

Title: Impersonal Constructions in Russian Grammar Classes
Author: Ludmila Kozhevnikova, Smolny College

Abstract:

Teaching students at the B2-C1 level presupposes searching for and study of new grammar topics. Functional-semantic and comparative approaches to the study of grammar of different languages allow instructors to navigate categorical semantics well, and, therefore, choose those aspects of the language, which are least studied in class. In my opinion, impersonality is one such aspect. It demonstrates the speaker's freedom of choice, and is not necessarily dictated by the language system. Proceeding from the idea that impersonality is expanding the sphere of its influence in the Russian language, I see the need for the introduction of subjectless constructions in grammar classes. Textbooks of Russian as a foreign language rarely address this topic.

In this presentation, I will discuss a system of studying impersonal constructions in the classroom, which appears as follows: 1) Considering the existing impersonal Russian verbs; they are not very numerous and could be memorized by students without difficulty (i.e. знобить, светать, вечереть, хотеться, and others), 2) practicing the formation of impersonal utterances with various additions of place, time, and intensity (at this stage, students learn to create impersonal sentence structures), 3) singling out "personal" verbs, which contribute to the formation of impersonal constructions (i.e. нести, пахнуть, капать, плыть и др. - У меня плыло перед глазами), 4) study of infinitive sentences with different meanings as well as with negative pronouns and adverbs (i.e. негде, некуда, и др. - Город маленький: нечего смотреть), 5) considering the use of impersonal constructions in excerpts from literary texts, 6) creating independent texts using these sentences.

I think that this approach to the study of such new constructions allows students to expand not only their vocabulary, but, after mastering new syntactic constructions, to also understand the descriptive function of impersonal constructions in literary texts.