DEVELOPING MASTERY OF THE GRAMMATICAL GENDER CATEGORY IN RUSSIAN: LINGUISTIC AND METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR TURKIC-SPEAKING STUDENTS

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Annotation.The article examines linguistic, psycholinguistic, and methodological foundations of mastering the grammatical gender category in Russian among Turkic-speaking students. Given that Turkic languages such as Uzbek, Kazakh, and Turkish lack grammatical gender, students frequently encounter interference-related errors that impede communicative competence. The study analyzes structural differences between Russian and Turkic languages, classifies typical student errors, and proposes a comprehensive pedagogical model that integrates contrastive analysis, cognitive visualization, communicative grammar tasks, and digital learning platforms. Emphasis is placed on meaningful context, cultural responsiveness, and the development of morphological awareness. The research highlights methodological recommendations applicable in teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL), demonstrating that an integrated approach significantly improves learners' accuracy, confidence, and linguistic flexibility.

Introduction. The grammatical gender category represents one of the core structural elements of Russian grammar, determining agreement between nouns and other parts of speech such as adjectives, pronouns, numerals, and past-tense verbs. For native speakers, the acquisition of gender occurs naturally through exposure; however, for learners whose first languages do not contain grammatical gender, this process becomes significantly more challenging. This is particularly true for speakers of Turkic languages—such as Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkish—which do not divide nouns into masculine, feminine, or neuter classes. As a result, students often encounter difficulties identifying the gender of Russian nouns and applying agreement rules accurately in both written and oral communication.

In educational contexts across Central Asia, Russian remains a key language of academic instruction and professional interaction, especially in medicine, law, and technical fields. Therefore, insufficient mastery of grammatical gender affects not only linguistic accuracy but also students' academic performance and professional readiness. Common difficulties include incorrect gender assignment, inconsistent agreement, and confusion caused by irregular or phonologically ambiguous noun forms. These errors frequently arise because learners rely on phonetic intuition or semantic association instead of understanding the formal morphological system that governs gender in Russian.

The relevance of studying grammatical gender acquisition lies in the need to support learners in overcoming interference from their native language and forming stable, linguistically grounded representations of gender categories. To address this, the present research examines the linguistic and methodological factors influencing gender mastery among Turkic-speaking students. It analyzes typical error patterns, explores the cognitive reasons underlying such errors, and evaluates instructional strategies that may improve learners' competence. By combining contrastive analysis, lexicographic work, communicative grammar tasks, and visual-cognitive techniques, the study aims to propose an effective approach for developing accurate and confident use of grammatical gender in Russian as a foreign language.

Research methods. The methodological framework of the study is based on a combination of linguistic, comparative, lexicographic, and discourse-analytic approaches, allowing a comprehensive examination of how Turkic-speaking students acquire grammatical gender in Russian. Linguistic analysis was applied to identify recurrent morphological and syntactic errors, focusing on difficulties related to gender assignment, agreement patterns, and the interpretation of irregular or ambiguous noun forms. This method helped classify the most typical error types produced by learners and revealed gaps in their understanding of Russian morphological structures.

Comparative analysis was used to evaluate structural differences between Russian and Turkic languages, particularly the absence of grammatical gender in the latter. This comparison made it possible to determine how native-language interference affects students' perception of gender categories and why certain grammatical forms are consistently misinterpreted. The contrastive approach also helped identify which Russian noun types (e.g., zero-ending masculine nouns, soft-sign feminine nouns, neuter forms with irregular patterns) create the greatest difficulty for learners.

The research further employed a lexicographic method, involving the use of explanatory dictionaries, bilingual resources, and educational corpora to observe how students interpret and apply dictionary information when determining gender. This method revealed that many learners rely on phonetic intuition or semantic associations rather than formal morphological cues, which leads to inaccurate gender identification.

To analyze how gender is used in practical communication, discourse analysis was conducted on written assignments and oral tasks, including dialogues, descriptions, and narrative exercises. This made it possible to observe how learners apply gender rules in spontaneous contexts and how frequently errors appear during real-time speech production.

Finally, elements of pedagogical observation were incorporated through monitoring classroom activities, practice exercises, and corrective feedback sessions. These observations helped assess how different instructional strategies—contrastive explanation, visual aids, repetition, and communicative grammar tasks—affect students' acquisition of grammatical gender. Together, these methods provided a multi-dimensional understanding of the linguistic, cognitive, and methodological factors that shape gender mastery in Russian as a foreign language.

