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# FORMATION OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS THROUGH WORKING WITH PUBLICISTIC AND MEDIA TEXTS

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**Abstract**

The development of communicative competence and critical thinking has become one of the most important objectives of contemporary language education. In the context of information globalization and the rapid expansion of digital media, students are constantly exposed to various forms of information, including newspaper articles, online publications, interviews, analytical reports, blogs, and social media content. Therefore, the ability to understand, interpret, evaluate, and critically respond to media messages is an essential component of modern language learning. This article examines the pedagogical and methodological potential of using publicistic and media texts in Russian language lessons to develop students' communicative competence and critical thinking skills. Particular attention is given to the linguistic, structural, stylistic, and pragmatic characteristics of media discourse. The article also proposes a system of classroom activities aimed at developing reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, argumentation, discussion, and written communication. It argues that systematic work with authentic media materials can contribute to the development of independent thinking, information literacy, and responsible communication.

**Keywords**: communicative competence, critical thinking, publicistic texts, media discourse, Russian language teaching, information literacy, analytical reading, argumentation, media literacy, communication skills.

## 1. Introduction

The modern information environment is characterized by an unprecedented increase in the volume and speed of information exchange. Newspapers, television, online news platforms, social networks, blogs, and digital publications have become important sources of information and instruments of



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social communication. In this environment, individuals need not only to understand information but also to evaluate its reliability, identify the author's position, recognize persuasive strategies, and distinguish facts from opinions.

These developments have significant implications for language education. Contemporary language teaching should not be limited to the acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It should also prepare students to participate effectively in social communication, express opinions, defend arguments, interpret different viewpoints, and respond appropriately to information encountered in everyday life.

Publicistic and media texts provide valuable material for achieving these objectives. They reflect contemporary social issues, present different perspectives, and contain diverse linguistic and rhetorical devices. Their use in Russian language lessons creates opportunities for meaningful communication and analytical work.

Working with such texts allows students to develop several interconnected abilities: understanding the main idea, identifying supporting arguments, recognizing emotional and evaluative vocabulary, interpreting the author's intention, comparing different sources, and producing independent oral and written responses.

The purpose of this article is to examine the methodological possibilities of using publicistic and media texts to develop communicative competence and critical thinking skills in Russian language education.

**The main objectives are:**

to analyze the relationship between communicative competence and critical thinking;

to identify the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of publicistic and media texts;

to examine the educational value of authentic media materials;

to develop practical activities for analytical reading and communication;

to propose methodological conditions for integrating media texts into language lessons.

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## 2. Communicative Competence as a Fundamental Objective of Language Education

Communicative competence is generally understood as the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in different social and communicative situations. It involves more than grammatical accuracy because successful communication requires knowledge of linguistic forms, social conventions, discourse organization, and communication strategies.

Canale and Swain (1980) identify grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic dimensions of communicative competence. Canale (1983) further develops this framework by emphasizing discourse competence as an important component of effective communication.

These theoretical approaches are particularly relevant to teaching Russian through publicistic and media texts.

Grammatical competence enables students to use vocabulary, grammatical structures, and sentence patterns correctly when interpreting and producing media messages.

Sociolinguistic competence helps learners understand the relationship between language choices and social contexts. Students learn to distinguish formal journalistic language from conversational expressions and recognize how language varies according to the intended audience.

Discourse competence involves the ability to understand and produce coherent texts. It includes recognizing the structure of an article, identifying the relationship between paragraphs, and organizing ideas logically.

Strategic competence refers to the ability to overcome communication difficulties through clarification, paraphrasing, asking questions, and using alternative expressions.

Publicistic texts are especially useful because they provide examples of how these components function together in real communication.

For example, when reading an analytical article about environmental problems, students must understand specialized vocabulary, identify the author's argument, recognize the structure of the text, and formulate their own response. Thus, one learning activity can develop several aspects of communicative competence simultaneously.



