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Teaching emotive language use in a beginners' course of Russian

The Russian language abounds with affixes for indexing speakers' age, sex, social status, relations, and the attitude to the topic of conversation, but despite their frequent use, most textbooks and exercises neglect this crucial aspect. The present article reports the empirical experience of teaching an experimental course design of Russian for beginners. The textbook material was enhanced with in-depth work on emotive morphology in text analyses and creative speaking exercises, aiming at skills of interpreting and responding to speech situations with an emotional layer. The results are solid and show that this course design can promote communicative skills and creative handling of vocabulary without excessive lexical burden. By the end of the course, the students distinguished the use of diminutives in baby talk, companionship, emotional manipulation, flirting, politeness, and sales promotion, and could adjust their speech to the circumstances and purpose of the situation.

Keywords: Russian, emotivity, diminutive, pragmatic functional situation

1 Introduction

The question of what has variously been discussed in terms of affect, emotivity, emotions, and feelings has gained increased interest in several disciplines during the last few decades. In linguistics, for instance, affect / emotivity / expressivity¹ for a long time was treated as a kind of rarity on the margins of the linguistic system (Volek 1987: 1). Reports and results of resent research and theorizing on the emotional side of language can be found in, among others, the volumes edited by Foolen et al. (2012) and Lüdke (2015). As argued by Foolen (2012: 350–354) emotions can both be conceptualized in words that denote them (e.g. *love, anger, joy*) and expressed directly in emotive/expressive language, which occurs on all linguistic levels: prosody, morphology, interjections, emotion-laden lexemes, syntax, and constructions. Among the morphological means for direct expression of emotion, diminutives play an important part in Russian.

An affective turn has also reached the field of language acquisition and learning (Pavlenko 2013: 5–6), which can be witnessed in increased research on the role of affect in second language acquisition (SLA) in the last 10–15 years (e.g. Dewaele 2010; Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011). As Dewaele (2015: 13) notes, until the current century even the word *emotion* itself was not used in the literature on SLA, and the only emotion studied was foreign language anxiety. Pavlenko (2013: 5–6) discusses the affective turn in terms of three lines of inquiry, viz. linguistic, psychological, and social aspects of the language learning process, and proposes that they need to be merged to reach an understanding of the affective dimensions of language learning, “placing embodied subjects in their linguistic and social contexts”. This urge rhymes well with Foolen’s (2012: 349) contention that not only motion but also emotion is part of the embodied grounding of language, and that emotion thus is “one of the preconditions for the functioning of language”, which entails that second language (L2) teaching should allow emotional involvement (Foolen 2012: 364). Swain (2013) likewise maintains that emotions no longer should be separated from cognition in L2 learning – they “are at the heart of the foreign language process” as Dewaele (2015: 13) puts it.

The teaching of the experimental course design that is the topic of our article was conceived in the same vein as the ideas discussed above. The students should not only learn and acquire the cognitive content of the linguistic material presented in the textbook, but in addition, they were to get acquainted with some emotive morphological variants of words (diminutives) and typical

¹ These terms are sometimes used basically synonymously, different authors preferring one or the other term, while other authors provide different definitions. In the present article, we use the terms *emotive* and *emotivity*, except when referring to authors using another term.

situational contexts of use in various pragmatic functions. Moreover, emotivity should play a dual role: it should be both an object of study and an important component of the process of teaching. Introducing positive emotive linguistic material could contribute to the creation of a friendly atmosphere in the classroom and positive “vibes” towards the teacher, the fellow students, and, finally towards the Russian language and culture (on “language learning vibes”, see Gregersen 2013). Since foreign languages are mostly studied to be able to communicate in a cultural environment with a different set of emotional and emotive norms, students should be prepared for how differently their foreign interlocutors may perceive and evaluate events, statements, and behavior. Russians are often accused of lack of courtesy, as they use the words *thank you* or *please* rarely in comparison with British people, whereas an Englishman’s speech may seem cold and unemotional for a Russian, especially in communication with family and close friends (Ovčinnikov 2008: 347). In their study of the experience of loving a partner in a foreign language, Dewaele & Salomidou (2017: 124) report on a participant who linked her difficulties in expressing her emotional state to the absence of the diminutives of her native Croatian in English, the language she was communicating with her partner in, which Dewaele & Salomidou (2017: 126) liken with “the lack of required sugar in a cup of tea”. In Russian, diminutives are of paramount importance for the communication of a large spectrum of emotive values.

