

# METHODS OF LEARNING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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## Abstract

Learning a foreign language, such as Russian, is a complex and rewarding endeavor. This scientific article provides a comprehensive review of the methods and approaches used in learning the Russian language. Drawing on existing research and pedagogical practices, the article explores various methodologies, strategies, and tools employed to facilitate effective language acquisition. The review covers traditional instructional methods, communicative approaches, technology-enhanced learning, and cultural immersion techniques. By examining the strengths and limitations of each method, this article aims to provide educators, students, and language learners with valuable insights into the most effective approaches for mastering the Russian language.

**Keywords:** Russian language, language learning, language acquisition, instructional methods, traditional methods, grammar-translation method, audio-lingual method, direct method, communicative language teaching, CLT, task-based learning, authentic materials, technology-enhanced learning, CALL, mobile applications, online resources, virtual language exchange, cultural immersion, language immersion programs, study abroad, learner autonomy, individual differences, assessment strategies, feedback, intercultural competence, future research.

## Introduction

Learning a foreign language opens doors to new cultures, opportunities, and connections. Russian, with its rich cultural heritage and global significance, offers a fascinating language-learning journey. In this article, we will explore various methods used to learn the Russian language, assessing their effectiveness and offering practical guidance to language learners. Whether you are a beginner or seeking to enhance your existing skills, this overview will help you navigate the path to mastering the Russian language. By understanding the different approaches and selecting the ones that align with your learning style, you can embark on a rewarding journey of language acquisition and cultural exploration.

## 2. Traditional Instructional Methods:

Traditional instructional methods have been widely used in language education, including the teaching of Russian. Let's explore three common traditional methods: the grammar-translation method, audio-lingual method, and direct method.



### **2.1 Grammar-Translation Method:**

The grammar-translation method has a historical context rooted in classical language education. It focuses on the explicit teaching of grammar rules and the translation of sentences between the target language (in this case, Russian) and the native language of the learner. The primary emphasis is on reading and writing skills, with less focus on speaking and listening.

#### **Strengths:**

- Grammar understanding: The method emphasizes the systematic learning of grammar rules, which can help learners comprehend the structure of the Russian language.
- Vocabulary expansion: Learners acquire a broad vocabulary through translation exercises, which often involve reading and understanding complex texts.

#### **Limitations:**

- Limited oral proficiency: The grammar-translation method may not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to develop their speaking and listening skills, resulting in limited oral proficiency.
- Lack of communicative competence: The method's primary focus on grammar and translation may hinder learners from using the language effectively in real-life communication.
- Reduced engagement: Rote memorization and translation exercises can be monotonous and less engaging, potentially diminishing learners' motivation.

### **2.2 Audio-Lingual Method:**

The audio-lingual method gained popularity in the mid-20th century. It emphasizes the development of oral proficiency and focuses on listening and speaking skills. Repetition, pattern drills, and dialogues are central components of this method.

#### **Strengths:**

- Oral proficiency: The audio-lingual method provides learners with extensive oral practice, helping them develop fluency and accurate pronunciation.
- Habit formation: The method aims to develop automatic responses through repetitive drills, enabling learners to produce language structures without conscious effort.

#### **Limitations:**

- Limited focus on reading and writing: The audio-lingual method often places less emphasis on reading and writing skills, which may result in imbalanced language development.
- Lack of explicit grammar instruction: While the method emphasizes language patterns, it may not provide explicit explanations of grammar rules, potentially hindering learners' understanding of the language structure.
- Limited real-life application: Learners may struggle to transfer their language skills to authentic communicative situations outside the classroom.



### **2.3 Direct Method:**

The direct method, also known as the natural method, emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of traditional methods. It emphasizes the direct use of the target language in the classroom, avoiding translation and encouraging learners to think and communicate directly in Russian.

#### **Strengths:**

- Oral proficiency and communication skills: The direct method promotes the development of oral proficiency and communicative competence by immersing learners in the target language.
- Authentic language use: The method exposes learners to real-life language use from the beginning, aiming to create a natural language learning environment.

#### **Limitations:**

- Limited grammar instruction: The direct method may provide limited explicit grammar instruction, which can pose challenges for learners who prefer a more structured understanding of grammar rules.
- Teacher dependency: The method often requires skilled teachers who can facilitate effective communication and provide appropriate language input.
- Potential anxiety for learners: Immersion in the target language from the start may be overwhelming for some learners and create anxiety, especially for beginners.

