the in-house translators do not know what needs to be translated. And when these translators, without subject-specific knowledge, do produce a translation, no one is willing to read it due to its poor quality.² In America factories or other industrial establishments do not have in-house translators. Instead, a small number of librarians distribute all the relevant foreign literature among engineers in accordance with their particular specialisation, and it is the engineers' obligation to familiarise themselves with the literature.

Our relatively young culture and deficiency in specialist literature categorically require that every specialist read the necessary specialist literature not only in their own language but at least in one other European language. Even in countries with well-established cultures, such as Holland, the intelligentsia study modern languages, which gives them access to world culture.

We must therefore exert our greatest efforts to restore wide-scale knowledge of foreign languages in our country.

IV. The concept of “general education” is complex and multi-faceted and, most

² I would like to emphasize here that this is not a matter of terminology, as many believe, but a matter of general education: in order to translate content one does not understand, one has to be an exceptionally erudite philologist; I cannot develop this point further here due to limitations of space.

importantly, changes with time; so I will not try to analyse it here, as it would require a thorough investigation. However, some of its aspects are so indisputable and self-evident that I can easily refer to the general educational value of foreign languages without resorting to a detailed investigation.

V. Prior to proceeding to the major theme of my article, it would be useful to look back into history. First of all, it should be highlighted that “foreign languages” are essentially a new subject on the school curriculum, with no traditional place, as it were. They appeared when Latin practically ceased to function as the *lingua franca* in life, in academia, and especially in technology; and, furthermore, when the national literatures of advanced nations developed to such a level that they could not be ignored by the relatively great swathes of the population studying in secondary school (to the very end, foreign languages were not in the curriculum of “peasant schools” [*народная школа*]^{iv}). The introduction of modern languages was evidently a concession made by the traditional school system in response to the realities of life. In most instances, however, this concession produced dire results and the new subject did not gain popularity either here at home, or in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the linguistic training gained from years of learning Latin enabled anybody who wished to take advantage of the available tuition in modern languages to learn to read the required foreign literature with ease.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, efforts to capture the economic markets gave a new impetus to foreign languages as a school subject. The response was the establishment of private schools with a great many hours of foreign language classes taught by the so-called “direct method”. This movement, based in academic linguistic theory and known as the “reform movement”, generated a considerable reaction worldwide, including in pre-revolutionary Russia. To this day, “direct methodology”, in one form or another, and to a greater or lesser extent, is equated with the “new methodology” and is contrasted with “pre-reform methods”.

It should be noted that the issue of the general educational value of modern foreign languages was not raised at all, either at the stage of the initial introduction of foreign languages into the school curriculum or later, during the “reform” period. Latin occupied the prime position, while modern languages were either treated as a supplement to other subjects or taught in specialised vocational educational establishments.

VI. Another point worth mentioning is that Russian language study is also in fact a relatively new subject in the school curriculum, however paradoxical this might seem. Latin

used to fulfil the role currently played by our “native language studies” in the school programme. The leading position of local native languages in school curricula is the outcome not only of centuries of struggle, but also of the growth of national consciousness and national languages and literatures. This process took its own course in different countries and has not been fully investigated to date. We are fortunate³ to have had in place of Latin “Old Church Slavonic” – or simply, as it was called, “Slavonic” - which was formerly the literary language of Eastern Europe (including modern-day Czechia).

Ultimately, we should not be too astounded by Latin performing the role of one’s native language. Latin entirely matched the functions of the modern national languages, only with much wider social foundations. But then again, none of the modern national languages could match one’s native language in the literal sense of this word. This is particularly noticeable in Italy, Germany and Norway, where the majority of the population are bilingual, i.e. people speak a local dialect, as well as the standard national language. This is not as obvious in the case of Russian: the intelligentsia and city-dwellers in general have no knowledge of peasant dialects, and villagers speak some variegated linguistic mixture with absolutely unidentifiable norms, rather than a standard language (consequently, we cannot completely understand the linguistic relationships in Western Europe, where a great number of people are fully aware of their bilingualism, speaking two distinct languages with clearly distinct norms).

