

## Radosław Kaleta

University of Warsaw, Poland

Варшаўскі ўніверсітэт, Польшча

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6892-9332>

e-mail: [rkaleta@uw.edu.pl](mailto:rkaleta@uw.edu.pl)

# The Significance of Glottodidactics in Belarusian Studies

## Значэнне глотадыдактыкі ў беларусістыцы

**Abstract:** This article examines the significance of glottodidactics in Belarusian studies, emphasizing both theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and learning Belarusian as a native, heritage, revived, or foreign language. It traces the history of Belarusian glottodidactics from early 20th-century grammars, through émigré educational initiatives, to modern academic developments, including the Laboratory of Belarusian Glottodidactics at the University of Warsaw. This study highlights the role of language policy, cultural factors, teacher training, and motivation in language learning, and stresses the importance of promoting Belarusian globally and within the diaspora. Belarusian glottodidactics fosters both knowledge production and practical teaching, contributing to language preservation, revitalization, and international recognition.

**Keywords:** Belarusian language, glottodidactics, diaspora education, Belarusian grammars, terminological discussion.

**Рэзюмэ:** Артыкул разглядае значэнне глотадыдактыкі ў беларускіх даследаваннях, падкрэслівае тэарэтычныя і практычныя аспекты навучання беларускай мове як роднай, успадкаванай, адроджанай або замежнай. Адсочваецца гісторыя беларускай глотадыдактыкі ад граматык пачатку XX стагоддзя, праз адукацыйныя ініцыятывы эміграцыі да сучасных акадэмічных распрацовак, уключаючы Майстэрню беларускай глотадыдактыкі ў Варшаўскім універсітэце. Асаблівая ўвага надаецца моўнай палітыцы, культурным фактарам, падрыхтоўцы настаўнікаў і матывацыі навучэнцаў. Глотадыдактыка спрыяе захаванню, адраджэнню і міжнароднаму прызнанню беларускай мовы.

**Ключавыя словы:** беларуская мова, глотадыдактыка, адукацыя дыяспары, беларускія граматыкі, тэрміналагічная дыскусія.

## Introductory Remarks

The term *glottodidactics* remains largely unknown in English-language academic literature. More popular

are terms such as *second language acquisition* [see Herschensohn, Young-Scholten (ed.) 2013], *language teaching methodology* [see Nunan 1991, Rodgers 2001], *second/foreign language teaching/learning*

[see Brown (ed.) 2006], (*foreign*) *language education* [Stanulewicz, Janczukowicz, Ročławska-Daniluk (ed.) 2017], *language pedagogy* [see Abrams 2020], etc. For native speakers of English, the word *didactic* has acquired rather negative connotations, involving a moralizing (moral instruction) or condescending stance, for example, *a didactic novel*, *didactic lecturing*. However, in Europe, especially in Poland, where the *International Journal of Belarusian Glottodidactics* is published, the term *glottodidactics* is well known and generally perceived as neutral. It is derived from the Greek words *glōtta* ('language') and *didaktikós* ('instructive', 'capable of teaching'; from *didaskein* 'to teach'). In Western European scholarship, it has been used in various meanings: either as a science concerned with the processes of learning and teaching both native and foreign languages (including living languages, dead languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek, and Old Church Slavonic, and also artificial languages such as Esperanto), or to describe methods and techniques of language teaching [see Jaroszevska 2014: 54–55].

## Glottodidactics

Glottodidactics is often considered a branch of linguistics. Although the connections between them are evident, glottodidactics has emerged as a relatively young, yet autonomous field of study and continues to develop under the influence of global processes that promote the learning of multiple languages and the trend toward multilingualism. The need for every person to master not only their native language but also two or three additional languages is a characteristic feature of the modern era in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of the term *glottodidactics* is credited to the Polish linguist and specialist in Polish and German studies Ludwik Zabrocki (1907–1977) [Jaroszevska 2014: 53], who was the head of the Depart-

ment of Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland) and editor of the journal *Glottodidactica*. This term has since been widely popularized, among others, by Franciszek Gruzca.

Initially, glottodidactics encompassed both the teaching and learning of the native language and of foreign languages as similar—though not identical—processes which occur in the brain during language acquisition and learning. The aim of glottodidactics was therefore to analyse and describe the similarities and differences between these processes [cf. Gruzca 1978 and 2007]. Since the 1970s, however, the academic community in Warsaw, Poland narrowed the scope of glottodidactics to the analysis of processes involved exclusively in teaching and learning foreign languages [see Kaleta 2019: 12]. In our own work, we follow this Warsaw tradition. This understanding of glottodidactics is also reflected in the Polish language dictionary, published by PWN (National Scientific Publishers), as “a science concerned with the study of the process of teaching and learning foreign languages” [see: *Glottodydaktyka* (online)].

Nevertheless, various interpretations of the term continue to circulate. It may refer, for example, to the teaching of foreign languages to children or the practical methods used in teaching foreign languages to adults [Jaroszevska 2014: 54–55]. It may also denote an approach that helps children learn to read, write, and count in their native language and stimulates them to explore and understand the surrounding world (domestic/native-language glottodidactics, Pol. *glottodydaktyka ojczystojęzyczna*, see: *Edukacja językowa...* (online); Jaroszevska 2014: 53, 59). In this sense, glottodidactics functions as a practical method rather than a science focused on the cognitive processes underlying language learning.