The objective of this article is to report the above-mentioned teaching experiment conducted by the first author. The results reported are exclusively based on participant observation by the teacher. In the next section, we briefly discuss diminutives and their formation, semantics, and pragmatic functions. We then move over to describing the course, its additional experimental design and teaching, and, finally, some results.

2 Word formation, diminutives, and emotivity

Along with paralinguistic and other linguistic means of expressing emotivity, Russian abounds with suffixes with emotive functions, among them diminutives, which poses problems to those whose native languages do not use diminutives to the same extent and in the same functions as Russian. Russian diminutives can be formed with the help of suffixes placed after the base stem but before the ending (if there is one), most productively from nouns and in various degrees from all other word classes (for Finnish diminutives, see Laalo 2007, for Swedish, Åkerblom 2013). Referring to Dokulil’s three onomasiological categories, Volek (1987: 45) maintains that the word-formation value of diminutives is generally one of modification, i.e. adding a diminutive suffix does not change the part of speech of the word, nor does it change its

TABLE 1. The characteristics of the word-formation values.

Compared words	Word-formation value	Part of speech same/different	Lexical meaning same/different
<i>holodn-yj</i> ADJ – <i>holodn-o</i> ADV	Transposition	Different	Same
<i>holod</i> N – <i>holod-ec</i> ² N	Mutation	Same	Different
<i>holodn-yj</i> ADJ – <i>holodn-en'k-ij</i> ADJ-Dim	Modification	Same	Same + additional modifier

lexical meaning – it adds a modifier, usually including the senses of ‘smallness’ and ‘endearment’. Table 1 lists and compares Dokulil’s three types of word-formation values as described by Uluhanov (1996: 149) and illustrated by the following pairs of words: *holodnyj* (‘cold’) – *holodno* (‘coldly’); *holod* (‘coldness’) – *holodec* (‘jellied meat’); *holodnyj* (‘cold’) – *holodnen'kij* (‘cold and cute’).

As transposition and mutation concern general lexical and grammatical meanings of words, the use and meaning of the resulting lexemes is mostly not as context-dependent and “fluid” as in the case of the additional modifiers of diminutives, which makes diminutives more challenging for foreign language (FL) learners.

Diminutives have been the object of numerous linguistic studies, both universally (e.g. Jurafsky 1996) and in individual languages. Detailed studies of different aspects of Russian diminutives are presented in, e.g., Volek (1987), Steriopolu (2008), and Makarova (2014), whereas a short overview can be found in Protassova & Voeikova (2007). In Table 3 we list the suffixes that the teacher (author 1) deemed relevant for and possible to include in the beginners’ course design. In spite of the meaning of the term diminutive, diminutives, for the most part, do not designate only ‘smallness’, but smallness in combination with different positive or negative attitudes and pragmatic implications, even only loosely associated with smallness. There are suffixes mainly conveying either positive or negative attitude and ambivalent suffixes, which may express either positive or negative attitude. In the experimental course design for beginners, only usage in positive meanings was included to keep the topic manageable within the frames of the course. Support for this deci-

² Many Russian suffixes have different word-formation values in different words. The suffix *-ec* can also form diminutives, see Table 3.

sion can also be found in Volek's (1987: 79) calculations of the frequencies of positive and negative emotive nuances, according to which the positive ones prevail.

