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TikTok in the Russian Language Classroom

A Best Practice Example for A2+/B1 Level

This best practice example illustrates how social media content, more precisely a TikTok video and users' comments, can be incorporated into Russian language teaching at the level A2+/B1. The presented activities aim to integrate different communication modes such as mediation, audiovisual reception, production and interaction and develop students' digital media literacy, linguistic, sociolinguistic and intercultural competences. Following a brief introduction, the article explores didactic considerations related to the previously mentioned skills and competences. The paper closes with some final remarks on this best practice example. The printable ready-to-use worksheet is provided at the end of this paper.

Keywords: social media, integrated skills practice, digital media literacy, colloquial Russian, intercultural competence

Dieses *Best Practice* Beispiel zeigt, wie soziale Medien, genauer gesagt, ein TikTok Video und Kommentare von Nutzer*innen in den Russischunterricht auf A2+/B1 Niveau integriert werden können. Die Aufgabenstellungen des Beispiels zielen auf die Integration verschiedener Kommunikationsmodi wie z.B. der Mediation, audiovisuellen Rezeption, Produktion und Interaktion ab. Gleichzeitig fördern sie die digitale Medienkompetenz der Russischlernenden sowie linguistische, soziolinguistische und interkulturelle Kompetenzen. Im Anschluss an die kurze Einführung werden didaktische Überlegungen zu den angeführten Sprachaktivitäten und Kompetenzen angestellt. Der Artikel schließt mit einem kurzen Fazit. Die Kopiervorlage des Arbeitsblatts befindet sich am Ende des Beitrages.

Keywords: Soziale Medien, integrierte Fertigkeiten, digitale Medienkompetenz, russische Umgangssprache, interkulturelle Kompetenz

1. Introduction

Nowadays social media form an integral part of everyday life. Especially younger generations, often referred to as digital natives, cannot imagine a life without smartphones and social media applications such as YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, BeReal, Spotify, and Whatsapp (cf. Bacher, 2022, 133; mpfs, 2022, 20, 28; Tirney, 19.05.2023). Hence, it seems quite natural to incorporate carefully selected social media content into the foreign language classroom alongside traditional formats. What is more, school syllabi and university curricula[1] stipulate the employment of audiovisual and digital media (e.g. films, video and online material) considering the primacy of didactics (cf. BMBWF AHS, 2023, 69, 70, 174, 175; BMBWF HAK, 2014, 2, 7, 29; Autonome Provinz BZ, 2021, 10, 38). Undeniably, social media offer a wide array of language learn-

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[1] The new Austrian university curricula for teaching Russian as a foreign language are scheduled for publication in 2025/26. They place a strong emphasis on digitalisation and the development of students' digital literacy skills.

ing materials that can be used to develop different modes of communication, facilitate intercultural and global learning, and promote digital media literacy (cf. Byram, 2021; CEFR, 2018; United Nations, n.d.). Study findings suggest that social media can make language learning more current, authentic and motivating (cf. Bacher, 2022, 141–142). Given the limited availability of Russian language learning materials specifically designed to engage with social media content, this paper aims to provide Russian language teachers with a theoretically grounded, ready-made, easy-to-use example (cf. ibid., 142, 143)[2]. The best practice example illustrates how social media content – specifically, a TikTok clip and its comments – can be effectively integrated into an A2+/B1-level Russian language classroom, meeting key didactic requirements. As the users' comments contain colloquial and connotative lexis[3], the example is intended for adult learners of Russian in various institutional settings (e.g., at universities or adult education centres). In the Austrian and South Tyrolean school context, Russian language learners typically reach the A2+/B1 level only in upper secondary school, usually between the ages of 17 and 19. Therefore, the example can also be employed with this target group to foster communicative competences and sociolinguistic awareness. It is to be noted that the example has been trialled with university students and adapted to meet specific didactic objectives, learner needs and preferences.[4] The next section will provide a detailed discussion of the didactic considerations related to the best practice example. The printable worksheet is provided at the end of this contribution.

2. Didactic Considerations

The best practice example consists of six activities that target specific didactic aims. Most of the presented tasks are designed to be conducted in pairs or small groups to increase speaking time on the one hand (cf. Thaler, 2012, 186–187), and to foster mediation skills on the other. According to the CEFR (2018, 104), *Collaborating in a Group: Facilitating Collaborative Interaction with Peers, Mediating a Text: Expressing a Personal Response to Creative Texts* and *Analysis and Criticism of Creative Texts* are to be considered mediating tasks. Besides engaging in pair and group work activities, students are required to express their own opinion, and critically reflect and comment on the provided social media content (*Activities 2, 4* and *5*).

