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From Language Input to Communicative Identity: An Authorial Methodology for Teaching Russian to Foreign-Language Learners

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Abstract. The article proposes an original methodology for teaching Russian as a foreign language that reconceptualizes language learning as a gradual transformation of linguistic knowledge into meaningful communicative action. The central idea of the proposed model is that a foreign learner should not merely accumulate vocabulary, grammatical rules, and speech patterns, but progressively develop the ability to construct, express, negotiate, and reflect upon personal meaning in Russian. The methodology is structured around the trajectory "input → awareness → interaction → production → reflection → communicative identity," through which linguistic material is transformed into an instrument of authentic communication.

Keywords: Russian as a foreign language; authorial methodology; communicative identity; meaningful interaction; language awareness; communicative competence; intercultural communication; reflective learning; linguistic production; learner-centred education.

The teaching of Russian to foreign-language learners in contemporary education can no longer be reduced to the transmission of grammatical rules, lexical units, and standard speech patterns. A learner may know numerous Russian words, recognize grammatical constructions, and successfully complete controlled exercises while still experiencing considerable difficulty when faced with a real communicative situation. The central methodological problem therefore lies not simply in the amount of linguistic material acquired, but in the learner's ability to transform linguistic knowledge into meaningful communicative action. Russian as a foreign language should consequently be taught not as a collection of isolated language elements, but as a dynamic system through which the learner gradually constructs the ability to understand, express, interpret, negotiate meaning, and participate in communication[1]. This perspective forms the basis of the authorial methodological concept "From Language Input to Communicative Identity." Its fundamental idea is that effective foreign-language education develops through a gradual transformation of linguistic material into personal communicative experience: input → awareness → interaction → production → reflection → communicative identity. Within this trajectory, the learner does not remain a passive recipient of Russian-language information. The learner becomes an active participant who observes linguistic phenomena, formulates hypotheses, tests them in communication, evaluates the effectiveness of personal speech, and gradually develops an individual manner of using Russian[2]. The concept is based on a simple but methodologically significant distinction between knowing a language and being able to act through the language. Knowledge answers the question of what a linguistic form means and how it is constructed;

communicative competence answers the question of why, when, with whom, and for what purpose that form should be used. The task of teaching Russian to foreign learners is therefore to connect these two dimensions. Grammar must become speech, vocabulary must become intention, pronunciation must become intelligibility, reading must become interpretation, and writing must become a conscious act of communication[3].

The Russian language presents foreign learners with a particularly complex system of grammatical, lexical, phonetic, and stylistic relationships. Categories such as grammatical gender, case, aspect, verbal government, motion verbs, reflexive constructions, word order, and aspectual distinctions cannot always be acquired effectively through mechanical memorization. Their communicative value becomes clearer when learners encounter them in meaningful situations. For this reason, the proposed methodology proceeds from the principle "form through meaning, meaning through context, context through communication." A grammatical construction should first appear as part of a communicative intention and only then become an object of conscious linguistic analysis[4]. For example, the opposition between the imperfective and perfective aspects of Russian verbs can be introduced not merely as a morphological distinction but as a difference in the speaker's representation of an action. Instead of memorizing isolated pairs such as читать — прочитать, делать — сделать, or писать — написать, learners can investigate how the speaker's communicative intention changes when the aspect changes. The question "What did the person do?" may require one perspective, while "What was the person doing?" activates another. Thus, grammatical form becomes a mechanism for constructing meaning rather than an abstract rule to be reproduced.

The same principle applies to vocabulary. Traditional vocabulary instruction frequently organizes words according to thematic lists: profession, family, education, travel, food, transport, and so forth. Such organization is useful at an initial stage but insufficient for advanced communicative development. Words acquire communicative value through combinations, contexts, emotional associations, pragmatic functions, and cultural meanings[5]. Therefore, the proposed methodology introduces the principle of semantic networks instead of isolated lexical units. Learners should not only ask "What does this word mean?" but also "With which words does it naturally occur?", "In what situation is it appropriate?", "What emotional or stylistic effect does it produce?", and "How would the meaning change if another word were used?" This approach allows vocabulary to become operational. The learner moves from recognition to selection and from selection to purposeful use. A word is considered fully acquired not when it can be translated correctly, but when the learner can independently choose it in an appropriate communicative context. An essential component of the methodology is the creation of micro-communication environments within the classroom[6]. A foreign-language lesson should simulate the logic of real communication as much as possible. Instead of organizing all activity around the teacher's explanation, the classroom can be constructed as a network of communicative situations: asking for clarification, expressing disagreement, making a suggestion, explaining a problem, defending an opinion, negotiating a decision, describing an experience, interpreting information, or responding to an unexpected question. Such tasks require learners to combine linguistic resources rather than reproduce predetermined sentences[7].

