

**DARIA LAGUTINA SARIYILDIZ****Hacettepe University, Graduate School of Foreign languages, Turkey****DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS OF TURKEY****Abstract:**

The influence of Russia on the worlds' political arena and global economy led to dynamic integration of Russian language into the world community. Russian language holds a particularly important place among the foreign languages taught in the higher educational establishments of Turkey. The main challenge of teaching Russian is developing students' communication competence. In this regard, we believe that the most effective method is interactive teaching, with the following tools: a) maps, slides, multimedia, modern computer and Internet programs as means of implementation of communicative situations in the classroom; b) communicative games.

When using modern effective technologies of interactive learning high motivation, focus, verbal activity, personal interest is observed among students at high level of all communication functions. A peculiar feature of interactive learning is teacher's attitude towards a student not as an object but an equal partner of the learning process. In this respect teacher should master numerous and diverse technologies of communicative education.

Modern educational technologies considered in this study promote students' communicative competence, enhance students' motivation and thus, optimize learning process. The use of interactive technologies for teaching Russian makes lesson entertaining and truly modern. Such formation of educational activity plays an important role in the development of the communicative competence of foreign students, promotes development of their speech capabilities, develops an interest in the Russian language and Russian culture.

**Keywords:**

Russian language, educational technologies, communicative competence, interactive methods.

**JEL Classification:** I23, I20

The position of Russia at the global stage and its influence on the global economy has led to the dynamic integration of the Russian language into the world community. Russian language holds a particularly important place among the foreign languages taught in the higher educational establishments of Turkey, and interest of the students to it is constantly growing. Russian is popular among the students due to substantial economic, political, business and cultural relations between Russia and Turkey which existed for a long time and have recently entered a new phase. Eagerness of Turkish students to choose Russian as a foreign language is also affected by the fact that many of the descendants of Circassians, Tatars and other nations who used to live in Russia, but then emigrated to the territory of modern Turkey, still live there.

The main goal of teaching any foreign language, and Russian particularly, is the formation of communicative competence of the students. "Communicative competence is sometimes determined as the capability of personality "to implement linguistic competence in various situations of speech communication"<sup>1</sup>, but recently it has started to be more often referred to as communicative-speech competence necessary "for achievement of concrete goals and performing various types of speech activity in communicative situations"<sup>2</sup>.

In the level system determining a student's command of Russian as a foreign language (A1 – C2) commonly accepted in Europe<sup>3</sup>, each level is characterized by a set of certain communicative skills. In our research we shall dwell upon formation of communicative competence of the students studying Russian as a foreign language in Hacettepe University, Ankara (Turkey). Due to the specific character of academic activity in our university – while the number of second foreign language classes is small – we shall consider the formation of communicative competence of our students of A1 – B1 level.

We suppose interactive training to be the most effective. "Interactive training is first of all dialogue practice which includes interaction of the professor and the student. In the core of the concept of this technique lies the understanding of social interaction of individuals in interpersonal communication, the most important characteristic of which is considered to be an individual's capability to accept the role of the other and imagine in what way he is perceived by the partner in communication"<sup>4</sup>. The effective means of interactive training may be:

a) **training communicative situations**, in simulation of which we work with maps, slides, computer software and internet applications.

b) **training games**.

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<sup>1</sup> Schukin A.N. Lingvodidactic encyclopedic dictionary. Moscow/Astrel, 2007. P.109.

<sup>2</sup> Lazareva O.A. The socio-cultural significance of communicative speech competence. Pedagogical education in Russia. FGBOU VPO, Ural, State Pedagogical University, 2011. № 3

<sup>3</sup> Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment. Department of Language Policy, Strasbourg.

<sup>4</sup> Passov E.I. The concept of communicative foreign language education: handbook for Russian language teachers. Moscow, 2007. P. 145.

## 1. Training communicative situations

“Regularly and deliberately created situations play a very important role in the formation of foreign language communicative competence, since they facilitate formation of a motive and a need for a statement, help making hypotheses or suppositions, stimulate thought and draw the training process closer to the natural speech communication”<sup>5</sup>.

