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Maria Bondarenko, University of Montreal, Canada; Heidelberg University, Germany

Vita V. Kogan, Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom

"Shouldn't We Do More Grammar?": Learners' Perspectives on the Communicative Approach in the Russian L2 Classroom

Abstract 1

The communicative approach to language teaching (CA) has commonly been recognized as having a positive impact on student motivation. However, language instructors notice that the CA does not elicit enthusiastic response from all learners. Based on the dynamic conception of motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015), this paper shares data from the empirical study examining Russian L2 learners' attitudes to the CA. A qualitative analysis of 241 comments collected from 448 participants in five North-American institutions enabled us to distinguish thematic clusters organized along the lines of the contrast between total-acceptance vs. criticism/disappointment. The findings also demonstrate students' readiness to participate in discussions on L2 methodology. We propose that students' attitudes to the CA correlate with their ability to cope with novelty and discuss this assumption in connection with "tolerance for ambiguity" as a constitutive feature of the CA (Oprandy, 1999), on the one hand, and cognitive learning style theory—which also makes use of the concept of "tolerance for ambiguity" (Grigorenko et al., 2000)—on the other. Finally, we raise the possibility of the "consultative L2 pedagogy" approach—the term we propose to use to indicate students participation in the process of curriculum design, including decisions related to teaching methodology.

Keywords: motivation, dynamic conception of motivation, communicative approach to teaching second and foreign languages, cognitive and learning styles, tolerance for ambiguity, consultative approach

Abstract 2

Dem kommunikativen Ansatz im Fremdsprachenunterricht (KA) wird gemeinhin ein positiver Einfluss auf die Motivation der Lernenden zugeschrieben. Lehrkräfte behaupten jedoch, dass der KA nicht bei allen Lernenden Begeisterung hervorruft. Auf Grundlage des dynamischen Konzepts von Motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) werden in diesem Beitrag Daten aus einer empirischen Studie zu den Einstellungen russischer L2-Lerner*innen zum KA im Unterricht vorgestellt. Die qualitative Analyse von 241 Kommentaren von insgesamt 448 Teilnehmer*innen aus fünf nordamerikanischen Institutionen ermöglichte es uns, Themenblöcke zu bilden, die sich auf einer Skala zwischen vollständiger Akzeptanz und Kritik/Enttäuschung einreihen lassen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen auch die Bereitschaft der Studierenden, an Diskussionen über L2-Methodik teilzunehmen. Wir nehmen an, dass die Einstellungen der Studierenden zum KA mit ihrer Fähigkeit korrelieren, mit Neuartigem und mit Mehrdeutigkeit umzugehen. Wir diskutieren diese Annahme im Zusammenhang mit der „Ambiguitätstoleranz" als konstitutivem Merkmal des KA (Oprandy, 1999) sowie in Verbindung mit der kognitiven Lernstiltheorie, die sich ebenfalls des Konzepts der „Ambiguitätstoleranz" bedient, um das unterschiedliche Verhalten der Studierenden in L2-Klassenräumen zu erklären (Grigorenko et al., 2000). Schließlich stellen wir die Möglichkeit einer „beratenden Pädagogik" vor. Dieser Begriff bezeichnet die aktive Beteiligung der Studierenden am Prozess der Lehrplangestaltung einschließlich der Entscheidungen im Zusammenhang mit der Lehrmethodik.

Keywords: Motivation, dynamisches Konzept von Motivation, kommunikativer Ansatz im Fremdsprachenunterricht, Ambiguitätstoleranz, kognitive Lernstile, beratende Pädagogik.

1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation and Communicative Approaches

Many would agree that the communicative approach to language teaching (CA) is one of the most influential approaches in second language (L2) education (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). The CA provides a set of principles that support content-, task-, project-, scenario-based and collaborative learning (e.g., Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004), and it is the inspiration for widely used proficiency guidelines, such as the CEFR in Europe, ACTFL in the USA, or TORFL in Russia. The best-known communicative teaching principles are:

- focus on communicative competence (Canale, 1983),
- performance-based instruction and assessment (Bachman & Palmer, 1996),
- comprehensive input (Krashen, 1981) reinforced by oral output, as means of testing understanding/intake (Swain, 2000), and immediate error correction in the form of recasting (Lyster, 2001),
- focus on content and meaning (Long, 2015),
- learner-centeredness (Nunan, 1988, 2004),
- attention to pragmatics and culture (Kasper & Rose, 2003),
- use of authentic material (Peacock, 1997; Gilmore, 2007),
- a nearly monolingual environment (Krashen, 1981),
- collaborative work and community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991),
- task and project pedagogy (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Ellis, 2003),
- some approaches that belong to the communicative paradigm (e.g., task-, content- and project-based) are associated with open-architecture curriculum design and textbooklessness (Campbell, 2021).

It has been recognized that the CA "requires complexity in terms of planning and a tolerance for messiness and ambiguity as teachers analyze students' needs and design meaningful tasks to meet those needs" (Oprandy, 1999, p. 44; as cited in Jacobs & Farrell, 2003, p. 9).

The traditional belief has been that the CA has a positive impact on students' motivation (e.g., Nunan, 2004; Balogh, 2012; Long, 2015; Van den Branden, 2016; Lasagabaster, 2019; Muir, 2019). However, L2 instructors face a challenge: the CA does not elicit an equally enthusiastic response from all learners. We sometimes find ourselves surprised by polar-opposite feedback given by the students from the same communicative course. A similar polarity of opinions can be found in the research literature. For instance, contrary to the common belief, Gilmore (2007) demonstrates that authentic materials might not have an impact on motivation.[1] Abundant empirical research has shown that students have a positive attitude toward the use of L1 in the L2 classroom (e.g., Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018; Sah, 2018). Gilmore (2007) still sees the relevance of the concerns expressed in the 1990s by Oxford and Shearin (1994, p. 16) that researchers and teachers are largely unaware of learners' true motivations for learning a language. This

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[1] See also Kaltseis (2021) in the current *DiSlaw* issue.

is particularly true in relation to L2 teaching methodology: it seems that, to this day, we cannot assume that we have a deep understanding of how teaching strategies are related to motivation.