Diminutives are used in various pragmatic functions, apparently first minutely described by Volek (1987: 175). She starts from the specific ability of diminutives to express the emotive attitude of the speaker both toward the phenomenon designated by the base stem of the word in the diminutive and toward other phenomena, notably the addressee (Volek 1987: 149–150). Below we list only the different functional situations which are included in the course design. The attachment of the emotive attitude toward the referent of the base stem is largely predictable in the following cases: intensification of the emotive meaning, presence of the literal meaning of "smallness", children's discourse, and when the referent is a person (Volek 1987: 158). The emotive attitude is directed towards the addressee rather than the referent of the word in the diminutive in the following situations: command or prompting when the relation between speaker and addressee is close, the speaker wants to create an atmosphere of concern, or the speaker wants the addressee to have a positive attitude toward an offered object (Volek 1987: 161). There are also cases where the emotive attitude towards the referent of the word in the diminutive radiates from this object to something else mentioned in the utterance or to the addressee. This may happen in "[j]ocular powerplay with the addressee", speech directed to children, and intimate advice (Volek 1987: 169). Russian diminutives are thus conspicuously present in many other types of discourse than children's speech and child-directed speech. Although in adult speech, diminutives are "a non-obligatory speech refinement" (Protašova & Voeikova 2007: 50), they form such an essential part of Russian colloquial everyday communication that FL learners of Russian have much to gain from starting to get used to them right from the beginning.

3 The course: basic facts

The experimental course design was taught in the framework of a one-term (56 hours) Open University course of Russian 1 (level A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), with classes (90 minutes) twice a week in the evenings. The language of instruction was English. A group of 14 students enrolled³, and to complete and pass the course they were required to score no less than 70% in the final test and make a presentation based on the studied material. 9 students successfully finished the course.

³ When enrolling the students were informed about the experimental nature of the course, and they gave their permission to utilize anonymized student data, in addition to oral and written responses, for scientific purposes.

TABLE 2. Background facts about the students.

Age	21 (n = 2), 23 (n = 2), 28 (n = 1), 29 (n = 1), 40 (n = 1), 42 (n = 1), 55 (n = 1) years
Occupation	student (n = 6), Ph. D. student (n = 1), post-doctoral researcher (n = 1), freelancer (n = 1)
Native language	Finnish (n = 3), Swedish (n = 5), Czech (n = 1)
Other languages	English (n = 9), German (n = 6), Finnish (n = 5), Swedish (n = 4), French (n = 4), Danish (n = 1), Norwegian (n = 1), Spanish (n = 1)
Amount of Russian studies after the course	1 academic term (n = 6), 1 term + private lessons and self-study (n = 2), 1 term + 3 years at school in childhood (38 years ago, n = 1)
Reasons for taking the course	studies (n = 5), travelling (n = 3), business (n = 2), culture (n = 2), friends and family (n = 2), personal interest in languages (n = 2), for fun (n = 2), reading the news (n = 1)
Contact with the Russian language (use/hear/speak) outside the lessons	the Internet (n = 4), TV & radio (n = 3), friends (n = 2), family (n = 1), travelling (n = 1), reading (n = 1), with a classmate when doing homework (n = 1); almost never (n = 1)

The drop-out was due to “external” reasons, such as moving to another city and lack of time because of the workload in other academic subjects. The final written test contained a compulsory part based on the textbook and another part concerning the experimental part of the course.

As the course was given by an Open University, which forms part of the adult education available in Finland regardless of age and educational background, the group of students was highly heterogeneous: the age of the students ranged from 20 to 55 years, the level of education from Bachelor to doctoral student up to post-doctoral researcher, with Swedish, Finnish, Czech and Romanian as their L1 (the Romanian speaking students, however, moved away towards the end of the course). The students’ second and additional languages were English, Swedish, Finnish, French, German, Danish, Spanish, and Norwegian. This variety of languages enabled interesting comparisons and discovery of both commonalities and differences between the various linguistic systems with their morphology and expression of emotions. Table 2 subsumes background facts about the students given in a questionnaire that was conducted in addition to the final test.

As can be seen from Table 2, Russian was the third or further additional language to the students as they all had knowledge of English. Most of them

also had knowledge of German and Finnish/Swedish besides their L1. Most of the students had no or little knowledge of Russian prior to the course. Studies and travelling were the most common reasons for taking the course. All students but one seem to have used the language also outside the lessons.

The classroom was spacious enough for work in groups or pairs and allowed rearranging the furniture for different kinds of activities. It was equipped with all the necessary devices of audio and visual aids, as well as an Internet connection, which enabled quick and easy access to information, pictures, illustrative examples, and videos to clarify the meaning of unknown words.

