

TILTM 2022

Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication

**INNOVATIVE METHODS TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION
SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE: CASE STUDY**

Sonu Saini (a), Gaurav Sharma (b)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, sonusaini@jnu.ac.in, unosru@gmail.com

(b) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, RUDN University, Moscow, Russia, sharma_g@pfur.ru

Abstract

This article on innovative methods based on traditional methods attempts to provide pedagogical support on using technology as gaming techniques outside the language environment, i.e., in India. Combined with conventional methods, game-based technology can be used in the classroom to motivate students to learn a foreign language and enhance communication skills. The case study is based on the Rusist-students of Russian language study in one of the finest institutes of the Russian language in Asia. The authors conclude that game-based or task-based activities would work effectively in learning a foreign language and developing communication skills even for introverted learners. The methods can be used in a 'flipped classroom,' where the learner-centric approach is adopted. In the modern era of technology, learners are more advanced and would look forward to exciting and innovative learning methods. The case study based on the students of Russian language in India has shown positive results during online classes, which will be fruitful for the studies in the field of online effective teaching practices.

2672-815X © 2022 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Communication skills, FLT, innovative teaching, Learning Russian, Rusist in India

1. Introduction

Nelson Mandela said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart” (Blog, British Study Centres, Inspirational Quotes for Language Learners, Blog, n.d.). Learning a foreign language is not only a requirement today in business, mutual relations, and diplomacy but also one of the learners’ passions. The number of foreign language learners is increasing in the era of global village and information and technology. Travel around the globe has become more accessible. Therefore, the interaction with people speaking other languages has increased. International trade, connecting roads, rail, and airways are also growing. All such factors are boosting the demand for foreign language learners. The rising figure of learners has increased the number of learning institutes. The educational institutes are emphasizing qualitative teaching methods to maximize the output.

In the modern world, learning a new language is not easy. The appropriate methods are not used. Students may find it challenging to acquire a new language in a non-native land. It has been observed that the learners drop out of the course due to difficulties faced at the beginning. That’s why in foreign language courses, the number of learners decreases towards completion. It is said that any subject cannot be considered easy or difficult; the teacher makes it for students. It is a time of innovative methods of teaching based on various forms of technology, games, and other forms of interactive activities. Out of some innovative methods, two methods are being discussed in this article. The base of both the innovative methods can be considered the traditional methods. The methods are modified and adjusted per the requirement to make the learner’s practice more accessible, exciting, and fruitful. As per Shaklein and Ryzhov (2008), “The concept of “innovation” may be interpreted as “update, innovation, or change.” Innovation is a direct consequence of the word “new” (p. 2).

In our classroom teaching, we often use cutting-edge technical tools (in the form of games), particularly when learning a new language and culture. Specifically, we are taking the case of Russian language learners, but it is not limited to this particular language only. The selected methods can also be implemented and practiced in another foreign language teaching. Learners of Russian in India do not get the opportunity to practice the language skills outside the classroom; hence, it is challenging to acquire communication skills in a foreign language.

It has been proved that the learners learn swiftly through activities, tasks, or game-based methods (Avramenko & Shevchenko, 2018; Kulikova et al., 2018; Skiada, 2021). As stated earlier, the two approaches may be highly fruitful for the learners to remove the barriers to communication skills. The first game-based method is called “Words for and Against,” and the second is “Speech Spontaneous.” The first method is based on traditional debate, whereas the second is on extempore. Both the ways are worked out innovatively to facilitate the learner in acquiring good communication skills.

2. Problem Statement

- i. Lack of innovation methods to enhance communication skills in foreign language.

3. Research Questions

- ii. Specification of communication skills in foreign languages;
- iii. the methods of teaching communication skills in foreign language;
- iv. case study of Rusist in India;
- v. develop the innovative methods to enhance communication skills.

4. Purpose of the study

The article aims to study innovative methods to enhance communication skills in foreign language by analyzing case study of Rusist in India.