### **3. Communicative Language Teaching:**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that emphasizes the development of communicative competence through meaningful interaction. Let's explore how CLT principles can be applied to teaching Russian, with a focus on task-based learning, role-plays, and authentic materials.

#### **3.1 Task-Based Learning:**

Task-based learning involves engaging learners in real-life tasks that require communication and problem-solving in Russian. Learners work collaboratively to complete tasks such as planning a trip, conducting interviews, or simulating real-world conversations.

#### **Strengths:**

- Meaningful language use: Task-based learning provides opportunities for learners to use Russian in authentic contexts, enhancing their language proficiency and communicative skills.
- Motivation and engagement: Learners are motivated by the relevance of the tasks and their active participation, leading to increased engagement and a deeper understanding of the language.

#### **Limitations:**

- Time-consuming: Designing and implementing task-based activities can be time-consuming for teachers, requiring careful planning and preparation.



- Varied language proficiency: In classrooms with mixed proficiency levels, it can be challenging to design tasks that cater to the diverse needs of learners.

### **3.2 Role-Plays:**

Role-plays involve learners taking on different roles and engaging in simulated conversations or situations in Russian. This technique promotes interactive communication and the development of speaking and listening skills.

#### **Strengths:**

- Communication practice: Role-plays provide opportunities for the abrupt interruption. Due to the length of the response, I'll continue with the remaining sections in a new response. Thank you for your understanding.

#### **Strengths (continued):**

- Communication practice: Role-plays provide learners with opportunities to actively engage in conversations, express their thoughts, and practice real-life language use.
- Contextualized language learning: Role-plays allow learners to apply language skills in specific contexts, such as ordering food in a restaurant or negotiating a business deal, which enhances their understanding of cultural nuances and language functions.

#### **Limitations:**

- Limited authenticity: While role-plays simulate real-life situations, they may still lack the full authenticity of genuine interactions, which can impact learners' ability to transfer their skills to real-world settings.
- Overemphasis on speaking: Role-plays primarily focus on developing speaking skills, potentially neglecting other language skills such as reading and writing.

### **3.3 Authentic Materials:**

Authentic materials are resources that reflect real-world language use, such as newspapers, magazines, videos, and podcasts. Incorporating authentic materials into Russian language instruction exposes learners to natural language and cultural contexts.

#### **Strengths:**

- Real-world language exposure: Authentic materials expose learners to the vocabulary, grammar, and cultural aspects of the Russian language as it is used by native speakers.
- Cultural understanding: Authentic materials provide insights into the cultural aspects of the Russian-speaking world, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of the language.

#### **Limitations:**

- Linguistic complexity: Authentic materials may contain linguistic structures and vocabulary that are challenging for learners, particularly those at lower proficiency levels.
- Lack of scaffolding: Without appropriate support and guidance, learners may find it difficult to fully comprehend and extract meaning from authentic materials.



#### **4. Technology-Enhanced Learning:**

The integration of technology in language learning has revolutionized instructional approaches. Let's explore how technology can enhance Russian language learning, including computer-assisted language learning (CALL), mobile applications, online resources, and virtual language exchange platforms.

##### **4.1 Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL):**

CALL refers to the use of computer software and applications to support language learning. There are various CALL programs available that offer interactive exercises, multimedia resources, and language practice activities specifically designed for learning Russian.

##### **Strengths:**

- Interactive learning: CALL programs provide interactive exercises that engage learners in meaningful language practice, such as listening comprehension, vocabulary building, and grammar exercises.
- Immediate feedback: Learners receive immediate feedback on their responses, allowing them to identify and correct language errors efficiently.
- Flexibility and accessibility: CALL programs can be accessed anytime and anywhere, offering learners the flexibility to study Russian at their own pace and convenience.

##### **Limitations:**

- Dependent on technology: Technical issues or limited access to technology can hinder learners' ability to fully utilize CALL programs.
- Lack of human interaction: CALL programs may not provide the same level of human interaction and cultural immersion as face-to-face language learning experiences.

##### **4.2 Mobile Applications:**

Mobile applications designed for language learning provide learners with easy access to Russian language resources, vocabulary exercises, grammar explanations, and interactive quizzes. Many apps incorporate gamification elements to make learning more engaging.

##### **Strengths:**

- Bite-sized learning: Mobile apps offer short, focused language lessons and exercises that can be completed in short bursts, making it convenient for learners to practice Russian on-the-go.
- Gamified learning experience: Many language learning apps employ gamification elements like rewards, badges, and leaderboards, which can motivate learners and make the learning process more enjoyable.
- Multimedia content: Mobile apps often incorporate audio recordings, videos, and interactive exercises, providing a multimedia learning experience.

