

A JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF COMMUNICATION: VIRTUAL TOURS FOR FUTURE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on how virtual tours can help improve the communication skills of future Russian as a foreign language teacher. The paper presents a variety of methodological techniques, such as organizing dialogues, conducting role-playing games, completing text assignments, analyzing audio and video materials, and developing presentations.

Keywords: Exercises, communication skills, Russian as a foreign language, role-playing games, tasks, virtual excursions.

INTRODUCTION

To become a good Russian teacher in a foreign language group, it's crucial for students to hone their communication skills. This is where virtual tours come in – they're a modern and highly effective way to do just that! They offer the opportunity to literally "immerse" themselves in Russian culture and language, practicing communication in a variety of realistic situations. In this article, we explore which exercises and tasks can be used with virtual tours to help future Russian language teachers improve their communication skills.

Virtual tours are becoming a valuable pedagogical tool, not only deepening students' knowledge of the Russian language, culture, and history, but also intensively developing their communicative and linguistic skills. The use of modern technologies expands opportunities for interactive engagement with language material, offering students access to a wide range of resources for practical application. This approach demonstrates particular relevance in the context of distance education and the need to develop innovative teaching methods.

TYPES OF EXERCISES AND TASKS FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Developing communication skills is impossible without actively engaging students in language learning through a variety of exercises. This allows them not only to master the material but also to express themselves confidently and competently. Virtual tours offer opportunities to use specific exercises and tasks that are particularly effective in stimulating the development of speech and language skills.

Question and answer tasks. Question-and-answer tasks are one of the most popular and productive tools for developing oral communication. During virtual tours, when students explore various cultural and historical sites, these tasks play a key role. They not only help refresh existing knowledge and skills but also actively motivate students to formulate their own questions and answers in the target language. Imagine a virtual tour of Moscow: students could be divided into groups, with some acting as tour guides answering questions about the

significance of historical monuments, and others as tourists asking questions about the places they "visit."

Examples of questions that might be asked of students: • What is the history of the Moscow Kremlin? • What famous monuments are located in Red Square? • Why did Peter the Great choose the site for the construction of St. Petersburg? These tasks allow students to develop quick response skills, improve grammar skills, and enrich their vocabulary.

Role-playing. Role-playing is a great way for students to put their language skills into practice in a variety of situations. For example, during virtual tours, they can try their hand at being tour guides, tourists, or historians. This helps them develop their speaking skills by communicating as they would in real life.

Example assignment: Students can visit the Hermitage Museum and assign roles:

Tour guide – answers tourists' questions, explains the history of the museum, and the significance of its collections.

Tourists – ask questions about works of art and express their impressions of their visit to the museum.

Historians – provide a more in-depth explanation of the significance of certain works of art.

These assignments develop oral communication skills and also help students deepen their knowledge of the country's cultural characteristics and history.

Text assignments and written descriptions. Developing writing skills is an important aspect of learning. Virtual tours can serve as an excellent tool for assigning written assignments, in which students must express their thoughts and impressions of what they saw. Students can be asked to write descriptions of the objects they "visited," using new words and expressions, which not only helps them improve their written language but also deepen their knowledge of the Russian language and culture.

Example assignment: Write a description of a cultural landmark, such as the Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower, highlighting important historical facts and architectural features. You could also ask students to write about their virtual tour of St. Petersburg, describing all the important things they saw and learned.

These tasks help expand students' vocabulary and improve their skills in creating coherent texts.

Listening and Analysis. Working with audiovisual materials is an important part of learning. Virtual tours often include audio files and videos that can be used for listening and further analysis. Students can listen to guides, analyze the information, answer questions, or write summaries.

Example assignment: Students listen to a story about St. Petersburg and answer the following questions:

- What historical events are associated with this city?
- What architectural features of St. Petersburg distinguish it from other cities around the world?

This type of assignment develops listening comprehension skills and helps students focus on key points and elements of the text.

