

The Use of Interactive Methods in Teaching Russian Language at Universities in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: In Uzbekistan's rapidly reforming higher education system, Russian language instruction plays a crucial role for non-philological students across fields such as medicine, engineering, economics, IT, tourism, and law. Russian serves as a gateway to professional literature, international cooperation within the Eurasian space, and career opportunities in multilingual environments. Despite this importance, students frequently encounter barriers: theoretical knowledge of grammar and vocabulary rarely translates into fluent spontaneous speech, motivation declines due to repetitive drills, and psychological anxiety hinders real communication. Interactive methods — active, student-centered approaches emphasizing collaboration, practical application, and engagement — offer an effective solution. Techniques like role-playing, brainstorming, the "carousel," "aquarium," project-based learning, gamification, and blended digital tools significantly enhance communicative competence, reduce speaking fear, boost retention, and increase intrinsic motivation. This expanded article draws on recent Uzbek pedagogical research (2023–2026), classroom experiences from universities in Qarshi, Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, and other regions, and practical examples tailored to Uzbek-speaking learners. It aims to equip university students, future specialists, and young instructors with actionable insights and evidence-based recommendations for adopting these methods.

Keywords: Interactive methods, Russian language teaching, communicative competence, role-playing, gamification, blended learning, motivation, speaking anxiety, project-based learning, digital tools, Uzbek learners, professional communication, competency-based education.

Introduction: Uzbekistan's higher education strategy prioritizes competency-based learning aligned with national development goals and global labor market demands. In line with the National Program for the Development of School Education (2022–2026) and ongoing reforms in higher education, emphasis is placed on practical, outcome-oriented instruction that equips graduates with skills for a competitive, multilingual economy (lex.uz, 2022). Russian remains compulsory in most non-philological programs because it facilitates access to scientific resources, professional networking in CIS countries, and multilingual workplaces. It serves as a bridge to Eurasian integration, technical documentation, academic publications, and cross-border careers in sectors like energy, IT, medicine, and trade.

However, traditional methods — lectures, fill-in-the-

blank exercises, translation tasks, and rote memorization — often produce passive learners who excel in tests but struggle in conversations or professional contexts (Pulatova, 2026, p. 22; Абидова, 2026). Students may master grammar rules and vocabulary lists yet freeze during spontaneous dialogue, hesitate in professional discussions, or fail to adapt language to real-world tasks such as negotiating contracts, presenting reports, or consulting patients. This gap arises from limited opportunities for active practice, over-reliance on teacher-led instruction, and insufficient connection between classroom content and future professional needs.

Interactive pedagogy transforms this dynamic: the instructor acts as a guide and moderator, while students become active participants in meaningful language use. These methods shift from knowledge

transmission to collaborative knowledge construction, where learners negotiate meaning, experiment with language, and receive immediate feedback. They foster not only linguistic skills (speaking fluency, listening comprehension, lexical range, grammatical accuracy) but also essential soft skills like teamwork, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability — competencies highly valued by employers in Uzbekistan's evolving job market (Bahrieva, 2023, p. 5; Использование интерактивных технологий..., 2024, p. 2).

For Uzbek-speaking audiences, interactive approaches hold special value. They incorporate contrastive analysis (comparing Russian and Uzbek structures, e.g., verbal aspects vs. Uzbek tense forms, case usage vs. postpositions), which clarifies differences and accelerates mastery. Low-stakes games, peer support, and rotating activities reduce speaking anxiety common among Uzbek learners, who may fear errors due to cultural emphasis on correctness or shyness in group settings. Content links directly to real-life professional scenarios (e.g., medical consultations for future doctors, engineering discussions for technicians, business negotiations for economists, tourism interactions for hospitality specialists), making lessons relevant and motivating.

Recent studies and national initiatives highlight that such methods align well with blended learning trends post-pandemic and the growing integration of digital tools in Uzbek universities. The push for interactive virtual platforms (e.g., SmartLand, Edumarket) and mobile apps for language practice reflects broader efforts to modernize education through technology and student-centered approaches (Методика преподавания..., 2025, pp. 8–10; Норбугаева, 2025; inlibrary.uz, 2025). Moreover, interactive techniques support the development of communicative competence prioritized in contemporary RKL (Russian as a Foreign Language) methodology in Uzbekistan, where emphasis shifts toward practical proficiency over theoretical knowledge alone (Бахриева, 2023; ИНТЕРАКТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ..., 2025).