These divergent interpretations give rise to significant debates [cf. Dakowska 2014: 25; Jaroszevska 2014: 26, 52], as some scholars deny the scientific and autonomous status of this practical, methodological version of glottodidactics. This, however, cannot be said of glottodidactics understood more broadly, as a science studying the processes involved in teaching and learning both foreign and native languages.

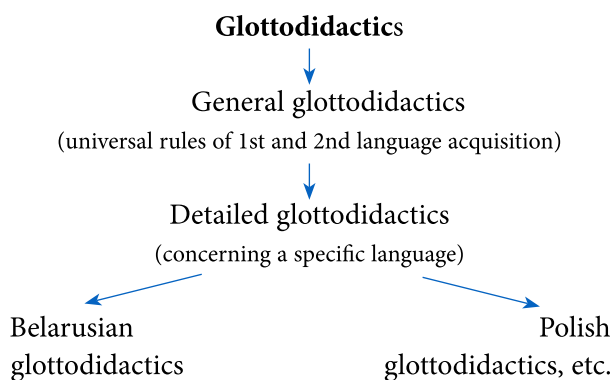
<sup>1</sup> As opposed to, for example, the United States, where most native-born people speak only one language.

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The fact that in Western European countries, including Poland, doctoral and habilitation theses have been defended in the field of glottodidactics, demonstrates the established status of this field [see Kaleta 2019: 12]. For instance, in the United States, over the last 25–30 years or so, professorial positions focused on practical aspects of foreign language education have been created at a number of universities. While not all of these positions are tenured or tenure-track, they are nonetheless higher in rank than lecturers. Often they carry the title “Professor of the Practice.”

It should not be forgotten that glottodidactics is a broad term, encompassing various subfields in the scholarly literature. For example, *pure glottodidactics* [Grucza 1978: 37] focuses on the theoretical description and explanation of language learning processes, whereas *applied glottodidactics* (also called *pragmatic glottodidactics* or *foreign language teaching methods*) implements the practical objectives derived from the processes analyzed [more see Kaleta 2018: 68].

There is also a distinction between *general glottodidactics* and *detailed glottodidactics*, the latter of which examines processes with reference to a specific language [cf. Pfeiffer 2001: 14–15].



Maria Dakowska, in her monograph on the development of foreign language didactics as an academic discipline, presents numerous arguments confirming that it is an independent, “normal” science and dispels many myths surrounding it. Dakowska uses the term *foreign-language didactics*, but she herself notes that it is also referred to as *glottodidactics* [Dakowska 2014: 25, 63].

As mentioned above, not all researchers consider glottodidactics to be an independent discipline. Dakowska explains why glottodidactics is not recognized by some researchers as a science:

The first very significant obstacle in the search for its own identity is the dominant belief regarding foreign language teaching methods [...] that the monopoly on concepts concerning language and its acquisition belongs to other, more academically established disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, cognitive science, research on non-primary language acquisition, etc. According to this view, which has functioned with various modifications for several decades, these disciplines are considered to contain essential definitions, sources of innovation, and impulses for development: foundational concepts are supposed to breathe new life into foreign language teaching, modernize it, and optimize it in school conditions [Dakowska 2014: 26].

According to Dakowska, glottodidactics is not merely a collection of methods of teaching but, above all, a science that investigates the processes of acquiring and teaching foreign languages in educational settings. A foreign language is a communicative code (a system of transformations), the mastery of which requires usage for communicative purposes and activating the cognitive processes available at a given stage of a learner’s development [Dakowska 2014: 36]. This is not identical to studying second-language acquisition in natural settings, an area long examined by a separate (though related to glottodidactics) discipline – Second Language Acquisition Studies. Scholars in that field, in contrast with glottodidactics, are concerned with explaining the processes in question without producing practically applicable knowledge that can be used in the classroom [Dakowska 2014: 36–37]. Glottodidactics is an empirical, relatively autonomous academic discipline that seeks to understand the phenomena of foreign-language acquisition in educational contexts. Its subject matter consists of empirical phenomena occurring in time and space, as well as empirical

research aimed at testing hypotheses in light of empirical data concerning the phenomena within its scope. Foreign-language acquisition processes in educational settings are specific, specialised, and natural processes of human information processing—that is, linguistic communication in a socio-cultural context [Dakowska 2014: 35].

Glottodidactics may therefore have related disciplines, but as an autonomous field, it no longer needs to adopt research perspectives imposed by these areas [Dakowska 2014: 30]. Glottodidactics does not compete with other disciplines—for example, those that study language as a formal system or acquisition at a universal, user-independent level—because it investigates actual processes of language communication, meaning that its research subject has a significant level of detail [Dakowska 2014: 28].

Dakowska criticizes the notion that foreign language teaching methods (methodology) should be considered a discipline taking over the tasks of glottodidactics. This implies denying glottodidactics its cognitive value, reducing its status primarily to the realm of practical activity. According to the Dakowska, foreign language teaching methods is not a framework capable of meeting the challenges posed by foreign language teaching in the 21st century [Dakowska 2014: 25].

