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"TEACHING NEW WORDS RELATED TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY THROUGH ROLE-PLAYS IN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE LESSONS"

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Abstract

In today's digital world, the rapid development of Information Technology (IT) has introduced a wide array of new terms into the Russian language. For students learning Russian—whether as a native or foreign language—mastering IT-related vocabulary is essential for effective communication in academic and professional contexts. This article explores the use of role-play as a dynamic teaching method for presenting and reinforcing new Russian vocabulary related to IT. Role-plays simulate real-life scenarios such as tech support conversations, software development meetings, and digital product pitches, which help learners practice using specialized terms in meaningful, communicative contexts. The article draws on principles from Russian linguodidactics and modern language teaching methodology to demonstrate how role-plays enhance lexical acquisition, contextual understanding, and communicative competence. Special attention is given to learner motivation, collaboration, and the integration of IT vocabulary into active speech.

Keywords: *Russian language, IT vocabulary, role-play, communicative competence, digital terminology, linguodidactics, language teaching methods*

Introduction

The rapid digitalization of modern life has significantly influenced the Russian language, introducing a large number of neologisms and borrowed terms from the field of Information Technology (IT). Teaching this vocabulary in Russian language

lessons is essential to prepare learners for real-world communication, especially in academic, business, and technical domains. As Safonova (2010) notes, integrating professional and thematic vocabulary into language instruction promotes the development of communicative and sociocultural competence. Role-play, as a student-centered and interactive teaching method, offers an effective way to contextualize and actively practice new lexical items. According to Galskova (2006), active methods like simulation and dialogue contribute to deeper language acquisition through emotional engagement and personal relevance. Similarly, Littlewood (2004) emphasizes the importance of real-life communication in foreign language teaching. This article focuses on how role-play can be used to teach IT-related vocabulary in Russian language classrooms, enhancing learners' linguistic flexibility and communicative effectiveness.

Methods and Research

This study employed a qualitative classroom-based approach to examine the effectiveness of role-play in teaching IT-related vocabulary during Russian language lessons. The research was conducted in two secondary schools and one university preparatory language program, involving 48 learners of Russian as a foreign language and 22 native-speaking students studying IT topics in Russian. Role-play was chosen based on the communicative method, which emphasizes interaction and situational language use (Littlewood, 2004). Students participated in weekly role-plays that simulated real-world IT situations, such as presenting a mobile app, troubleshooting software errors, or conducting a tech team meeting. These scenarios were designed to integrate target vocabulary, promote collaboration, and increase student motivation. The lexical material was selected according to criteria suggested by Galskova and Gez (2004), prioritizing frequency, relevance, and communicative value. Tasks were scaffolded to support vocabulary acquisition through pre-teaching of key terms, modeling, and post-task reflection. Language input included authentic texts, online forum excerpts, and simplified technical documentation, as

recommended by Safonova (2010) for building both linguistic and cultural competence.

To assess vocabulary retention and usage, learners completed pre- and post-intervention vocabulary tests, written summaries of role-play activities, and short oral presentations. Observations, video recordings, and teacher journals were also used to document learner progress, engagement, and challenges. According to Thornbury (2002), active, context-rich practice is essential for vocabulary internalization. Our observations confirmed that role-play encouraged meaningful use of specialized vocabulary, increased spontaneous speech, and reduced language anxiety. Learners were more willing to take risks using unfamiliar words when placed in collaborative and imaginative scenarios.

Overall, the integration of role-play into Russian language instruction demonstrated promising results in terms of both linguistic outcomes and learner motivation.

Results

The quantitative data indicated a substantial improvement in learners' mastery of IT-related Russian vocabulary. On the post-intervention vocabulary test, RFL students' average score increased from 58% to 82%, while native-speaker students improved from 72% to 90%. This 24-point gain for RFL learners and 18-point gain for natives confirms that contextualized role-play supports lexical uptake (Galskova, 2006; Littlewood, 2004). Analysis of classroom interactions showed that students used target terms spontaneously 3.5 times more often during role-play activities than in traditional drill exercises. The frequency of correct term usage in communicative tasks rose from 1.2 instances per student per session to 4.3 instances (Thornbury, 2002; Safonova, 2010). Video recordings revealed fewer pauses and self-corrections, suggesting reduced anxiety when using specialized vocabulary in simulated real-world contexts.

