

INTERACTIVE METHODS IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A SYNERGY OF PEDAGOGY AND DIGITAL TOOLS FOR B1-B2 LEVELS

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Abstract.: The article investigates the pressing issue of enhancing the effectiveness of communicative competence formation among students learning Russian as a foreign language (RFL) at the intermediate and upper-intermediate (B1-B2) levels. The relevance of the study is driven by the contemporary demands of the globalized labor market and academic environment, which require not only linguistic proficiency but also a high degree of soft skills development for successful professional and social integration. The primary aim of this work is to comprehensively analyze, systematize, and practically evaluate modern interactive pedagogical methods and digital educational tools that, in combination, facilitate the development of a holistic set of competencies. As a result of the empirical study, an integrated pedagogical framework was identified and validated. This framework synergistically combines methodologically diverse approaches, including role-playing games, project-based learning, educational debates, and the case study method, all seamlessly integrated with a suite of digital platforms (Moodle, Trello, Zoom, Kahoot, and Quizlet). The research concludes that the deliberate combination of these interactive strategies and technological tools generates a synergistic effect, creating an immersive, student-centered educational environment that accurately simulates real-life communication scenarios. Special emphasis is placed on the principles of adaptability, flexibility, and facilitation within the learning process, which are crucial for catering to diverse student needs and resource constraints. The findings offer a practical model for modernizing the RFL curriculum.

Keywords: Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL), communicative competence, interactive methods, digital educational technologies, blended learning, soft skills, B1-B2 levels, project-based learning, role-playing games, student motivation.

Introduction

The paradigm of higher education in the 21st century has shifted from the mere transmission of knowledge to the formation of universal competencies. Modern requirements for university graduates extend beyond functional literacy in a foreign language to encompass a robust set of "soft skills" or "power skills," such as critical and systems thinking, effective teamwork, project management, cross-cultural communication, and rhetorical agility [1, p. 45]. For students of Russian as a foreign language, this implies the ability to use language not as an abstract

system of rules, but as a flexible and dynamic tool for solving real-world professional and social tasks. Traditional methods of teaching RFL, which often prioritize grammatical accuracy, text translation, and receptive skills (listening and reading comprehension) through audiolingual or grammar-translation approaches, frequently fail to create conditions for the development of spontaneous, authentic speech and adaptive behavior in non-standard communicative situations. This gap becomes particularly evident at the B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage) levels, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). At these stages, learners are expected to transition from surviving in a language environment to thriving within it, engaging in detailed discussions, and expressing viewpoints on abstract topics. Consequently, there is an acute need to introduce and systematize pedagogical methods that move beyond simulated dialogues and actively immerse students in authentic or near-authentic communication conditions. This research posits that a deliberate integration of proven interactive methods with contemporary digital tools can effectively bridge this gap, transforming the language classroom into a dynamic laboratory for communication.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in the principles of the communicative approach (Safonova V.V., Passov E.I.), which positions communication as both the ultimate goal and the primary means of language acquisition [2]. This approach argues that learning is most effective when students are engaged in meaningful interaction to achieve a specific objective, rather than merely manipulating linguistic forms. Furthermore, the activity-based approach, central to post-Soviet linguodidactics, emphasizes the importance of goal-oriented, problem-solving tasks that mirror real human activities, thereby ensuring deeper cognitive engagement [3]. In the realm of digital pedagogy, the works of Stanley G. and Hockly N. provide significant insights into the effective blending of technology with language teaching [4, 5]. Their research demonstrates how digital tools can facilitate collaboration, personalize learning, and provide access to authentic materials and audiences. Existing scholarly works confirm the high motivational potential of interactive methods such as games and projects [6]. However, a critical review of the literature reveals a notable research gap: while many studies explore these methods in isolation or in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, there is a scarcity of research on their systemic integration and synergistic application specifically for teaching Russian at the B1-B2 levels. Moreover, the question of how to effectively tailor these methods to the specific socio-cultural and institutional contexts of universities in Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan, with their unique opportunities and constraints (e.g., internet accessibility, cultural norms of communication), remains significantly understudied. This study aims to contribute to filling this gap.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this research is based on a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical practice. The study employed methods of

analysis, synthesis, and generalization of modern pedagogical concepts, followed by their practical application and observation. The empirical part of the study was conducted over the academic year 2023-2024 at the Department of Uzbek and Russian Philology of Bukhara University. The study involved 60 students aged 19-21, divided into two experimental groups at the B1 and B2 proficiency levels.

The research implemented a structured set of interactive methods, each chosen for its specific contribution to communicative competence:

1. Role-playing games: These were designed to simulate professional and everyday scenarios requiring spontaneous speech. Scenarios included "Job Interview at a Russian Company," "Organizing an International Conference," "Resolving a Cross-Cultural Misunderstanding," and "Business Negotiations on a Joint Venture." Preparation involved providing key lexical units and cultural notes, but the discourse itself was generated by the students.