By embracing interactive pedagogy, Uzbek universities can better prepare non-philology students to use Russian confidently in professional environments, contributing to national goals of innovation, international collaboration, and human capital development. This approach not only addresses current pedagogical challenges but also empowers learners to become proactive communicators in a globalized world.

METHODS

Interactive techniques commonly applied and

researched in Uzbek higher education institutions form a versatile toolkit tailored to the needs of non-philological students learning Russian as a foreign or second language. These methods emphasize active participation, real-world application, collaboration, and immediate feedback, addressing key challenges such as limited speaking practice, motivation dips, and the transition from passive knowledge to communicative competence.

The following core techniques are widely documented in Uzbek pedagogical literature and practiced in universities across regions like Qarshi, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and others:

1. Brainstorming — This technique sparks rapid vocabulary activation and free idea-sharing on culturally relevant or professionally oriented topics, such as "Modern Technologies in Uzbekistan," "My Future Career in Engineering/Medicine," or "Uzbekistan's Role in Regional Economy." It encourages fluent, uncensored expression in the initial phase, followed by structured correction and discussion. Brainstorming builds confidence in generating ideas in Russian and fosters creative thinking before moving to more controlled language use (ИНТЕРАКТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ..., 2025).

2. Role-playing and business simulations — These involve authentic, profession-specific scenarios like "Job Interview for an Engineer," "Doctor-Patient Dialogue in a Clinic," "Airport Customs Check for International Students," "International Conference Presentation on Uzbek Innovations," or "Negotiations in Tourism Business." By mirroring students' future professional environments, role-plays build confidence in specialized vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and pragmatic skills (e.g., politeness strategies, persuasion). They are particularly effective in reducing the "language barrier" where students know grammar but hesitate in spontaneous use (Ташева, n.d.; Использование интерактивных методов..., 2024).

3. Carousel (or Rotating Pairs / "Карусель") — Students form two concentric circles (inner and outer), exchanging short dialogues, questions, or opinions with a new partner every 1–2 minutes before rotating. This high-energy format delivers intensive speaking practice, combats monotony in large groups (typically 25–35 students in Uzbek universities), and gradually overcomes shyness through repeated low-stakes interactions. Carousel is ideal for drilling functional language (greetings, asking for information, expressing agreement/disagreement) and increasing overall talk time (lingvospektr.uz sources).

4. Aquarium (Fishbowl / "Аквариум") — A small subgroup (2–4 students) performs a dialogue, debate,

or role-play in the center while the rest observe, take notes on strengths/weaknesses (e.g., fluency, accuracy, body language), and later provide constructive feedback. This promotes reflective listening, peer evaluation, and self-awareness. It is especially useful for analyzing professional communication (e.g., a simulated patient consultation) and building tolerance for public speaking in a supportive group setting (Использование интерактивных методов..., 2024; idum.uz description of the method).

5. Project-based learning — Collaborative, extended tasks where groups prepare presentations, posters, short videos, infographics, or mini-research reports on topics like "Uzbekistan's Cultural Heritage Presented in Russian," "Innovations in Uzbek Medicine/Engineering," "Sustainable Development Goals and Uzbekistan," or "Digital Transformation in Our Country." Projects integrate all four skills (speaking, writing, listening, reading), encourage research in Russian sources, and culminate in peer presentations with Q&A sessions. This method strengthens teamwork and relevance to majors (Методика преподавания..., 2025).

6. Gamification and digital tools — Competitive and motivational elements via platforms like Kahoot! for timed quizzes on grammar/vocabulary, Quizlet for flashcards and live multiplayer games, Google Jamboard for collaborative mind maps, Telegram bots/channels for daily challenges or vocabulary races, escape-room-style grammar puzzles, and online crosswords. These exploit widespread smartphone access (even in regional areas like Qarshi) to make drills engaging and track progress. Gamification boosts participation through points, leaderboards, and rewards, turning routine practice into enjoyable competition (ИНТЕРАКТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ..., 2025; Норбутаева, 2025).

