

**TEACHING READING AND LISTENING IN RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (A1-B1) CLASSES USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY**

**ENSINANDO LEITURA E ESCUTA EM AULAS DE RUSSO COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA (A1-B1) USANDO TECNOLOGIA DIGITAL**

**ENSEÑANZA DE LECTURA Y ESCUCHA EN RUSO COMO IDIOMA EXTRANJERO (A1-B1) CLASES UTILIZANDO TECNOLOGÍA DIGITAL**

Anna Sergeevna IVANOVA <sup>1</sup>

Maria Alekseevna LONTSKAYA <sup>2</sup>

Inna Nikolaevna PAKHOMOVA <sup>3</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The present article is devoted to the problem of teaching reading and listening in Russian as a foreign language (A1-B1) classes using digital technology. The developed skills and abilities in speech activity based on the socio-cultural and everyday social spheres of communication allow Russian language students to not only easily enter the Russian social and cultural space but also further carry out their activities in the educational-professional and professional communication spheres. The novelty of the study is due to the relevance of the selected topic and lies in the fact that the study involved analyzing Russian and foreign works on the studied problem, identifying the main characteristics of the target audience, as well as factors influencing the organization of teaching the Russian language to foreign specialists at the pre-university stage, and accounting for said characteristics and factors in developing the model of profession-oriented teaching.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital technology. Russian as a foreign language. Pre-university education. General proficiency. Listening. Reading.

**RESUMO:** *O presente artigo dedica-se ao problema do ensino da leitura e da escuta em aulas de russo como língua estrangeira (A1-B1) usando tecnologia digital. As habilidades e habilidades desenvolvidas na atividade da fala com base nas esferas socioculturais e sociais cotidianas da comunicação permitem que os alunos de língua russa não apenas entrem facilmente no espaço social e cultural russo, mas também realizem suas atividades de comunicação nas esferas educacional-profissional e profissional. A novidade do estudo se deve à relevância do tema selecionado e reside no fato de o estudo envolver analisar obras russas e estrangeiras sobre o problema estudado, identificando as principais características do público-alvo, bem como fatores que influenciam na organização do ensino da língua russa para especialistas estrangeiros na fase pré-universitária, e levando em consideração essas características e fatores no desenvolvimento do modelo de ensino orientado para a profissão.*

<sup>1</sup> Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow - Russia. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5100-0305>. E-mail: [ann.s\\_ivanova@mail.ru](mailto:ann.s_ivanova@mail.ru)

<sup>2</sup> Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow - Russia. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6348-096X>. E-mail: [lontskaya.m.a@mail.ru](mailto:lontskaya.m.a@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup> Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow - Russia. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3838-5888>. E-mail: [i.pakhomoffa@mail.ru](mailto:i.pakhomoffa@mail.ru)

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Tecnologia digital. Russo como língua estrangeira. Educação pré-universitária. Proficiência geral. Escuta. Leitura.*

**RESUMEN:** *El presente artículo está dedicado al problema de la enseñanza de la lectura y la escucha en las clases de ruso como lengua extranjera (A1-B1) utilizando tecnología digital. Las habilidades y habilidades desarrolladas en la actividad del habla basadas en las esferas socioculturales y sociales cotidianas de la comunicación permiten a los estudiantes de lengua rusa no solo ingresar fácilmente al espacio social y cultural ruso, sino también llevar a cabo sus actividades en la comunicación educativo-profesional y profesional. esferas. La novedad del estudio se debe a la relevancia del tema seleccionado y radica en que el estudio implicó analizar obras rusas y extranjeras sobre el problema estudiado, identificando las principales características del público objetivo, así como los factores que influyen en la organización de Enseñar el idioma ruso a especialistas extranjeros en la etapa preuniversitaria y tener en cuenta dichas características y factores en el desarrollo del modelo de enseñanza orientada a la profesión.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Tecnología digital. Ruso como lengua extranjera. Educación preuniversitaria. Competencia general. Comprensión auditive. Lectura.*

## Introduction

Due to the changes in the content of higher professional education caused by transformations in the social, political, and economic spheres of social life, the approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language has changed as well.