Therefore, there is a need for both practitioners, who will effectively teach foreign languages, and theorists, who will test theoretical models to generate knowledge applicable in practice. The processes of using and acquiring foreign languages are complex, requiring a scientific approach to their study. This also demands specificity, as, for example, general learning psychology differs from the psychology of language learning, formal linguistics focuses on abstract and universal relations between linguistic forms, whereas glottodidactics situates its research subject in the realm of empirical phenomena. Glottodidactics aims first to explain the phenomena it investigates and only subsequently to generate practically applicable knowledge. All of this underscores the necessity of glottodidactics' autonomy as an

academic discipline [Dakowska 2014: 17–18, 20, 22; cf. also Dakowska 2012, 2015].

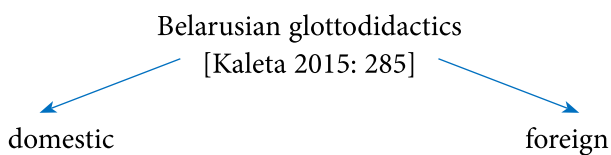
## Belarusian Glottodidactics

In a similar way, one can also identify *Belarusian glottodidactics*, which concerns the study of the processes involved in teaching and learning the Belarusian language, which must also take other, non-linguistic factors into consideration. Here is our broad definition of general *Belarusian glottodidactics* [Kaleta 2019: 14–15]:

*Belarusian glottodidactics* is a branch of general glottodidactics, an autonomous field within the humanities that conducts its own research while drawing on the heritage of linguistics, pedagogy, general didactics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. It engages both the theoretical and practical aspects of the processes through which learners (of all ages) acquire language, study it, and learn to teach Belarusian as a native, inherited, second, or foreign language within a broad, multifaceted glottodidactic system (learner – channel – teacher). It examines the functioning of this system and the relationships among its components, all of which are influenced by both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors (e.g., motivation, learning conditions). Belarusian glottodidactics also addresses cultural aspects and intercultural dialogue in the learning and teaching of Belarusian, methodology and teaching techniques, Belarusian pedagogical studies (the role of the teacher), instructor preparation, diachronic and synchronic description and evaluation of didactic materials, and new technologies in Belarusian language learning and teaching. Further issues considered are the teaching of Belarusian both in Belarus and abroad, language policies, promotion of Belarusian language instruction worldwide, history of Belarusian language teaching, assessment of language acquisition, and analysis of difficulties in learning and teaching Belarusian. Throughout this process, it is crucial to refer to comparative glottodidactics, that is, build upon the findings and achievements of glottodidactics of other languages. Among the objectives of Belarusian glottodidactics are forecasting, modernizing, and verifying research pro-

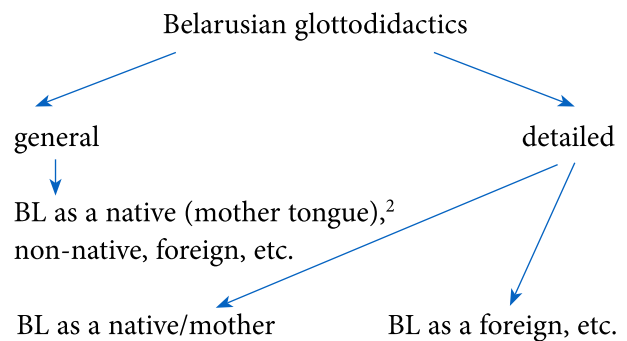
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cesses, as well as delivering new knowledge about them. This includes specific methods, techniques, and strategies for language learning and teaching. A distinction is made between *domestic Belarusian glottodidactics*, practiced in Belarus, and *foreign Belarusian glottodidactics*, practiced outside Belarus in various countries, such as Poland.



Here is a concise version of this definition [Kaleta 2019: 15]:

*Belarusian glottodidactics* is the science that studies the processes of language acquisition by learners, as well as the learning and teaching of Belarusian as a native, heritage (second), revived, or foreign language. It also addresses cultural aspects and intercultural dialogue in the learning and teaching of Belarusian, teaching methods and techniques, Belarusian pedagogical studies (the role of the teacher), teacher preparation, diachronic and synchronic description and evaluation of didactic materials, new technologies in Belarusian language teaching and learning, teaching Belarusian in Belarus and abroad, language policy and the promotion of Belarusian worldwide, the history of Belarusian language teaching, assessment of language acquisition, analysis of difficulties in learning and teaching Belarusian, and comparative glottodidactics, drawing on its own findings as well as achievements from glottodidactics of other languages. This definition can be further narrowed to a specific target group. In our view, Belarusian glottodidactics can also be divided into *general* and *detailed* branches. The general branch studies (and compares) the processes of learning and teaching Belarusian in general, i.e., as a native, heritage (second), revived, or foreign language. Detailed glottodidactics focuses on a specific group (e.g., foreigners) who use Belarusian, for example, as a foreign language (BFL) [Kaleta 2019: 12–15].