The course used the beginners' textbook *Kafe Piter 1* (*Кафе Питер 1*) by Marjatta Alestalo (2009; 5th edition, 2015), widely used in Finland, and also in the Open University where the course was taught. The positive aspects of the textbook are that it contains sufficiently detailed explanations of the grammatical material in Finnish, which made it possible to leave much of the theoretical part for self-study. There are relevant explanations of phonetics, phonetical exercises and online audio support. The author of the textbook tried to introduce some youth slang and make the dialogues less formal, which brings the book closer to real colloquial speech, but there are only a handful of diminutives in the whole book. Some of the examples do not seem relevant and up-to-date (for a critical analysis of the *Kafe Piter* series of textbooks, see Mironenko 2016). The weak points of the book are the lack of exercises for revising grammar and vocabulary, and the fact that all the recurring characters are young people of the same age. Exercises and dialogues had to be reworked to demonstrate various conversational tactics according to the level of politeness, familiarity and age disparity.

As *Kafe Piter 1* was originally designed for a full academic year course, to adapt it to the length of the course, the order of lessons and presentation of new grammar structures had to be reworked. This also prompted the need for additional materials. Firstly, the grammar material from the textbook was reproduced in bright PowerPoint presentations that contained further examples related to the relevant lexical topic of the lessons, their dialogues and speaking tasks. Second, drilling exercises to supplement the textbook were added. These exercises combined the new grammar and vocabulary with revision of knowledge from previous lessons.

Since the textbook vocabulary is restricted (about 1,000 words), the students were encouraged to enhance it to their discretion by compiling their own "My vocabulary", using ten designed sheets where they could record 15–20 new words on the topic studied in addition to the words used in the textbook. The aim of this task was to motivate the students to boost their vocabulary with the words they felt necessary in order to tailor the material to their own needs. The new words became the object of grammar drilling exercises, but more importantly for the topic of this article, the students discussed each

new page of “My vocabulary” in groups and could share their ideas of why they had chosen a certain word, which turned into good speech practice as well, see (1):

- (1) I found the word *gulât*’ which means ‘to walk’. I like walking, so *â lûblû gulât*’.

The additional materials also included videos with songs and cartoons, so that every new topic would be associated with positive emotions and in order to further interest. These materials promoted the connection between language and culture and helped master pronunciation. They were enjoyed by the students and gave rise to fruitful conversations enlivening the lessons (classroom observation by the teacher). Other speech enhancing activities included: Revising the studied material and mastering new skills by playing cards, board games, and role-playing games. The speed of “linguistic reaction” was exercised using a dice that was thrown to students one at a time with an oral prompt that required the student to produce a new word to be memorized or a certain grammatical form of a word.

All the extra materials were available on Moodle and open to print, watch and listen at any convenient time.

4 The experimental course design and its implementation

The innovation of the experimental course design lies in the immediate immersion of beginner students in a colloquial environment with characteristic emotive diminutives in typical situational contexts. This allows students in each individual case to “feel” by themselves the pragmatic meaning of these words in concrete situations, much as it happens in child language acquisition. Thus, the order of acquainting the students with diminutives starts from pragmatics, further working through semantics and morphological composition. This is the reverse order as compared to more traditional curricula, where, apart from occasional instances, students are more systematically acquainted with diminutives at a much later stage in courses of grammar and/or word formation. Such courses usually start and concentrate the explanation on the formation of diminutives, which leaves much less time for understanding and practicing their utilization. The two opposing types of approach are illustrated in Figure 1.

In-depth work with affixes in combination with speech thus began from the stage of meeting with the students at the first lesson, and the first pragmatic function encountered was talking to people of the same age and companionship.⁴ The teacher (author 1) had a list of the students in advance and

⁴ The course design paid attention to word formation in general, helping the students to see

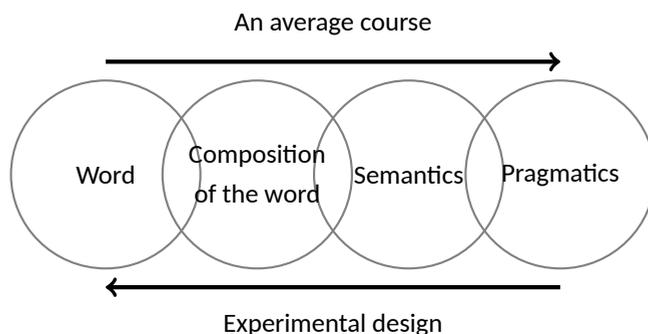


FIGURE 1. Teaching diminutives in the experimental design compared to the traditional approach.