5. Research methods

The study is conducted by processing different sources and journals published by national and foreign authors. The study offers several methods and cases of teaching foreign languages used by the Russian language institute in India “Rusist” which emphasis the significance of communication skills in foreign languages based on Russian language.

6. Findings

I. Method “Words for and Against”

The most noteworthy barrier to the development of communication in non-linguistic situations is the absence of experience participating in the conversation. Students are embarrassed and afraid to speak Russian in class. Therefore, they avoid doing so and often hesitate to talk. To address this problem, it is essential to devise a method that would enable students to express their perspectives in Russian without worrying about making grammar mistakes (Saini, 2020). In her work, the methodologist Bitekhina refers to the traditional debate method as the "Competition of discussion-communicative task." As per the opinion of NB Bitekhina, "It is possible to classify learning games by types of speech activity (games for developing skills and abilities in reading, listening, speaking, writing), by types of skills and abilities developed, by types of competencies (phonetic, lexical, grammatical, speech)" (Bitekhtina, 2022).

We have used the Game “Words for and Against” (Saini, 2017) method for the last seven years with Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi students. As per the feedback from students, success is guaranteed the same. Now, let’s check how this method works.

There are four rounds in this game:

Round 1. “My argument”

Round 2. “Counter argument.”

Round 3. “Shout in the crowd.”

Round 4. “Find the error.”

Before we go to round 1, let us pay attention to some of the points in preparation for the game:

The whole game, i.e., session, can be held from 40-80 minutes depending on the number of learners in the class.

- The first three rounds are recorded through a video or mobile camera. The recording will be used in round four.
- There are specific points which we generally inform students as a ‘disclaimer’:
- The whole game will be recorded, and you consent to be recorded for educational purposes.
- The arguments or counterarguments presented by all the players, i.e., learners, will not be considered a personal point of view. All the points will be regarded as fictional and used only for practicing communication skills.
- The game should be played on the principles of ethics, i.e., no defamation of any personality, not to use any word or expression which may hurt anyone’s sentiments.
- Teacher will not correct/prompt any grammatical or lexical error during the first three rounds. The teacher will work only as a facilitator.
- The broad topics may be given or decided well in advance. The issues may be such as “Love marriage vs. arranged marriage,” “Life in Village vs. Life in City,” “Internet helps vs. internet spoils,” etc. The learners may be asked to prepare /her arguments after reading some material on the topic. The teacher may provide the material. The learners can note their argument only in points for both sides, i.e., for and against.
- During the first three rounds, the teacher would not help the participants recall any word or expression. The participants should use alternative words or phrases while playing. Otherwise, their brain will get habitual in asking for help, which may be considered a breach of the game rules.
- During the whole play, participants should use only the language they are learning, such as in our case study, Russian. Using any other language is prohibited in this game.
- On the game day, learners would be divided into teams (Team A and Team B or Team Moscow and Team Petersburg) as per the attendance to 50-50 ratio. The learners may define the name of their team. The side of the team will be decided at this time only.

Now let’s find out how the various rounds are defined in the game:

Round 1. “My argument”:

This is the first round of the game. The participant will put forward their argument on the topic in this round. The learners will be presenting their points one by one from both teams. After one participant spoke from Team A, the next person should be from Team B. While the participant from Team A is telling, the rest of the participants from both the teams should note down the point. Team A will be noting the point down and should prepare mentally to support the argument presented by their team member. At the same time, team B participants will note down the points to produce the counterargument, which will be shown in the next round. After both team members have spoken, the game may be elevated to Round 2.

Round 2. “Counter argument”:

In this round, the participants will be taking up counterarguments by raising their hands. They may start with the sentence but disagree with the point that Mr/Ms.....” The. The counterargument should

clearly define whose point is being challenged. The teacher should encourage everyone from the team to develop critical thinking and motivate them to speak in the foreign language without thinking about mistakes or errors.

