

Title: Virtual Voyages: An Experiential Language Learning Approach for Novice-level k-12 Russian Contexts

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Abstract:

Experiential learning, which emphasizes the making of meaning from students' direct, hands-on experiences, began to be integrated into the US k12 education system in the 1980s (Kolb, 1984; Lewis & Williams, 1994). It has subsequently been adopted in language learning contexts, most frequently through project-based language learning. However, it can be challenging to design curricula and activities that effectively support learners at the novice level in experiential learning, particularly in a language like Russian, with few cognates and challenging morphology.

This presentation describes an experiential curriculum that follows Koenderman's (2000) model of exposure, participation, internalization and dissemination phases, using role-play and project-based instruction at the novice level to develop multiple aspects of communicative proficiency, through a Communicative-Experiential Syllabus, as described by Knutson (2003). Developed using the ACTFL standards and ACTFL's Keys to Planning for Learning (Clementi & Terrell, 2017), this curriculum takes learners to a host family in St. Petersburg, on a tourist excursion in Moscow, and across Russia on the Trans-Siberian railway. Learners improve their oral and written Russian in all three modes as they purchase train tickets, take a master class at the museum, help their host mother prepare a salad, and report their luggage stolen. A series of technology-enhanced presentations serves as the capstone project for the curriculum.

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