could select a few appropriate hypocoristic nicknames derived from the students' names using Russian diminutive suffixes, e. g.: *Milka – Milkočka*, *Jonas – Jonasik*, *Dina – Dinočka*⁵. (In the textbook hypocoristic forms of Russian names are introduced only in lesson 3, and the first diminutive form of a name appears in lesson 8.) The students first familiarized themselves with the Cyrillic alphabet writing their names and choosing a nickname that they wanted to be used during the lessons in order to create a close friendly classroom atmosphere, where one of the basic affective functions of diminutives – informal communication could be felt, understood, and acted out. Based on classroom observation, this atmosphere and the Russian nicknames formed from their own names made the students feel comfortable and free to ask questions, participate in role games and dialogues, as well as to make and discuss mistakes. It was also the first step in recognizing the affixes in a word and starting to work with them.

Due to the level of the course, the number of diminutive suffixes introduced had to be quite limited. The productive suffixes taught are listed in Table 3.

Diminutive word forms were systematically introduced in additional dialogues on the topics of the textbook lessons (see examples 2–9 below), staging concrete examples of functional situations discussed in Volek (1987) (see section 2). Thus the situation of the speaker wanting the addressee to have a positive attitude toward an offered object was manifested in conversations involving food, where diminutives were met with and practiced in dialogues about ordering and serving food:

a new word not as a line of letters but as formed by meaningful components. In this article, however, we concentrate on the diminutives. Talking to strangers was also exercised, but is likewise beyond the scope of this article.

⁵ These are not the real names of any of the students.

TABLE 3. Diminutive suffixes taught in the beginners' course.

N-Masc	-ik	nož-ik ('knife-Dim')
	-čik	žurnal'-čik ('magazine-Dim')
	-ec	brat-ec ('brother-Dim'; 'little brother'; 'pal')
N-Fem	-k-	spin-k-a ('back-Dim')
	-očk-	koft-očk-a ('cardigan-Dim')
	-ečk-	nož-ečk-a ('leg/foot-Dim')
	-onk-	ruč-onk-a ('arm/hand-Dim')
N-Neut	-k-	okoš-k-o ('window-Dim')
	-išk-	pal't-išk-o ('coat-Dim')
ADJ/ADV	-on'k-	tih-on'k-ij / tih-on'k-o ('quiet/quietly-Dim')
	-en'k-	horoš-en'k-ij / horoš-en'k-o ('good/well-Dim')

- (2) Jonasik, budeš' salat ili sup-čik? 'Jonasik, would you like some salad or soup-Dim'

Taking this topic a step further, the students were asked to use real Russian websites to study the menus of some popular pubs and cafeterias in Moscow and St. Petersburg. These menus often contain the diminutive forms of the names of dishes: *supčik* (*dnâ*) ('soup-Dim (of the day)'), *kotletka* ('patty-Dim'), *salatik* ('salad-Dim). Such examples taken from the Internet made the students aware of the sales promotion pragmatic function of diminutives used in menus to create an aura of homemade cooking around the dishes. The students further worked with online cafeteria websites using the menus in dialogues and role-playing. Through children's menus, the functions of child-directed discourse and children's speech were practised in role games of families with children.

The sales promotion function is also relevant to the topic of clothes and fashion, where the positive emotive attitude towards the referent of the word in the diminutive radiates from this object to the addressee:

- (3) Sejčas v mode takie sum-očk-i. 'This kind of bag-Dim-s are the craze now'

Here the additional meaning of cuteness reflects the speaker's positive attitude towards the object. As the positive attitude also extends to the addressee, diminutives of clothing and fashion vocabulary were used for making compliments and flirting. The students used online stores to find pictures of clothing and the relevant words to form diminutives from, e.g.:

- (4) O! kakaâ šap-očk-a! Tebe očen' idët! 'O, what a hat-Dim! It suits you very well!'