For example, while preparing our research we carried out a questionnaire survey among all students of Russian in Hacettepe University during spring semester of 2013/2014. Eighty one student of A1-B1 level participated in the anonymous survey. We asked the students to choose the best answer to the following statement: “The best task aimed at the development of my communicative skills is:

1) reading a dialogue and making up a dialogue according to the original model;

2) reading a dialogue and making up a dialogue according to the model close to the original one;

3) simulation of a real-life situation and making up a dialogue necessary in that situation”.

Only 4 students chose the first option, 20 students chose the second option and 57 (which equals 70%) of them chose the third option. Thus, the students themselves feel the necessity of drawing the training process closer to natural situations of communication rather than automatically fulfill tasks from the textbooks and learning guides.

Communicative situations are the situations of natural communication simulated by the professor (at the early stages of learning Russian (Level A1) on the topics “Acquaintance”, “In the street”, “In the transport”, “In a shop”, “In a cafe”, “At the university” etc.). In simulation of communicative situations at the earliest stages from the first lessons cards or photographs of various things are distributed among the students. For instance, while practicing the topic “Doing the shopping” two students participate in a dialogue playing the parts of a consumer and a shop-assistant. The “shop-assistant” gets the cards with images of clothes, fruit and vegetables or other foods. Using the previously explained theoretic material (structures “How much is ..”, “I like...”, adjectives and expressing request or wish eg. “Could I have..”, “Could you show ...”) the students make up spontaneous “live” dialogues, plunging into a situation of natural communication. According to our observations, making up a dialogue without visual materials is less active and effective, while bright cards arouse interest in all students, simulation of the situations goes in an active and entertaining manner, thus a positive attitude and of course interest to the Russian language is shaped from the very first classes.

Let us give another example from our experience with the students who have very newly started to study Russian (Level A1). While practicing the verb “to wait” and the accusative case (to wait for somebody) in the topic “Meeting” we suggest that students send SMS-messages to each other in Russian. There is nothing more natural for young people than exchanging messages in real-time mode. The message is sent not to an imaginary friend but to a classmate. In the messages the students arrange to meet each other at the cinema, at the library or in a cafe, etc. Then the

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<sup>5</sup> Djhandar B.M., Shkhatpatseva M.H. Training situation as a basis for communicative situational teaching Russian as a foreign language. Journal of Adygea State University. Series 3: Pedagogy and Psychology, 2012. № 2

messages are read aloud and the professor corrects mistakes. Here are some of the received messages: (with the spelling of the author): “Hi, I am very waiting” (in the meaning “so much”); “Hi, how are you? I am very goob. I wid wait for you in the cafe” (trying to use future tense); “Hello sir, I will be waiting for you at the university” (usage of the formal address in informal communication with a friend).

In simulation of communicative situations at higher levels of foreign language training (A2, B1) we engage city maps, computer software and Internet applications in our work. For example, for studying the topic “How could I get to...” we hand out city maps or maps print-outs to the students. Then they get the roles of a tourist and a pedestrian in the street. Using the maps (information in them) the students make up a dialogue.

Working with Internet applications seems to us to be a more up-to-date approach. If the classroom is equipped with a computer and access to the Internet – Google Maps are used. Then the final destination and the place of dialogue are entered, the route is offered, the necessary scale is chosen, and the students make up a dialogue which is close to the real-life situation of communication in the street with the support of the data of the map.

In a similar task while practicing the topics “Finding your way in a city”/“Using public transport” we distribute the maps of Moscow and St. Petersburg underground to the students. During the class they have to juxtapose them with a regular city map, choose a route and ask another “passenger” (who is also one of the students) for help.

At a higher level of Russian language learning (starting with B1) we offer a real communicative situation to our students: a call via Skype or Voipwise applications to various establishments in Russia, for example courses of Russian for foreigners. The student is supposed to call a certain organization, introduce himself/herself and ask questions including where the courses are located and using which means of transport one can get there.

Before the conversation comes the preparation: at first students form questions, then call the organization. All students in the group listen to the conversation. As a conclusion a detailed analysis of the conversation is made: whether all the questions were answered, were the answers understood by the student, and what was his reaction to the answers of the clerk on the phone.