VII. The aim of the preceding section was to demonstrate that Latin was not at all a “foreign language” in the sense we understand it. This is why there is nothing unusual in the fact that an entire system of education could be Latin-based. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that Latin was a second language for its speakers and that the mastery of this second language was on a par with the speaker’s first language (i.e., the language of daily use in a particular area). In earlier times, therefore, education primarily produced bilingual people who had a mastery of two languages – their local language and Latin (or “Old Church Slavonic” in our case) – and this is the essence of linguistic (or, more precisely, philological) education, as I hope to demonstrate below. I will also demonstrate that the development of bilingualism is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the beneficial effects of linguistic

³ I say “fortunate” because this was a language that everyone more or less understood. Any difficulty in understanding the language most likely would have been caused by the vague content of the literary works written in it. Besides, it was precisely this interaction of the two elements – Russian and the culturally refined (for its time) Old Church Slavonic – to which our modern Russian language owes its richness and flexibility. Later on, a third element – Western European – was added to these two.

education. Bilingualism must lead to comparison of the two linguistic systems. If this second condition is not met, linguistic education becomes void of any general educational value. Finally, I will try to demonstrate that a properly designed linguistic education is the only way of developing a higher level of culture. Human experience, throughout the entire history of mankind, speaks in favour of my claims (it should be borne in mind that the role of a second language has frequently been performed by the standard literary form of a particular language).

The admission of the mother tongue into the list of school subjects alongside Latin was a step forward, in that the mother tongue became the object of study at school. And this was the state of affairs as long as Latin retained its position. As far as modern foreign languages are concerned, they were never a part of the education system and continued to be seen as a purely practical subject.

VIII. But when – from the second half of the last century (TN: nineteenth century) – the use of Latin as a foundational subject in the curriculum came under attack on the grounds that it was useless for any practical purposes,⁴ and when Latin started disappearing from school programmes, the state of affairs was catastrophic, because new foreign languages were not capable of performing Latin's general educational function, either in theory or in practice. What is more, the latest methods of teaching these languages, which were aimed at a purely practical application, formulated ground rules that were quite contrary to the foundations of the general educational task of Latin. These new methods prohibited any comparison of a foreign language with one's mother tongue.

IX. In the West, the necessity of transferring the general educational functions of Latin into modern languages has already been perceived. However, no suitable theory has been developed to date, and no final word has been given on the educational value of Latin itself. On the one side we hear echoes of the old debates between defenders of Latin and proponents of the national language, and on the other side we have ongoing debates between adherents of classical and non-classical education.

X. Our situation has been much worse. For a long time, progressive pedagogy was in opposition to Latin, partly because Latin disengaged young people from reality and was one of the weapons of reactionary politics,⁵ but mainly because it was clearly of no practical

⁴ It is of practical utility only for philologists, historians, philosophers and lawyers (one cannot seriously claim practical significance for Latin in medicine or in natural sciences)

⁵ Reality is not as simple as this: classical education can bring up genuine social activists, progressive and revolutionary minds and, conversely, education based on natural and technical sciences can frequently cultivate

utility and also required a substantial investment of time and effort.

It has already been noted that the essence of the general educational value of Latin was not evident even to the proponents of classicism. Even less clear was the inherent general educational value of modern foreign languages: everybody viewed them merely as subjects of practical utility. Having said that, it should be noted that in a pre-Soviet secondary school no less than half of the pupils acquired their knowledge of languages at home; the other half, on the basis of studying Latin, i.e. serious linguistic training, could independently learn to read literature fluently in another language if they really wished. Hence people derived their convictions about the irrelevance of modern languages in the school programme altogether; it was believed that one could easily learn languages on one's own (such were the pronouncements made at the conference on reforming the secondary school system in 1915).