The authorial model therefore distinguishes between reproductive tasks and generative tasks. Reproductive tasks are necessary for establishing linguistic accuracy, but generative tasks are responsible for transforming knowledge into communicative competence. A learner who completes a sentence according to a grammatical model demonstrates recognition of a rule. A learner who independently chooses an appropriate construction in an unpredictable communicative situation demonstrates functional mastery. The methodological sequence can consequently be represented as follows: LINGUISTIC MATERIAL → OBSERVATION → HYPOTHESIS → CONTROLLED PRACTICE → COMMUNICATIVE TRANSFER → PERSONAL PRODUCTION → REFLECTION.

The first stage introduces linguistic material through an understandable context. The second encourages learners to identify patterns. At the third stage, learners formulate an initial hypothesis concerning meaning or usage. Controlled practice then provides an opportunity to consolidate the structure. The crucial transition occurs when the same linguistic resource is transferred into a new communicative context. Personal production allows the learner to construct original speech, while reflection completes the cycle by encouraging conscious evaluation of what was said, why a particular form was selected, and how effectively the communicative intention was achieved.

The role of the teacher changes accordingly. The teacher is no longer only a transmitter of linguistic knowledge or a corrector of mistakes. The teacher becomes a designer of communicative trajectories. This means selecting linguistic material, constructing meaningful situations, predicting possible learner difficulties, creating opportunities for interaction, and providing feedback that supports further development rather than interrupting communication. Error correction within this model is also reconceptualized. Not every error should be corrected immediately. Excessive interruption may destroy communicative initiative, particularly among learners who are still developing confidence in Russian. It is more productive to distinguish between errors that interfere with meaning and errors that do not prevent successful communication. The first category requires immediate or delayed pedagogical intervention depending on the situation, while the second can become material for subsequent reflection. The objective is not to create speech without any mistakes from the earliest stages, but to create learners capable of noticing, analyzing, and gradually overcoming their own linguistic difficulties. This leads to another central principle of the methodology: “self-correction before teacher correction.” When a learner makes an error, the teacher can first create conditions for the learner to identify the problem independently. Rephrasing, contextual clues, contrastive examples, visual prompts, or guiding questions can encourage the learner to reconsider the utterance. Such an approach develops linguistic awareness and reduces dependence on external correction[8].

Particular attention is given to the development of communicative initiative. In many foreign-language classrooms, learners speak only when the teacher asks a question. This creates an artificial communication model in which the right to initiate interaction remains almost exclusively with the teacher. The proposed methodology reverses this hierarchy. Learners should regularly be placed in situations where they must initiate a conversation, ask a question, challenge an opinion, request additional information, redirect a dialogue, or introduce a new topic. Communicative competence becomes stronger when the learner is not merely responding but also determining the

direction of interaction. Reading is integrated into this system not as an isolated receptive skill but as a source of linguistic and communicative resources. Authentic and adapted Russian texts can function simultaneously as vocabulary environments, grammatical models, cultural materials, and stimuli for discussion. Instead of limiting reading tasks to questions that reproduce information from the text, learners can be asked to identify the author's intention, compare perspectives, infer implicit meanings, transform information, formulate alternative interpretations, or connect the text with their own experience. Writing similarly becomes a form of purposeful communication. Rather than completing only sentence-level exercises, learners can produce messages, short reflections, explanations, reviews, requests, personal statements, argumentative paragraphs, and other forms of real-world communication. The methodological objective is to teach learners to control not only grammatical correctness but also communicative purpose, coherence, tone, audience, and stylistic appropriateness[9]. An important innovation of the proposed model is the integration of linguistic reflection into everyday classroom practice. Reflection does not have to be lengthy or theoretical. After a communicative task, learners may answer three concise questions: What did I want to say? What linguistic resource helped me express it? What would I change next time? Such questions gradually transform language learning into a conscious process of self-regulation.

The model can also be adapted to learners with different linguistic backgrounds. A foreign learner does not enter the Russian-language classroom without prior linguistic experience. Each learner possesses at least one existing language system that influences pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical interpretation, and communicative behavior. The methodology therefore recognizes interlingual transfer as both a resource and a potential source of difficulty. Comparative observation between the learner's first language and Russian can make certain differences visible and prevent unconscious transfer from becoming a persistent error. However, contrastive work should not be reduced to lists of differences. Its purpose is to develop metalinguistic awareness. When learners understand why a structure that is natural in their first language does not function in the same way in Russian, they become more capable of monitoring their speech.

