

VIRTUAL SPEECH ENVIRONMENTS IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Abdusalamova Adiba Karimjanovna

Lecturer, Department of Russian Language and Literature

The National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan named after Nizami

Abstract. The thesis examines virtual speech environments as an effective means of developing communicative competence in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Particular attention is paid to the transition from traditional classroom speech situations to digitally modelled communicative contexts created through virtual reality, interactive platforms, panoramic environments, role-playing scenarios, and online communication tools. The study argues that the methodological value of a virtual environment is determined not by technological complexity but by the presence of a genuine communicative goal, role distribution, information gap, and the need for spontaneous language use.

Keywords: Russian as a foreign language, virtual speech environment, communicative competence, virtual reality, speech situation.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary teaching of Russian as a foreign language is increasingly focused on the development of learners' ability to use language in real communicative situations rather than on the isolated acquisition of grammar and vocabulary. A learner may know grammatical rules and possess a substantial lexical repertoire but still experience difficulties when required to communicate spontaneously, react to an unfamiliar interlocutor, clarify information, express disagreement, or achieve a practical goal through Russian. For this reason, communicative competence has become one of the central objectives of modern RFL methodology. A.N. Shchukin emphasizes that successful foreign-language learning requires the integration of linguistic knowledge with practical skills in different types of speech activity [1].

MAIN PART

A virtual speech environment can be defined as a digitally constructed communicative space in which learners use Russian to perform a specific practical or social task. Such an environment may be created through virtual reality, 360-degree panoramas, interactive maps, video communication platforms, multiplayer virtual worlds, or other digital resources. The key characteristic is not the technological format itself but the existence of a meaningful communicative situation. A virtual image of a restaurant does not

automatically constitute a speech environment. It becomes communicative only when learners need to order food, ask about ingredients, solve a misunderstanding, respond to a waiter, or negotiate a practical problem.

This distinction is methodologically important because contemporary digital education sometimes equates visualization with communication. Bogomolov and Dunaeva describe the modern digital RFL learning environment as an open system that integrates educational, authentic, multimedia, communicative, and instrumental resources. They also identify virtualization, augmented reality, mobile services, cloud technologies, and artificial intelligence as important directions in the further development of digital RFL education [3]. Thus, the digital environment should not simply reproduce traditional exercises on a screen; it should provide new conditions for learner activity.

One of the main advantages of virtual speech environments is contextualization. Foreign-language vocabulary and grammar become easier to understand and remember when they are associated with a concrete communicative purpose. For example, vocabulary related to transport can be practised in a virtual metro station where a learner must find a route, ask another participant for directions, interpret signs, and explain where a particular station is located. In a virtual hotel, the learner may need to make a reservation, report a problem, request additional services, or clarify payment conditions. In each case, linguistic forms are transformed from abstract educational material into instruments for action.

The effectiveness of virtual speech environments is closely connected with the level of communicative complexity. Beginning learners require substantial support. At A1–A2 levels, a virtual situation should involve familiar topics, limited vocabulary, short exchanges, visual prompts, and predictable communicative goals. Examples include buying a ticket, ordering food, introducing oneself, or asking for a price. At intermediate levels, support can gradually be reduced. Learners may be asked to explain a problem, negotiate conditions, compare alternatives, or respond to unexpected information. At advanced levels, virtual environments can model professional meetings, academic discussions, interviews, consultations, and situations involving disagreement or competing interests.

This progression is important because immersion itself does not guarantee language development. A technologically complex environment may even interfere with learning if students must simultaneously process unfamiliar vocabulary, operate a complicated interface, interpret multiple visual signals, and produce spontaneous speech. N.A. Kozlovitseva, analysing the use of VR technologies in RFL teaching, points to their educational potential while emphasizing their role as a means of organizing an innovative learning process [5]. Therefore, technological complexity should correspond to the learner's linguistic and cognitive readiness.

CONCLUSION

Virtual speech environments represent a promising means of developing communicative competence in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Their principal methodological value lies in the possibility of connecting linguistic knowledge with contextualized action. They allow learners to practise speaking and listening in simulated social environments, use vocabulary and grammar to solve practical tasks, develop sociocultural awareness, and respond to unpredictable communicative situations.

At the same time, the effectiveness of virtual environments depends on appropriate methodological organization. Technology itself does not create meaningful communication. A productive virtual speech situation requires a clear communicative goal, understandable roles, a relevant context, an information gap or problem, appropriate linguistic complexity, and subsequent reflection. The level of immersion should correspond to the learners' proficiency and should not generate unnecessary cognitive overload.

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