The Russian language has become fully understood as a means of communication, mutual understanding, and interaction of people, a means of becoming familiar with Russian national culture.

The main goal of teaching Russian as a foreign language is the objective of teaching a foreign student to speak Russian fully and fluently. Specialists in teaching Russian as a foreign language see the solution to this problem in developing a high level of students' communicative competency that will allow them to communicate in various situations. The communicative competency is a complex and multifaceted concept including language and speech skills and abilities, sociocultural and pragmatic competencies, and speech strategies and tactics making a student ready and able to use Russian as a foreign language in intercultural interaction. The formation of students' communicative competency at different stages of training involves the use of various didactic instruments among which computer-based teaching aids occupy a special place.

The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in the process of training foreign applicants of Russian universities currently presents an obligatory prerequisite

for the intensification and optimization of the educational process. The types of ICT actively used in teaching foreign languages include electronic textbooks, interactive teaching aids (simulators), virtual environments, computer presentations (demonstrations), universal learning environments and tools for creating educational materials, electronic databases, reference and information sources (online translators, dictionaries), electronic libraries, electronic periodicals, electronic collections (collections of audios, photos, video files).

The effectiveness of the educational process is contingent on the correspondence of the goals and content of the proposed language courses to the educational needs of the target audience. This factor is especially relevant in teaching foreign citizens, specifically in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Thus, the success of teaching foreign students largely depends on the properly structured training course: it must be effective, intensive, and interesting at the same time to sustain students' motivation for learning the foreign language in the indicated difficult conditions.

When it comes to ICT, the existing programs for learning Russian as a foreign language provide a complex approach to the formation of the general communicative competency while targeted focus on the development of such difficult types of speech activity as reading and listening which call for special attention due to their importance is lacking. This explains our interest in developing a digital model of teaching said types of speech activity.

## **Methods**

The method of teaching a foreign language distinguishes four main types of speech activity: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are the receptive types of speech activity while speaking and writing are the productive types. The process of receptive activity involves perception, processing, and assimilation of information and productive activity is aimed at expressing opinions and information in the verbal or written form.

The method of teaching foreign languages including Russian as a foreign language also distinguishes visual perception actualized in the process of reading texts and auditory perception (hearing) actualized when listening to speech. Reading and listening are the skills that are fundamental in learning communication in a foreign language. They are united by common aspects of the functioning of psychological mechanisms: probabilistic forecasting, attention, memory, and comprehending information. According to A.A. Leontiev's speech perception theory, a signal incoming from the outside world is perceived by a person via visual

and auditory receptors. The recipient then establishes its meaning by transforming it into internal speech and memorizing the obtained information (LEONTIEV, 2005).

We will proceed to examine the characteristics of listening as a type of speech activity in greater detail.

M.V. Liakhovitskii characterized listening as “an analytical and synthetic process in processing an acoustic signal resulting in the comprehension of the perceived information” (LIAKHOVITSKII, 1981). P. Kostera views listening as a process of perceiving and deciphering the perceived verbal information (KOSTERA, 1986). E.I. Passov states that “listening is hearing with understanding or understanding speech from hearing” (PASSOV 1989; 1996). Similar definitions are presented by G.V. Rogova and I.N. Vereshchagina. The authors distinguish the following stages in the process of listening – “the ability to differentiate the perceived sounds, integrate them into semantic complexes, keep them in memory while listening, carry out probabilistic forecasting and understand the perceived sound chain based on the communication situation” (ROGOVA, 1988).

Foreign methodologists use the term “listening” interpreted by J. Egan as the listener’s ability to perceive and understand information regardless of the verbal or non-verbal form of presentation (EGAN, 1990).

I.A. Zimniaia suggests that in the process of deciphering a verbal message, the recipient goes through different levels of recognition:

“1) The level of recognition at which language signals are compared according to their physical characteristics;

2) The level of intelligibility where the sound combinations are perceived;

3) The level of semantic perception which is the highest level” (ZIMNIAIA, 1985).