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### 3. The Role of Critical Thinking in Working with Media Texts

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, identify assumptions, compare evidence, and make reasoned conclusions. It is particularly important in contemporary education because access to information does not automatically guarantee its correct interpretation.

In language learning, critical thinking enables students to move beyond passive reading. Instead of simply reproducing information, learners become active participants in the interpretation of texts.

Bloom's revised taxonomy, developed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), provides a useful framework for organizing such activities. It identifies six cognitive processes: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

These processes can be applied to media-based language instruction:

Remembering: identifying key facts, names, dates, and terms.

Understanding: explaining the main idea of a media text.

Applying: using information from the text in a new communicative situation.

Analyzing: examining arguments, structure, language, and the author's position.

Evaluating: assessing the reliability of information and the strength of arguments.

Creating: preparing an article, review, presentation, or discussion based on the analyzed material.

For instance, after reading two different news reports about the same event, students may compare their headlines, identify differences in emphasis, examine the evidence presented, and discuss how language influences readers' perceptions.

Such activities develop the ability to approach information thoughtfully and avoid accepting every media statement without analysis.

### 4. Linguistic and Pragmatic Characteristics of Publicistic and Media Texts

Publicistic and media texts have specific linguistic and structural features that distinguish them from many other types of discourse. They are designed to inform, explain, persuade, influence public opinion, and attract the attention of readers.



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One of their important characteristics is the combination of informative and persuasive functions. A news report may primarily present facts, whereas an editorial or opinion article may contain explicit evaluation and argumentation.

### 4.1. Lexical characteristics

Media texts frequently use social, political, economic, cultural, and scientific vocabulary. They may also contain evaluative words, emotionally expressive expressions, idioms, and figurative language.

Students can analyze how lexical choices influence the perception of information. For example, the words "reform", "crisis", "achievement", and "controversy" may communicate different evaluative perspectives depending on the context in which they are used.

### 4.2. Syntactic characteristics

Publicistic writing often combines short and extended sentences, rhetorical questions, parallel constructions, and complex syntactic structures. Headlines may use concise expressions designed to attract attention.

Analyzing these features helps students understand how sentence structure contributes to the effectiveness of communication.

### 4.3. Stylistic characteristics

Media texts may include elements of official, scientific, conversational, and literary styles. Their stylistic organization depends on the genre, target audience, communicative purpose, and publication format.

For example, a newspaper report usually emphasizes factual information, while an opinion column allows greater use of evaluation, interpretation, and persuasive language.

### 4.4. Pragmatic characteristics

The pragmatic dimension concerns the relationship between the text, its author, its audience, and the communicative purpose.

Students should learn to identify:

who produced the text;

who the intended audience is;

what the author wants to communicate;



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whether the text aims to inform, persuade, criticize, or entertain;
what linguistic strategies are used to influence the reader.
This type of analysis develops students' understanding of language as a social instrument rather than merely a collection of grammatical rules.

**5. Methodological Approaches to Teaching through Media Texts**

The successful use of media materials requires a systematic teaching methodology. Teachers should select texts according to students' language proficiency, age, educational needs, and the objectives of the lesson.
A three-stage model can be applied.

**Stage 1. Pre-reading activities**

The purpose of this stage is to activate students' background knowledge and prepare them for understanding the text.
Possible activities include:
discussing the topic through introductory questions;
analyzing the headline and predicting the content;
identifying unfamiliar key vocabulary;
examining photographs, charts, or other visual materials;
discussing students' initial opinions about the issue.
For example, before reading an article about environmental protection, the teacher may ask: "What environmental problems are most serious in your community?" or "What responsibilities should citizens have in protecting nature?"
These questions encourage students to connect the topic with their personal experience.

**Stage 2. While-reading activities**

During reading, students focus on the structure, meaning, and communicative purpose of the text.
They may:
identify the main idea of each paragraph;
distinguish facts from opinions;
underline arguments and supporting evidence;
identify emotionally expressive vocabulary;


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find expressions indicating the author's attitude;
formulate questions about unclear information.
The teacher should encourage students to support their interpretations with specific evidence from the text.