As a result of all this, Latin was thrown overboard. Of the two modern languages, only one was retained in our school programme, with a considerably reduced allocation of hours. Thus our schools ended up "language-less", if one can say so, as is illustrated by the following figures: in pre-Soviet non-classical secondary schools (I don't even include gymnasias) and in non-classical schools in Western Europe, the number of hours allocated to languages comprised on average 1/4 of the total number of hours; whereas in our Soviet schools this proportion is 1/9.

XI. Now I will try to explain why making schools "language-less" must lead to a decline in the level of culture, and why the comparison of two linguistic systems is essential for the fostering of highly cultured individuals (we will see later that it also has its practical value).

Unity of language and thought ultimately means that locution acts, from a simple flow of sounds, to the most refined syntactic constructions and other language forms, are inseparable from their corresponding ideas: words cease to be words if they are deprived of their meaning.

Foreign language teaching, when handled properly (I specifically emphasise the word 'properly'), alters the state of things entirely. When learning a foreign language, we soon realise that every new foreign word makes us ponder upon its meaning and over the meanings of the corresponding words in one's own language; it makes us ponder upon human thought itself. Of course, this mainly takes place at advanced levels of study, when reading literature

self-interested, anti-social elements. There can be found many instances of each, from both the recent and the distant past.

and when translating,⁶ particularly when rendering challenging texts. But already at the elementary stages, even the simplest facts expand the learner's range of linguistic understanding a little. For example, the discrepancy of grammatical gender between one's own and a foreign language can indeed be a revelation (I was present at the scene when an adult learner got frustrated and could not comprehend how *la table* could be feminine when *стол* [table] was masculine in Russian). An even starker revelation (and an invigorating one) is the fact that English (along with most other non-Indo-European languages) does not distinguish between grammatical genders at all; this means that the absurd fact that we assign the word *стол* [table] to the masculine gender and the word *скамья* [bench] to the feminine gender is a linguistic mirage (an anachronism with a complex history) which is not based on the meanings themselves (at least not the current meanings). The rational learning of foreign languages leads to the understanding that the verb aspect is not a mandatory attribute of an action – of a verb – as is inculcated in us by Russian. Matching verb aspects and tenses between different languages is a very delicate and complex process requiring great thought, but it is of great practical importance for understanding a text correctly and, at times, even for comprehending its general meaning. The value of engagement in such activities is not, of course, in their philosophical treatment (this is not the task of secondary school) but in the very fact that in the course of their studies the pupils learn, little by little, not to glide over familiar language phenomena, but to notice the various undertones of thought, unobserved when they were only using their mother tongue. This can be called overcoming the mother tongue, or finding a way out of its magic circle. There is nothing to discern in one's mother tongue; everything is straightforward and familiar and, mostly, does not provoke any doubts. One has to exercise great ingenuity in lessons of verbal development in order to draw children's attention to specific language points. Lessons in foreign-language translation (even without producing fine literary text) essentially force pupils to gain insights into the finest shades of meanings. I would say – not seeing this as a paradox in the slightest – that complete mastery of one's own language (I mean, of course, the standard literary language), i.e., appreciation of all its richness and all its expressive means is possible only by studying a foreign language. Nothing can be cognized without comparison, and the unity of language and thought does not allow us to separate thought from the means of its expression. A foreign

⁶ I should emphasise that this concerns "exact" translations and, moreover, that the notion of "exactness" itself is not as simple as it may seem at first glance: it is not synonymous with either literal or literary translation. However, further elaboration on this matter would lead me too far off course.

language allows us to do so by expressing the same idea in different terms; it enables us to uncover a variety of expressive means in our own language and weans us off the habit of confusing a verbal expression with the essence of things: the expressions *погаси свет, погаси электричество, поверни выключатель* [put out the light, put off the electric, switch it off] can express the same idea.

XII. There are no end of examples: each word could be a topic for a whole dissertation, especially if one considers abstract terms. But at school dissertations are not required, and the focus should be on as full and deep understanding of the text as possible. The best material is provided, of course, by literary texts of high quality. The teaching of foreign languages should be based on reading and construing these texts; this is particularly pertinent for advanced levels of schooling when the basics of the languages have already been ingrained at a younger age.

