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Simulation Method in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

In connection with a significant shift in educational processes towards computerization and internetization, the content and methodological approaches to teaching foreign languages have changed. The article considers the simulation method as part of communicative-oriented teaching. The purpose of this method in the modern educational environment is to provide experience that is as close as possible to "real life", where, using simulation, situations are created that allow students to "plunge" into the scenario and try out alternative strategies. The objective of the simulation method is to relieve stress and overcome the psychological barrier, which lead to the rapid acquisition of a foreign language. As an example, the article cites the Internet resource of linguo-didactic orientation "Time to speak Russian". It is intended for foreign students studying the Russian language, for their independent work, or for teachers while preparing for classes. The relevance of the research is due to the fact that traditional teaching methods are gradually fading into the background, and new, more modern technologies are replacing them.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the simulation method and gamification are considered the latest, powerful and innovative methods in the modern educational space, in particular, in communicative-oriented teaching. Simulation is a practical training technique that can be applied to many different disciplines and students, while replacing the real experience with the managed one. Using the "immersion" method, the simulation allows users to reproduce the essential aspects of the real world in a fully interactive mode. In this case, the term "immersion" means artificially created task and environment, as close as possible to the real world.

MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Simulation is a controlled representation of reality. Meaning a role-playing game or rehearsal in which the learning process is carried out artificially, simulation teaching is characterized as a training technique used to change the behavior of students, i.e. relieve stress and psychological barriers in learning a foreign language. Since training is carried out in "artificial situations", this method requires preliminary, thorough and systematic planning, which ensures the achievement of desired objectives. Richard D. Duke, professor at Brown University (USA) and founder of simulation and gamification as a scientific discipline, argues that simulation is "a conscious desire to reproduce the basic characteristics of the system" [Duke & Geurts, 2004, 1.5.2.] In this case, the simulation also allows users to visualize and edit the model. In addition to R. D. Duke, simulation in the educational process is considered by a number of scientists, such as: D. Kaufman, K. Aldrich, L. Ronald, A. Carstens, B. V.

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Fribourg, D. Gibson, D.A. Kolb, D. Krukal, R. Pastor, J. A. Rodriguez, R.D. Duke, K. Stapleton, T. Taylor-Wood, T.A. Aderson, S.D. Oskina, V.L. Averbukh and others.

Imitation, as the main method in training, using information and communication technologies, allows users to represent the simulated process in real time. Computer modeling tools have shown numerous advantages in education. Since computer technologies continue to improve, modeling becomes more exciting and continues to offer new applications in the educational space. Simulation tools offer many advantages over traditional teaching methods, since they are able to demonstrate abstract concepts, transform abstract concepts into interactive visual content, making it easier for students understanding between different parts of the system and providing users with feedback that allows them to improve their knowledge and skills.

Using a simulation model and visualization of the simulation results on the screen, students better understand the main features of processes and systems, solve complex logical problems, develop their intuition and logical thinking.

Main part

Simulation in training is a simplified, but accurate, reliable and dynamic model of reality that allows users to face problem situations, test solutions and actions, evaluate results and change them without causing harm. We cannot disagree that modeling has many advantages for training and practice: 1) the ability to repeat scenarios with specific learning objectives, 2) to practice different speech situations, 3) to use the trial and error method, 4) the ability to beat situations encountered in everyday life [Dieker et al., 2007]. In terms of skills development, modeling outcomes, combined with analysis and reflection, provide feedback to improve results and evaluate actions [Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Lyons, 2012; Ulrich, 1997].

Simulation includes play, exploration and a new discovery, thereby affecting all elements of training [Huizinga, 1938/1955]. She is characterized by creative design, game form for completing tasks, multimedia, interactivity, modular structure. Simulators differ from games in that there is no obvious competition in them. Instead of trying to "win", simulation participants take on roles and actions, without harming anyone, which is especially necessary when working with difficult students or those with special needs. [Ferry et al., 2004].