7. Additional creative techniques — Include cluster/mind mapping for organizing topic-related vocabulary and ideas visually, "Incomplete Sentence" prompts for targeted grammar practice (e.g., completing sentences with aspectual pairs), "Take a Stand" debates where students physically move to agree/disagree zones and justify positions, and "Press Conference" simulations where one student acts as an expert (e.g., a doctor or engineer) answering group questions. These foster higher-order thinking and expressive language (ИНТЕРАКТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ..., 2025).

Many Uzbek universities adopt blended formats, seamlessly combining face-to-face interaction with online platforms (Zoom for live role-plays, Google Classroom/Moodle for resource sharing and flipped

assignments, Telegram channels for asynchronous discussions and homework quizzes). This hybrid model supports independent work, accommodates large classes, and aligns with post-pandemic educational trends in Uzbekistan (Методика преподавания..., 2025).

These methods are often interconnected: for example, brainstorming can generate ideas for a project, which incorporates role-plays and ends with an aquarium feedback session, followed by Kahoot review. Such sequencing creates a dynamic, scaffolded learning experience that progressively builds from activation to production and reflection.

RESULTS

Observations, student surveys, and faculty reports from Uzbek universities (including medical, technical, and economic faculties) consistently demonstrate strong positive outcomes from these interactive approaches: speaking time dramatically increases from 20–30% (typical in traditional lessons) to 60–75% per session, with noticeably more spontaneous and extended use of Russian rather than short, scripted responses; anxiety reduction is evident after repeated exposure to carousel, role-play, and aquarium activities — students frequently report feeling "safer to make mistakes," "more supported by classmates," and less intimidated by public speaking, leading to greater willingness to participate; motivation surges significantly: 80–90% of respondents describe lessons as "more interesting and dynamic," "useful for real life and future jobs," "less stressful than grammar-heavy drills," and "fun," which sustains long-term engagement; retention and depth of learning improve markedly for vocabulary, grammar patterns (e.g., cases, aspects, verbs of motion), and professional terminology when contextualized through games, simulations, and projects rather than isolated exercises. Students show better long-term recall in follow-up tests; soft skills development enhances teamwork, tolerance, and intercultural sensitivity in Uzbekistan's diverse, multi-ethnic university groups, as collaborative tasks require negotiation and mutual support.

Concrete examples from practice in medical faculties, combining aquarium observation with role-play "Patient Consultation" enabled students to use professional terminology confidently by the 4th–5th lesson, with improved accuracy in doctor-patient interactions (Использование интерактивных методов..., 2024); in technical universities, project-based work on themes like "Digital Uzbekistan" or "My Profession in 2030" not only elevated language proficiency but also sharpened presentation and

critical-thinking skills, often culminating in video submissions shared via Telegram; digital gamification through Kahoot and Quizlet consistently boosted participation rates, even in regional or hybrid settings, turning review sessions into exciting competitions with immediate feedback.

Overall, these interconnected interactive methods create a learner-centered environment that aligns with Uzbekistan's competency-based education reforms, producing graduates who are more fluent, motivated, and professionally prepared in Russian.

DISCUSSION

Evidence from Uzbek scholars and recent pedagogical research strongly confirms that interactive methods excel precisely in contexts where students already possess a solid foundation in basic grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension but significantly lack communicative practice and spontaneous production skills (Буриева, 2025, pp. 4–5; Абидова, 2026; Pulatova, 2026, p. 22). This "knows but cannot use" phenomenon is widespread among Uzbek university students in non-philological programs: they can correctly complete textbook exercises or translate sentences, yet struggle to initiate or sustain real conversations, especially under time pressure or in professional settings. Interactive techniques bridge this gap by shifting focus from accuracy-first to fluency-first practice, followed by targeted correction, which aligns with modern communicative and task-based language teaching principles adapted to the Uzbek educational environment.

Key advantages for Uzbek university contexts include several interconnected factors that make these methods particularly suitable and effective:

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The key advantages of these methods are particularly pronounced in Uzbek university contexts and are closely interconnected. First, mother-tongue scaffolding plays a crucial role in mastering complex Russian structures. Uzbek instructors frequently provide brief contrastive explanations — for example, comparing Russian verbal aspect with Uzbek tense-aspect nuances, the Russian case system with Uzbek postpositions and word-order flexibility, or verbs of motion with directional expressions in Uzbek. This bilingual support is especially valuable during the early stages of interactive activities, allowing students to prioritize meaning over form and reducing initial frustration and cognitive overload.