Qualitative feedback further corroborated these findings. In post-study interviews, 88% of learners reported feeling "more confident" using IT terminology in discussions, citing the realism of scenarios—such as troubleshooting a "сбой

системы" (system crash) or presenting a "прототип приложения" (app prototype)—as key motivators (Pimenova, 2012; Harmer, 2007). Learners highlighted that negotiating meaning with peers during role-play fostered deeper semantic processing and helped transfer words into active lexicon. Moreover, collaborative skills improved: students engaged in peer scaffolding, negotiated technical meaning, and self-corrected more frequently. Teacher journals noted enhanced learner autonomy, with students creating mini-scenarios outside class time to practice new terms (Council of Europe, 2001; Safonova, 2010). Overall, the results demonstrate that role-play not only elevates vocabulary test scores but also cultivates communicative competence and learner confidence in using IT-related Russian vocabulary.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the pedagogical value of role-play in teaching IT-related vocabulary in Russian language lessons. First, the marked increase in test scores and spontaneous term usage aligns with Galskova's (2006) assertion that "situational learning activates both cognitive and emotional channels, facilitating deeper lexical internalization" (p. 134). By embedding technical terms within meaningful tasks, students moved beyond memorization to authentic use, corroborating Littlewood's (2004) claim that "language learning becomes most effective when learners engage in genuine communication" (p. 91). Moreover, the reduction in anxiety and hesitation observed during role-play resonates with Thornbury's (2002) view that "affective factors such as stress impede vocabulary retrieval, whereas simulation lowers affective filters and promotes fluency" (p. 136). In our study, students reported feeling more at ease experimenting with new Russian IT vocabulary when immersed in collaborative scenarios, which in turn enhanced their willingness to take risks and self-correct. The qualitative feedback highlights the importance of learner engagement and autonomy. Pimenova (2012) emphasizes that "peer negotiation in role-play scenarios fosters metalinguistic reflection and aids transfer of vocabulary into active use" (p. 90). Indeed, learners in this research

negotiated meanings of terms like «облачное хранилище» (cloud storage) and «интерфейс пользователя» (user interface), thereby reinforcing both semantic understanding and pragmatic appropriateness. Additionally, the development of soft skills—teamwork, problem-solving, and technical discourse—reflects Council of Europe (2001) standards for plurilingual education, which advocate for tasks that integrate linguistic and intercultural competencies. Safonova (2010) further argues that "role-play situates vocabulary within its sociocultural context, equipping learners for real-world interaction" (p. 148). Our observations confirm that students not only acquired terms but also understood their pragmatic functions in professional IT settings.

Finally, the success of role-play suggests its scalability across proficiency levels and contexts. Harmer (2007) notes that "interactive, student-centered methods sustain motivation and mirror authentic language use," (p. 98) a principle borne out in both secondary and university classrooms. In sum, role-play emerges as a holistic methodology that simultaneously advances lexical, communicative, and affective learning objectives in Russian IT vocabulary instruction.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that role-play is a powerful method for teaching IT-related vocabulary in Russian language lessons. The significant gains in test scores and the increased spontaneous use of terms such as «отладка» (debugging) and «сеть передачи данных» (data network) confirm that situational, interactive learning promotes durable lexical acquisition (Galskova, 2006; Littlewood, 2004). Role-play also reduces affective barriers, as predicted by Thornbury (2002), fostering greater learner confidence and willingness to experiment with new vocabulary. Furthermore, peer negotiation and collaborative scenario design enhanced metalinguistic awareness and autonomy, in line with Pimenova's (2012) findings. By situating IT terms within realistic sociocultural contexts, role-play cultivates not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic and intercultural skills essential for professional communication (Safonova, 2010; Council of Europe, 2001). In sum,

integrating role-play into Russian IT vocabulary instruction offers a holistic, student-centered approach that effectively bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use.

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