We are directly interested in those programs that could be used by foreign students studying Russian for independent work or by teachers while preparing for classes. An example of such a linguo-didactic resource is the Internet resource "Time to

Speak Russian" (speak-russian.cie.ru). The developers of this resource claim that this program helps students overcome their psychological barrier at the initial stage of learning a foreign language. This is due to the serial animated films posted on this platform, whose characters are made of plasticine. This "plasticine reality" makes it possible to take heroes not very seriously, as you can laugh at them and ironize. The program contains 11 sections: main course, grammar guide, testing, dictionaries, etc. All sections of the course are interconnected and at the same time autonomous. They can be used in parallel with the main section and independently of it. The main section "Time to speak Russian" is the main course, which consists of 10 lessons: 1) "At the airport"; 2) "At the hotel"; 3) "In the room"; 4) "In the restaurant"; 5) "Conversation by telephone"; 6) "Currency exchange"; 7) "On foot or by transport"; 8) "John and Mary met"; 9) "Pay a visit"; 10) "John and Leva visiting Mary." These lessons are parts of a multi-part animated film that are connected by a common plot and recurring characters. At the very beginning of the lesson, students get acquainted with the topic of the lesson, with the constructions and grammatical topics that are subsequently worked out, with the cross-cultural materials presented in a part of the film. The lesson consists of several scenes. The key part of the lesson is watching a video fragment. The episodes of the film are based on situational and thematic dialogs.

After watching a fragment of the film, the student is offered to do various lexico-grammatical and communicative exercises, based on the sections "Dictionary" and "Grammar commentary". The lesson can be completed by a verification test (listening, grammar, reading, writing) or a module test. The "Country Studies" section contains materials on the realities of Russian life and helps to develop reading and speaking skills. Thanks to the "Media Library", students can develop perception and listening comprehension skills through listening to modern and folk songs, excerpts from popular Russian films. The "Library" contains texts that were specially written for the training course.

As an example, we will consider a fragment of the lesson "In the restaurant". This is the fourth lesson, consisting of two scenes: "In the restaurant. Menu" and "What for breakfast". Scene 1 includes preview tasks, namely, learning new words (*names of dishes* (*omelet, pelmeni, cake...*), ingredients, sequence of serving dishes (*appetizers, first courses, dessert*) and expressions (*Do you want more...? I want/like/don't like...*), their working out in interactive exercises (tasks for correspondence). The following is "viewing" a dialogue, which can be reproduced with or without Russian subtitles. If listening causes difficulties for students, then you can use the option "Show dialogue in a separate window". This

dialogue simulation shows the situation in the restaurant. The heroes of the dialogue are the waiter and the client. After "viewing" tasks for understanding are offered. Additional options like a dictionary (the words from the lesson are sorted in alphabetical order), a grammar guide (in this lesson the emphasis is on the Dative case) and interactive (grammar, phonetic, speech, writing, lexical) exercises are also present.

Using this resource helps to master the lexical minimum (about 1000 units), learn how to express a request, desire, disagreement, etc., understand Russian language by ear and maintain a conversation, and adapted texts of everyday and socio-cultural nature will help students quickly understand Russian culture and mentality.

Often, simulation is also used in classes in Russian as a foreign language without online resources, but using an interactive approach. Undoubtedly, role-playing games and simulations are forms of learning based on experience [Russell & Shepherd, 2010]. Students "try on" various roles, interact with each other, performing certain tasks. In our case, we do not identify the simulation method with role-playing, since we believe that simulation is a broader concept. Simulations mimic real life situations, while in a role-playing game, participants play characters from real everyday life [Scarcella, R. et al., 1990]. Thus, we can conclude that the simulation is a realistic situation, the role of the student in which may not be as significant and noticeable as in a role-playing game. Many scientists, such as B. Berry, G. Trapp and others, speak of "role-playing simulation" as a new phenomenon, where simulation is combined with role-playing.

