

Title: Situating Word Formation in Communicative Language Teaching
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Abstract:

Teachers of Russian strongly believe that, when confronted with unknown words, learners should use word formation clues to infer the words' meaning (Keefe 2004). Reflecting this, the field has produced useful, but specialized texts (Patrick; Browning, Hart & Solovyova) that acquaint learners with word formation principles through dictionary-style lists of words and usage examples. Recent Russian language textbooks (e.g., Golosa, Mezhdud nami) tend to address word formation principles primarily in an ad hoc fashion, attaching them to reading strategy instruction as a tool to explain words encountered in texts. Other textbooks (e.g., V puti) highlight these principles in vocabulary presentation and instruction, but irregularly. Perhaps this restricted embrace of word formation principles makes sense for communicatively-oriented textbooks since they generally organize instruction around functions, topics, or themes. Word formation, by contrast, lends itself to instruction organized around formal elements that may be hard to connect with a single theme (i.e., a root пис can yield words of very disparate meanings письмо, запись, описать, выписать, прописать). Yet, the ad hoc treatment of word formation may obscure for learners the generalizable principles, such as the meanings behind highly productive and transparent suffixes (i.e., ность or тель). This presentation will attempt to chart a new way of situating word part instruction within a communicatively-oriented intermediate-level language course. The presenter will give an overview of the course and its word formation component, sharing exercises and activities that try to fit word formation work into productive communicative activities

Browning, G., D. Hart, and R. Solovyova. Leveraging Your Russian With Roots, Prefixes, and Suffixes. Slavica, 2001.

Keefe, L. The Place and Pedagogy of Reading in the Russian Language Curriculum. PhD Thesis. U of Kansas, 2004.

Patrick, G. Roots of the Russian Language. Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1997.