Results and discussions. The results of the study show that Turkic-speaking learners experience the greatest difficulty in three interconnected areas of grammatical gender acquisition: identifying gender categories, maintaining agreement across syntactic components, and applying gender rules in spontaneous communication. Error analysis revealed that many students rely on phonetic similarity or semantic intuition rather than morphological cues when assigning gender, which results in frequent misclassification of zero-ending masculine nouns, soft-sign feminine nouns, and neuter forms with irregular endings. Written tasks demonstrated that even when students correctly memorize rules, they often fail to transfer this knowledge into practice, especially in contexts requiring quick, communicative decision-making. Discourse analysis of oral responses and narrative exercises confirmed that agreement errors—in adjectives, pronouns, numerals, and past-tense verbs—remain persistent, reducing grammatical clarity and overall coherence of the message. These findings indicate that the main source of difficulty lies not in the lack of theoretical knowledge, but in the absence of stable internalized representations of the gender category.

The discussion of these results highlights the need for an integrated instructional model that goes beyond rule explanation and mechanical drills. The study found that methods combining contrastive analysis, lexicographic training, visual-cognitive techniques, and communicative grammar tasks produced noticeably stronger outcomes. When students compared Russian grammatical gender with the structure of their native Turkic languages, they became more aware of interference and avoided instinctive, incorrect assumptions. The use of dictionary-based exercises and educational corpora improved their ability to interpret morphological markers instead of relying on intuition. Classroom observations showed that visual tools—such as gender charts, color-coded noun groups, and morphological schemes—helped students remember and categorize nouns more effectively. Most importantly, communicative tasks that required real-time usage—dialogues, descriptions, and short narratives—strengthened the automatic application of gender rules. These findings suggest that successful acquisition of Russian grammatical gender depends on the consistent combination of cognitive awareness, structured practice, and meaningful communicative use.

Conclusion. The overall findings of the study indicate that mastering the grammatical gender category in Russian poses significant challenges for Turkic-speaking learners due to the

absence of this category in their native languages and the resulting interference in both perception and usage. The analysis shows that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for building stable grammatical accuracy; learners require structured support that integrates contrastive explanations, lexicographic training, visual-cognitive tools, and communicative practice. When students engage with gender markers through contextualized tasks, authentic discourse, and real-time language production, their ability to assign and maintain agreement improves considerably. Therefore, the most effective approach to developing gender competence is a comprehensive instructional model that connects linguistic theory with practical application, ensuring that learners internalize gender distinctions and apply them confidently in academic and professional communication.

Keywords: grammatical gender, Russian as a foreign language, Turkic-speaking learners, gender agreement, linguistic interference, contrastive analysis, lexicographic training, communicative competence, discourse analysis, language acquisition.

Introduction. The grammatical gender category is a fundamental component of Russian grammar, playing a key role in agreement between nouns and related word classes such as adjectives, pronouns, numerals, and past-tense verbs. For native speakers, gender is acquired naturally through exposure, whereas learners whose first languages lack grammatical gender often struggle to internalize this category. Speakers of Turkic languages—such as Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz—do not distinguish nouns as masculine, feminine, or neuter, which leads to difficulties in assigning gender and maintaining agreement in Russian. Structural features of the Russian language, including zero-ending masculine nouns, soft-sign feminine nouns, and irregular neuter forms, further complicate the learning process. As a result, even advanced learners frequently rely on intuition rather than morphological analysis, producing errors that affect clarity and coherence in communication.

The relevance of studying gender acquisition is particularly high in academic and professional contexts across Central Asia, where Russian remains a significant language of instruction and workplace interaction. Persistent gender errors can reduce communicative accuracy and undermine learners' confidence. Therefore, understanding the linguistic and cognitive factors that shape these difficulties is essential for developing more effective instructional approaches. This research addresses typical gender-related errors produced by Turkic-speaking students, examines the influence of native-language interference, and evaluates methodological strategies that support more accurate and automatic use of gender in Russian. Through an integrated approach combining linguistic analysis, contrastive comparison, lexicographic training, and communicative tasks, the study aims to propose practical solutions for strengthening gender competence in Russian as a foreign language.