An example of a simulation lesson in Russian as a foreign language can be a studying a topic by students in the framework of speech communication disciplines – "National Cuisine (International Cuisine)". Today, numerous universities, colleges and courses offer training and retraining in the areas of "Tourism and hotel business", "Restaurant business". Undoubtedly, the topic of food is very relevant, and culinary tourism is gaining popularity every year. Simulation with this topic can be played in two situations: 1) in the language environment (in Russia), where, for example, a foreign chef needs to know the Russian language to present a dish; 2) outside the language environment, where the emphasis is on managers, waiters, i.e. on all staff. The function of a moderator can be performed by a teacher or student who knows Russian better than anyone else in the group. The work is carried out in several stages.

To create a simulation, each student needs to be given a specific role, a speech task and provided with grammatical material (in our example, we consider students with a level of knowledge of the Russian language A2+, and the words and expressions that students need to know at this stage of study are taken from the vocabulary minimum for Russian as a foreign language. The "plus" mark indicates additional professionally oriented vocabulary).

The first stage is aimed at preparatory work. This is an important part of the work, as students lack the skills for spontaneous and free communication. There are preliminary classes, where, for illustrative purposes, new lexical and grammatical material is introduced based on the situation. Dialogical unities (question and answer) are also considered and worked out. This is necessary for subsequent successful simulation and spontaneous communication.

The second stage is distribution of roles. It is recommended to give the student a specific role in advance, as students whose level of knowledge of the Russian language A2-A2+ have difficulties in highly specialized vocabulary.

The roles we offer are:

1) Waiters. Their main duty is to serve guests (*Hello, can I accept your order? Have you already made your choice? How about dessert/drinks?*), they also need to know the composition and name of dishes (*name of seafood, meat and their cooking method, name of fruits, vegetables, pastas, sauces, etc., as well as orientation in alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. Ex.: This dish consists of..., served cold / hot, along with... sauce, on a bed of ..., with the addition of... As a drink, I would recommend you take...*), their priority (*first course, aperitif, main course, dessert*), to solve problems if there are any problems with the dish (*Sorry, I will change the dish*).

2) Clients. Their task is to book a table (*Hello, I would like to book/reserve a table*), select it (*Do you have a free table for two/three persons? Can we move to another table? Is there a free table near the window?*), order dishes (*Be kind, this dish. For me, please... Do you have a vegetarian menu? Do you have a menu in English, French...?*), pay the bill (*Bill, please. Give me my bill, please. Can I have a bill, please? Can I pay by card/in cash?*), know the name of the main foodstuff (*What are the ingredients of this dish? What is included in this dish?*), make a request, dissatisfaction, file a complaint (*Tell me, please, where can I wash my hands? Can I take…/Can you wrap it with me? Please, bring another chair/high chair? This dish is cold. Call the manager!*).

3) Head waiter in a restaurant. His/her tasks include reserving a table (*On what day do you want to reserve and at what time? How many persons? In the smoking or non-smoking area?*), receiving guests (*Hello, we are glad to see you in our restaurant. Did you book a table, what time? What name and how many persons? I will lead*

you to your table), organization of the filling of the hall (*Unfortunately, all the tables are occupied, but you can sit at the bar. As soon as the table is empty, I will change your seat*).

4) Manager. One of his/her main functions is to resolve conflict situations (*Our restaurant apologizes to you. We will solve your problem immediately. Your dinner will be at the expense of our establishment*).

5) Cook. In addition to cooking, the cook holds master classes, talks about the concept of his/her dish, presents his/her author's menu (*Let me introduce you… I have developed my own menu… In this dish, there are some notes… My main ingredient is…*).

At will, for completeness and realism, a restaurant concept is created. A menu is developed (in our case, it may be their national dishes), all the necessary cutlery, if possible costumes, are brought. The third stage involves modeling. A situation that is as close as possible to real life is created. The best way to quickly activate students' speech skills, in our opinion, is to create a conflict situation that requires an immediate decision. In our case, these may be situations in which the guest is not satisfied with the food, service, with disputes and conflicts between customers, a mistake in the reservation, and, consequently, refusal to provide a table and others.