As an example we would like to offer the task given to the students of Level B1. We suggested that they should call the information desk of two museums in Russia: the Russian Museum in Saint-Petersburg and the memorial flat of Ivan Bunin in the town of Yelets in Lipetsk region. The students were supposed to find out the working days and hours of the museums, current exhibitions, whether taking photographs is allowed, if there are guided tours in foreign languages and in which ones, and if there is a souvenir shop in the museum. While analyzing the conversation, it was considered if the student could correctly formulate the question and ask it (if the counterpart could understand him/her), if the student understood the answer and what was his reaction.

In our opinion, the calls via Skype or Voipwise applications to the establishments of the country of the studied foreign language should become an essential part of the classes. The practice like that does not only make the classes more expressive and entertaining, but owing to it the main goal of teaching foreign language is achieved –the student becomes a part of a real-life spontaneous communicative situation with a native speaker instead of a learning situation which is easily foreseen. Without doubt, practice like that is very helpful but the teacher should very carefully approach the choice of places to call. The least of all we would like the first communication experience of a student with a native speaker to be negative. That

is why we suggest that the students should call the organizations where the employees are used to deal with foreigners: courses of Russian as a foreign language, universities and of course information desks of museums and theaters.

## 2. Training games.

Practice shows that games in a classroom with Turkish students are usually very active. The peculiarities of national mentality and temperament of Turks, such as openness, hot temper and striving for healthy competition, increase the efficiency of the training game even more. According to our observations, games in the classroom help even the shyest students to overcome the language barrier.

Let us look again at our questionnaire survey among the students who studied Russian in Hacettepe University in the spring semester of 2013/2014. Eighty one students participated in the survey. Thus, 80 % of the participants noted that during training games in the classroom they feel greater interest to studying Russian, 65 % stated that games help them to grasp new lexical and grammatical material, 67 % of the participants stressed that games in the classroom relieve the psychological load, and that while participating in the collective games in the classroom it is easier for them to communicate in Russian with other students during the class. And 42 % of the participants noted that while playing games in the classroom they loose the fear of making a mistake (to be fair we have to state that 41 % of the students had not had that fear at all).

Let us consider several of the games most frequently used by us in the classroom. As in our work we generally address the students of the beginner level of learning Russian, here we shall dwell upon several simple but very useful games.

1) "Auction". The structure of the game comes from its name. An "auction" is held in the class, where the professor plays the role of the "auctioneer", and "the prices" are offered by the students. The "price" is a word related to the topic offered by the auctioneer, e.g. "classroom", "family", "street" etc. At higher levels the topics can be more complicated and modified. The students name the words on the topic, the auctioneer counts to three after each of them. Like in a real auction, the winner says the last word.

2) "Museum gallery". The game offered by us is based on the paintings by Russian artists from Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. The students are split into two groups. The groups are given two same sets of cards with the paintings by Russian artists. The task of the first team to describe the painting, the other team should guess which painting is meant. The description lasts for one minute. The team that guessed more paintings wins. This game is especially good at the beginner level of learning Russian (A1): the students cannot give a full detailed description of a person or object portrayed in the painting, e.g. "a girl in a red shawl" or "a girl in a beautiful long dress on a black horse" etc. The students name words or word combinations, adequate to their knowledge of Russian language at the current level, for instance: "yellow", "forest", "blue sea", "beautiful girl", "coat", "small dog". As soon as the team guesses the painting, professor shows the painting on the computer screen and gives brief information – its name, name of the artist, the year of its creation. Thus, games with a substantial socio-cultural component may be used even at the early stages of learning Russian language.

Judging by our work experience we may state that the usage of interactive teaching techniques increases the performance and helps develop communicative competence of foreign students. The main part is played by the professor who sees

the student not as an object, but as a full-fledged partner of the learning process and who should manage numerous and various techniques of communicative education.

Modern teaching techniques considered in the present research broaden the opportunities of teaching, enhance students' motivation and optimise academic activities. Such techniques are valuable practically not only in teaching Russian, but also other foreign languages. We also see our goal in preparing new tasks which will arouse interest of the students to the language that they learn and increase their motivation.

Using interactive techniques of teaching Russian makes the class really exciting and up-to-date. Organization of academic activity in such a way plays a significant role in development of communicative competence of foreign students, helps development of their speech capabilities and increases interest in Russian language and culture.