In the literature on the Belarusian language, Belarusian glottodidactics is often discussed, and different groups of learners of Belarusian are analyzed simultaneously [cf. Barysenka 2012: 393; Pisarèk 2012: 365–366; Plyhaŭka 2017: 8]. In doing so, authors consciously or unconsciously follow the old, original definition of (general) glottodidactics, which analyzed and compared the processes of learning both the native and foreign languages. For us, as illustrated in the diagram, there is a difference between detailed Belarusian glottodidactics, which can concern only BFL, and general Belarusian glottodidactics. We distinguish separate target groups because, in practice, different methodological approaches and techniques must often be applied to each group [Kaleta 2015]—a point also recognized and emphasized by researchers writing about the various processes of general Belarusian glottodidactics, e.g., Barysenka 2012: 393; Pisarèk 2012: 365–366.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Zawadowski pointed out in his article that a language whose domain of use is everyday life, employed in conversations on daily topics, and simultaneously the first language of children within the family, is referred to in linguistic literature as a *primary language*. This term is usually used to denote the *mother tongue* [Zawadowski 1961]. However, attempts to define this concept give rise to numerous doubts and difficulties, especially when we talk about the former multicultural and multilingual lands of the Republic of Poland, consisting of parts of present-day Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine [see Krasowska 2020]. Belarusian serves as the language of daily communication (and simultaneously as the primary language) in many families of the Polish national minority living in Belarusian rural areas, for example in the Hrodna and Braslaw regions. That is why in that context it is possible to use different terms like the *first/primary language* (first linguistic code), naturally acquired, and the *second/secondary language* (second linguistic code) [see Zawadowski 1961].

In foreign Belarusian studies, the term (*Belarusian*) *glottodidactics* appeared on December 1, 2015, in the name of the newly established Laboratory of Belarusian Glottodidactics at the Department of Belarusian Studies of the University of Warsaw. This name is unsurprising, as it refers to the Warsaw terminological tradition [see also Kaleta 2015, 2018]. The Laboratory emerged as the outcome of a large section entitled “Belarusian Language as a Foreign Language” (with ten participants from three countries), which took place at the 6th International Congress of Belarusian Studies in May 2015 in Minsk, in the office of the director of the Center for the Study of Belarusian Culture, Language, and Literature of the Institute of Linguistics of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus – Prof. Alyaksandr Lukashanets [see more: Kaleta 2017: 8]. It is a laboratory open to collaboration with international researchers.

Probably under the influence of Polish Belarusian studies [cf. Kalita, Sadoŭskaja, Staravojtava 2021: 20], the term *Belarusian glottodidactics* has increasingly been used by Belarusian researchers as well, for example by L. Syameshka [Sjameška 2018: 67–69], or from 2019 onwards in the titles of sections during International Congresses of Belarusian Studies. The initiator of these sections was Dr. Nadzeia Staravojtava, who had participated in the above-mentioned section on Belarusian as a Foreign Language in 2015, and, for many years, collaborated with both the Laboratory of Belarusian Glottodidactics and the editorial board of the journal *Belarusian Language as a Foreign Language*, published by the Laboratory from 2017 onwards [see also Kaleta 2017].

It is worth noting that terminology concerning the study of the Belarusian language not as a (symbolic) native language was not a priority in Belarus, which has led to terminological diversity and different terminological traditions. In Russian and among Russian Studies specialists (including Polish scholars), the term *linguodidactica* is used. This term was proposed to describe language for educational purposes, and denotes the general theory of language teaching as well as theoretical and practical issues of language instruction [Čaxoŭski 2006: 183].

In Belarusian academic literature and methodological science to this day, the term *linguodidactica* (as a legacy of the Soviet terminological tradition) is used both in relation to foreign language learning—for example, Lidzija Syameshka and Ina Kalita write about Belarusian (*belaruskaya*) *linguodidactica* [Sjameška 2016: 201; Kalita, Sadoŭskaja, Staravojtava 2021: 20], though Kalita also mentions Belarusian (*belarusistychnaya*) *linguodidactica* [Kalita 2021: 22]—similarly, other researchers [Važnik, Savickaja 2003; Semjan’kevič 2017]—as well as in relation to the native language [e.g., Jaleński 2005].

In Poland, the term *linguodidactica* can be synonymous with *glottodidactics*, but it can also be used in opposition to it, referring only to the didactics of the native language, whereas *glottodidactics* applies to foreign languages [cf. Nocoń 2012: 50].

### Some Facts on the Early History of Belarusian Glottodidactics

Glottodidactics is a relatively young discipline, but has deep historical roots [cf. Dakowska 2014: 15], since people have been acquiring knowledge and learning languages for centuries, for example, for trade purposes. The same applies to Belarusian general glottodidactics, and even more so to Belarusian detailed glottodidactics, particularly oriented toward foreign learners. The history of these disciplines could easily warrant separate articles, so here only selected facts from the early history of the field will be presented briefly.