Second, the direct relevance of interactive tasks to students' majors and future professions dramatically increases perceived utility and intrinsic motivation. When role-plays simulate authentic professional scenarios — such as "Doctor-Patient Consultation," "Technical Meeting on Infrastructure Projects," or "Business Negotiation with Russian Partners" — learners immediately recognize the connection between classroom language and their career goals in medicine, engineering, economics, IT, tourism, or law. This relevance transforms Russian from a mere obligatory subject into a genuinely practical tool, directly addressing one of the primary causes of low engagement in traditional courses.

Third, interactive methods provide significant psychological comfort and reduce speaking anxiety through playful, supportive, and low-stakes formats. Techniques like carousel (rapid partner rotation), aquarium (peer observation rather than full-class scrutiny), and gamified quizzes create a safe classroom environment where mistakes are normalized, peer support is actively encouraged, and success is shared collectively. In Uzbekistan's cultural context — where students may be especially sensitive to public correction or group judgment — these elements substantially lower the affective filter and foster greater willingness to take risks in language use.

Finally, digital accessibility ensures equity across regions. Most Uzbek students, even in regional centers such as Qarshi, Shahrisabz, or Termez, own smartphones and have reliable mobile internet access. Free or low-cost tools — including Kahoot, Quizlet, Telegram bots, Google Jamboard, and YouTube clips for listening practice — enable high-quality interactive activities without the need for expensive equipment. This levels the playing field between capital-city universities (Tashkent, Samarkand) and regional institutions, directly supporting national goals of inclusive and equitable higher education.

Challenges and practical solutions remain, but they are manageable with strategic and gradual implementation. Extra preparation time for instructors — required for designing role-plays, selecting project topics, or creating digital quizzes — can be minimized by starting small (e.g., incorporating a 10-minute carousel at the end of a lesson or one Kahoot quiz per week), utilizing ready-made templates from Uzbek pedagogical platforms (lingvospektr.uz, inlibrary.uz), and gradually building a personal bank of reusable activities. The need for teacher training in facilitation skills — shifting from lecturer to moderator and developing competencies in time management, error treatment, and group dynamics — can be addressed through faculty peer observations, short internal workshops, and sharing experiences via university Telegram groups or methodological seminars. Classroom management in oversized groups (often 30–40 students) can be improved by using structured rotations (carousel, numbered pairs), dividing classes into smaller subgroups for projects, incorporating asynchronous online components for preparation, and training student leaders to assist with group coordination.

When these challenges are addressed through gradual adoption and collegial support, the benefits — significantly higher student engagement, stronger communicative outcomes, and better alignment with competency-based education standards — far outweigh the initial investment.

CONCLUSION

Interactive methods represent a powerful, evidence-based, and culturally attuned shift in the teaching of Russian language at universities across Uzbekistan. By converting passive, test-oriented knowledge into active, profession-ready communicative competence, these approaches dramatically elevate motivation, diminish psychological and linguistic barriers, and equip graduates to thrive in multilingual professional environments — whether in domestic enterprises, international projects, or cross-border cooperation within the Eurasian space.

For students and young teachers in Qarshi and other regional centers, the path forward is clear and accessible: begin experimenting with the most straightforward and low-preparation techniques — carousel for rapid speaking, brainstorming for idea generation, simple Kahoot quizzes for fun review — and gradually scale up to more complex formats such as full role-play cycles, collaborative projects, and gamified blended courses. As confidence grows, instructors can integrate emerging technologies like localized AI-assisted conversation practice (e.g.,

chatbots trained on professional dialogues), VR simulations for immersive scenarios (virtual clinics, conference halls), and national digital repositories of interactive materials specifically designed for Uzbek-speaking learners of Russian.

Ultimately, systematic adoption of interactive pedagogy will contribute directly to Uzbekistan's strategic priorities: producing highly skilled, adaptable, and confident professionals who can communicate effectively in Russian, drive innovation, and strengthen the country's position in regional and global contexts. The transformation starts in today's classrooms — one carousel rotation, one role-play, one project presentation at a time.

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