

# Application of The Situational Method in Russian Language Classes

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**Received:** 31 March 2025; **Accepted:** 29 April 2025; **Published:** 31 May 2025

**Abstract:** This article discusses the theoretical problems of using the situational method in the educational process, describes the meanings of the concepts "situation" and "situational method", the features of this method, and also describes the theoretical foundations of the situational method.

**Keywords:** Situation, situational method, principle of communication, disproportion, communicative approach.

**Introduction:** Improving teaching methods is one of the main tasks addressed by both pedagogical science and practice. This issue becomes especially relevant during periods of revision of educational goals and content in higher educational institutions. Therefore, this problem is particularly acute now, when universities have transitioned to new programs and textbooks.

For a student of a non-linguistic university, mastering the grammatical rules of the Russian language is something entirely new. While in native language classes students are aware only of grammatical norms they already practically command, in Russian language classes they must simultaneously learn vocabulary and grammar rules that differ significantly from those of their native language. In this regard, we believe it is necessary to align teaching methods with the updated content of academic disciplines, particularly Russian.

University teaching experience shows that the principle of communicativeness is still not fully reflected in educational materials, and students encounter difficulties related to the functional aspects of mastering the Russian language. Consequently, there is a need to find optimal ways of presenting educational situations in Russian. Based on this, we consider it appropriate to teach grammar through a set of educational and communicative situations using examples of Russian dialogical speech.

In our opinion, the solution to this problem lies in the careful selection of structural-semantic units of dialogue—dialogical units (DUs)—and the classification of speech situational constructions (SSCs) that form the

basis of speech acts, according to their situational correlation. These should be compared with their equivalents in students' native languages at the conversational level. Altogether, this can serve as the basis for a set of situational exercises and tasks that should become an integral part of the practical Russian language course in universities. This should be projected onto the unique character of the Russian language as an academic discipline.

It is both reasonable and well-founded that the deeper and more thorough the analysis of the course content of "Russian Language" is, aimed at identifying components that predetermine various ways of learning (including the situational method), the better the subject will be mastered, including students' academic performance.

It is well known that much has already been done in this area within the methodology of teaching Russian, and what is needed now is systematization, clarification, and organization from the standpoint of a unified university-level approach.

A study of students' knowledge, skills, and competencies in Russian reveals a pronounced imbalance between the ability to reproduce pre-learned situations, definitions, and rules, and the ability to operate with them, apply them in real activities; between the ability to recall isolated knowledge elements and the ability to generalize and systematize them; between the reproduction of knowledge and the ability to assess its practical value; and between reproductively acquired skills and those requiring

creative activity.

The causes of this situation lie in both the selection of subject content and the organization of the pedagogical process. Both aspects, as previously noted, are related to teaching methods.

For example, much has recently been said about problem situations, situational methods, and problem-based questions and tasks in Russian language classes. However, these situational techniques are often applied where the material resists them, and the suggested questions and tasks often only superficially appear situational.

In the pursuit and promotion of new methods, traditional ones are often misunderstood or diminished. For instance, there is a widespread belief that whenever a teacher asks “why,” “for what purpose,” “how to prove it,” or gives instructions like “compare and find similarities (or differences),” “justify,” “explain,” or “find the reason” during a Russian language class, this automatically constitutes situational learning and implies the use of the situational method.

However, developers of the situational learning theory emphasize that traditional methods—explanatory-illustrative and reproductive—do not imply mechanical memorization. On the contrary, these methods are essential for the acquisition of the main part of knowledge and skills. The information-receptive method remains one of the most efficient and economical ways to transmit the generalized and systematized experience of humankind to younger generations. Moreover, the development of skills and abilities is not possible outside the framework of the reproductive method. These traditional methods can also nurture cognitive independence among students.

Modern research attributes creative activity features to situational learning—features that cannot be developed through simple verbal instruction or demonstration of actions. This is because creative procedures lack an algorithm, a system of actions that can be presented to the learner. In contrast, the situational method assumes the existence of a structured system of actions.

It is likely that creative activity, though stimulated by different motivations and composed of varying components, nonetheless shares common characteristics in both cases. One such characteristic is well expressed in the idea that:

“Procedures of creative activity cannot be transmitted other than by involving the person in accessible situational activity that requires the manifestation of certain creative traits and thereby helps develop

them.”

The communicative approach to speech development significantly alters teaching methods, placing speech situation modeling at the forefront. It is implemented through various situational exercises and tasks based on the principle that the content and structure of speech are dependent on the communicative situation.

By training students to correlate the content and form of their utterances with the speech situation, these exercises sharpen thinking, heighten their sensitivity to Russian, and teach them to use the language flexibly—choosing the most suitable phrase or structure among several possible options depending on the conditions. These situational tasks not only improve students’ speech culture but also enhance their overall behavioral culture, thus exerting a powerful educational influence.

As a structural unit of teaching communication in a second language—in our case, Russian—the situation serves as a universal form of communicative functioning, existing as an integrative dynamic system of social-status, role-based, activity-related, and moral relationships between the subjects of communication, reflected in their consciousness and arising through their interactive positioning in communication.

The key components of a situational structure include:

- 1) Conditions and circumstances under which communication takes place;
- 2) Relationships between speakers: participants may be classmates, friends, family members, or professionals (engineers, economists, builders, etc.), and the relationships can be formal (e.g., rector–student, supervisor–worker) or informal (e.g., mother–daughter);
- 3) A speech stimulus, which is the motivating factor that prompts communication.

The key factor in a communicative situation is the relationship between interlocutors, the system of interpersonal relations. It is precisely these relationships, having acquired a personal character, that determine the motivation for speech and provoke active engagement with the surrounding reality. External circumstances may not be directly present at a given moment, but they inevitably “function,” since they are embedded within the situation in a latent or abstracted form. Hence, the situational nature of speech is a special characteristic, expressed in the fact that speech units, in both semantic and temporal dimensions, are always correlated with the situation and create a potential context within a specific range.

If a teacher in a Russian language class says, outside any relevant context, “The female student bought two

books,” this phrase will not resonate with the students. In their minds, it is not tied to any particular situation: Which student? From which university? Why two books? Which two books? and so on. That is why such a sentence is just a statement, not a phrase, and essentially not speech at all, because true speech is always situational.

The essence of situationality lies in the fact that its realization is only possible if the personal qualities of students are taken into account, and if the instructor has a deep understanding of the interpersonal relationships among students, their personal experiences, interests, value orientations, worldview, emotions, and their social status within the university community.

One of the most important ways to create situational support for stimulating non-native speech is the use of various visual aids and materials. By placing students in situations specially designed using these visual tools and materials, it becomes possible to establish a clear connection between real-world phenomena and their linguistic expression. The creation of scenarios close to real-life situations facilitates better understanding and mastery of the Russian language, increases interest in learning a non-native language, stimulates student engagement, and helps overcome the psychological barrier often experienced by learners.

Thus, the implementation of the principle of situationality makes it possible to intensify the process of forming communicative and speech skills among students, support individualization and differentiation in instruction, and thereby promote a personality-activity-based approach in the educational process at the university level.

The results of the conducted experiment confirmed the effectiveness of the system we proposed for developing Russian speech among university students in engineering, construction, and technical fields, based on educational situations.

The use of the situational method, within a scientifically grounded system, created favorable conditions for teaching Russian speech in language classes at the institute. It became a valuable tool for enhancing students' intellectual and cognitive activity, as well as for the development of their oral speech.

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