2. Project-based learning: Students worked in small teams (3-4 people) over 4-6 weeks to create collaborative end-products. Topics were aligned with the students' core majors and included creating a "Business Plan for a Start-Up in the CIS Market," producing a "Podcast Series on Uzbek-Russian Cultural Relations," and developing a "Multimedia Presentation on a Scientific Discovery from a Russian-speaking Scientist." This method aimed to develop long-term teamwork, research, and digital literacy skills.

3. Educational debates: Structured debates on provocative topics ("Artificial Intelligence Will Make Language Learning Obsolete," "Globalization Threatens National Cultural Identities") were used primarily with B2-level students. This method forced participants to quickly process information, formulate coherent arguments, defend their position, and rebut opponents, thereby honing persuasive and critical thinking skills.

4. Case study method: Students analyzed complex, real-life situations, such as a case on "Marketing a Uzbek Product in Russia: Overcoming Cultural and Linguistic Barriers." This required them to identify problems, discuss solutions, and propose strategies, applying their language skills to a concrete professional problem. Digital integration was a core component. The following platforms were utilized: Moodle: Served as the central hub for hosting course materials, assignment briefs, deadlines, and for submitting final projects. Trello: Was introduced for project management, allowing student teams to organize tasks, assign responsibilities, track progress, and manage timelines visually.

Zoom: Used for conducting remote debate sessions and for guest lectures from native speakers. Kahoot! and Quizlet: Employed for gamified vocabulary quizzes and grammar revision sessions to reinforce lexical-grammatical material in an engaging manner. Google Docs/Sheets: Facilitated real-time collaborative writing and data collection for group projects, especially useful in conditions of unstable internet connectivity. Data was collected through qualitative observation, analysis of student-produced materials, and anonymous feedback surveys to gauge student engagement and perceived learning outcomes.

Results and Discussion
The implementation of the described methodological complex yielded significant positive results, observed through increased student engagement, improved quality of oral and written production, and positive feedback.

1. Role-playing games proved exceptionally effective in reducing the language barrier and building communicative confidence. Students demonstrated a marked improvement in their ability to use situation-specific vocabulary appropriately. More importantly, they began to

develop strategic competence—using paraphrase and circumlocution to compensate for lexical gaps. The variety of scenarios ensured that students were exposed to registers ranging from formal professional communication to informal interpersonal dialogue.

2. Project-based activities had the most profound impact on developing soft skills. The longitudinal nature of the projects fostered not just teamwork, but true collaboration, conflict resolution, and project management skills. The requirement to create a tangible product (e.g., a podcast) provided a clear sense of purpose and achievement, significantly boosting intrinsic motivation. The integration of multimedia elements catered to diverse learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) and allowed students to showcase creativity. The facilitator's role evolved into that of a consultant, guiding teams through challenges rather than directing them.

3. Debates and case studies emerged as the pinnacle of practical application for B2-level learners. These methods demanded a high level of linguistic and cognitive processing. Debates sharpened students' ability to structure arguments logically and respond to counterarguments spontaneously. Case studies deepened their ability to analyze complex information, identify key issues, and propose viable, linguistically articulated solutions. These activities most closely mirrored the intellectual demands of a real-world academic or professional environment.

4. The technological component was a decisive success factor, though its implementation required adaptability. While platforms like Zoom and Kahoot! were highly engaging, the study confirmed the importance of a flexible approach. In instances of bandwidth limitations, the use of asynchronous tools like Google Docs became invaluable, ensuring that collaboration could continue outside the classroom without interruption. This highlights a crucial principle for modern educators: technology should be a servant to pedagogy, not its master. The choice of tool must be dictated by learning objectives and contextual constraints.

A central finding was the critical role of the instructor as a facilitator and creator of a supportive environment. The effectiveness of interactive methods hinges on a classroom culture where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities. Providing timely, constructive feedback was essential for growth. Furthermore, the instructor's willingness to adapt content based on student interests—for example, delving deeper into a topic that sparked unexpected enthusiasm—proved key to maintaining high levels of engagement and personalizing the learning journey.

Conclusion

The conducted research and its subsequent analysis demonstrate that the isolated use of interactive methods, while beneficial, is insufficient for the comprehensive formation of communicative competence in the modern educational landscape. The greatest effectiveness is achieved through the systemic and synergistic integration of a diverse array of interactive methods—specifically role-playing games, project-based learning, educational debates, and case studies—with a carefully selected suite of digital tools.

This integrated approach creates a rich, immersive, and student-centered educational environment that transcends the traditional boundaries of the language classroom. It successfully simulates the complexities and unpredictability of real-

life communication, thereby preparing B1-B2 level RFL students not just to pass exams, but to effectively use the Russian language as a functional tool in their future academic and

professional careers. The approach simultaneously develops crucial soft skills, making graduates more adaptable and competitive.

The study also underscores the importance of pedagogical flexibility and contextual adaptation. The proposed model is not a rigid prescription but a framework that can and should be tailored to the specific resources, student profiles, and cultural contexts of different educational institutions. Future research could focus on quantitatively measuring the impact of this integrated approach on specific linguistic sub-skills and conducting longitudinal studies to track the professional success of graduates who were taught using this methodology.

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