Introduction: Student Co-Creation of Teaching Resources, Methods, and Social Integration

Laura Janda

Anna Endresen

Svetlana Sokolova

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rlj

Part of the Slavic Languages and Societies Commons

Introduction

Student Co-Creation of Teaching Resources, Methods, and Social Integration[1]

Laura Janda, Anna Endresen, Svetlana Sokolova

Undergraduate research is a high-impact practice that increases student learning and is driven by engaging in mentoring relationships with faculty while building a culture of innovation and scholarship. This volume of the *Russian Language Journal* presents a special collection of articles entitled "Collaboration Beyond the Classroom: Undergraduate Research in Russian Language Studies." Undergraduate students have contributed to these articles as researchers and coauthors on topics related to Russian-language study, namely, the co-creation of teaching resources, methods, and sociolinguistic integration.

Nine articles are arranged in three thematic groups. Group 1 features students as co-creators of novel digital resources (Clancy & Lee; Janda et al.; Endresen et al.; and Nesset et al.). Group 2 focuses on student involvement in developing new participatory methods for teaching L2 Russian (Sokolova et al.; Pilipchuk & Lyanda-Geller; and Bernasconi & Giampietro). Group 3 explores issues of sociolinguistic integration (Knickmeier Cummings et al. and Laleko & Miroshnychenko).

Clancy and Lee open Group 1 with "*Visualizing Russian*: Illuminating Corpora, Conjugations, and Classrooms." *Visualizing Russian* is a collaborative research project that resulted in the creation of a novel tool that visualizes the distribution of language data covering a wide range of topics, from vocabulary and morphology to syntactic patterns. This tool provides Russian learners with information on the complexity of texts, the compatibility of words in selected texts, and frequency information. The student collaborator explored novel web visualization

techniques for language data and applied statistical language analysis. *Visualizing Russian* presents a case for the merits of combining language instruction with advances in computer sciences and corpus linguistics.

The contribution by Janda et al. entitled "Empirically Determined Strategic Input and Gamification in Mastering Russian Word Forms" describes an innovative research-based educational resource for learning Russian inflectional morphology, the SMARTool (Strategic Mastery of Russian Tool; https://smartool.github.io/smartool-rus-eng/), and proposes two ways to use this resource in the classroom or online: "Treasure Hunt" and "Story Time." Both gamification strategies are student-driven and designed by the instructor and the students to make the SMARTool resource more accessible and beneficial for learners.

In "*Construxercise!* Implementation of a Construction-Based Approach to Language Pedagogy," Endresen et al. present *Construxercise! Hands-On Learning of Russian Constructions* (https://constructicon. github.io/construxercise-rus/), a research-based resource that proposes new ways of teaching constructions and idiomatic syntactic units. The resource was built under close collaboration between faculty members and students, including both native and non-native speakers of Russian. The outcome of this collaboration is a free open-access website that offers over 150 exercises for mastering Russian discourse constructions and organizing classes on conversation. The authors discuss in detail the methodology of building this resource, its organization, and the overall approach to teaching and learning Russian via its frequently attested and representative syntactic structures (constructions) that equip learners with ready-to-use communicative patterns.

Nesset et al.'s "Flipping the Classroom? From Text to Video in Teaching Russian Grammar" brings grammar instruction to a new level by proposing the collaborative co-creation of instructional grammar materials. While working on the grammar sections of a new beginners' Russian course, the instructor collaborated with two students on the creation of scripts for instructional videos explaining grammar points. Student coauthorship was fundamental in designing the videos to facilitate the learning process and move a significant amount of transmission of information out of the classroom.

Group 2 opens with "The Participatory Approach and Student Active Learning in Language Teaching: Language Students as Journalists

and Filmmakers," in which Sokolova et al. combine the participatory approach with student active techniques to foster language learning. This method is used in both text and video production, based on the results of the course Media Language in Use, which familiarizes students with four major media genres (news article, interview, book/film review, and op-ed), and the film project *Our Common Victory* (2020, https://site.uit.no/clear/2020/09/07/var-felles-seier/), which incorporates documentary filmmaking into learning L2 Russian.

Pilipchuk and Lyanda-Geller, in "*Outside the Earth:* Translating and Exploring with Tsiolkovsky," present a collaborative research project that stemmed from the innovative interdisciplinary course Russian for Rockets. The student translated Konstantin Tsiolkovsky's science fiction novel *Outside the Earth*, a work mostly unknown to STEM specialists and students outside Russia. The collaboration resulted in a book-length scholarly study aid containing both translations and extensive scientific, engineering, and linguistic commentary. This contribution presents a case for the merits of combining translation studies, second language learning, and interdisciplinary research at the crossroads of science, engineering, and humanities.

Bernasconi and Giampietro's article "Teaching Discourse Markers to Students with Students: The Case of Italian Learners of L2 Russian" provides a comparative analysis of the use of Russian discourse markers by native speakers and L2 learners. The authors propose a didactic procedure for teaching discourse markers to L2 learners as an alternative to traditional textbook presentation. They suggest a four-stage game-centered process that focuses on four types of discourse markers: approximators, shields, fillers, and reformulators. The task-based design of the didactic intervention accommodates students' communicative needs and provides scaffolding through an appropriate learning schedule.

Knickmeier Cummings et al.'s "Psychological Safety in the Russian Language Classroom," which opens Group 3, draws attention to L2 Russian instruction and learning for students of color in the U.S., with a focus on psychological safety, based on experiences at Howard University, the only Historically Black College or University (HBCU) that offers a Russian minor. The article emphasizes the importance of student-inspired and student-led ideas in facilitating an equitable and inclusive environment, creating representative characters in textbooks,

and providing learning activities that reflect other cultures, minorities, and underrepresented and underserved communities.

Finally, the contribution by Laleko and Miroshnychenko, "Grammars in Contact: A Linguistic Study of Russian in Brighton Beach, New York," examines the speech production of 17 adult heritage Russian speakers that belong to the largest integrated community of Russian speakers in the U.S.: Brighton Beach, New York. The authors analyze grammatical innovations in heritage Russian in three linguistic domains: case, gender, and verbal aspect. The experimental design can serve as a methodological example for future research in the study of heritage Russian. This study is relevant for teaching L2 Russian because many students of Russian programs are heritage speakers, and the study demonstrates the importance of the supporting speech community in preserving heritage Russian.

The goal of this special issue is to initiate and widen discussion on the role of undergraduate research in language teaching and to uncover synergies between undergraduate research and other topical issues, such as student active learning, digital humanities, and sociolinguistic integration.