

# PROBLEMS OF THE FRENCH ORTHOGRAPHY IN THE HETEROSTRUCTURAL LANGUAGES IN TEACHING OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

ПРОБЛЕМЫ ФРАНЦУЗСКОЙ ОРФОГРАФИИ НА ГЕТЕРОСТРУКТУРНЫХ  
ЯЗЫКАХ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ФРАНЦУЗСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

FRANSIZCA ÖĞRETİMİNDE HETEROJEN-YAPILI DİLLERDE FRANSIZCA  
FONETİĞİNİN SORUNLARI

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## ABSTRACT

The paper presents the work with bilinguals. Students are introduced to the French spelling on specific examples of the French open sound [ɛ], which is similar in pronunciation to the Yakut and Russian languages, but has a different spelling.

The task is to teach students to master the French spelling, using the computer and different types of dictations, as well as the Latin language.

**Keywords:** Orthography, Bilinguals, Heterostructural Languages, Diacritical Marks, Letter Combinations, Dictation-Transcription, Dictation-Translation, Phonetic Principle.

## АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье показана работа с билингвами. Студентов знакомим с французской орфографией на конкретном доступном примере на французском открытом звуке [ɛ], который близок в произношении с якутским и русским языками, но имеет разное написание. Задача научить студентов освоить французскую орфографию, используя компьютер, и разные виды диктантов, и латинский язык.

**Ключевые слова:** Орфография, Билингвы, Инострантурные Языки, Диакритические Знаки, Буквосочетания, Диктант-Транскрипция, Диктант-Перевод, Фонетический Принцип.

## ÖZET

Makalede iki dillilik üzerinde çalışmalar yapılmıştır. Öğrencilere farklı yazısı olan, ancak telaffuz olarak Rusça ve Yakutça'ya yakın olan Fransızca'nın açık [ɛ] sesini örnek

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alarak tanıtıyoruz. Vazifemiz öğrencilere Latince, bilgisayar, ve imla derslerini kullanarak Faransızca'nın imlasını öğretmektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İmla, İki Dillilik, Farklı Yapılı Diller, Tenkit İşaretleri, Harf Uyumu, İmla – Transkripsyon, İmla-Çeviri, Fonetik Prensipler.

Our time sees expanding international business relations of Russia and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) with other countries. We need to use writing in various fields more and more. Business and commercial correspondence is starting to play a greater role.

Students who graduate from the Institute of Foreign Philology and Regional Studies must learn not only to read, translate, speak to be understood by native speakers, but also write in French. This means that they must acquire strong spelling skills.

Most of our students are bilingual. The republic has a multi-ethnic population. The French language is taught in Russian (Slavic). Most students are Yakuts, whose native language is Turkic, but they learn French (Romanic). All the languages are different in terms of structure.

The word "orthography" (spelling) is derived from the Greek words *orthos* "correct" and *grapho* "I write". It is a system of rules for the transmission of speech in writing to communicate at a distance.

The French spelling is difficult for Yakut and Russian speakers because of its conservatism. For centuries, it has not changed, while the pronunciation has. The result is a discrepancy between the pronunciation and the spelling. For example, there were diphthongs and triphthongs (**beaucoup, auditoire**), all final consonants were pronounced. In French, the same sound can be conveyed by different letters and letter combinations.

In Yakut one pronounces all the letters spelt, i.e. the letter corresponds to the sound. All the letters are pronounced.

Take, for example, the French sound [o], closed "o", which does not exist in the Yakut and Russian languages. It can be expressed in writing in different ways: **ô, au, eau, eô, otion, os, osse, one, ome, ow, oa.**

It should be remembered that the **au** combination is written in the middle of a word, while the **eau** at the end of words. At the beginning of words one should write only **au**: l'**au**tomne, l'**au**trefois. The word **beaucop** is spelled with the **eau**, because it consists of two words.

"Writing a larger or smaller number of words in languages usually does not cause any doubt, as it is not inconsistent with the rules of pronunciation and graphics: they spell what they say. So in the Russian language spelling of words such as **стол** (table), **бабушка** (grandmother), **уборка** (cleaning), **кукушка** (cuckoo), **стукнуть** (strike), **юла** (whirligig), **кюю** (I'm forging), etc. ... the spelling of all these words corresponding to their pronunciation is based, as they say, on the phonetic principle, i.e. strictly speaking, it coincides with one of the possible (if there are several) graphical versions of the language." [Matusevich, 1959: 118]

"The phonetic principle requires that the sound be represented by a letter or a complex grapheme (combination of letters) for which this value is basic. For instance, in the word

**mur** all the sounds are designated on the basis of the phonetic principle. However, in view of presence of unpronounceable letters, diacritics, and other phenomena, the possibilities of using the phonetic principles in the French spelling are limited and give way to the phonetic-graphic principle.” [Gak, 2005: 60]

The French sound [ɛ], the open “e”, is easy to pronounce for the Yakut and Russian speakers, easy to remember, when written as **e**. As **e** it is written before a consonant cluster: *chercher*, *fermer*, *rester* 2. Before double consonants: *professeur*, *cesser*, *terre*. 3. Before *x*: *exercice*. 4. Before *i*: *soleil*, *conseil*. 5. Before a final pronounced consonant: *cher*, *sec*, *sel*, *net* 6. Before an unpronounced final *t*: *buffet*, *tabouret*, *ballet*, *billet*, *bracelet*. [Tatiyeva, 1969: 223]. It is easy to guess which unpronounced consonant letter you should write, if you compare the word with its borrowed Russian equivalent (**буфет** (buffet), **табурет** (stool), **балет** (ballet), **билет** (ticket), **браслет** (bracelet)).