Apart from mediation, students' speaking skills are developed through the first four tasks. The primary focus is on spoken interaction (cf. CEFR, 2018). In groups, learners are required to answer questions about their individual preferences and ways of using social media, discuss the pros and cons of TikTok (*Activity 1* and *Activity 2*), and summarise the contents of the video (*Activity 3*). The word banks provided in *Activities 1* and *3*, along with the incomplete pros and

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[2] Ready-made Russian language learning materials, incorporating social media content or video clips, are also presented in the works of Binder and Kaltseis (2025) as well as Gelfreykh & Niznik (2022).

[3] E.g., *бухать* which in this context means heavy drinking.

[4] The students highlighted the authenticity and relevance of using TikTok content in the Russian language classroom. Moreover, they described the activities as engaging and the video as motivating. A few students encountered some difficulties using appropriate lexical items in speech and understanding colloquial expressions. Consequently, some instructions were refined and scaffolding (i.e. word banks, pros and cons list) enhanced.

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cons list in *Activity 2*, serve as scaffolding to help students express themselves and reinforce vocabulary (cf. Meyer et al., 2022, 213).

Additionally, several activities aim to enhance the (critical) digital media literacy of Russian language learners. Besides discussing the advantages and disadvantages of TikTok, students should answer questions such as *Вы уже создавали и выкладывали видео или контент в ТикТок? Почему (да/нет)?* and *Вы бы посмотрели видео такого рода в реальной жизни, т.е. вне урока? Почему?*. Furthermore, students are required to write their comments in reaction to the users' comments (see *Activity 6*). According to the Digital Competence Framework for Educators (2017, 22, 23, 69–75, 77–87), the described activities correspond to the competence areas *Empowering Learners* and *Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence*. In this example, digital technologies are integrated into pedagogical strategies to foster creative expression and learners' active engagement with specific subject matter, opening learning to new, real-world contexts (cf. Punie & Redecker, 2017, 22).

Some activities also target audiovisual and written reception alongside students' intercultural and sociolinguistic competences (cf. CEFR, 2018; Meyer et al., 2022, 54, 276). In *Activity 3*, students view the TikTok video *… и снова БАНЯ!* that deals with the process of having sauna, i.e. *баня*.[5] The fact that a cat is the main protagonist might add to the amusement and motivation of Russian language learners.[6] Through this video and the questions accompanying it, students acquire culture-specific knowledge (*savoir*) (cf. Byram, 2021, 21, 44; Meyer et al., 2022, 9), more precisely sociocultural knowledge about social conventions and ritual behaviour (cf. CEFR, 2001, 101–103). In *Activity 5*, the user's comment *Хозяин: Может водки? [...] Всех с лёгким паром!!!* is an allusion to the Soviet film *Ирония Судьбы, или С лёгким паром!* (1975). As is tradition, the main character, Zhenya, and friends go to the banya on New Year's Eve. After a few too many drinks, they mistakenly send Zhenya to the airport, where he ends up boarding a flight to Leningrad. He finds himself spending New Year's Eve in a stranger's apartment with someone else's fiancée. This allusion in the TikTok video could be made explicit by the teacher to facilitate intercultural learning.

The sociolinguistic competence of students is developed in *Activities 3, 5* and *6*. Understanding colloquial Russian might be rather challenging for students who are traditionally exposed to the standard variety of the target language (cf. Stadler & Kaltseis, 2024). Derivations from the norm, colloquial lexis and altered spelling pose only some of the challenges to students. Hence, and in terms of authenticity, it is vital to also implement colloquial Russian in the language classroom. The TikTok video and users' comments contain elements that are characteristic of colloquial speech as exemplified here:

- frequent word repetitions (e.g. *Да, да, да, заходи!; Всё, всё, всё, всё!*)
- interjections (e.g. *Ой, Оо, Хахаха*)
- particles (e.g. *уж, еслиб, пойдёмте, не то*)

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[5] See also *Dekoder* special: https://specials.dekoder.org/banja/

[6] It should be noted that the cat in the video was not harmed. As a long-term cat owner and an ordinary member of the local animal shelter, I would never use a video if I believed an animal had been treated inappropriately. Considering the nature of cats, it is worth mentioning that they tend to act on their own terms and rarely do anything they do not want to. However, if you feel that the video might cause offence to any of your students, you may need to consider an alternative option.

- colloquial, connotative, and semantically loaded lexis (e.g. *умора, братан, бухать, точняк, кузя*)
- suffixes such as -очка, -оченьку (e.g. *парилочка, потихонечку*)
- missing punctuation and spelling mistakes (*кот живёт лутше чем я* [sic!])