L.Iu. Kulish believes that the quality of information perception depends on concentration at the moment of listening. “In turn, attention depends on motivation, the mental and physical state of a person, attention and focus determine the memorization of the perceived material” (KULISH, 1991).

In modern conditions, when users commonly refer to Internet resources, especially podcasts and blogs, the importance of listening as an aspect of learning a foreign language rises significantly. Tim Murphy views listening as a priority aspect of teaching since language is, first of all, communication in the verbal form and only after that – in the written one. However, Murphy also argues that listening, speaking, reading, and writing are inseparable and each aspect contributes to the development of other ones (MURPHY, 1995).

In the real-time process of teaching foreign languages, the types of speech activity must not be separated as they are constantly interacting with one another.

It has been proven that listening significantly affects the ability to produce written speech, as indicated by T.V. Rozanova in a comparative analysis of the development of written language in non-impaired and deaf children (ROZANOVA, 1985). The works of I.A. Zimniaia (1988), I.M. Popov, and M.A. Akopova (1999) also explore the issue of the combination of speech activity types most efficient in achieving the maximum effect in the learning process.

Let us consider in more detail the features of reading as a type of speech activity.

The main goal of reading is deriving and understanding the information contained in written text (SHCHUKIN, 2011). In the process of reading, the reader not only perceives information but also carries out its semantic processing. As indicated by S.K. Folomkina, this process results in “a certain level of understanding of the text characterized by completeness, accuracy, and depth” (FOLOMKINA, 2005). Thus, reading is a difficult and complex type of speech activity. The meaning created by the reader is not accidental as it is determined by the norms adopted in the language. Knowing these norms gains special importance when it comes to reading in a foreign language, since the reader’s success in recreating the meaning intended in the written text is directly contingent on numerous factors: the level of proficiency in the foreign language, knowledge of the peculiarities of the construction of texts in the given foreign language, the ability to recognize the genre features of specific texts. Many researchers (GRABE; STOLLER, 2011; XI CHEN; DRONJIK, 2015; SARIG, 1987; SALATACI, 2002; FOLOMKINA, 2005, etc.) consider reading in a foreign language a much more difficult process compared to reading in the native language, because it involves constant interaction of the two languages. K. Koda believes that teaching reading in a foreign language has to account for three major factors: 1) reading is a complex and multifaceted process implying the presence of a wide range of skills; 2) the formation of each of these skills calls for certain linguistic knowledge; and 3) in the process of reading in a foreign language, reading skills develop in the process of interaction of two languages — the native and the foreign (KODA, 2007).

The changing learning conditions and the shift of accent towards students’ independent work calls methodologists to revisit the previously developed methods and technologies for teaching reading in Russian as a foreign language and create new effective techniques aimed at developing skills that will allow the reader to isolate, analyze, and critically rethink information received from different sources.

## **Results and discussion**

When developing the principles for creating a model for teaching reading and listening, we proceeded from the following provisions:

Listening in Russian as a foreign language is one of the speech-activity types that are the most difficult to develop. The complexity of developing auditory skills in foreign students is determined by the complexity of developing listening mechanisms, the specificity of the Russian phonetic system, particularly the presence of consonantal sounds contrasted in terms of being voiced/voiceless and hard/soft, vowel reduction, the intonation of sentences. These phonetic phenomena present a certain complication for many foreign students as such phenomena are either absent or partially present in their native language.

In the modern conditions of teaching Russian as a foreign language, reading is a fundamental type of speech activity at levels A1, A2, and B1 since it serves a double purpose: reading itself as a means of acquiring information for further use but also as a basis for the construction of oral or written statements. This provision is easily substantiated by the example of tasks for Typical tests in which the test taker has to read the vocabulary and grammar test tasks, read the text and retell it in the speaking test, and read the text and write an essay using the information from it.