**Stage 3. Post-reading activities**
This stage focuses on independent interpretation and communication.
Students may:
summarize the text orally or in writing;
compare the article with another source;
participate in a structured discussion;
prepare a short argumentative essay;
write an alternative headline;
present their own solutions to the problem discussed.
The post-reading stage is particularly important because it transforms reading comprehension into active language production.

## 6. Practical Activities for Developing Communicative Competence and Critical Thinking

The following activities can be incorporated into Russian language lessons.
**Activity 1. "Fact or Opinion?"**
Educational objective: to develop analytical reading and the ability to distinguish factual information from subjective evaluation.
Students receive a short media text and identify statements that represent facts and statements that express opinions.
Example:
"The city opened a new public library on Monday."
"The new library is the most important cultural achievement of the year."
Students discuss why the first statement can be verified through evidence, whereas the second contains an evaluative judgment.
The activity helps learners recognize the difference between objective information and subjective interpretation.

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**Activity 2. "Analyze the Headline"**

Educational objective: to examine how language influences the reader's expectations.

Students receive several headlines concerning the same topic. They analyze vocabulary, emotional expressions, sentence structure, and possible communicative intentions.

The teacher asks:

Which headline appears neutral?

Which headline is more emotional?

What information is emphasized?

Does the headline accurately represent the article?

This task develops pragmatic awareness and media literacy.

**Activity 3. "Two Sources, Two Perspectives"**

Educational objective: to develop comparison, evaluation, and argumentation skills.

Students read two texts about the same social issue published by different sources. They identify similarities and differences in the information presented.

The analysis may focus on:

the main message;

the evidence used;

the author's position;

the selection of vocabulary;

the presence of emotional or persuasive expressions.

Students then formulate a conclusion explaining which source provides stronger evidence and why.

**Activity 4. "Press Conference"**

Educational objective: to improve oral communication and spontaneous speech.

One student acts as a journalist, while other students represent specialists, public figures, or community representatives. The journalist asks questions about a selected social issue, and the participants provide explanations and arguments.

This activity develops the ability to formulate questions, respond appropriately, clarify information, and maintain a communicative exchange.



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**Activity 5. "Write an Opinion Article"**

Educational objective: to develop written communication and logical argumentation.

Students choose a social or educational issue and prepare a short opinion article. Their writing should contain:

a clear introduction to the issue;

a central argument;

supporting reasons or examples;

a consideration of an alternative viewpoint;

a conclusion.

The teacher evaluates not only grammatical accuracy but also coherence, argumentation, vocabulary, and the appropriate use of stylistic devices.

**Activity 6. "Detect the Bias"**

Educational objective: to recognize potentially biased language and persuasive techniques.

Students analyze a media text and identify words or expressions that may influence readers' attitudes. They discuss whether the text presents different perspectives fairly and whether its conclusions are supported by evidence.

Teachers should emphasize that the presence of emotional vocabulary does not automatically make a text unreliable. Students must examine the context and evidence before reaching a conclusion.

## 7. The Contribution of Alaudinova's Research to Communicative Language Teaching

The methodological development of communicative competence is closely connected with learner-centred approaches, active interaction, and the purposeful organization of language activities.

In her article "Communicative Competence in the Language Learning System" (2025), Alaudinova examines communicative competence as an important component of language education. The ideas discussed in this research are relevant to the use of publicistic and media texts because these materials create opportunities for learners to interpret messages, exchange opinions, and participate in meaningful communication.



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In addition, Alaudinova's article "Theoretical Approach of Oral Communication Competency" (2022) provides a theoretical perspective on the development of oral communication abilities. This direction is particularly significant when media-based instruction includes debates, interviews, discussions, and presentations.

