

«A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE: FROM REPRODUCTIVE RULE MEMORIZATION TO REAL-WORLD COMMUNICATION»

Murodkhodzhaeva Malika Alisherovna

Department of Russian Language and Literature

Non-State Educational Institution

University of Economics and Pedagogy

Faculty of Foreign Languages

Malikamurodxodjayeval797@gmail.com

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Abstract.

The article addresses the problem of transforming the methodological system of teaching Russian as a non-native language (RNL) within the framework of the competency-based approach. The author analyzes the factors underlying the inefficiency of the traditional knowledge-centered model focused on the rote memorization of grammatical rules and proposes systemic solutions for transitioning to a communicative-activity paradigm. The key components of communicative competence are described, and the roles of interactive methods, authentic materials, and situational modeling are substantiated. The study provides a comprehensive set of methodological conditions that ensure the development of learners' capacity for real-world speech interaction.

Keywords: Russian as a non-native language, competency-based approach, communicative competence, speech activity, interactive methods, linguodidactics.

Introduction

The current stage of development in linguodidactics is characterized by the definitive consolidation of the competency-based approach as the leading methodological platform. In general pedagogical terms, this approach marks a transition from the transmission of isolated knowledge to the formation of integrated personal capacities [9, p. 59]. In teaching Russian as a non-native language (RNL), this implies shifting the focus from the passive accumulation of theoretical data about the linguistic system (*the knowledge component*) to fostering learners' readiness to effectively utilize the language in diverse everyday and professional situations (*the activity component*).

However, a profound contradiction persists in the actual practice of teaching RNL in secondary and higher education institutions. Students frequently demonstrate high performance on standard lexical and grammatical tests (showing knowledge of declension, conjugation, and syntactic structures) yet remain helpless in situations of spontaneous speech communication. "Grammatical dogmatism" and reproductive forms of work stunt the development of the linguistic persona. Consequently, there is an urgent need to design a scientifically grounded methodological trajectory that ensures an effective transition from memorizing abstract rules to fluid, adaptive communication within the new educational outcome paradigm.

Traditional and Reproductive Methods in RFL Teaching.

Within the context of linguodidactics, the competency-based approach relies on the concept of communicative competence developed in the foundational works of researchers from the domestic school of Russian as a Foreign Language (RFI). In the conceptual framework of modern methodology, communicative competence is defined as the ability to perform speech activity by means of the target language in accordance with the goals and situations of



communication [1, p. 104]. Its structure traditionally encompasses several interconnected sub-competences:

Linguistic (language) competence — knowledge of language units (phonemes, lexemes, grammatical forms) and the rules governing their operation .

Speech (pragmatic) competence — the ability to construct coherent utterances in four types of speech activity (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) adequately matching the goals of communication.

Sociocultural competence — command of the national and cultural specificities governing the speech behavior of native speakers, ensuring the deep integration of the non-native speaker into the language environment.

The traditional approach overemphasizes the importance of linguistic competence, treating it as an end in itself. Conversely, the competency-based approach asserts the subordinate status of grammar: rules are merely tools or "building blocks," whereas the ultimate objective is solving a communicative task in real time.

Barriers to Transitioning from Rules to Communication

The transition from the traditional knowledge-centered model of language teaching to the modern competency-based communicative approach represents a profound transformation of the entire educational paradigm which inevitably faces serious psychological and methodological obstacles.

The main barrier lies in the perception of errors because in the classical system any mistake is treated as an object of rigid control and immediate punishment which breeds a fear of speaking and forms a persistent language barrier whereas the communicative approach views an error merely as a natural indicator of the learning process and a signal for gentle adjustment that does not require interrupting the flow of live speech. Another major difference lies in the very unit of instruction since the traditional method relies on memorizing isolated lexemes and artificial sentences detached from reality while the modern model immerses the student in coherent text discourse and authentic speech situations where language is absorbed in its natural context.

The very position of the learner also changes moving from a passive object who mechanically memorizes ready-made algorithms and rules to an active subject of communication who is forced to independently make choices during a live dialogue and promptly react to the interlocutor's remarks.