Presentation Creation. Creating presentations is an excellent way to develop not only communication skills but also organizational ones. Students can create presentations in which they describe cultural objects using images, text, and maps. In the process, they learn how to structure information, visualize it, and present it to an audience. Example assignment: Create a presentation about the Tretyakov Gallery, featuring information about the gallery's most famous paintings and its significance to Russian culture. The presentation should include not only text but also photographs of the paintings, exhibition plans, and other visual materials.

BENEFITS OF USING VIRTUAL TOURS

Using virtual tours in the educational process offers a number of significant advantages for students studying in the Russian as a Foreign Language program. These benefits relate to language practice, cultural competence, student motivation, and the use of modern technology. Let's examine each of these in more detail.

Interactivity and student engagement. One of the most striking advantages of virtual tours is their high degree of interactivity. Unlike traditional lectures and textbooks, virtual tours provide the opportunity for active student participation. They can "visit" various cultural and historical sites, engaging in discussions, asking questions, and interacting with the materials. For example, students can take a virtual tour of Moscow and answer questions about the history of famous monuments like Red Square or the Moscow Kremlin. Each tour site will be accompanied by audiovisual materials, allowing students to not only see but also hear the story of the place, asking questions in real time. Virtual tours allow students to actively participate in the learning process rather than just passive observers. This promotes better learning, increases interest in the topic, and improves student motivation.

Accessibility of educational resources. Virtual tours provide access to sites that would be difficult for students to visit in real life, especially if they are located far from Russia or in other countries. This is especially important in the context of globalization and the need for distance learning. Students can visit museums, cultural and historical monuments, and explore Russian nature and architecture without having to travel. For example, students studying Russian language courses abroad can take a virtual tour of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg without traveling to Russia. The accessibility of such tours makes them an indispensable teaching tool for international groups when physical presence is not possible.

Developing cultural competence. Virtual tours allow students to gain a deeper understanding of Russian culture, history, art, and architecture. Immersion in the cultural context not only helps with language acquisition but also develops cultural competence—an essential element of foreign language learning. For example, a virtual tour of St. Petersburg can introduce students to the city's cultural and historical aspects, its unique features, and its traditions.

After the tour, students can be asked questions about cultural differences, the Russian mentality, and how culture influences language and communication.

Developing IT skills. Modern virtual tours often incorporate a variety of technologies, from interactive maps and 3D objects to video materials and virtual tour creation apps. Students not only gain cultural insights but also master digital tools that can be useful in their future careers and personal lives. For example, students can use virtual tour platforms like Google Arts & Culture to create their own virtual field trips. They can select sites for the tour, gather information about them, and then present their findings to a group using presentations, videos, and maps. In this way, students develop skills in using modern technology, which is an important aspect of their preparation and competitiveness in the job market.

Increasing student motivation. Virtual tours can significantly boost student motivation, as they provide a unique opportunity to "visit" places they've only read or heard about. This makes the learning process more engaging and lively. Using modern technology helps students see the real objects they're learning about in class, creating additional motivation for learning. For example, a virtual tour of the Tretyakov Gallery might engage students by allowing them to see famous works of art and even "discuss" them with other tour participants. Through such activities, students can deepen their knowledge and practice the language in real-life situations, significantly increasing their motivation.

FLEXIBILITY IN LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Virtual tours allow instructors to be flexible in organizing the learning process. Assignments can be adapted to students' varying levels of knowledge and interests. They can be used for both individual and group lessons, giving instructors ample opportunity to create a personalized approach to learning. For example, a teacher could organize a virtual field trip that would be suitable for both beginners and advanced students. Beginners could be offered simple tasks, such as writing a short description of the site, while more experienced students could be offered challenging assignments that require in-depth analysis of historical context or interaction with other students in a debate format.

Thus, virtual tours are becoming a valuable tool in training future teachers of Russian as a foreign language. Their use significantly expands educational opportunities, improves student motivation, develops their communicative and cultural competencies, and helps them master modern technologies. Virtual tours make learning more engaging, accessible, and effective, thereby facilitating successful preparation for teaching.

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