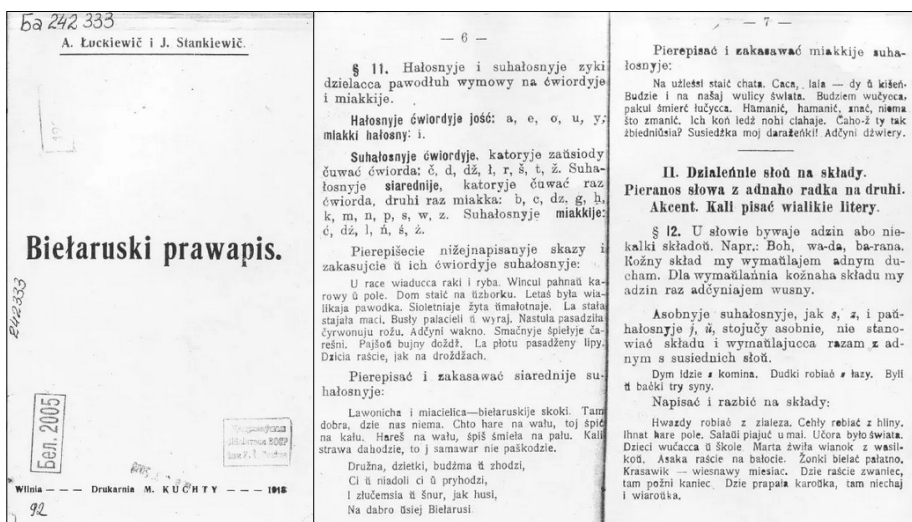
The first works in which attempts were made to systematically describe the Belarusian language were printed at the beginning of the 20th century, usually in a Polish-modified version of Latin script [cf. Sudnik 1950; Mayo 1977; Šakun 1995; Alexna 2003]. One of the earliest textbooks was *Hramatyka bielaruskaj mowy* (*Grammar of the Belarusian Language*) by the priest Balyaslaw Pachobka, developed in 1915 and printed in Vilnius in 1918 [Pačobka 1918]. However, it was recognised as a low quality publication and is sometimes not mentioned in academic resources

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[cf. Alexna 2003: 91]. The second and more serious work was *Bielaruskaja hramatyka* (*Belarusian Grammar*) by Anton Lutskyevich [Łuckiewiç 1916], who was an instructor at the Vilnius Belarusian Teachers' Courses (1915–16) and a teacher at the Vilnius Belarusian Gymnasium [Bieder 2017]. His work is recognized as the first Belarusian grammar, although it was not a professionally printed manuscript (it was likely reproduced in a primitive way). This grammar

can be recognized as the first unpublished Belarusian grammar. In 1917, again in Vilnius, the brochure *Jak prawilna pisać pa biełarusku* (*How to Write Correctly in Belarusian*) was issued by Anton Lutskyevich [Łuckiewiç 1917]. This brochure became the basis for preparing a more substantial edition in 1918 – *Bielaruski prawapis* (*Belarusian Orthography*), printed also in Vilnius [Łuckiewiç, Stankiewiç 1918]. In addition to the rules, this edition also provided dictations.

**Fig. 1.** *How to Write Correctly in Belarusian by Lutskyevich, Vilnius 1917*



**Fig. 2.** *Belarusian Orthography by Lutskyevich and Stankiewiç, Vilnius 1918*

After the October Revolution, in 1918, a small manual entitled *Prosty sposab stacca u karotkim časie hramatnym* (*A Simple Way to Become Literate in a Short Time*) was printed in Wrocław by Rudolf Abicht and Yan Stankyeovich [Abicht, Stankiewiç 1918] — its purpose was to help learners read and write in Belarusian as quickly as possible. All these editions were considered to be basic readers, while the first serious academic work was Branislaw Tarashkyevich's *Bielaruskaja gramatyka dla škol* (*Belarusian Grammar for Schools*), printed earlier in the year 1918, in Vilnius.

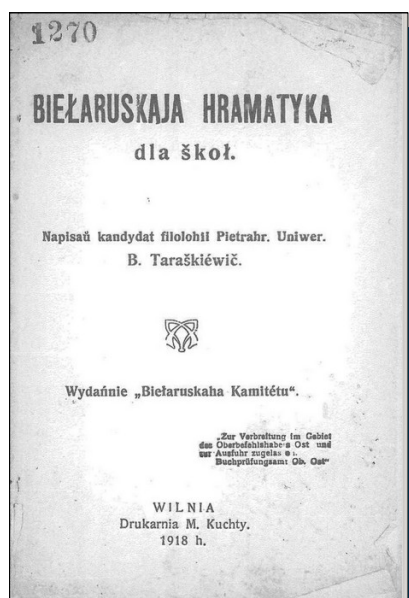


Fig. 3. *Belarusian grammar for schools* by Branislaw Tarashkyevich, Vilnius 1918

Tarashkyevich's grammar is officially recognised as the first Belarusian grammar, and it was a serious scholarly and printed edition. This grammar demonstrates a combination of scientific and educational description, as it was intended for use in schools. For this reason, it includes specially designed exercises (called, in the singular, *zadačka*) to reinforce the theoretical material and rules in practice.

The author was a social and political activist and held many positions, for example:

- in 1917, he was the secretary of the school commission (Congress of Belarusian National Organizations, Minsk, March 25–27, 1917);

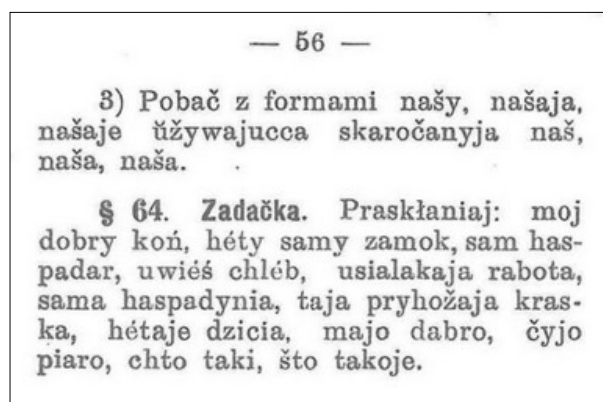


Fig. 4. An example of an exercise given after rules in Tarashkyevich's grammar

- in 1918, he was the head of the cultural and educational department of the Petrograd branch of the Belarusian National Commissariat (Belnatskam) and worked at the Minsk Pedagogical Institute, where he also taught Belarusian language and literature;
- in 1922, he was appointed director of the Belarusian Gymnasium in Vilnius, where he taught Latin and the history of the Belarusian language;
- he was also an initiator of the Society of the Belarusian School – the most influential cultural and educational organization in Western Belarus [see: Rusak (ed.) 2023].