These aspects should be discussed in class before students proceed to create their own colloquial comments (see *Activity 6*). Nevertheless, linguistic accuracy should not be neglected. The teacher should make students aware of any grammatical, semantic, punctuation or spelling errors in their comments. As a follow-up to *Activity 6*, further differences between the standard variety and colloquial Russian could be addressed (see e.g., Stadler & Kaltseis, 2024).

3. Conclusion

The presented example meets various didactic requirements. Besides integrating different communication modes (e.g., mediation, reception, interaction, production), the learners' digital media literacy, linguistic, sociolinguistic, and intercultural competences are developed through the given activities. The structure and task types of this best practice example could serve as a model for dealing with social media content in the Russian language classroom. The video and comments can essentially be replaced, and the activities (such as questions and word banks) adapted to fit new content requirements. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that this example illustrates just one of many ways to incorporate digital media content into the Russian language classroom at the A2+/B1 level. In the context of Russian language teaching, future research should place greater emphasis on effective strategies for integrating digital media content into the classroom. Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to develop more practical, high-quality, ready-to-use teaching materials tailored to social media. Consequently, this would help reduce the workload of Russian language teachers and cater to authentic classroom environments (cf. Bacher, 2022, 141–143). In conclusion, this paper aims to make a small contribution towards addressing the above-mentioned desideratum.

Media Sources

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Рабочий лист

Зада́ние 1: В сего́дняшнее время молоды́е лю́ди ча́сто по́льзуются социа́льными сетя́ми. Порабо́тайте с партнёром. Скажи́те, каки́ми соцсетя́ми и ме́ссенджерами вы по́льзуетесь и для чего. Да́нные ни́же слова́ помо́гут вам при э́том.

https://pixabay.com/de/photos/internet-whatsapp-smartphone-3113279/ (17.12.2024)

<u>Слова́ для спра́вки:</u>
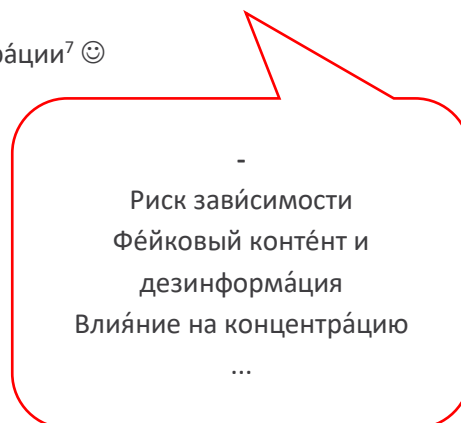Фейсбу́к, Вконта́кте, Экс, Инстагра́м, Ютью́б, Ва́йбер, Ска́йп, Ватса́п, Фейсбу́к Ме́ссенджер, ТикТок

по-/обща́ться с кем-л., по-/весели́ться, развле́чься/развлека́ться, отвле́чься/отвлека́ться от чего́-л., оста́ться/остава́ться на свя́зи, получи́ть/получа́ть информа́цию

+ ва́ши иде́и ☺

Зада́ние 2: Порабо́тайте с партнёром и отве́тьте на сле́дующие вопро́сы.

1) Вы иногда́ смо́трите ви́део в ТикТоке? Éсли да, о чём они? Éсли нет, то почему́?
2) Вы уже́ создава́ли и выкла́дывали ви́део или конте́нт в ТикТок? Почему́ (да/нет)? Како́й э́то был конте́нт? ☺
3) В чём, по-ва́шему, плю́сы и ми́нусы испо́льзования ТикТока (<u>см. ни́же</u>)?
4) Како́й конте́нт вам осо́бенно нра́вится и почему́?

Для инспира́ции[7] ☺

+
Креати́вное самовыраже́ние
Разнообра́зный конте́нт
Возмо́жности для обуче́ния
Социа́льное взаимоде́йствие
…

-
Риск зави́симости
Фе́йковый конте́нт и дезинформа́ция
Влия́ние на концентра́цию
…

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[7] Since *вдохновение* might be difficult for A2/B1 students to understand, the foreign word *инспирация* is used instead. The word *взаимодействие* could be explained by using the synonym *интеракция*.

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Зада́ние 3: Посмотри́те ви́део «… и сно́ва БАНЯ!», кото́рое бы́ло вы́ложено в ТикТок (https://www.tiktok.com/@andreymetlevskiy/video/7213470590437461249)[8]. Вместе с партнёром переда́йте основно́е содержа́ние видеосюже́та. Сле́дующие вопро́сы помо́гут вам при э́том.

https://pixabay.com/de/photos/bank-bl%C3%A4tter-kr%C3%A4uter-handt%C3%BCcher-6761313/ (17.12.2024)

1) О чём э́тот видеоро́лик?
2) Кто гла́вный геро́й? Как зову́т гла́вного геро́я?
3) Где нахо́дятся геро́и видеоро́лика?
4) Что происхо́дит?
5) Каки́е кома́нды мужчи́на даёт гла́вному геро́ю?