As mentioned earlier, the participants should not seek help from their teachers or friends. They should not enquire about the meaning or how to say a particular expression in a foreign language. This will create a barrier to developing communication skills.

Teachers' role will be to give opportunities to all students to speak in all rounds. Special attention is required to the students who are shy or talk very little. Such students need some extra words of motivation.

Round 3. "Shout in the crowd."

This is one of the most exciting rounds. Teachers may turn his/her back toward the teams as if no one is watching/monitoring the participants. When one shouts in the crowd, it is difficult to find out who shouted. In the same way, the third round is placed to speak without fear or hesitation of being watched/monitored. However, the video recording should be on for the next round. The participants can stand up and make small circles, such as standing in a crowd and raising their voices to put forward the arguments. The arguments in a loud voice will help the participants jot the sentences swiftly. The American author Judith E. Glaser says that "...arguing can lead to innovation...when we have a good argument and can express our views and be listened to, we strengthen our ability to have really powerful exchanges of ideas...." (Melissa, 2022, <http>).

The participants should be artificially short and speak loudly in their learning language. It is said that people switch to their mother tongue when they are in anger. It is a natural process because when one is arguing, blood circulation raises, and the brain needs a lot of words in a concise time to utter them as per the context of the argument. But if we do it artificially and restrict using any other language than practiced, the brain will get training to speak the particular language similar to the mother tongue. The learners enjoy this round because they know that no one can check and notice if they make mistakes. The fear of committing a mistake increases the hesitation in communication skills. The shy learners are also afraid of this phenomenon. Such a round helps them open up and speak without any anxiety.

Round 4. "Find the error."

This is one of the most effective rounds, where the learners will learn to find out their own and their batchmates' errors and learn through mistakes. The video of the previous three rounds is analyzed here by playing it back on a big screen or projector. While playing the video and studying the same in class, the teacher would involve the participants and motivate them to oversee the recording and point out the errors. If the learners could not find a particular argument's mistake, the teacher may prompt it. Such practice helps in registering the errors in their brains and not repeating them in the future.

Therefore, this whole game becomes a fun activity where everyone participates and practices their communication skills in a foreign language. In this method, teachers speak very little as it is one of the student-centric methods.

II. Method “Speech Spontaneous.”

This activity is another game-based activity that can be beneficial for foreign language learners. The method is based on the traditional way of extempore (Saini, 2017). There will be two rounds in this activity:

Round 1. “Speak spontaneously.”

Round 2 “Find the error.”

The whole speech or session should be video-recorded. The video recording will be required in the second round while analyzing the video and the learners.

Round 1. “Speech Spontaneous,”

In this round the learners would get a word, and they are supposed to start speaking soon after they get a comment or see the expression on screen. The term can be from any field. It can be a word combination. The speech may be of 2-3 minutes, which can be increased gradually. The participant should speak continuously soon after they get the word. Initially, the words should be simple, and the learners should be asked one by one to the stage/at the teacher’s place to make /her speech. The teacher would prepare small chits (a piece of paper) on which the words like “mother,” “father,” “friend,” “school,” “notebook,” “pen,” “pencil,” etc. Such a method helps to speak extempore at any point in time.

It may look easy, but it may be initially difficult for foreign language learners to comprehend the speech on a simple topic. Therefore, we need to mention the method which may assist the learners in forming the address spontaneously. The learners should be explained to remember the 5W1H+E formula, i.e., essential question words such as “what?”, “who,” “where?”, “when?” “why?” and “how?” along with 5W1H, we need to add personal experience based on fiction. The whole experience may be fictionalized. For example, if a word is “dog,” the participant can speak: “The dog is an animal. It can be found in some houses and on the streets. The age of dogs varies from 10-20 years. The dogs can be of various colors such as white, black, brown, etc. They can also have multiple colors on their fur. The dog is considered an honest pet for humans. Dogs are also deployed in the security system of various organizations. [fiction-based experience]... yesterday I was going to the market, where I saw a dog standing and looking at me with affectionate eyes. I went up to her and gave them some cookies. The dog did not eat it. Then I tried to feed her my milk, but she refused to drink it. She was looking at an opened sewer again and again. I sensed some tragedy and saw it in the opened sewer; I was shocked to see... in this way, one can cook the story on the spot. The main aim of this method is to speak in Russian and practice all the grammatical knowledge and vocabulary during the speech.