Tarashkyevich was very engaged in what today is also the focus of glottodidactics: the creation of learning materials, ensuring appropriate conditions for the educational process, and managing the influence of language and educational policy on the processes of learning, including language learning. Here is a fragment of his report on the activities of the cultural and educational department of the Petrograd branch of the Belarusian National Commissariat that he headed, which he wrote by hand in Russian in 1918:

One of the main tasks of the cultural and educational department is the publication of school textbooks and teaching aids. This task, in terms of creating and revising textbooks in the spirit of the needs and worldview of the working people, has already been largely accomplished. Considerable materials have already been col-

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lected and prepared for printing. Some of the textbooks have already been published, but due to a lack of funds, this work was suspended.

In the near future, the cultural and educational department will open the Belarusian National University, with various departments, in the working districts of Petrograd. Support and assistance have been promised by the Commissioner of the Northern Commune. Teaching staff is available. It is believed that this work will develop broadly and productively, especially since among the Belarusian masses in Petrograd (up to 300,000 people), there is a great thirst for knowledge and a desire for learning.

For the proper establishment of the Belarusian school, a project for Belarusian pedagogical courses has been developed.

In addition, it is planned to open a number of literacy schools, people's houses and clubs, clubs for proletarian youth, libraries, etc.

However, it goes without saying that the implementation of this plan requires funds, which are currently completely lacking. [Rusak (ed.) 2023: 14]

Taraskyevich can therefore be regarded not only as the author of the first modern Belarusian grammar,

but also as a figure who laid the foundation for Belarusian education and Belarusian general (glotto) didactics.

After World War II, there was a wave of emigration of Belarusians to the West, for instance, to Germany, England, and the USA. Initiatives in émigré education would require a separate extensive description, but at least one name should be mentioned here. In the 1970s, Valentyna Pashkievich published two parts of a textbook for learning the Belarusian language: *Fundamental Byelorussian* [Pashkievich 1974, 1978].

Initially, these books were intended for the children of Belarusian emigrants in Canada, but they soon also became a basis in North America for teaching Belarusian to foreigners [see: Barysenka 2017]. This was one of the first impulses for the development of this branch of specialized Belarusian glottodidactics.

In the 1990s, the development of this field was taken up by Lidia Syamyeshka at the Faculty of Philology of the Belarusian State University, along with her colleagues, including Viktoryya Lyashuk, Hyeorhiy Chakhowski, and others [see more Kaleta 2019]. This orientation was also developed at the Minsk



Fig. 5. Selected works by Valentyna Pashkievich

State Linguistic University (see works by Volha Barysyenka, Larysa Knysh, Aksana Syemyankyevich). Within the field of foreign Belarusian glottodidactics (to mention just a few facts), significant contributions were made by former and current Belarusian and Polish staff of the Department of Belarusian Studies, which has existed at the University of Warsaw since 1956 and has been engaged in glottodidactics, even before beginning to use this term (the term officially appeared in the name of the Laboratory in 2015, as previously mentioned) [see more Kaleta 2018: 96–97]. For more information on Polish academic and teaching centres see Siwek 2021. In the USA, linguist Curt Woolhiser perfected his Belarusian and began to teach it, then Jenya Mironava from Harvard University; in Lithuania, Liliya Plyhawka did significant work, in Japan, Shiori Kiyosawa helped prepare a Belarusian coursebook for Japanese students, along with a number of other committed Belarusianists. Thanks to various researchers, teachers, and enthusiastic glottodidacticians, the necessary task of promoting the Belarusian language, even under difficult conditions, still remains possible. The example of Tarashkyevich's dedication and biography can serve as a great inspiration here.

### The Latest Achievements in Belarusian Glottodidactics

So far, Belarusian glottodidactics focused on BFL has been developing successfully even without the financial (or state) support that it needs. Between 1994 and 2019, at least 138 academic works on BFL were published [Kaleta 2020], and between 2018 and 2023, about 152 [Kaleta 2023]. Between 1973 and 2017, around 55 textbooks and various teaching aids were published. Below, some examples of monographs, scholarly dissertations, and textbooks of recent years, from among the vast number of publications, will be briefly mentioned.

The first monograph on this topic was *Errorology in Belarusian Glottodidactics*, published in Polish in Warsaw in 2018 [Kaleta 2018]. This book analyzes the theoretical foundations of Belarusian glottodidactics

and the mistakes made by Poles learning Belarusian. A year earlier, in 2017, the theses (author's abstract) of Liliya Plyhawka's dissertation was published in Belarusian at Belarusian State University for the doctoral degree in Philology: *Belarusian Language in the Multicultural Region of the Republic of Lithuania: History, Current Status, and Development Trends* [Plyhaŭka 2017]. In this work, the author also addressed Belarusian both as a native and as a foreign language (the topic is broad, so it is difficult to classify this work as being entirely a typical BFL publication). It is a detailed analysis of Belarusian language teaching in Lithuania as the language of the Belarusian ethnic group, combining sociocultural and linguistic aspects and undoubtedly contributing to the preservation and promotion of Belarusian outside Belarus [cf. Plyhaŭka 2017: 6].