XIII. The outcomes of the properly organised teaching of foreign languages (which implies a sufficient allocation of hours and a considerable volume of literary texts read and construed) will be as follows:

1. Pupils will acquire the invaluable skill of close reading. Reading solely in one's mother tongue produces a habit of grasping only the general meanings. However, the skill of close reading is absolutely essential for everyone who deals with books, or with newspapers even, and this skill should be an absolute requirement for admittance to higher educational institutions.

2. On the basis of this skill, pupils can comprehend the mechanics of stylistically literate writing. They will appreciate the practical importance and necessity of its application in bureaucratic correspondence, in the texts of administrative orders and decrees, and more so in legal documents, and so on. And once they grasp all that, they will consciously strive towards mastering literary style.

3. When breaking free of the bondage of their mother tongue, pupils will become accustomed to viewing things as they really are and will, in any case, gain solid foundations for a critical stance towards what is happening in real life and what they read. From a philosophical point of view, they will learn to practise dialectics, as the conception of the inviolability of notions will be destroyed, and destroyed beyond repair. Such a conception of the inviolability of notions is cultivated by the mother tongue, unless there is a detailed juxtaposition of the mother tongue with a foreign language, i.e. practically – by translating large quantities of complex texts.

4. Pupils will develop the skill of independent learning of foreign languages in general, at least in their written form. We can see how our students in higher educational institutions struggle with certain issues in the absence of proper linguistic training at school. Good old Latin and its serious study used to open doors to all other languages.

5. Finally, pupils will acquire the ability to independently read any kind of text of any level of difficulty in the language they have studied. Speed of reading (the basic measurement of the practical application of this ability, measurement which has not gained adequate consideration in our methodology) will hinge on the amount of hours allocated to language lessons at school, but it can always reach the required practical level through independent reading once it has been properly directed at school. Mastering speaking proficiency will depend entirely on the number of hours at school.

General educational value, in its strict sense, is presented in point 3. Points 1 and 2 refer to the practical applications, but cannot be admitted to the category of general education.

The general educational value of learning a second language, which is outlined here in brief, has provided the explanation as to why Latin has been so firmly embedded in the school curriculum.

XIV. I hope it is becoming clear from what has been said so far that it is not possible to train truly literate individuals (in the broadest sense), in whatever specialism they may pursue, by any means other than the properly organised teaching of foreign languages, whether Latin or modern languages. Without this kind of training, it is unimaginable to expect the production of writers, journalists, critics, reporters, literary scholars, lawyers, authors of projects and memorandum reports, etc. Ultimately, it is not even possible to train a good reader by any other means, because their range of literature would otherwise be confined to the contemporary literature in their own language. Any advanced literature is connected with the past – one's own and others' – and it is not accessible without knowledge of that past.

To conclude, I will reiterate what I have already said earlier: a person who has not studied foreign languages has great difficulty moving outside a limited circle of notions, ideas and tastes; it is difficult for them to develop into an individual with a broad worldview.

XVI. At this point, the issue is the choice of language. Does Latin have specific advantages over other languages in any respect? It has already been noted above that there is nothing in a system of well-developed languages that would make a certain language

intrinsically better than any other. The crux of the matter is the literary adaptation of a language, i.e. the richness of its literary production, and this is why there are no substantial grounds to regard Latin as being any better suited for general educational development than French or English. Quite the opposite: these two languages should be preferred to impractical Latin.⁷ This is my view on the matter, and I believe that modern languages, with their rich, varied literatures, are the loci of living and developing cultures steeped in tradition, and, as school subjects, should certainly assume the general educational functions of Latin. However, it should be noted that, to date, modern languages as they appear in the Soviet school curriculum are absolutely devoid of general educational goals. Modern languages have been viewed exclusively in terms of their practical utility, and their teaching has been based to a great extent on the principles of “directist” methodology, whose objective (as explained above) is the development of practical language skills. The ideal of practical language skills is an intuitive command of the language; ultimately, a foreign language is supposed to become like a second mother tongue for the pupils, yet at the same time without any obvious link with their first mother tongue. Otherwise, the two languages would influence one another, and could easily result in a mixture jokingly called “Nizhny Novgorod French” [нижегородско-французский]^v or the like. Hence the efforts to isolate the foreign language from the mother tongue when teaching foreign languages at home or at school under the direct methodology; this voids foreign language studies of any general educational value. Indeed it is possible to be proficient in several foreign languages and to remain uncultured. The older generation would remember those young *Mademoiselles* who could chat fluently in French and German and yet who, as a general rule, were not considered highly educated. As a matter of fact, it should be borne in mind that being a polyglot is not the same as being a philologist.