Listening and reading have similar speech mechanisms and units of functioning so it is quite natural to combine these speech activity types into a single component of the teaching model.

The development of the communicative competency in listening and reading is impossible without forming reliable listening and reading mechanisms in a student allowing them to reach a high speed of information perception making it possible to proceed to learn how to extract the meaning of the read/heard text.

An analysis of a range of distance programs, electronic textbooks, and training instruments demonstrates that there are no training tools aimed specifically at the development of skills in the technique of listening and reading. The model proposed by us will fill this gap in the system of teaching Russian as a foreign language to foreign students.

In the modern learning conditions a model for the development of the communicative competency in listening must be digital, since this format has several advantages:

- Greater variability in the time of learning and control;
- The use of the model regardless of a student's location;
- Familiarity with the use of digital resources in training;

The digital format encourages the user to self-study and allows for a gradual transition to the modern level of education based on information technology and to implement a flexible individual educational trajectory, including the opportunity for a student to go through an electronic lesson again, if necessary, as well as to receive an objective assessment of knowledge.

The proposed model comprises several “steps” corresponding to the levels of training – A1, A2, and B1. All exercises are time-restricted and have a minimum threshold for passing (the number of mistakes). The exercises focused on the development of the technique of reading and listening involve a language exercise base that changes if a student makes a lot of mistakes or wants to repeat the exercise. This system of exercise organization allows diversifying the content of the training instrument and avoiding repeated interaction with the same linguistic content.

The typology of exercises presented in the model allows for meeting all the aforementioned goals and objectives of the training program. The text content of the model for teaching reading and listening was organized using the ISpring program. To illustrate the format of text content presentation, we provide examples of some types of exercises demonstrating the form of implementation of the model. The structure, content, and lexical content of exercises are developed following the goals and objectives of each stage of training.

The A1 stage is predominantly filled with exercises for practicing the automatism of reading and listening techniques. These tasks focus on the development of listening and reading mechanisms. The linguistic content of exercise options includes both the vocabulary of the A1 level and unfamiliar words. This aspect allows for practicing the skill of reading and listening to unfamiliar linguistic content while understanding and memorizing the words is not necessary. Unfamiliar linguistic material serves as a means of practicing and reinforcing the skills in said types of speech activity. Dialogues and texts presented in the verbal or written form are introduced at this stage to develop the mechanisms of perceiving and understanding information.

### **Let us examine some examples of exercises presented in the declared model and offered at the A1 level**

#### **Types of listening exercises**

*Exercise 1.* Listen to the pairs of words. (2 presentations at a slow pace.)

If you hear two of the same word, write the “+” sign and if you hear two different words, write the “-” sign.

Words: tom-dom, pyl-był, fint-fint, shest'-zhest', shar-shar, klub-glup, dal-dal', neft'-neft', zhivot-zhivut, poet-poiut, sledi-sledy.

**Exercise 2.** Read the words, listen to, and mark the syllables/words you hear (2 presentations)

The student sees:	The student hears:
le[lə]-le, niu-nu, sa-za, ka-ga, god-kot, fara-para, ma-mia, dom, Dima, mach, minus, most	le[lə], nu, sa, ga, kot, fara, mia, Dima, minus, most

Source: Devised by the authors

### Types of reading exercises

**Exercise 1.** Read and find the words that do not fit in the list. You have 8 minutes to read and choose.

Student sees:

Iabloki [apples], grushi [pears], arbuz [watermelon], ananas [pineapple], lozhka [spoon], banany [bananas], limony [lemons], apelsiny [oranges], karty [cards].

**Exercise 2.** Read the words and find the words of the same thematic group. You have 10 minutes.

Option 1. Clothing.