In contrast to the Yakut and Russian languages, that sound is conveyed by different letters one has to know. These are combinations of letters and **e** accented characters.

**è** is written in words before a consonant followed by an unpronounced vowel: *père*, *mère*, *frère*; before a group of indivisible consonants: *règle*, *chèvre*; before an unpronounced final *s*: *après*, *près*, *congrès*, *dès*, *progrès*, *très*.

**ê** can be explained etymologically, instead of a letter which has disappeared, for example: *fête* – festival, *bête* – bestial (Russian *бестия*), *arrêt* cf. arrestation (Russian *арест*), *intérêt* cf. (Russian *интерес*).

**ai** is often used in the alternation of French or Russian paronymous words: **caisse** (Russian *касса*), **fait** (Russian *факт*), **baisse** (Russian *бас*), **prolétaire** (prolétariat) (Russian *пролетарский*).

**aî** is often written in the following familiar words: **aîné**, **chaîne**, **fraîche**, **connaître**, **maître**, **maraîcher**, **naître**, **traîner**, **traître**.

**ei** *baleine*, *beige*, *enseigne*, *haleine*, *peigne*, *peine*, *reine*, *seigneur*, *seize*, *treize*.

**ay**, **ey** in borrowed words: *hockey*, *jockey*, *tramway*.

This example shows that “... one and the same sound can be displayed differently in the French language. Why in each case it is supposed to be written this way and not otherwise is determined by historical reasons: because it was thus written, and in most cases, it was thus said in former times. This is just what is called the historical spelling. So it is spelled **au**, and not **o**, because the word goes back to **a le** > **al**. Further, it is written **jour**, and not **geour**, as the first sound goes back to the Latin **di(urum)**, and not to the Latin *g*.

However, a lot is determined not only historically, but also etymologically. So **petit** is spelled with **t** at the end, as in the feminine gender it has the form **petite**; in **sans**, **dans** there is the **s** because the conjoint forms are «*sãz*, *dãz*»; **bruit** is spelled with **t**, since there is a verb **ébruiter**; **pied** is written with **d**, because the conjoint form is «*pjet*» (pied-à-terre); it is spelled as **pied**, and not **piet** for the reasons of the academic etymology (Latin **pedem**); **sabot** is not written with **au**, since the derived verb is «*sab te*», and not «*sabo:te*»etc. [Scherba, 1953: 145]

“This seemingly strange historical and etymological spelling of French, however, has its certain internal justification, for it grows into “hieroglyphic” spelling. The fact is that the French language has many homonyms: so words like **sain**, **saint**, **sein**, **ceint**, **cinq** (conjoint form), **seing** – are all pronounced «*sã*», etc.

So, the meaning of these words is directly related to the graphic character as we have in hieroglyphs.” [Scherba, 1953: 146]

At the initial stage of learning the French spelling, we can use the computer to work with difficult-to-remember orthograms in order to memorize the graphic images of the words. Students should repeat the rules explained by the teacher. The teacher should present exceptions to be memorized. It is recommended to have a special notebook for spelling.

Here are some sample exercises. For example, fill in the blanks in the words with the French sound [ɛ], the open “e”.

-ai	è	eû	Ê	Ei	et	ay
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1. le sal...re 2.l'...ne 3. la t...te 4. le...gne 5. cad... 6. la m...re 7.br...on 8. il n'os...t 9.tr...s 10. m...tre 11. pl...ne 12. chev... 13. vr...ment 14. apr...s 15. le p...sir 16.n...ge 17. tabour 18. la sem...ne 19. le portr...t 20. l'obj... 21. la fen...tre 22. tramw...

Task (self-control): Fill in the gaps

ê	ai	È	aî	Ei
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1. Martiniqu... se 2. le fr...re 3. elle f...t 4. l'e'l...ve 5. f...te 6. la r...son 7. derni...re 8. m...s 9. ...tes 10. une f...ve 11. la r...ne 12. pr...te 13. expr...s 14. lach...se 15. peut...tre 16. soutr...te 17. j'esp...re 18. l'...nerez 19. tr...che 20. conn...sez 21.elle ach...te.

Control (task): Translate the following phrases.

1. I love ballet. 2. My older sister likes a beige jacket. 3. This woman is very beautiful. 4. There are sixteen windows in this auditorium. 5. He writes poems. 6. We are going to the congress. 7. We often go to the forest. 8. Our youngest brother lives in the Far East. 9. Raymond does not like it when it is snowing, but I am looking out the window with pleasure. 10. He does not pay for dinner. 11. This is a fresh apple. 12. My dream is to work in the theater.