XVII. What would be a way out of this situation? Obviously, the methodology of teaching modern foreign languages should be revised so that the general educational objectives become part and parcel of foreign language teaching. In particular, it is evident

⁷ When I call Latin “impractical”, I mean this in a very narrow sense, i.e. that no one these days speaks or writes in Latin. However, it goes without saying that Latin, as the foundation of modern European culture, cannot be useless to us; without Latin we cannot understand our modern languages and their historical evolution because they are all saturated with Latin (and this includes Russian). Scientific language, and especially specialist terminology, cannot be clearly comprehended without knowledge of Latin. This is particularly important for Russian-speakers because our everyday language has a relatively smaller number of Latin-based words than other Western-European languages do. Greek would be of historical value for us Russians, as it notably and beneficially impacted on the shaping of our literary language via Old Church Slavonic, but its learning on a mass scale would be problematic and this matter should be left to specialists in Russian philology.

that the traditional practice of isolating a foreign language from the mother tongue must categorically be abandoned, and that efforts must be made to produce the desired outcomes by other means. Teaching practice has already started down this route, because it has turned out to be practically impossible under the conditions of school teaching to accomplish the results that used to be achieved by home-schooling with a governess. However, the theoretical methodological base did not sever ties with tradition and did not problematize the issue in depth. So if it is not possible to eliminate the mother tongue from the teaching of foreign languages at school (the newly set objectives for foreign languages presuppose just the opposite), then it is only logical to try to turn the mother tongue from foe to friend and accomplice. This is a distinct possibility if the teaching of a foreign language commences in the fourth or fifth year of schooling, i.e. when children reach a certain level of conscious appreciation of linguistic features in their own language. Teaching a foreign language in these circumstances can and should start out from the mother tongue: for example, “in Russian it is like this, while in a foreign language it is like that”. Thus, all the idiosyncrasies of a foreign language should not be acquired subconsciously, experientially, but should, instead, be consciously juxtaposed to the features of one’s own language. At a later stage, during the revision of the studied material with the help of associated exercises, the conscious understanding will transfer to the level of the subconscious, as happens in any other area of human knowledge.

“The Reform” aspired to accomplish the subconscious mastery of a foreign language outright, starting from the memorisation of set phrases and whole conversations (this, of course, followed some sequence, starting from the simplest). Conscious understanding of the language norms learned through practice was secondary and, in any case, was not put into the context of the norms of the mother tongue. Consequently, even the most obvious discrepancies between the two languages usually remained unrecognised. More subtle discrepancies, were not addressed altogether. Moreover, since the number of hours allocated to teaching a foreign language in a comprehensive school is insufficient for the proper and skilful mastering of the language through the direct method, the lack of the conscious comprehension of the discrepancies between the mother tongue and the foreign language led to the outcome that was so dreaded by “the reform”, i.e. linguistic mixtures and all sorts of *Volapüks*,^{vi} as was mentioned earlier. This should be frankly acknowledged, and on this

account⁸ traditional methodology should be overturned, which will mean proceeding from the conscious to the subconscious mastery of language. I think that ultimately, in the context of the comprehensive school, this approach to teaching foreign languages will produce more beneficial results even in terms of practical application: while it will not develop fluent speaking (traditional methodology achieved this only with the select range of topics drilled in class), it might furnish more or less correct, if hesitant, conversation on a wide range of topics and, even more importantly, the ability to express ideas in writing with a reasonable degree of clarity. This approach will certainly develop the capacity needed for a fair comprehension of texts of any level of difficulty and will inherently be of general educational value, as this was formulated earlier.

