



METHODOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES HELPING FOREIGN STUDENTS MASTER THE PREPOSITIONAL-CASE SYSTEM OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19677562>

Abstract: The Russian language presents considerable challenges for foreign learners due to its complex grammatical structure, particularly the prepositional-case system. Correct use of cases and prepositions is essential for accurate communication, yet many international students experience persistent difficulties in mastering these forms. This article examines effective methodological techniques that facilitate the acquisition of the Russian prepositional-case system by foreign students. Special attention is given to communicative teaching methods, visual aids, contextual learning, comparative grammar, repetition exercises, and the integration of digital technologies. The study argues that a student-centered and practice-oriented approach significantly improves grammatical competence, reduces common errors, and increases learner motivation. The findings may be useful for teachers of Russian as a foreign language seeking practical strategies to improve instruction and student outcomes.

Keywords: Russian as a foreign language; grammar teaching; case system; prepositions; foreign students; communicative approach; language acquisition; teaching methodology

The Russian language is widely recognized as one of the most grammatically rich languages in the world. One of its most challenging aspects for foreign learners is the system of six grammatical cases combined with numerous prepositions that determine noun endings and sentence meaning. Unlike many languages in which word order plays the dominant grammatical role, Russian relies heavily on inflectional endings and case relationships (Wade, 2011). For international students studying Russian, the prepositional-case system often becomes a major obstacle. Learners may understand vocabulary and basic sentence structure, yet continue to make errors such as confusing the accusative and prepositional cases, misusing prepositions, or applying incorrect noun endings. These difficulties are especially common among students whose native languages lack case systems or use prepositions differently (Ter-Minasova, 2008).

As a result, teachers of Russian as a foreign language must employ effective methodological techniques that simplify learning and make grammar more accessible. This article explores practical approaches that help foreign students successfully master the Russian prepositional-case system. The case system of the Russian language is the most difficult part of grammar for foreign students. The reason for this, of course, is either the lack of nominal inflection in the native language of the foreign

language, or the discrepancy of this system in the studied and native language (Unezheva, 2016, p. 201). Difficulties are caused by "the polysemy of cases, the variety of inflections, the changing of forms and

alternation of the bases of singular and plural nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numerals, ... prepositional case management" (Valizadeh, 2017). In addition, "problems in the development of the case system of the

Russian language by foreigners are caused by interference" (Kholodkova, 2012, p. 275) It is proposed, for example, "a comprehensive linguistic analysis of the category of case, the application of which in the classroom on Russian as a foreign language... will contribute to the effectiveness of training and revision of approaches to teaching the case system" Morozovska, 2016, p. 197). Within the communicative trend in teaching Russian as a foreign language proposed situational motivation, that is, demonstration to foreign students that incorrect use of cases results not only in violation of the rules, but also in communicative failure. It is also said about the "principle of continuity and perspective" in teaching foreign students the case system of the Russian language (Zlobina, 2011, p. 43). In contemporary textbooks and instructional manuals, grammatical material related to the Russian case system is presented in a variety of ways, differing both in the sequence in which cases are introduced and in the methodological strategies used to explain them. There is no single universally accepted model for teaching this aspect of Russian grammar, and authors often organize the material according to their pedagogical priorities and assumptions about learner needs. As a result, students may encounter significantly different approaches depending on the textbook or program they use.

In some teaching resources, the study of the case system begins with the accusative case, as it is frequently used in everyday communication and often appears in basic sentence structures involving direct objects and movement. Other manuals introduce the prepositional case first because of its practical relevance in expressing location and common conversational topics such as residence, study, or work. Still others begin with the genitive case due to its wide range of functions, including possession, negation, quantity, and expressions of absence. Each sequence reflects a particular view of which grammatical forms are most useful or accessible for beginner learners. Textbooks also differ in how the material is structured. Some authors prefer a horizontal approach, in which each grammatical case is studied separately and comprehensively before moving to the next one. Under this model, students learn all endings, functions, and usage patterns of a single case across nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. This method provides depth and clarity, allowing learners to focus intensively on one case at a time. However, it may also create cognitive overload, as students are expected to master many forms and meanings simultaneously.