Слова́ для спра́вки: па́рить кого́-л. ве́ником, па́риться в ба́не, мы́ться в ба́не, купа́ться в снегу́, закаля́ться по́сле ба́ни

Зада́ние 4: В гру́ппах обсуди́те сле́дующие вопро́сы.

1) Вы бы посмотре́ли ви́део тако́го ро́да в реа́льной жи́зни, т.е. вне уро́ка? Почему́?
2) Что но́вого или интере́сного вы узна́ли из ви́део? Что вам понра́вилось, а что не понра́вилось?
3) Каки́е вопро́сы у вас возни́кли во вре́мя просмо́тра?

Зада́ние 5: Прочита́йте не́которые коммента́рии, кото́рые оста́вили по́льзователи. О чём они́ пи́шут? Что вы ду́маете о коммента́риях? Прочита́йте коммента́рии ещё раз. Обрати́те внима́ние на осо́бнности разгово́рной ре́чи. Вы́делите разгово́рные выраже́ния и объясни́те, как вы их понима́ете. Каки́е выраже́ния или фра́зы вы не понима́ете?

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[8] To activate the subtitles for this video, click on the "CC" button in the lower-right corner and select "Subtitles".

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kak_tam_v_bane

kak_tam_v_bane · 2022-2-12

Follow

Кот не пострадал. Он профессионал в бане. Видео мне прислал мой друг) Коты тоже любят баню да ещё и в... **more**

♫ оригинальный звук - kak_tam_v_bane

♡ 1M 💬 6617 🔖 56K

https://www.tiktok.com/@kak_tam_v_bane/video/7063... **Copy link**

Comments (6617) | Creator videos

solov'ev solo 62 rzn
Был бы у меня такой кот, я бы и не женился😅😅
2022-2-... Reply
♡ 19.2K

> **kak_tam_v_bane** · Creator
> Хаххааххах 😂 точняк
> 2022-2-... Reply
> ♡ 1482

View 75 more ⌄

"Механик"
Он в прошлой жизни " КОНКРЕТНЫМ БРАТАНОМ" был. Сауны, девочки....
2022-2-... Reply
♡ 9732

> **kak_tam_v_bane** · Creator
> Лучший комментарий 😂
> 2022-2-... Reply
> ♡ 677

View 17 more ⌄

kak_tam_v_bane · Creator
РЕБЯТА КОТ НЕ МОЙ!! Кто просил его ПРОДАТЬ, говорю ОН НЕ ПРОДАЁТСЯ! Хозяин его любит 😊
2022-2-... Reply
♡ 5519

View 43 replies ⌄

user1608882985615
еслиб еще бухал,цены бы не было😂
2022-2-... Reply
♡ 4220

> **kak_tam_v_bane** · Creator
> Ххахаха 😂
> 2022-2-... Reply
> ♡ 243

View 35 more ⌄

Enomay41
Это лучший кот в мире 😁
2022-2-… Reply

♡
1538

View 5 replies ⌄

Alex Eagle
В парилочку 😄 возле батареи не то 😄😄😄
2022-2-… Reply

♡
1471

kak_tam_v_bane · Creator
Ххахаха да) вообще умора 😄
2022-2-… Reply

♡
166

View 1 more ⌄

Gagarinnext
кот живёт лутше чем я))
2022-2-… Reply

♡
1232

View 5 replies ⌄

✝✠Фартовый✠✝
кот в прошлой жизни любил парица
2022-2-… Reply

♡
352

kak_tam_v_bane · Creator
Это точно) а ещё и в снег нырять) первый
раз такое видел)
2022-2-… Reply

♡
195

View 3 more ⌄

user4415096141609
Кот:"… Ну а после баньки - молоко!!!" Хозяин :
"Может водки?" Кот:"Не-е-т, не то!…" 😊😊🐴
Всех с лёгким паром!!!
2022-3-2 Reply

♡
304

kak_tam_v_bane · Creator
😄😄😅😅
2022-3-2 Reply

♡
28

View 3 more ⌄

skrip 1987
Если бы у меня такой кот был то меня жена бы из
дому выгнала в баню жить. 😄😄😄
2022-2-… Reply

♡
197

kak_tam_v_bane · Creator
Ххахах 😄
2022-2-… Reply

Back to top ⌃

♡
19

https://www.tiktok.com/@kak_tam_v_bane/video/7063840845656591618?lang=en (22.10.2024).

Зада́ние 6: Како́й коммента́рий вы бы оста́вили? Почему́? Напиши́те коммента́рий и постара́йтесь испо́льзовать разгово́рные выраже́ния.

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