Fig. 6. Two publications by L. Plyhawka and R. Kaleta

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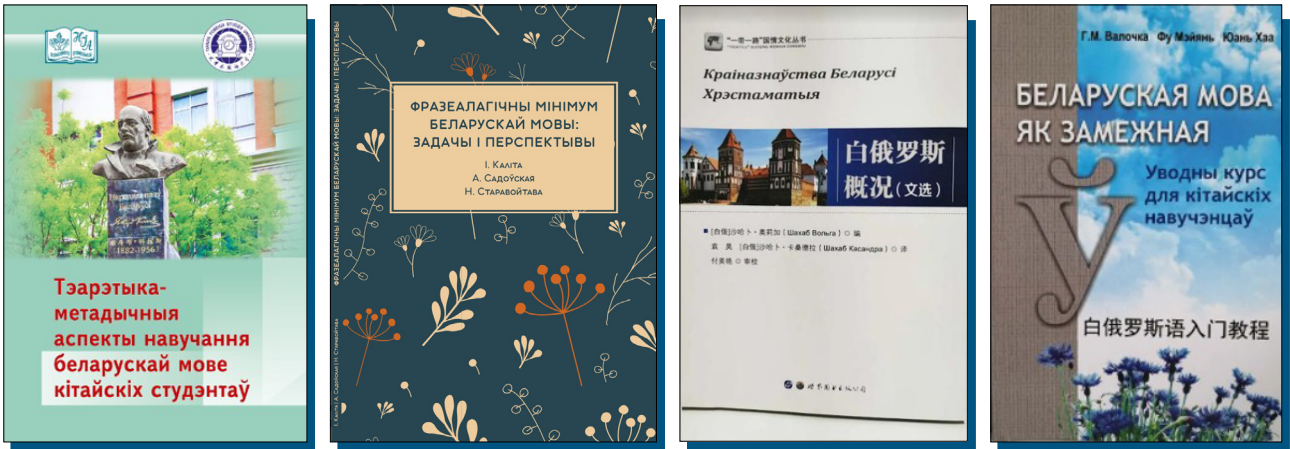


Fig. 7. Some further monographs on BFL

In 2021, some further academic monographs were published in Belarusian: *Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Teaching Belarusian to Chinese*

*Students* [Valočka et al. 2021] and *The Phraseological Minimum of the Belarusian Language: Tasks and Perspectives* [Kalita, Sadoŭskaja, Staravojtava 2021].



Fig. 8. Selected teaching materials on BFL for Chinese learners

The teaching of Belarusian as a foreign language in China is developing very rapidly [see *Kitajskija belarusaznaŭcy...*]. Among others, for Chinese learners, in 2020, an introductory course entitled *Belarusian Language as a Foreign Language: Introductory Course for Chinese Students* [see Valočka, Fu Mèjjan, Juan' Xaa 2020] and a *Reader in Belarusian Studies* were prepared “to form an objective understanding of Belarus as a state and its economic, scientific, and cultural relations” [see Šaxab 2020]. In 2021, a beginner-level textbook *Belarusian Language for Chinese Students. Beginner Level* was published [Sjameška 2021]; in 2022, it was followed by a reading textbook entitled *Belarusian as a Foreign Language: Reading Manual for Chinese Students* [Valočka et al. 2022]; and, in 2023, an audio textbook *Belarusian as a Foreign Language: Listening Manual* [Šaxab et al. 2023]. In 2024, *Belarusian. Audio Practice* [Barysenka, Pryhun, Juj Juan' 2024], a practical course in BFL for Chinese students, was published.

In today's conditions, teaching Belarusian as a foreign language inside Belarus functions almost exclusively in cooperation with China and for Chinese students. In the Belarusian diaspora, however, two main tendencies have emerged:

1. Education within the Belarusian emigrant community (for example in Poland, Lithuania, the USA), aimed at maintaining and transmitting the Belarusian language.<sup>3</sup>
2. Teaching Belarusian to foreigners, which also helps Belarusians themselves see that their language is a full-fledged, internationally teachable language like any other.

Both of these areas present challenges.

<sup>3</sup> The indigenous Belarusian minorities are a special case. For instance, in Podlasie region (Poland) pupils in schools generally speak the local transitional Belarusian-Ukrainian dialects and/or Polish as their first language. This group, which should be distinguished from the emigrant community, presents special challenges from the standpoint of Belarusian glottodidactics [cf. Kaleta 2022].

## New Cha(lle)nges in Belarusian Glottodidactics

The Laboratory of Belarusian Glottodidactics, mentioned above, focuses primarily on theoretical and practical issues related to teaching Belarusian as a foreign language, since the students of the Department of Belarusian Studies are mainly foreigners from Poland and other countries (there were also individual students from Russia, Lithuania, and Spain). In 2024, a Chinese student living in Paris, who teaches French, applied to the PhD programme for the coming academic year; she had become acquainted with Belarusians and wanted to dedicate her dissertation to language issues within the Belarusian diaspora. After 2020–2021, more and more Belarusians in emigration have been enrolling in the department, which has necessitated an expansion of the Laboratory's research scope. Life presents new conditions and challenges, and glottodidactics has the opportunity to develop and adapt to these circumstances. Therefore, the Laboratory of Belarusian Glottodidactics has been dealing with a shift from detailed Belarusian glottodidactics, focused solely on foreigners, to the broader perspective of general Belarusian glottodidactics.