Other manuals apply a concentric approach, which is based on the principle of gradual progression and repeated expansion of knowledge. In this model, students first learn the most common meanings and basic forms of all cases, usually through singular nouns and personal pronouns. At later stages, the material is revisited and expanded to include plural nouns, more complex syntactic functions, adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, and stylistic nuances. This spiral method allows learners to return to familiar material at increasing levels of complexity, which often improves retention and confidence.

Both approaches have pedagogical value, and their effectiveness may depend on factors such as students' native language background, level of proficiency, and learning objectives. For example, learners from languages with case systems may adapt more easily to comprehensive

presentations, while students from analytic language backgrounds may benefit more from gradual exposure and repeated practice.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze and summarize existing experience in teaching the Russian case system to foreign learners and to propose a more systematic, balanced, and learner-oriented approach to mastering this important grammatical topic. By integrating the strengths of different methodologies, teachers can make the learning process more accessible, logical, and effective for international students.

The prepositional-case system of the Russian language is one of the most difficult areas for foreign students, yet it can be mastered through effective teaching strategies. Contextual learning, visual aids, comparative grammar, structured repetition, communicative practice, digital resources, and supportive error correction all contribute to successful acquisition.

Successive natural bilingualism refers to the step-by-step acquisition of two languages in a natural communicative environment, where one language is learned after the other through everyday interaction rather than through formal instruction. When children acquire Russian as a second language under such conditions, the development of the Russian case system demonstrates a number of distinctive features shaped by both cognitive growth and communicative necessity.

The syntactic complexity of a child's speech is closely connected to cognitive abilities and practical communication needs. For this reason, researchers often establish stages of language development using quantitative criteria, such as the number of words or elements contained in an utterance, and relate these stages to the emergence of grammatical oppositions between cases (Voeikova, 2015). In contrast to native Russian-speaking children, foreign-language learners frequently begin by producing longer but grammatically incomplete or weakly structured utterances. These statements are often elliptical, simplified, or lacking necessary grammatical markers because of limited vocabulary resources. As a result, communication difficulties may arise, clearly distinguishing the speech patterns of foreign-speaking children from those of native-speaking peers.

When examining how inophone children acquire Russian case grammar, it is useful to rely on a morphological framework. Within the project Early Stages of Morphology Acquisition by Children, W. U. Dressler identified several developmental phases: premorphology, protomorphology, and modular morphology. These stages are defined according to the degree to which children master paradigmatic grammatical systems, including inflectional forms and patterns (Voeikova & Gagarina, 2002). Similar developmental stages can also be observed in children learning Russian as a foreign language, although the sequence and pace may differ somewhat from native language acquisition.

At the premorphological stage, the system of parts of speech has not yet been fully established, and grammatical categories remain largely undeveloped. During this period, the child's active vocabulary consists mainly of nouns in the nominative singular form. This usage is functionally understandable because the nominative case is the basic citation form used to name objects, identify subjects, and refer to participants in communication. It also commonly appears in counting expressions, impersonal constructions, and negative statements.

As language exposure increases, children gradually move beyond isolated nominative forms and begin experimenting with other cases, often first in formulaic expressions or high-frequency phrases. Over time, repeated communicative practice helps them recognize

grammatical contrasts and use case endings more systematically. Therefore, the acquisition of the Russian case system in successive bilingualism is a gradual developmental process influenced by input quality, interaction opportunities, vocabulary growth, and the child's general cognitive maturity.

Rather than presenting grammar as a set of abstract rules, teachers should make the case system functional, understandable, and relevant to real communication. A learner-centered methodological approach not only improves grammatical accuracy but also increases confidence and motivation among foreign students. As international interest in Russian continues to grow, the development of innovative methods for teaching grammar remains an important priority.

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