The emotive attitude is directed towards the addressee rather than the referent of the word in the diminutive in polite requests, which were practiced for different types of situations. In imperative clauses following clauses with the short adjective *nužen* ('need'), the request is softened by the diminutive, which even makes it possible to drop the word *požalujsta* ('please') without being rude, as shown in example (5):

- (5) Mne nužen karandaš. Daj mne *karandaš-ik!* 'I need a pencil. Give me a pencil-Dim'

Using the diminutive of proper names makes it is possible to exert flattering emotional manipulation in requests, which makes it harder for the addressee to decline the request:

- (6) *Jonas-ik*, pomogi mne, požalujsta! 'Jonas-Dim, help me, please'

With words denoting an absolute value the diminutive can be used to decrease the importance of the object requested (by making it seem small), and therefore easier for the addressee to part with.

- (7) Odolži mne *million-čik!* 'Could you lend me a million-Dim'

Diminutives used to decrease the importance of an absolute entity, like a week, can also be used to temper a problem, as in (8):

- (8) Â uedu vsego na *nedel'-k-u*. 'I'm going away only for a week-Dim'

Irony and sarcasm, finally, were practised in situations where an obviously large object was named using a diminutive:

- (9) *I èto ty nazyvaeš' sum-očk-oj?! 'And you call this a handbag-Dim'* (Talking about a large handbag)

After plunging the students into a functional situation, where already familiar words occurred with diminutive suffixes, and helping them to sense the emotive attitude expressed, it was time to analyze the composition of the words, comparing words with similar suffixes, and to replace suffixes and subsequently observe the change in the meaning of the word. Bright visual aids were used to minimize the use of translation in explanations and to illustrate different senses of words. After discussing some suffix/es, students were asked to predict or guess the meaning of an unknown word with the same affix. Usually, the students could come up with a plausible meaning of a word based on their familiarity with the affixes and roots, or by analogy with familiar words. These exercises produced many "wow effects" and inspired the students to look for new words to recognize and memorize easily (classroom

observations by the teacher). Dealing with the words like with a Lego brick set significantly affected the interest in new words and their acquisition.

As the aim of the experimental course was not only to recognize and understand the emotive attitudes expressed by the diminutives, but also to internalize this mode of emotional expression⁶, the students got ample opportunity to practice the use of diminutives through a rich array of activities both in class and at home. These activities usually started with tasks to read and enact dialogues, and later to compose their own dialogues containing words with emotive elements. The students could imagine themselves of a different age, or occupation, communicating in different places, such as a classroom, a café, a business trip, etc. Playing such role games allowed the students to experience and implement conversational tactics in various circumstances and emotional contexts. The positive impact observed by the teacher was that the students felt more and more confident using Russian in different circumstances.

The students actively worked with online resources in order to bring the language practice beyond the classroom. With the help of smartphones and computers, they consulted online maps to find out a route around the city and give directions, practiced mock ordering of food and trips for the Christmas vacation. The students found using real Russian websites highly motivating since they could utilize knowledge from the pragmatic situational functions exercised and gain new interesting experience. They could observe the emotive meanings of diminutives in online stores and in dialogues between friends and family members on chats and social networks.

The most challenging part of the work with emotive suffixation was for the students to grasp the emotive attitude present in each new functional situation, for the simple reason that non-Slavic languages do not have and use morphological diminutives to the same extent as Russian. It was interesting to observe the students' first reaction to some diminutive forms, such as those derived from numerals ("Does it mean fewer?") or dishes in a menu ("Do they mean there will be a little portion of soup?"). Quite expectedly, the student whose L1 was Czech mastered the topic better and faster than the others since diminutives perform similar functions in Czech. A second difficulty concerned the fact that there are cases where a suffix added to a base stem can yield both a modification, i. e. a diminutive, and a mutation, i. e. a homonym with a different meaning cf.: *ruka* ('hand') – *ručka* ('hand-Dim/little hand') and homonyms that mean 'handle', 'pen', and 'ear of a cup', among others. This part of the course required close attention, especially when selecting examples.

⁶ Cf. "L2 learners may face new modes of emotional expression, which they have to internalize or, at least, decode to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication." (Pavlenko 2013: 10).