The connection between these methodological ideas and media-text analysis can be expressed through the following sequence:

Perception → Comprehension → Analysis → Evaluation → Formulation of an Opinion → Argumentation → Interaction → Reflection.

At the first stage, students receive and understand information. They then examine its content, structure, and linguistic features. After evaluating the presented arguments, learners formulate their own positions and express them through oral or written communication.

This sequence demonstrates that media texts can serve as an effective methodological resource for integrating reading, speaking, writing, and critical thinking.

It is important to emphasize that the proposed sequence represents a methodological synthesis developed for this article rather than a direct quotation from Alaudinova.

## 8. Assessment of Students' Progress

Assessment should reflect the integrated nature of communicative competence and critical thinking. Traditional assessment methods that focus exclusively on grammatical accuracy may not adequately demonstrate students' ability to interpret and evaluate media information.

A comprehensive assessment system can include the following criteria:

Reading comprehension: the ability to identify the main idea, supporting details, and the structure of a text.

Critical analysis: the ability to distinguish facts from opinions, recognize the author's position, and evaluate arguments.

Vocabulary and grammar: the appropriate use of lexical and grammatical resources.

Oral communication: the ability to express ideas clearly, participate in discussions, and respond to questions.


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Written communication: the ability to produce coherent summaries, reviews, and argumentative texts.

Information literacy: the ability to identify the source of information, compare publications, and recognize unsupported claims.

Formative assessment can be conducted through observation, peer feedback, self-assessment, analytical worksheets, and short reflective tasks.

For example, after a classroom debate, students may assess whether they presented clear arguments, used relevant examples, listened to opposing opinions, and responded appropriately.

## 9. Challenges and Pedagogical Conditions

Despite the educational advantages of media-based instruction, several challenges may arise.

Information overload. Students may encounter an excessive amount of information and experience difficulties identifying the most relevant content. Teachers should select manageable texts and provide clear analytical tasks.

Language complexity. Authentic media materials may contain unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and culturally specific references. Texts should therefore be adapted, when necessary, without removing their essential communicative features.

Misinformation and unreliable sources. Students may have difficulty distinguishing reliable information from misleading or unsupported claims. Teachers should introduce basic source-evaluation procedures and encourage comparison of independent publications.

Passive participation. Some learners may hesitate to express their opinions because of limited vocabulary or fear of making mistakes. Pair work, small-group discussions, and supportive feedback can help overcome this difficulty.

Emotional and ideological sensitivity. Media materials may address controversial social or political issues. Teachers should select age-appropriate content and maintain a respectful environment in which different viewpoints can be discussed constructively.

For effective implementation, the following pedagogical conditions are necessary:

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Selection of authentic and educationally appropriate media texts.
Integration of linguistic, communicative, and analytical objectives.
Gradual progression from comprehension to independent evaluation.
Creation of a supportive environment for discussion and argumentation.
Development of information and media literacy.
Continuous formative assessment and reflective practice.

## 10. Conclusion

Working with publicistic and media texts offers significant opportunities for developing communicative competence and critical thinking in Russian language education. Such texts provide authentic examples of contemporary language use and introduce students to different forms of social communication. Their systematic application enables learners to develop reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammatical awareness, analytical reasoning, argumentation, and oral and written communication skills. More importantly, students learn to interpret information independently, distinguish facts from opinions, evaluate the reliability of sources, and formulate reasoned conclusions.

The proposed methodological model, which includes pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities, creates a structured framework for integrating media materials into the educational process. The practical activities presented in the article demonstrate how language learning can be combined with analytical and communicative tasks.

The development of communicative competence should therefore be regarded as an integrated process involving linguistic knowledge, social interaction, critical interpretation, and independent expression. Publicistic and media texts can serve as an effective resource for achieving these objectives when they are selected carefully and supported by appropriate teaching strategies.

In conclusion, the integration of media-text analysis into Russian language lessons contributes not only to the development of language proficiency but also to the formation of thoughtful, independent, and responsible individuals capable of participating effectively in contemporary information society.

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