This entails a change in the nature of exercises where purely reproductive tasks like filling in blanks and opening brackets are replaced by productive and quasi-productive formats such as case studies role-plays and simulations of real-life situations where the main goal becomes successfully solving a communicative task rather than demonstrating knowledge of rules.

The transition process is further complicated by the professional inertia of teachers who find it difficult to give up the role of the sole source of knowledge to become discussion moderators as well as by the habit of the students themselves to measure their success by the number of notebooks filled with rules rather than by actual fluency of speech.

Methodological Strategies for Activating Communication

To restructure the process of RNL instruction and elevate learners to the level of actual language proficiency, it is necessary to implement a suite of interconnected strategies described in the practical courses of modern linguodidactics.

1. Functional Approach to Grammar. The study of grammatical forms must proceed from intention to form (e.g., "Learning to express an instrument of action or a profession: *писать ручкой* [to write with a pen], *работать врачом* [to work as a doctor]") rather than from form to meaning (e.g., "Studying the Instrumental case"). The learner must understand *what communicative problem* a specific grammatical category solves. In this framework, the rule is presented implicitly (via speech patterns) or through concise cognitive charts that minimize complex linguistic terminology.



2. Transition to Situational-Thematic Modeling. Every utterance must originate within the context of an activity. Classroom sessions should construct quasi-real speech situations (at a store, at the dean's office, at a doctor's appointment, or during a job interview). It is crucial to design an information gap: situations where one participant in a dialogue possesses information that the other must extract using available language resources.

3. Implementation of Interactive Technologies. Teaching communication is impossible within the framework of frontal "teacher-group" work. Priority is given to group and pair work formats. Among the most effective methods are:

Case Method: analyzing a real-life problem situation (e.g., "A conflict in a student dormitory") and developing solutions in Russian.

Role-Plays and Business Games: distributing social roles (seller-buyer, employer-applicant) within loosely structured yet guided scenarios.

Project Work: creating a tangible product (a presentation, a guidebook, a video clip) by micro-groups, where the Russian language serves as the tool for coordinating efforts.

4. Utilization of Authentic and Semi-Authentic Materials. Memorizing artificial texts from older textbooks instills an archaically "literary" speech style in non-native speakers, which can elicit a sense of estrangement from native speakers in everyday life. The educational environment should be saturated with living language: announcements, social media posts, fragments of modern podcasts, blogs, interactive maps, and instant messengers. The skill of reading the pragmatic context (e.g., understanding irony or speech etiquette in chat rooms) is critically important for adaptation to a Russian-speaking environment.

Results and Discussion

The experience of implementing these strategies indicates that shifting the emphasis toward communicative activity fundamentally alters the dynamics of linguistic persona development, increasing the psychological readiness of non-native learners for spontaneous speech interaction.

Simultaneously, a debate arises within the scientific and methodological community: does a complete abandonment of rigid rule memorization lead to the "pidginization" of speech, where communication is achieved at the cost of gross grammatical violations? The competency-based approach does not reject grammar; rather, it changes the chronology of its introduction. A rule should follow communicative experience as a means of systematizing and correcting an already initiated speech action, rather than preceding it. The balance between fluency and accuracy is achieved through delayed correction techniques, where errors are noted by the instructor during a game or discussion but are analyzed separately at the end of the class session.

Conclusion

The transition from reproductive rule memorization to real-world communication within the competency-based approach demands a conceptual restructuring of the educator's pedagogical mindset. The successful execution of this model requires:

- Rejection of excessive theorization in favor of functional linguistics;
- Modeling a natural speech environment in the classroom through interactive methods;
- Overhauling the assessment system, where the primary criterion of success becomes a resolved communicative task (whether the goal of the dialogue has been achieved).

Developing RNL linguodidactics along this vector will allow for the effective training of specialists and the adaptation of non-native speakers, enabling them to engage in full-fledged, flexible, and productive dialogue in a multicultural space.



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