The learner begins to see language not as a set of arbitrary restrictions but as a system organized according to its own logic. Cultural content occupies an equally important position. Communicating in Russian requires more than lexical and grammatical knowledge because speech is embedded in social norms, expectations, forms of politeness, communicative distance, and culturally determined patterns of interaction. A phrase that is grammatically correct may sound unnatural, excessively direct, overly formal, or pragmatically inappropriate in a particular context. Consequently, teaching Russian as a foreign language must develop pragmatic sensitivity alongside grammatical competence. For this purpose, the classroom can include situations involving disagreement, requests, apologies, invitations, refusals, compliments, complaints, negotiations, and professional communication. Learners compare possible linguistic choices and determine how changes in wording influence interpersonal meaning. In this way, language education becomes simultaneously an education in communication culture. Digital technologies can strengthen this methodology when they are subordinated to pedagogical objectives. Digital platforms, interactive exercises, speech-recognition technologies, electronic corpora, multimedia

texts, and artificial intelligence tools can expand the amount of Russian-language input available to learners. However, technology should not replace communication. Its methodological value lies in creating additional opportunities for observation, practice, feedback, personalization, and independent learning. Artificial intelligence can be particularly useful as a reflective partner. Learners can compare their own Russian-language production with alternative formulations, identify lexical repetitions, analyze grammatical patterns, and experiment with different communicative styles. At the same time, learners must retain responsibility for evaluating the correctness and appropriateness of generated language. Thus, AI should function not as an unquestioned source of answers but as an instrument for developing linguistic judgment. The proposed methodology also requires a reconsideration of assessment. Traditional assessment frequently concentrates on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary knowledge. These parameters remain important, but they do not fully represent communicative competence. A more comprehensive assessment system should consider at least five dimensions: linguistic accuracy, communicative adequacy, fluency, interaction, and reflective awareness. A learner who makes several minor grammatical errors but successfully communicates an intention, maintains interaction, responds appropriately, and independently notices problematic forms may demonstrate a higher level of functional competence than a learner who produces grammatically accurate but communicatively passive speech[10]. For this reason, the authorial model proposes a communicative competence matrix in which linguistic correctness is considered together with functional effectiveness. Assessment can be organized through descriptors such as “can understand,” “can formulate,” “can interact,” “can clarify,” “can reformulate,” “can justify,” “can adapt speech to context,” and “can evaluate personal performance.” Such descriptors shift assessment from the question “How many rules does the learner know?” toward the more meaningful question “What can the learner do with Russian?”

The effectiveness of this approach can be conceptualized through the movement from external support to internal independence. At the initial stage, learners rely heavily on models, prompts, vocabulary banks, and grammatical guidance. At the intermediate stage, they begin to combine resources independently. At the advanced stage, they can select linguistic strategies according to context, communicative intention, and interlocutor. The final methodological goal is therefore not maximal dependence on instructional materials, but the gradual reduction of that dependence. The concept of communicative identity emerges precisely at this point. Communicative identity is understood here not as a fixed personal characteristic but as the learner’s developing ability to represent oneself through another language. When learners begin to express opinions, tell stories, defend positions, joke, disagree, ask for help, demonstrate politeness, and formulate personal meanings in Russian, the language ceases to be an external academic subject. It becomes a medium of personal participation. Thus, the highest level of foreign-language teaching is reached when the learner stops asking exclusively “How do I say this in Russian?” and begins to think “How do I want to express myself here, and which Russian linguistic resources will allow me to do so most accurately and appropriately?” This transition represents a qualitative change in language learning. The learner moves from translation dependence to communicative choice, from reproduction to creation, and from linguistic knowledge to communicative identity.

The authorial methodology "From Language Input to Communicative Identity" therefore offers an integrated vision of Russian-language education in which grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, reading, writing, speaking, cultural awareness, digital tools, and reflection are not isolated components but interconnected stages of one developmental process. Its central methodological principle can be expressed through the formula "learn the form → understand the function → use it in interaction → create personal meaning → reflect on the result." The distinctive value of this approach lies in its attempt to reorganize the logic of foreign-language instruction. Instead of beginning and ending with the linguistic system, it begins with linguistic material but leads the learner toward communication, personal expression, and reflective autonomy. Russian is consequently presented not merely as an object to be studied, but as a living communicative environment in which the learner gradually acquires the ability to think, interact, express individuality, and construct meaning. The final pedagogical result is therefore broader than grammatical competence. It is the formation of a learner who can enter communication without waiting for a prepared sentence, understand language as a system of choices, adapt speech to context, use linguistic resources creatively, recognize difficulties, correct personal errors, and continue learning independently. In this sense, effective teaching of Russian to foreign-language learners is not simply the transfer of a language system from teacher to student. It is the construction of a pathway from linguistic input to conscious participation, from participation to personal expression, and from personal expression to communicative identity.

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