It seems to me that this is the solution to the current inconsistency between the practical utility and the general educational value of modern foreign languages as a school subject.

XVIII. It was noted repeatedly earlier that in terms of general educational value rendering complex texts – preferably literary texts – is particularly important, and this can be practised at advanced levels. However, it stands to reason that this task will be manageable only when the basic foundations of the language have already been laid down. This is why a few remarks should be made with reference to teaching languages at junior school. When learning languages, a considerable portion of material should be memorised at earlier stages. This is easier to accomplish at junior school, in the fourth or fifth grades, when children still willingly learn things that would seem boring and meaningless at an older age. But this requires a sufficient allocation of hours – no less than one hour each day – in order to get things moving, so that by the third year of studying a foreign language children can read things that interest them independently, otherwise there is constant reiteration of the same material, year after year, going around in circles, which disillusion children and makes them resent language lessons.

The methodology of elementary language teaching level in junior school (starting with the fourth grade) is well formulated (and this is an invaluable contribution of “the reform”), and is based on developing speaking skills. It just needs, in addition, to concentrate more attention on the development of independent reading skills (“the reform” did not pay sufficient attention to this component), and these can be developed in the course of two years

⁸ I say “on this account” because on many other accounts direct methodology developed a number of sound and valuable approaches

if allocated 12 hours of lessons per week. It goes without saying that the points of comparison between a foreign language and one's mother tongue should be taken into account from the very start of language teaching, contrary to traditional direct methodology.⁹

It is possible, of course, to start teaching languages earlier, but this requires the same prerequisite, a considerable allocation of hours, and for the same reasons. Such teaching has to rely on subconscious, imitative learning; but starting with the fourth grade it is essential to take a different approach and to make sense of all the knowledge acquired so far.

XIX. There is one issue that remains to be addressed, which might arise when all other subjects have to be squeezed up to make room in the curriculum of Soviet comprehensive schools to bring back linguistics, or, as I prefer to call it, philology, where the latter implies art of reading of complex texts discerningly. What is required here is the examination of whether philology would be a duplication of other subjects in the curriculum in terms of general educational objectives.

The basic curriculum subjects will now be examined with this purpose in mind.

1. Let us start with mathematics. Mathematics is traditionally viewed as developing abstract thinking. In my opinion, this view is not entirely valid because it is overly generalised: mathematical thinking is too specific to attune the mind to abstract thinking altogether. I believe that the significance of mathematics as a school subject (besides its obvious practical application) is in cultivating rigor and precision of thinking, and I see this to be of great educational import.¹⁰ In any case, it is absolutely clear that mathematics does not compete with philology in terms of its general educational value.

2. Physics and chemistry, apart from the body of factual information which is an indispensable part of the equipment of any educated individual nowadays, comprise, as it seems to me, two general educational objectives:

a) to develop the habit of asking "why" with reference to physical reality and of looking for the answer to this question;

b) to demonstrate that experimentation is one of the foundational principles of scientific understanding and of all progress in general.

Closely linked to the general educational objectives of physics and chemistry is, of

⁹ This, of course, does not imply that Russian should dominate foreign-language lessons: pupils should hear accurate foreign speech from the teacher as much as possible.

¹⁰ I would also like school graduates to perceive mathematics as a means of reflecting reality in its quantitative interconnections, but it seems that this would be the task of higher educational institutions and that it is not possible to fully comprehend the genuine meaning of mathematics in secondary school.

course, the development of technical ingenuity, which has played perhaps the most vital role in modern Soviet life. It is absolutely clear that neither physics nor chemistry contribute to developing and achieving the general educational aims accomplished by philology.

3. Let us move to the natural sciences in the narrow sense of the term. In my opinion, the general educational value of this subject is in nurturing observation skills. The task is, so to speak, to open pupils' eyes to nature (in order to achieve this, the subject should not be overloaded with facts and terminology). Philology also develops observation, but with reference to a completely different order of things, and we can state with confidence that we are dealing with entirely different or even opposing skills.