A very useful exercise is to spell out phrases written in transcription and translate them.

1. [mə-vɛs-tɛ-bɛʒ-klɛ:r] 2. [sɛt-ʃɛ:r-dy-prɔ-fɛ-sœ:r-ɛtɑ-ʃɛn-klɛ:r] 3. [sə-vɛr-də-tɛ:rɛ:-rɛlə-vɛr-vɛ:r] 4. [ma-mɛ:r-ʒɛr-mɛ-nɛ-trɛ-frɛl] 5. [i-rɛn-sil-vu-ple-fɛr-mɛ-sɛt-fnɛ:tr] 6. [pjɛrɛm-la-sɛn] 7. [lə-pe-rɛ-trɛfjɛr-də-sa-ka-rjɛ:r]

For students of French, there is a program of self-control exercises for mastering the following orthograms:

1. ef, eds, rs, es, ai; 2. o, au, eau, ome, one, otion; 3. eu, œu; 4. -sion, -ssion, -tion, -xion; 5. -ace, -cq; 6 -il, -ill; 7 -eur, -eure; 8 - am, an, em, en, -ien, -aon 9. oir, -oire; 10 -ance, -ence.

In the first year of study, students learn Latin, so when explaining the rules the teacher must refer to Latin. For example, some students have great difficulty writing feminine nouns with the suffixes **-ance**, **-ence**. The choice of **-ance** or **-ence** depends on the original Latin word, from which the French word is derived: **constantia**>**constance**, **violentia**>**violence**, **exigentia**>**exigence**, **negligentia**>**négligence**.

To better understand the spelling of the infinitive form of some verbs, it would be useful to refer to the Latin language, which will give a clear idea of the etymology of the Latin verb forms of conjugations II or III, on which the presence or absence of the final *e* in French verbs depends; *sufficere*>*suffire*, *videre*>*voir*, *credere*>*croire*, *recipere* >*recevoir*.

French words which are verbal nouns are always written with the suffix **-ance**. For instance: *suffire-suffisant-suffisance*, *venger-vengeant-vengeance*.

Some difficulties are caused by French masculine nouns with the suffix **oire** and **oir**. In words of the French origin the suffix is attached mainly to the verbal stem **-oir**: *fumer-fumoir*, *trotter-trottoir*, words of the bookish educational origin are joined by the suffix – (at)**oire**: *laboratoire*, *observatoire*, *conservatoire*, *réfectoire*.

It should be noted that in derivative words with the prefix **ad-** there occurs a progressive consonant assimilation; *accrocher*, *affamer*, *aggraver*, *allonger*, *arrondir*, *assourdir*, *afferrir*.

So, when teaching to write in French, in order to understand some of the spelling features it is useful to make references to Latin.

At the initial stage of learning it is recommended to conduct written exercises. Attention should be paid to overcoming the basic spelling difficulties and fostering the skills of practical application.

A teacher should conduct written exercises of a preparatory nature, such as copying the most difficult specific orthograms, for example, combinations of letters, letters with diacritical marks corresponding to one sound: **oy, oi, ail, aille, as, oy, emm, enn, œ, ou, am, au, à, â**.

You can also conduct dictations for mastering the spelling of certain words and grammatical forms. Spelling dictations, both visual and auditory, are held in the auditorium. It is recommended to encourage periodical mutual testing of these dictations by the students themselves. When checking visual dictations, they are checked against the printed text. Dictations for certain orthograms, for example the sound [k] **c, ch, equ, qu, k, ck, cc** can be designed for certain phrases, words or connected text.

You should draw students' attention to the fact that **c** and **qu** are used most frequently. **C** before **a, o, u** and all the consonants. If it is necessary to convey the sound [k] with the help of **c** before **e, i** then **u** is inserted between them: *cueillir*. The double **cc** occurs at the junction of the prefix and the root *ac/compagner*. **qu** used before **e, i**: *expliquer, qui* and before other vowels: *quatre, nous marquons*. The letter **q** (without **u**) is written at the end: *cinq, le coq*. **ch, ck, k** in borrowed words: *le ski, la technique, la kopek*.

Dictations can also be explanatory ones for the prevention of errors. And unprepared dictation is used to check students' knowledge of spelling and grammatical rules. In the first year of study, dictation texts should be based on lexical and grammatical material familiar to the students. A dictation should not contain more than 3-5 words that students are unfamiliar with. The teacher writes them on the board and explains the spelling of these words. It is recommended to conduct dictation, transcription, phonetic dictation. Such dictation requires students to express spoken words in traditional writing, after which the results are given as appropriate marks.

Senior students can write a dictation-translation to check the spelling of the vocabulary learned. You can read Russian texts that students are supposed to immediately translate into French.

Only having mastered the spelling, you can write competently and maintain correspondence with foreigners. That is the role of writing in the communication activity.

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