Here are some examples of possible dialogs:

1.

C. – Hello, we booked a table for two persons at 21-00.

HW. – Hello, what is the name of the reservation?

C. – Garcia Roberto.

HW. – Unfortunately, you are not on the list.

C. – How not!!! Knowing that your restaurant is always full, I booked a table a week ago. My wife and I came to celebrate our anniversary, and you tell me there is no reservation. Can you do something?

HW. – Unfortunately, I can't help you with anything, all the tables are occupied.

C. – Then I demand to call a manager!

M. – Hello, what is the problem?

C. – I booked a table in your restaurant a week ago, and they tell me that my reservation is missing! They refuse to give us a table, saying that there are no seats. What does it mean?! I read a lot of positive reviews about your restaurant, but as it turned out… you spoiled us all evening!

M. – ёмеп

2.

C. – I've been waiting for my dish for more than an hour, this is outrageous! Your waiters work very slowly, no self-discipline! I might be late for the airport because of you.

M. – Excuse me, please, we'll fix everything right now.

Cook. – Hello, I'm the chef of the restaurant. Sorry for the delay, we had a nuisance in the kitchen. Here is your soup. In order to at least somehow make amends for our guilt, I want to treat you with my signature dish.

C. – What is it made of?

Cook. – This is a duck breast with a caramelized pear, on a bed of vegetables: paprika, zucchini, tomatoes and pumpkin puree. I really hope you enjoy this dish.

Do not forget about monologue speech. For our topic, this is necessary for the presentation of the dish: historical facts, techniques and the method of its preparation, ingredients, benefits and harm to the body.

For homework, we offer independent work using video technologies, as the growing prevalence of video in everyday life is reflected in the educational environment. We are not talking about training programs containing video materials that are part of electronic teaching materials. Our material is authentic videos that are widely distributed on the Internet. This type of work allows students to develop educational and cognitive competence, i.e. those skills that are necessary for the implementation of independent educational activities. This is necessary so that students can "engage outside classroom activities using modern technologies, share opinions and impressions" [Zolotykh, Tsiu, 2018, p. 455]. As noted above, our videos are not methodological materials, for the simulation we use excerpts from culinary programs, series or blogs of famous chefs that can be used for educational purposes. As an example, you can use the series "Kitchen" or "Chef", the program "MasterChef", etc.

This task is undoubtedly creative, and for simulation we offer two techniques: "sound on, vision off" and "vision on, sound off". The first technique involves turning off the sound, but using an image. In this case, the simulation takes place with voice acting, where the ability to predict allows the student to navigate the situation. Character dubbing helps students get into the role, and therefore, overcome the language barrier faster. The second technique (turning off the image, but using the sound), let's call it "incomplete" simulation, involves language forecasting. Video clips must be selected by the teacher in advance. Students are invited to describe where the action takes place, what the guests look like, what people eat, what menu they are offered, how the dishes look, etc.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that simulation is a simplified, but accurate, reliable and dynamic model of reality, implemented in the form of a system [Sauvé, et al., 2007], where effective

modeling creates a sense of realism that makes the user, in a sense, consider the simulated world as real [Dieker, Rodriguez, et al., 2014]. To succeed, the simulation must be based on a sense of reality or create a whole new reality. The teacher unobtrusively monitors the process. In an ideal scenario, the simulation should correspond to situations that students may encounter in real life – in the household or professional areas. Realism can be enhanced by adapting the classroom to mimic the environment in which students are "located". The simulation method reveals the creative potential of the student, supports his/her motivation, helps to relieve tension in the classroom, which leads to quick communication, and helps to stimulate educational and cognitive activity.

Using online resources in a simulation approach, in particular, "Time to Speak Russian", allows users to implement specific linguo-didactic tasks in the system of teaching Russian as a foreign language for foreign students at all levels of Russian language acquisition, namely introduction to Russian culture, traditions and mentality of Russian people.

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