Round 2. “Find the error.”

This round allows the learners to learn through mistakes. The teacher facilitates the learners and motivates them to find the grammatical, lexical, syntactic, or any other type of error. If the learners cannot notice some mistakes, the teacher may bring them out and try to get a correct version from the first. This practice helps the learners to make notes in their memory which mistakes they should not repeat in the future.

To make this method more interesting, some rewards can be announced initially for the active participants in both ways mentioned above. The tips can be in the form of small gifts such as a pen,

notebook, or souvenir from Russia. We used to give the Russian coins as a souvenir as a reward. Such types of bonuses make the activity more interesting for the learners.

7. Conclusion

Therefore, it can be said that game-based or task-based activities would work effectively in learning a foreign language and developing communication skills even for introverted learners. The above methods can be used in a 'flipped classroom,' where the learner-centric approach is adopted. In the modern era of technology, learners are more advanced and would look forward to exciting and innovative learning methods. Lecture mode teaching in a foreign language may not be an excellent idea; that is why the activity-based approach can work more effectively. Our case study has shown positive results even during online classes. The same methods were applied during online teaching practices due to the pandemic. Similar techniques may be used in another foreign language teaching as well.

References

- Avramenko, A. P., & Shevchenko, V. N. (2018). Instagram in foreign language teaching. *Issues of Applied Linguistics*, 32-31, 21-32.
- Bitekhtina, N. B. (2022). *Pushkin Institute, Igrovye zadaniia na urokakh russkogo iazyka kak inostrannogo*, [Game tasks at the lessons of Russian as a foreign language]. Retrieved on May, 12, 2022 from <https://webinar.pushkininstitute.ru/webinar.php?webinarId=7>
- Blog. *British Study Centres, Inspirational Quotes for Language Learners, Blog*. (n.d.). Retrieved on May, 12, 2022 from <https://www.british-study.com/en/blog/inspirational-quotes-for-language-learners>
- Kulikova, E. V., Sultanova, Y. M., & Terekhina, O. V. (2018). The role of audiovisual material in foreign language teaching at non-linguistic university. *Issues of Applied Linguistics*, 32&31, 110-122.
- Melissa, B. (2022). *What's Going on in Your Brain and Body During an Argument*. October 6, 2015. Retrieved on May 12, 2022 from <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/whats-going-on-in-your-brain-and-body-during-an-124729543.html>
- Saini, S. (2017). Innovatsionnye igrovye metody na osnove tekhnologii i prodvizhenii russkogo iazyka v indiiskoi auditorii [Innovative Game based methods through technology and expansion of Russian language in Indian Classroom]. *Critic, Journal of Centre of Russian Studies*, 14, New Delhi, 2017-18, 21-28.
- Saini, S. (2020) Vremia priniat' innovatsionnye metody prepodavaniia na osnove tekhnologii, [Time to Adopt Innovative Technology-Based Teaching Methods]. *Critic, Journal of Centre of Russian Studies*, 17, 134-138.
- Shaklein, V. M., & Ryzhova, N. V. (2008). *Sovremennye metodiki prepodavaniia russkogo iazyka nerusskim* [Modern methods of teaching the Russian language to non-Russians]. Study guide. M.: RUDN.
- Skiada, M. (2021). The implementation of authentic language input in second language (L2) teaching: Pedagogical arguments. *Training, Language and Culture*, 5(1), 86-96. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2021-5-1-86-96>