The higher education has been international for many years already. The focus now is on making the educational process more interesting, effective and resultative. The expected result largely depends on whether the purposes and the course content correlate with the educational demands of target audience. It is especially true for teaching foreign languages, in particular, Russian as a foreign language. Russia as well as the other countries accept many international students every year. The majority of them study in the Russian language, the language being the key component of their successful adaptation to the Russian educational environment.

The article deals with the problem of teaching Russian as a foreign language to foreign post-graduates coming to study in Russia. The challenges they face in the Russian educational environment are caused by the specific characteristics of foreign post-graduates as the target audience. The 'specificity' is mostly caused by the professional experience they already have.

A foreign post-graduate has to get accustomed to the new educational environment, which is often difficult due to the cultural and educational differences. For the short time, they have to grasp the basic grammar and vocabulary for everyday communication as well as professional vocabulary necessary for the communication with the colleagues in Russia. It influences the structure and the content of the language course making it both intensive and highly efficient, and the motivation to study in the Russian language.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze these difficulties and to describe the ways of making the educational process for this target audience smooth and efficient. The authors study the teaching experience and the results of the survey conducted among the post-graduates during and after their pre-university language course at RUDN University.

The authors of the article consider the research to be important as the number of post-graduates getting higher professional education in Russian universities is growing.

Keywords: Cultural and educational differences, foreign post-graduates, Russian as a foreign language, educational environment.

1 INTRODUCTION

The tendency for the internationalisation of education is global, so Russia, as many other counties, accept many international students every year. The peculiarity of the pedagogical system of professional training of foreign students is teaching them in a non-native language. Students that are focused on a certain professional area and had a national-specific experience of educational activity, master the language of instruction in the conditions of intensive adaptation and inter-ethnic interaction.

Russia is a country with a rich educational tradition. For any foreign student coming to study in Russia the most difficult area of entry into the new cultural conditions is educational activity. It is primarily due to the need to master the Russian language to the extent that it will be enough to acquire professionally significant knowledge and skills. In addition to the level of competence in the Russian language, the students have to acquire the language for special purposes, i.e. for professional communication according to the major they chose. Besides, international students must adapt or adjust to a sociocultural system of Russia that is different from their own. All of them come with some educational experience, so the adaptation process is not always very smooth. At the centre of this process is always communication and learning the new language.

The expected result largely depends on whether the purpose and the language course content correlate with the educational demand of the target audience. It is especially true for teaching foreign languages, in particular, Russian as a foreign language. A foreign post-graduate has to get accustomed to the new
educational environment and to the professional environment. It is not a simple task for a foreign student at the post-graduate stage because of the cultural and educational differences and because of the professional experience the post-graduates normally have when they come to study in a foreign country. The students do not have much time to grasp the basic grammar and vocabulary for everyday communication as well as professional grammar and vocabulary, which adds to the adaptation problems.

It is well known that in the process of communication a person relies on their motivational, linguistic, cultural, ethnic characteristics, which are associated with life priorities, values, formed by a certain linguistic and cultural environment, specific cultural conditions. The success of communication is determined by a number of indicators, which are largely defined by personal characteristics, the ability to evaluate and understand what the interlocutor said.

The authors consider how the above mentioned factors affect the success of professional communication of foreign post-graduates and the difficulties faced by foreign post-graduates in the new language environment.

For a long time the system of professionally-oriented teaching of Russian as a foreign language to foreign post-graduates with a qualitatively new level of professional competence is the subject of discussion for foreign and Russian research community.

The content and structure of the general language course and the course of language for special purposes (professional communication and terminology) are crucial in this respect. A considerable amount of attention is devoted to the General Language Program design and to the design of the program for Language for Special Purposes (the professional communication and terminology). The priority here is the analysis of the needs of the target audience. The needs analysis process is now recognized as fundamental to the success of a specific-purpose language program, as through it the course designer becomes equipped to match up the content of the program with the requirements of the language learners. [1]

2 METHODOLOGY

In order to collect the necessary data, the authors employed data collection strategy that is common in this area of enquiry: a questionnaire. In order to clarify what factors could hinder the Russian language learning process and what is necessary to be done to improve the existing curriculum and pre-university language course content, the authors conducted a survey among the foreign postgraduate students at their pre-university stage. The participants included 20 medical students (foreign residents) and 15 engineering M.A. foreign students studying the Russian language at pre-university faculty of RUDN University. The Russian language is the future language of instruction for these students.

The questionnaire presented in Table 1 below was translated from Russian into the native languages of the respondents by a native speaker. The survey questions were about the attitude of the students to learning the Russian language and the problems they face in their educational process, their perception of the curriculum and the content of education. The methodological base for the questionnaire development was based on the one suggested by S. Eshghinejad with its detailed attitude measurement instrument. [2]

3 RESULTS

The given research has two purposes: to analyze the difficulties the foreign post-graduates have in their language course both for general and professional purposes and to see if there should be the difference in the program for the medical and engineering post-graduates, accordingly, as the target audience.

Foreign postgraduate students are usually highly motivated in their language studies as they have a clear goal and they realize what difficulties they could face when they start with the professional activities in the Russian-speaking environment. For example, medical postgraduate students start their residential practice in the Russian hospitals, and they have difficulties in adapting their interactive style to the Russian expectations.[3]

At the same time, there are factors that prevent foreign post-graduates from fast and easy acquisition of the language, especially the terminology and the grammar of the Russian professional language. The given paper focuses on these problems, taking into consideration the fact that the process of acquiring second-culture communicative competence is difficult.
The results of the survey conducted among the foreign postgraduates are presented in the table below. The answers are analyzed separately for the two sub-groups of the target audience.