2020 and 2022 were pivotal years for Belarus, and they had significant consequences for many Belarusians who left the country and became part of the Belarusian diaspora in various countries. In this context, the role of Belarusian studies and the place of glottodidactics within them has taken on a new dimension. It is necessary to think seriously and begin developing new approaches to teaching and learning Belarusian—not only as a native/primary or foreign language, but also as an inherited language. This should be reflected both in theory and in practice, because there is still a lack of prepared glottodidactic materials adapted to specific target groups.

One such group is Belarusians of the new diaspora (adults and children), who were forced to leave Belarus after the events of 2020–2021 and 2022, and who, while living abroad, wish to improve their

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Belarusian language skills, maintain their proficiency, strengthen their sense of Belarusian identity, and continue Belarusian-language education.

At the same time, there is a growing group of non-Belarusians: foreigners (students, graduate students, philologists, researchers, and other specialists) who study Belarusian for educational, academic, or professional purposes.

This poses a challenge, as the children of emigrants are already exposed to multilingualism. They begin attending school in the country they have arrived in (or were born in after their parents left Belarus). Belarusians may also enter mixed families in the new country, and in such cases, their children grow up with two languages at home, not necessarily including Belarusian, which they often have to learn through separate private lessons. Since Belarusian emigration has been large-scale, in addition to existing strategies for the development and preservation of the Belarusian language, a strategy for teaching Belarusian in the diaspora, along with more systematic support, would be highly beneficial. In this context, glottodidactic research serves as a foundation, and is of major significance in connection with the mass Belarusian emigration.

### Concluding Remarks

This article has demonstrated that glottodidactics refers to more than simply teaching and learning the Belarusian language. It also involves creating glottodidactic materials based on the latest scientific findings about how the brain functions, and includes the study of processes that take place in the brain during language instruction. The field also concerns the training of teachers for new generations who have different habits and expectations compared to those of language learners from 20 years ago [cf. Radaev 2022]. There is also the question of the role of the teacher today, in the age of new technologies including artificial intelligence. Glottodidactics also involves the role of culture, history, and literature in the process of language teaching and learning, the role of

the strategies and methods of teaching, and many other smaller aspects.

It also involves factors such as student motivation, passivity, and active engagement in language learning, especially when motivation is lacking or steadily declining. In the case of the Belarusian language, it also concerns language prestige as an important factor shaping users' attitudes, influenced by historical, political, and ideological conditions, and perpetuated by the pro-Russian Belarusian authorities through Soviet-era policies that were applied to ethnic and national languages other than Russian. It also involves stereotypes about the language, and even misinformation—highlighting the impact of language policy on the popularity of learning the language. Myths and stereotypes in this area are very common. They create a continuing challenge with regard to securing external funding for new publications and projects, both in Belarusian studies generally and Belarusian glottodidactics. However, it takes time to change old habits.

This is why the significance of Belarusian glottodidactics is so great, especially given that the language does not enjoy popularity in Belarusian schools for political reasons. Teaching it abroad, among the Belarusian diaspora and foreign learners, gives Belarusian an apolitical character. Belarusian becomes once again a language used as a tool for communication rather than an ideological issue grounded in historical and political premises. Therefore, Belarusian glottodidactics presents a way to give the language a second chance, to renew it, ensuring its survival and development.

The promotion of Belarusian glottodidactics also indirectly contributes to changing perceptions of the language, fostering a new perspective among both Belarusians themselves and foreigners. The shift in how the Ukrainian language has been perceived by Ukrainians since 2022 is also relevant here, although it was driven by non-linguistic factors. Glottodidactics provides an opportunity for a peaceful change in the global attitude toward Belarusian.

The involvement of foreigners, who do not carry Belarusian linguistic complexes, plays a significant

role. Equally important are the involvement of foreign scholars of Belarusian studies, their interest in the language, and the engagement of foreign (non-Belarusian) Belarusian language teachers—through international Belarusian glottodidactics—who can showcase new trends and serve as inspiration for Belarusian colleagues as well.

Glottodidactics holds an important and promising place within Belarusian studies and has already developed its own history. When a language is taught, even to foreigners, when a certification exam for different proficiency levels is created – allowing learners to obtain an official language certificate (for instance, the University of Warsaw has developed its own BFL exam and issues certificates to students) – and when textbooks and curricula continue to be published, all this enhances the language's prestige and promotes it internationally. It sends a strong message to both the world and Belarusians themselves: the language is alive, developing, and gaining visibility. This is a form of cultural diplomacy that benefits the Belarusian people.

Such developments can motivate Belarusians to return to everyday use of their language, overcome linguistic shame, barriers and stereotypes, and challenge the ideology surrounding language. Globalisation, migration, diplomacy, the positive attitudes of foreigners, cultural trends and other (extra)linguistic factors may also support the revitalisation of Belarusian and thus help preserve Belarusian identity and culture, and the future of Belarus.

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