5 Final assessment and results

As already noted, the final assessment included a compulsory part and an optional part. The compulsory part consisted of: a personal oral presentation, 10 topics of “My vocabulary” filled during the course, and the final grammar test. The oral presentations were on the theme “For my trip to X, I need” and tested the use of numbers in combination with articles of personal belonging. On the whole, the students boldly spoke in front of the whole group, some of them practically without looking into their manuscripts, and some using PowerPoint presentations. The final test was based on the material studied in the textbook and reminded of the homework tasks: answering questions, completing grammar charts, a cloze test, and a short essay about themselves. The questionnaire (mentioned in section 3) and a morphology test were optional, but all the students were willing to complete them. The tasks of the morphology test were: to match proper names with their nickname forms; to form a few hypocoristic name forms from the student’s own name; to paraphrase the sentences of a conversation, adjusting it to talking with a six-year-old nephew, and, finally, to define the pragmatic situations and emotive attitudes of a few typical utterances containing diminutives.

The results of the final assessment were most positive. In addition to sufficiently good knowledge of Russian grammar and vocabulary, the students showed their ability to recognize and use diminutives in the functional situation types covered by the course design:

- (10) *Vot moj novyj telefončik.* ‘This is my new phone-Dim’ – positive attitude towards an object
- (11) *Kakie u tebâ botinočki!* ‘What shoes-Dim(=beautiful) you have’ – complimenting
- (12) *Kakie nožki!* ‘What legs-Dim’ – flirting
- (13) *Podoždi menâ odnu minutku!* ‘Wait for me a minute-Dim’ – strong request and emotional manipulation
- (14) *Počitaem knižečku.* ‘Let’s read a book-Dim’ – child-directed discourse
- (15) *Privet, Tanečka!* ‘Hello, Tania-Dim’ – talking to a person of the same age, chumminess, intimacy
- (16) *Odnú minutku!* ‘Just a minute-Dim’ – politeness
- (17) *Èto vsego na časik.* ‘It will only take a minute-Dim’ – emotional manipulation through flattery
- (18) *Supčik dnâ* ‘Soup-Dim of the day’ – sales promotion

However, recognizing and interpreting the diminutives was easier for the students than forming the preferred variant for a given situation, when, for instance, there were three masculine suffixes to choose between (see Table

3) which may express slightly different emotive nuances with different words and in different contexts. Base stems are also susceptible to diminutive formation in different degrees, so that some stems allow a whole range of suffixes, while others are more restricted. A further problem arises from the fact that not all diminutives of nouns of a certain semantic group express all the same pragmatic and emotive nuances. Thus, in the final test to name a desired Christmas present for a little boy, one creative student formed the diminutive *traktor-ec* in analogy with *mašin-k-a* ('car-Dim', 'toy car'). Although fully possible (but somewhat odd sounding to a Russian ear), the word *traktor-ec* would not be used about a toy tractor.

6 Conclusion

In this article, we have touched upon the emotive/affective turn in linguistics and second/foreign language learning and acquisition. After a brief sketch of the category of diminutives in Russian, their formation, semantics, and pragmatic functions, we turned to the main topic of the article: the experimental beginners' course of Russian, aiming at accustoming the students to the Russian mode of emotional expression through the use of diminutives, so characteristic of colloquial Russian. The experience of the experimental course design demonstrated that inclusion of emotive morphology into the course had a positive impact in several respects: first, from the very first lesson when the students chose their "Russian" nicknames, stress levels were very low in class; second, student motivation and interest did not decrease, but rather increased, as the course progressed; third, in-depth work with morphology helped to memorize and boosted vocabulary; and, finally, speaking skills remarkably developed on various levels of speech, and in particular on those levels that are absent from regular textbooks – in several contexts students could understand and produce native-like utterances, even jokes.

Thus, the results show that the inclusion of emotive language use into a beginners' course of Russian is something that students can cope with. The students of this particular course learnt both the textbook material and the additional part, and with great pleasure. The experimental course design thus managed to bridge the abyss between the barren style of a textbook and the living speech. This first experience definitely encourages continuation and future refinements of the course design.

Abbreviations

ADJ	adjective
ADV	adverb
Dim	diminutive
Fem	feminine
FL	foreign language
L1	native language
L2	second language
Masc	masculine
N	noun
Neut	neuter
SLA	second language acquisition

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