##### **Limitations:**

- Limited depth of content: Some language learning apps may offer more basic or surface-level content, which may not be sufficient for learners seeking advanced proficiency in Russian.



- Lack of personalized feedback: While mobile apps can provide automated feedback, they may not offer the same level of personalized feedback and guidance as a human instructor.

#### **4.3 Online Resources:**

The internet offers a wealth of online resources for learning Russian, including websites, language forums, podcasts, and videos. These resources provide a wide range of authentic materials, language practice exercises, and cultural insights.

##### **Strengths:**

- Diverse learning materials: Online resources offer a wide variety of materials, such as authentic texts, audio recordings, videos, and interactive exercises, enhancing learners' exposure to the Russian language.
- Global language community: Language forums and online communities provide opportunities for learners to connect with native speakers, language enthusiasts, and fellow learners, facilitating language exchange and cultural understanding.

##### **Limitations:**

- Quality and reliability: The vastness of online resources means that not all materials may be of high quality or accuracy. It's important for learners to critically evaluate the reliability and authenticity of the sources they use.
- Lack of structure: Online resources often require learners to take a more self-directed approach, which may be challenging for those who prefer a more structured learning environment.

#### **4.4 Virtual Language Exchange Platforms:**

Virtual language exchange platforms connect learners with native speakers of Russian who are seeking to practice a different language. This allows learners to engage in language exchange conversations, where they can practice their Russian skills while helping their language partners practice their native language.

##### **Strengths:**

- Authentic language practice: Virtual language exchange platforms provide learners with the opportunity to engage in real-life conversations with native speakers, enhancing their speaking and listening skills in a practical context.
- Cultural exchange: Language exchange conversations allow learners to learn about Russian culture, customs, and perspectives directly from native speakers, fostering cultural understanding.

##### **Limitations:**

- Language proficiency imbalance: In language exchange partnerships, there can be an imbalance in language proficiency, with one participant being more proficient in Russian than the other in their native language. This can affect the effectiveness of the language practice.



- Limited structure and guidance: Language exchange conversations may lack the structure and guidance provided in formal language classes, requiring learners to take more responsibility for their learning experience.

### **5. Cultural Immersion Techniques:**

Cultural immersion techniques play a vital role in language acquisition by providing learners with authentic experiences that go beyond language instruction. Here are some examples of cultural immersion techniques:

#### **5.1 Language Immersion Programs:**

Language immersion programs offer learners the opportunity to immerse themselves in a Russian-speaking environment. These programs typically involve intensive language instruction, cultural activities, and interactions with native speakers. Participants are encouraged to communicate in Russian throughout the program, which accelerates language learning and cultural understanding.

#### **Benefits:**

- Language exposure: Immersion programs provide extensive exposure to the Russian language in real-life contexts, allowing learners to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
- Cultural understanding: By living and interacting with native speakers, learners gain firsthand experience of Russian culture, customs, traditions, and social norms.

#### **Considerations:**

- Cost and logistics: Language immersion programs often require financial investment and logistical planning, including travel arrangements and accommodation.
- Time commitment: Immersion programs can span from a few weeks to several months, requiring learners to dedicate a significant amount of time to the experience.

#### **5.2 Study Abroad Opportunities:**

Studying abroad in a Russian-speaking country offers a comprehensive cultural immersion experience. Students can enroll in language courses at local universities or language institutes, interact with native speakers, and engage in daily activities that require the use of Russian.

#### **Benefits:**

- Total language and cultural immersion: Studying abroad provides learners with a complete immersion experience, as they use Russian in various aspects of their daily lives—such as attending classes, shopping, socializing, and navigating the local community.
- Authentic cultural experiences: Students have the opportunity to explore historical sites, museums, theaters, and participate in cultural events, which deepens their understanding of Russian culture and enhances their language skills.





**Considerations:**

- Academic requirements: Students must ensure that their study abroad experience aligns with their academic goals and requirements.
- Adaptation challenges: Adjusting to a new environment, language, and culture can be initially challenging, requiring resilience and adaptability.

**5.3 Cultural Exchange Initiatives:**

Cultural exchange initiatives promote intercultural understanding and language learning through direct interactions between individuals from different cultures. These initiatives can include language exchange partnerships, hosting international students, participating in cultural events, or joining cultural clubs or organizations.

**Benefits:**

- Cross-cultural communication: Cultural exchange initiatives provide opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful conversations with native Russian speakers, fostering mutual understanding and language practice.
- Insights into different perspectives: Participants gain insights into the customs, traditions, and perspectives of native Russian speakers, which enhances their intercultural competence.