- 1) polotentse [towel] 2) perchatki [gloves] 3) shkaf [cupboard] 4) platie [dress]  
 5) rubashka [shirt] 6) noski [socks] 7) stol [table] 8) sharf [scarf]  
 8) chashka [cup] 9) avtobus [bus] 10) marka [stamp]

### Level A2

At the A2 level, the methodologists are faced with the task of supporting the developed reading and listening mechanisms which presents the focus of the exercise options of this stage. The linguistic content of exercise options includes both the vocabulary of this level and new words. The inclusion of unfamiliar words in the content of exercises meets the objective of developing the ability to transfer a skill to new language material and teaches the student to work with unfamiliar vocabulary. At this stage, much attention is paid to the formation of the skill of comprehending what has been heard/read and preserving it in the operative or long-term memory.

Below we provide examples of some types of listening exercises.



**Exercise 1.** Listen to the words and texts. Determine the number of words with the [shch] sound. (2 presentations)

Option 1.

Shchuka v ozere zhila

Cherviachka s kriuchka sniala.

Navarila shchuka shchei,

Priglasila trekh ershei.

Govorili vsem ershi:

“Shchi u shchuki khoroshi!”

**Exercise 2.** Listen to the dialogue and choose a word that is hard to hear. (2 presentations, noises in the audio recording are highlighted in the text)

The student sees:	The student hears:
Privet, Ira! [Hi, Ira!] Zdravstvui, Luis! [Hello, Luis!] 1)Kuda ty .....?V sportzal? [Where are you .....? To the gym?] 2)Net, ia idu..... Khochu kupit novoe palto. [No, I am going ..... I want to buy a new coat.] 1. A) poidesh [going to go] B) idesh [going] C) zhdesch [waiting] 2. A) v magazine [in a shop] B) k magazinu [towards a shop] C) v magazin [to a shop] Otvette na voprosy: [Answer the questions:] 3. Kto govorit? [Who is speaking?] A) Mat i syn [A mother and a son] B) Druzia [Friends] C) Student i prepodavatel [A student and a teacher]  4. Gde oni govoriat? [Where are they talking?] A) V magazine [In a shop] B) Na ulitse [On the street] C) V sportzale [In the gym]	Privet, Ira! [Hi, Ira!] Zdravstvui, Luis! [Hello, Luis!] Kuda ty <b>idesh</b> ? V sportzal? [Where are you <b>going</b> ? To the gym?] Net, ia idu <b>v magazin</b> . Khochu kupit novoe palto. [No, I am going <b>to a shop</b> . I want to buy a new coat.]

Source: Devised by the authors

## Types of reading exercises

**Exercise 1.** Read the collocations and find pairs of synonyms. You have 6 minutes

The student sees:	
1. truditsia [to labor]	A) issledovat [to research]
2. izuchiat [to study]	B) soobshchiat [to let know]
3. rasskazyvat [to tell]	C) rabotat [to work]
4. prosit [to plead]	D) umoliat [to beg]
5. sprosit [to ask]	E) zadat vopros [to ask a question]
6. liubit [to love]	F) nravitsia [to be liked]

Source: Devised by the authors

**Exercise 2.** Read the sentences.

Find and select the words that answer the questions. You have 10 minutes.

Option 1. Kakoi? [What kind?]

1. Eto novyi roman. [This is a new novel.]
2. Eto zhurnal "Nauka i zhizn". [This is the "Science and Life" journal.]
3. Eto rasskaz o liubvi. [This is a love story.]
4. Eto nash uchitel muzyki. [This is our music teacher.]
5. Etot film my smotreli po televizoru. [We watched this film on TV.]
6. My slushali doklad s interesom. [We listened to the report with interest.]

## Level B1

At this stage of learning, the main direction of training is working with the substantial part of the text content and supporting the developed skills of fast reading and understanding of the sounding information. Exercises include dialogues reflecting the features of the functioning of Russian colloquial speech, understanding the communicative roles of the interlocutors, the intonational characteristics of the sounding speech, identifying, and understanding the main and secondary information in texts. The exercise text library includes specially composed and authentic adapted texts. The lexical and grammatical content of the tasks meets the requirements for level B1.