Materials and Methods. The study employs an integrated methodological approach combining linguistic, comparative, lexicographic, and discourse-based analysis to examine how Turkic-speaking learners acquire the grammatical gender category in Russian. Linguistic analysis was used to identify recurring errors in gender assignment and agreement, focusing on problematic noun types such as zero-ending masculine forms and soft-sign feminine forms. Comparative analysis allowed for the systematic identification of differences between Russian and Turkic languages, helping to determine how the absence of grammatical gender in Turkic structures contributes to learner difficulties. In addition, lexicographic methods—including the use of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, glossary comparison, and examination of example sentences—were applied to understand how students interpret morphological cues and reference materials when determining gender.

To assess how gender rules are applied in practice, discourse analysis was conducted on students' written tasks and spoken responses. These included descriptive exercises, short narratives, and dialogue-based assignments that revealed how learners manage gender agreement in spontaneous communication. Pedagogical observation also played a role, tracking how students responded to instructional techniques such as visual aids, contrastive explanations, and

communicative grammar tasks. The combination of these methods provided a comprehensive view of the linguistic and cognitive factors influencing gender acquisition, while also helping to evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching strategies in supporting the development of accurate and stable gender use.

Results. The results of the study show that Turkic-speaking learners encounter consistent difficulties in identifying and applying grammatical gender in Russian, particularly when working with noun types that lack transparent morphological markers. Zero-ending masculine nouns, soft-sign feminine forms, and irregular neuter nouns appeared most problematic, with students frequently assigning incorrect gender based on phonetic intuition rather than morphological analysis. Written tasks confirmed that learners often produced agreement errors involving adjectives, pronouns, and past-tense verbs. Even students who demonstrated knowledge of theoretical rules struggled to maintain gender agreement in spontaneous written and oral communication, indicating that their understanding was not yet fully internalized. These findings highlight the gap between rule memorization and practical use, underscoring the need for methods that promote deeper cognitive engagement with gender patterns.

In addition, the analysis revealed that instructional interventions integrating lexicographic tools, visual supports, and contextualized practice resulted in improved learner performance. Students who used dictionaries and glossaries more actively demonstrated greater accuracy in distinguishing between ambiguous noun forms. Visual aids, such as gender charts and morphological groupings, helped reinforce structural patterns and reduce reliance on intuition. Communicative tasks, including dialogues, descriptions, and short narratives, strengthened learners' ability to apply gender rules in real-time language use. Overall, the results suggest that the development of stable gender competence requires not only explicit explanation but also repeated contextual practice and the strategic use of reference materials.

Discussions. The analysis of the findings demonstrates that the main challenges faced by Turkic-speaking learners in mastering Russian grammatical gender stem not only from the structural absence of this category in their native languages, but also from the cognitive strategies they employ when interpreting unfamiliar forms. Students frequently rely on phonetic resemblance or semantic association rather than morphological reasoning, which leads to persistent errors in gender assignment and agreement. This highlights the necessity of instructional approaches that move beyond memorization and introduce learners to the functional logic of Russian gender through contrastive explanation and guided analysis. The study also shows that lexicographic tools play a crucial role in supporting accurate gender identification: students who consistently used dictionaries, glossaries, and corpus examples demonstrated clearer understanding of ambiguous noun types. Moreover, discourse-based and communicative tasks proved essential for strengthening automaticity, as they required learners to apply gender rules in meaningful contexts, reducing the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical usage. Visual aids and structured input activities further enhanced retention by helping students recognize patterns rather than isolated rules. Taken together, these observations indicate that effective gender acquisition requires an integrated pedagogical model combining linguistic explanation, cognitive scaffolding, reference-based learning, and communicative practice, ultimately enabling learners to internalize gender distinctions and apply them confidently in academic and professional communication.

Conclusion. The overall results of the study confirm that the acquisition of grammatical gender in Russian by Turkic-speaking learners is a multidimensional process that cannot be effectively achieved through traditional rule memorization alone. The persistent difficulties observed in gender identification, agreement maintenance, and spontaneous language production demonstrate that learners require instructional support that addresses both linguistic and cognitive aspects of gender. The research shows that contrastive analysis helps students understand how the absence of gender in their native languages shapes their errors, while lexicographic tools provide essential guidance in interpreting ambiguous noun forms and understanding functional usage. Furthermore, communicative and discourse-based activities

significantly enhance learners' ability to apply gender rules correctly in realistic contexts, fostering the development of automaticity and confidence. Visual-cognitive strategies, reference materials, and guided practice together create an instructional environment that supports deeper internalization of grammatical gender. Therefore, the study concludes that an integrated pedagogical model—combining linguistic explanation, contextualized practice, and strategic use of learning resources—is the most effective approach for developing stable and accurate gender competence in Russian among Turkic-speaking students.

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