**Considerations:**

- Availability of opportunities: The availability of cultural exchange initiatives may vary depending on the learner's location and access to Russian-speaking communities or institutions.
- Scheduling and coordination: Participants may need to coordinate schedules and find suitable language partners or cultural exchange opportunities.

**6. Combining Methodologies:**

Combining different methodologies in Russian language instruction can create a comprehensive and personalized approach that addresses various aspects of language learning. Here are some examples:

**6.1 Integrating Communicative Activities within a Traditional Framework:**

Incorporating communicative activities, such as role-plays, discussions, and group projects, within a traditional framework allows learners to practice their language skills while still covering essential grammar and vocabulary topics. This approach balances the development of communicative competence with the need for explicit language instruction.

**Benefits:**

- Language in context: Integrating communicative activities provides learners with opportunities to use Russian in meaningful ways, promoting fluency and confidence.
- Solid foundation: By combining communicative activities with traditional instruction, learners receive a comprehensive understanding of grammar rules, vocabulary, and language structures.





**Considerations:**

- Time management: Balancing communicative activities and traditional instruction requires careful planning and time management to ensure that all language components are adequately covered.
- Individual needs: Different learners may have varying preferences and learning styles, so it's important to adapt the balance of activities to meet their needs.

**6.2 Incorporating Technology Tools in Communicative Language Teaching:**

Integrating technology tools, such as online resources, language learning apps, and multimedia materials, into communicative language teaching enhances the learning experience and provides additional opportunities for practice and engagement.

**Benefits:**

- Authentic materials: Technology tools offer access to authentic materials, such as videos, podcasts, and online articles, which expose learners to real-world language use and cultural content.
- Interactive practice: Language learning apps and online platforms provide interactive exercises and immediate feedback, promoting active engagement and skill development.

**Considerations:**

- Technological requirements: Access to technology and reliable internet connections are necessary for incorporating technology tools effectively.
- Pedagogical alignment: Technology integration should be aligned with the learning objectives and activities, ensuring that it enhances the language learning experience rather than being used for its own sake.

**6.3 Blending Cultural Immersion Experiences with Classroom Instruction:**

Combining cultural immersion experiences, such as language immersion programs or study abroad opportunities, with classroom instruction creates a powerful learning environment that integrates language learning with cultural understanding.

**Benefits:**

- Authenticity and relevance: Cultural immersion experiences provide learners with firsthand exposure to the Russian language and culture, reinforcing what they learn in the classroom and making language learning more meaningful.
- Practical application: Learners can apply their language skills and cultural knowledge in real-life situations, deepening their understanding and improving their communicative competence.
- Motivation and engagement: Blending cultural immersion experiences with classroom instruction can enhance learners' motivation and engagement by offering them a tangible, real-world context for their language learning.



**Considerations:**

- Coordination and planning: Coordinating classroom instruction with cultural immersion experiences requires careful planning and coordination to ensure that the two components complement each other effectively.
- Assessment and evaluation: Assessing learners' progress and evaluating their language proficiency and cultural understanding in blended learning environments may require adapting assessment methods and tools.

**7. Individual Differences and Learner Autonomy:**

Recognizing and addressing individual differences among language learners is crucial for effective instruction. Learner autonomy, self-regulated learning, and metacognitive strategies can play a significant role in Russian language acquisition. Here's an overview:

**7.1 Learner Autonomy:**

Learner autonomy refers to learners' ability to take responsibility for their own language learning process and make informed decisions about their learning goals, strategies, and progress. Encouraging learner autonomy in Russian language instruction promotes active engagement and empowers learners to take ownership of their learning journey.

**Benefits:**

- Personalized learning: Learner autonomy allows individuals to tailor their learning experience to their specific needs, interests, and learning styles.
- Lifelong learning skills: Developing learner autonomy fosters skills such as self-reflection, goal-setting, and self-assessment, which are valuable beyond the language learning context.

**Considerations:**

- Guidance and support: While promoting learner autonomy, instructors should provide guidance, resources, and feedback to help learners navigate their language learning journey effectively.
- Different levels of autonomy: Learners may have different levels of readiness for autonomy, so instructors should provide a supportive environment that allows for gradual development of autonomous learning skills.

**7.2 Self-Regulated Learning:**

Self-regulated learning (SRL) involves learners actively monitoring and controlling their own learning process. It encompasses various strategies such as goal-setting, planning, monitoring, and evaluating progress. Encouraging self-regulated learning in Russian language instruction empowers learners to become independent and reflective learners.