## Types of listening exercises

**Exercise 1.** Listen to the beginning of the sentences and finish them. Choose the correct option. (single presentation of information)

The student sees:	The student hears:
A) beregá [shores]	1. Lodka okolo ... . [The boat is near the ... .]
B) bérega [shore]	2. Tam net ... . [There is no ... .]
	3. Zdes ochen krasibye ... . [There are very beautiful ... here.]

Source: Devised by the authors

**Exercise 2.** Listen to the sentences. Determine the place of the intonation center. (single presentation of information)

The student sees:	The student hears:
1. Letom moi družia pobyvali v Italii. [In the summer, my friends visited Italy.]	1. Letom moi družia pobyvali <b>v Italii</b> . [In the summer, my friends visited <b>Italy</b> .]
2. Letom moi družia pobyvali v Italii. [In the summer, my friends visited Italy.]	2. Letom moi družia <b>pobyvali</b> v Italii. [In the summer, my friends <b>visited</b> Italy.]
3. Letom moi družia pobyvali v Italii. [In the summer, my friends visited Italy.]	4. <b>Letom</b> moi družia pobyvali v Italii. [ <b>In the summer</b> , my friends visited Italy.]

Source: Devised by the authors

### Types of reading exercises

**Exercise 1.** Complete the sentences using the words from the list. Choose the correct answer. You have 8 minutes.

The student sees:	The student hears:
Sentiabr [September]	1. Nachalo uchebnogo goda v Rossii – eto mesiat ... . [The beginning of the school year in Russia is the month of ... .]
Dekabr [December]	2. Samyi korotkii mesiat – eto mesiat ... . [The shortest month is the month of ... .]
Ianvar [January]	3. God okanchivaet mesiat ... . [The year ends with the month of ... .]
Fevral [February]	4. God nachinaet mesiat ... . [The year starts with the month of ... .]
Mart [March]	5. Seredina leta – eto mesiat ... . [The middle of summer is in the month of ... .]
Mai [May]	
Iiul [July]	

Source: Devised by the authors

**Exercise 2.** Read the collocations and find pairs of antonyms. You have 8 minutes. Choose the correct answer

The student sees:	
1) malenkii dom [a small house]	A) nizkii kust [a short bush]
2) sladkii chai [sweet tea]	B) tiazhelyi kamen [a heavy rock]
3) legkii shar [a light ball]	C) gorkoe lekarstvo [a bitter medicine]
4) uzkii rucheï [a narrow rivulet]	D) bolshoi slon [a big elephant]
5) vysokoe derevo [a tall tree]	E) shirokaia reka [a wide river]

Source: Devised by the authors

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the modern method of teaching Russian as a foreign language cannot be imagined today without the use of multimedia learning tools. This topic is increasingly attracting the attention of organizers of various conferences, linguists, and teachers of Russian as a foreign language. Many monographs, articles, and special collections devoted to this topic have appeared in recent years.

Today, the use of multimedia technology in training is of great importance for all teachers, particularly Russian language teachers. Both specialized training programs and holistic conceptions are being developed.

The formation of a new learning environment contributes to great results in learning a language in a relatively short time even in the distance learning format. The value and importance of multimedia technology are difficult to overestimate as they create comfortable conditions for language learning for each student and make lessons interesting and creative. Students master the necessary language competencies, develop the ability to complete exercises independently, and navigate the stream of information. Undoubtedly, all these factors assist foreign students in getting used to the conditions of living and studying in Russia faster.

As previously noted, reading is the main means of teaching other types of speech activity (writing, speaking) and listening presents one of the most difficult types of speech activity. This explains our appeal to the formation of communicative competency in reading and listening in the process of teaching Russian as a foreign language to foreign students.

The existing electronic instruments for teaching Russian as a foreign language provide foreign students with materials without focusing on the development of individual speech activity types but carrying out speech and language training in a complex while the practice and analysis of experience in teaching foreign students at the initial and secondary stages of training show that at levels A1, A2, and B1, a teacher's work on certain types of speech activity,

particularly listening and reading, needs targeted support due to the difficulty of one type of activity and the significance of the other.

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