4. Now we will look at history, whose general educational significance is absolutely obvious: the idea of continuity, and the idea of gradual and abrupt change. In a word, this subject fosters a historical outlook on the world. The main difficulty here is in the selection of material. Obviously, caution should be taken to avoid content overload but this issue is beyond the scope of my topic. Again, general educational objectives here do not overlap with those of philology, although learning about different constitutions, different modes of life, and so on, does impart the sensible idea of finding different meanings of seemingly the same words in different historical periods.

5. Moving on to geography: its main significance is the body of generally useful knowledge that is indispensable for any educated individual at present. First and foremost, this includes map reading. However, as I already noted earlier, the intelligent teaching of geography by way of continual comparison can facilitate the erosion of ossified narrow conceptions, and, even if it does not pull the thought out of the bondage of its verbal expression, it prepares the ground for this, and in this sense geography can assist philology. This is where I see the main general educational value of geography, and I view it as being independent of philology. Of course, we can find a lot of other points of general educational value in geography, but they all seem to me of a rather specific nature. Various fields have plentiful interesting material, but it is not possible to transport all interesting information to school: it should be borne in mind that fields of study and school subjects are not one and the same.

6. Let us move to Russian language and literature. This is not the occasion to try to prove that these comprise a single school subject; unfortunately even some philologists do not realise this. The practical utility and significance of the subject is so obvious that I will not even discuss it. As for the general educational value of the subject, it teaches children to

inspect words and, through them, thought itself: by examining the verbal means of expression we also examine what is being expressed, and thus the study of language is transferred into the study of literary texts. This is linked to the fostering of aesthetic appreciation, where literature also cannot be separated from language. Finally, the studying of literature – and this time, only literature – directly impacts on the formation of a worldview. As I hope I have indicated, the accomplishment of the first and the second general educational objectives of language and literature are unimaginable without terms for comparison, i.e. without studying a foreign (second) language. Thus the mother tongue and a foreign language comprise a closely interlinked pair of subjects which serve as a philological foundation for the entire educational enterprise, where one subject is inconceivable without the other.

ⁱ The Education Law of 1912 provided for a system of higher elementary education, which was designed to be a further level of elementary education to follow primary elementary education.

ⁱⁱ Gymnasium [Russian *Гимназия*] was a type of upper secondary school in pre-revolutionary Russia, roughly equivalent to British grammar school.

ⁱⁱⁱ Prostakova is a character from an eighteenth-century farce by Denis Fonvizin *The Minor*. She is an ignorant landowner. She ridicules learning and is denying the value of the science of geography. She states that it is not for noblemen to learn geography as it is the cab-driver's job to deliver her to the right location. Her phrase *извозчики на что* [what are cab-drivers for?] has become a popular metaphoric expression in Russian.

^{iv} The notion of *народная школа*, commonly translated into English as 'public school' or 'peasant school', refers to the type of elementary schools which were not part of general educational provision in Imperial Russia. These schools were established in smaller towns and the countryside in order to provide education to the masses, and occasionally to specific groups of children of workers or peasants. These schools were self-administered by the teachers or local organisers. One instance of such school is Lev Tolstoy's school for the children of peasants in Yasnaya Polyana.

^v "Nizhny Novgorod French" is a phraseological expression meaning 'a patchwork of broken French and broken Russian'. The expression was coined by a Russian poet Griboyedov in his play *Woe from Wit*, where the main character, Chatsky, inquires:

Oh, by the way,

Is there still a tendency today

At meetings, public gatherings, on stage

To mix the Nizhny Novgorod dialect with French?

^{vi} *Volapük*, or ‘World Language’, is a constructed language created in 1879 by Johann Martin Schleyer, a priest from Baden, Germany, and was intended as a language of international communication. In this context, the term *Volapük* is used in the meaning of ‘gobbledygook’ or ‘gibberish’.