**Table 1. The survey results.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Engineer students (15)</th>
<th>Medical students (20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Does the previous professional experience affect your studying at the University?</td>
<td>20/100%</td>
<td>12/80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Do you feel the need for the meetings with the undergraduate students to discuss problematic issues arising in the learning process?</td>
<td>20/100%</td>
<td>9/60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Do you need the meetings with the representatives of chairs and faculty to discuss the training problems?</td>
<td>18/90%</td>
<td>9/60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Do you feel comfortable communicating with the teachers?</td>
<td>15/75%</td>
<td>12/80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  What is unacceptable in the relationship between the teacher and the students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. rudeness</td>
<td>20/100%</td>
<td>15/100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. late arrival</td>
<td>3/15%</td>
<td>2/14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. incompetence</td>
<td>20/100%</td>
<td>15/100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Do you consider yourself to be sufficiently prepared to conduct professional activities in the Russian language?</td>
<td>10/50%</td>
<td>13/87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Does the lack of language and culture knowledge affect your learning?</td>
<td>20/100%</td>
<td>10/67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Do you think you get enough knowledge for further professional activity?</td>
<td>17/85%</td>
<td>15/100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Do you think that the organization of the educational process contributes to the disclosure of your individual abilities and the realization of your professional qualities in the future?</td>
<td>15/75%</td>
<td>10/67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Are you satisfied with the content of the educational program, methods, and training? What do you like/you do not like?</td>
<td>15/75%</td>
<td>15/100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 10 was the only “open” question were the students could express their opinion in words. The analysis of the survey results demonstrates the difference between the answers of the medical post-graduates and engineering post-graduates.

The organization of the educational process in Russian universities on postgraduates level is arranged in such a way that this category of students could learn to interact with the Russian-speaking colleagues. The difference between the engineering and medical students is in the amount to which they depend on the knowledge of the Russian language for general and professional purposes in their work. For the engineering students this dependence is not so expressed as the terminology they use and formulas are mostly universal for all the languages, and they do not have to communicate so much.

For the medical post-graduates – foreign residents – the knowledge of the Russian language is crucial for their professional activity. The most important problem for foreign residents is communication with Russian-speaking patients. A foreign resident should be able to ask the patients about the symptoms of the disease, to collect anamnesis of the disease and life, to understand correctly the answers, to think critically, to solve professional problems on the basis of the analysis of the information received during the educational, practical and research activities. The possession of the skills of oral and written professional speech, speech behavior in professional situations and language reactions to the spoken language of the patient will greatly facilitate their activities in a foreign professional space.
In the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language, foreign residents should be trained not only in the direction of General language proficiency, but also to master a professionally-oriented language, that is important to have a professional competence and is the criterion of a medical specialist professionalism. For foreign medical professionals mastery of the Russian language for professional purposes is more important than for other categories of foreign students.

Foreign residents who come to study at Russian universities face a number of problems that can be divided into several categories:

1. **social and psychological problems** (changing a social role, because at home many of them have already worked as doctors, they have professional background, adjustment of needs and value systems, clarification of self-esteem and the level of self-actualization, the need for manifestation of life position);

2. **activity-oriented problems** (dissimilarity of educational programs, models of relations between students and teachers, adaptation to new psycho-physiological loads, educational and cognitive activity);

3. **didactic problems** (increasing in the regulated volume of educational information) which are common to all foreigners associated with insufficient knowledge of language and culture, etc. [3] Such problems lead to serious difficulties in the adaptation period.

The training of residents at the pre-university faculty can be divided into two stages. The first one is the stage where the foreigners acquire the knowledge about the language system as a linguistic form of world perception of the Russian nation culture; where they gain the skills to use this system competently for adequate expression of one’s own thoughts and understanding of the interlocutor in the conditions of the current linguistic and cultural situation. The second stage is the mastery of professional communication. In this regard there is a problem of using a fundamentally different approach to professionally-oriented teaching of Russian as a foreign language for foreign residents, involving a comprehensive and variable use of theoretical knowledge, as well as practical skills and abilities both gained and acquiring experience. It is particularly important when teaching foreign residents oral and written professional communication to establish contact and mutual understanding with patients and medical colleagues, to realize important professional and social tasks.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Foreign post-graduate students are adults who often have work experience and, as a result, a stable set of professional terms in their native language. Terminological system of Russian and native language of post-graduates students can vary considerably, and these stereotypes are overcome with difficulty precisely because of its sustainability and maximum tightness.

The teacher, the class atmosphere, the course content, materials and facilities, as well as personal characteristics of the student will have an influence on the individual’s classroom learning motivation, that is absolutely true for the adult language learners as the foreign post-graduates. [5] Therefore, when teaching foreign students Russian as a foreign language at the postgraduate stage, it is necessary to create such conditions, choose such tactics of communication and make such a pedagogical trajectory, which, taking into account the usual methods of teaching, would help them to acquire the skills and abilities of new social communication, to find points of contact of their own experience and knowledge system with the picture of the world, shared by members of the Russian-speaking language community.

REFERENCES