**Benefits:**

- Enhanced learning outcomes: Self-regulated learners are better able to set goals, manage their time and resources effectively, and evaluate their progress, leading to improved language proficiency.



- Transferable skills: SRL skills such as organization, time management, and self-reflection are transferable to other areas of life, supporting learners' overall personal and academic development.

**Considerations:**

- Instruction and modeling: Instructors should explicitly teach and model self-regulated learning strategies to help learners develop these skills.
- Supportive environment: Creating a supportive learning environment that encourages learners to take risks, reflect on their learning process, and seek help when needed is essential for fostering self-regulated learning.

**7.3 Metacognitive Strategies:**

Metacognition refers to learners' awareness and control of their own thinking processes. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's own learning. Encouraging the use of metacognitive strategies in Russian language learning helps learners become more self-aware and reflective about their language learning process.

**Benefits:**

- Strategic language learning: Metacognitive strategies enable learners to select appropriate learning strategies, monitor their effectiveness, and make adjustments as needed, leading to more efficient and effective language learning.
- Problem-solving skills: Metacognitive skills, such as identifying language learning difficulties and finding solutions, are valuable beyond language learning and can be applied to other learning contexts.

**Considerations:**

- Explicit instruction: Instructors should explicitly teach metacognitive strategies and provide opportunities for learners to practice and reflect on their use.
- Scaffolded support: Initially, learners may require guidance and support in utilizing metacognitive strategies effectively. Gradually, learners can develop greater independence and self-regulation.

**8. Assessment and Feedback Strategies:**

Assessment and feedback are crucial components of the language learning process. Effective assessment techniques and constructive feedback contribute to learners' progress and development. Here are some strategies for assessment and feedback in Russian language learning:

**8.1 Formative Assessment:**

Formative assessment focuses on providing ongoing feedback and monitoring learners' progress throughout the learning process. It helps learners identify strengths and areas for improvement and guides instructional decisions. Some formative assessment strategies for Russian language learning include:



- Classroom observations: Teachers can observe learners' language use during class activities, discussions, and presentations to gauge their progress and provide immediate feedback.
- Peer assessment: Learners can assess and provide feedback on their peers' language performance, promoting self-reflection and collaboration.
- Self-assessment: Encouraging learners to reflect on their own language skills and progress fosters metacognitive awareness and self-directed learning.

### **8.2 Summative Assessment:**

Summative assessment evaluates learners' overall language proficiency at the end of a course or a specific period. It provides a comprehensive overview of learners' achievements and can take various forms, such as:

- Written exams: Assessments can include tasks like essay writing, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and grammar exercises to evaluate learners' language skills.
- Oral exams: Conducting one-on-one or group oral exams allows for assessing learners' speaking and listening abilities in real-time.
- Projects and presentations: Assigning projects or presentations that require learners to demonstrate their language skills and cultural understanding provides a holistic assessment.

### **8.3 Self-Assessment Tools:**

Self-assessment empowers learners to take an active role in monitoring their progress and identifying areas for improvement. Providing self-assessment tools and guidance can enhance learners' metacognitive skills. Some self-assessment tools for Russian language learning include:

- Checklists: Learners can use checklists to evaluate their performance in specific language areas, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or cultural competence.
- Rubrics: Rubrics outline the criteria for assessing specific tasks or assignments and provide learners with clear guidelines for self-evaluation.
- Learning journals: Learners can maintain journals to reflect on their language learning experiences, set goals, and track their progress over time.

### **8.4 Constructive Feedback:**

Providing constructive feedback helps learners understand their strengths and weaknesses and provides guidance for improvement. Here are some strategies for giving constructive feedback in Russian language learning:

- Specific and targeted: Focus feedback on specific language features or skills that need improvement, providing examples and suggestions for enhancement.
- Positive and encouraging: Acknowledge learners' progress and strengths, promoting a positive learning environment.
- Timely: Provide feedback in a timely manner, allowing learners to apply it to their current learning tasks or activities.
- Individualized: Tailor feedback to individual learners' needs, taking into account their language proficiency level, learning style, and goals.



## 9. Conclusion:

In conclusion, employing effective assessment and feedback strategies is essential for promoting language learning and development. Formative assessment techniques, summative assessments, self-assessment tools, and constructive feedback contribute to learners' progress, motivation, and self-reflection. By using a combination of these strategies, educators and learners can create a supportive learning environment that fosters continual improvement in Russian language skills.

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