1.2 Dynamic Conceptualization of Motivation

Poststructuralist applied linguistics (Norton & Morgan, 2013), for which the source of language development "resides in the environment rather than in the individual" (Lantolf, 2006, p. 726), understands learner's motivation to be context-dependent and process-oriented (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, pp. 39–40). Recent studies on motivation are "especially concerned with how motivation emerges from the interaction between individuals and contexts" (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 74). This "emergentist approach" understands motivation to be the result of an "organic development process" (Ushioda, 2009, p. 222) linked to multiple factors.

Using the term situated motivation, McGroarty (2010) argues that the learning context, and not only the learner's individual characteristics, plays a crucial role in the learning process. Nikolov (2001) demonstrates that even students with a positive attitude toward the language were not particularly successful in learning when the classroom practices got in the way. Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) notice that particular learning settings foster more active learners who are also more motivated.

Following McGroarty (2010) and others, we endorse the idea that the choice of methodology and pedagogical tools is crucial in supporting learners' motivation. Yet we still know very little about learners' attitudes toward particular teaching practices. This paper aims to share some preliminary data and thoughts from an ongoing empirical study examining learners' perspectives on the CA. We hope that understanding how our students feel about different aspects of the CA and its application to the Russian language classroom will make it possible to design language courses that are more effective and motivating.

2. Methods

2.1 Context

The present study is based on the evaluative comments collected by two Russian L2 instructors (the authors) during 2011–2021 at five educational institutions located in the USA and Canada (Appendix A). The comments have been collected from participants in different types of Russian language courses: semester-by-semester language programs, short intensive two- to eight-week Russian programs, and intensive nine-month courses for military linguists, with a variety of different classroom settings (from one or two three-hour classes per week to four-to-six-hour daily classes with optional co-curricular activities). All programs were based on curricula that prioritize the CA but utilize a wide variety of non-communicative teaching methodologies as well (e.g., grammar-translation method). At all institutions except one, instructors participated in curriculum development and selected materials and instructional strategies to meet the proficiency targets set for the classes.

2.2　Participants

Data from 448 students were used in the study (see Appendix A for the breakdown by institution). Learners' proficiency levels at the moment they wrote their evaluative comments ranged from A1.1 to B2 (Novice-High to Intermediate/Advanced according to ACTFL proficiency guidelines). All comments were submitted voluntarily and anonymously; specific biographical data were not collected.

2.3　Data Collection and Analysis

Data sources for this study included:

1.　Open-ended answers from student questionnaires completed in the middle and/or at the end of the program as part of the overall program evaluation at the five institutions;
2.　Open-ended answers from the student post-project survey addressing specific teaching methodology: telecollaboration. The telecollaboration project was conducted in two classes (A1.1) in two partnership formats: with native speakers and among Russian language learners (see details in Klimanova & Bondarenko, 2018).

Each institution had its own questionnaire, but all questionnaires comprised an open-ended section where participants were invited to express themselves freely on any aspect of the course or a specific aspect related to methodology (see Appendix A). Once collected, the data were pulled, and the evaluative comments with relevant content on teaching methodology and learner motivation were identified. Of 561 comments collected, we analyzed 241 that were relevant for our research. Applying qualitative research techniques (Hammersley, 2013), the content was identified iteratively, with several overarching themes emerging and multiple comments contributing to each theme.

3.　Findings

Ten recurring themes identified will be presented in the following paragraphs and illustrated by representative comments.[2] All English comments retain original language; the French comments are quoted in English translation (see Appendix A for the explanation of the encoding system).

3.1　Importance of the Teaching Method for Motivation

The students demonstrated a noticeable sensitivity to teaching methodology and acknowledged its importance for motivation: "No matter how easy or capable a student may be at learning languages, the quality of the teaching (especially in the first year) is paramount. The method [of our teacher] works and definitely makes us want to continue learning" (UdeM2013A1.1-n/d:4-3).

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[2] The whole corpus is available on https://osf.io/devhy/

3.2 Monolingual vs. Bilingual Environment

There was a clear division between two groups of students. The first group enjoyed having Russian as the sole language of instruction. Some students expressed direct frustration if the teacher did not use L2 Russian exclusively:

> "The course would have been excellent if we had gotten 100% exposure to Russian from the very beginning" (MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7).

> "The instructor should use the target language right from the beginning so one can hear the correct use of the language" (DLI2015B1B2-18:11-2).

The second group appreciated when the teacher used English or French and disliked the use of Russian in instruction and supporting materials, such as the metalanguage of the textbook, the course website, and e-mails. Some students felt intimidated even when the L2 was used thoughtfully and included only the patterns that the students already knew or could easily deduce from the context:

> "[The instructor] knows English very well and can explain things to us more clearly than most teachers" (DLI2014A2-21:21-8).

> "The course is difficult, the teacher speaks with us in Russian while we are only beginners" (UdeM2019A1.1(A)-24:7-1).

> "It should take time to explain in French all things related to assessments" (UdeM2019A1.1(A)-24:7-2).

3.3 Content/Meaningfulness

The students almost unanimously preferred the instruction that incorporated relevant, meaningful, and often complex content, such as politics, history, or current events. The majority of students enjoyed activities that helped them understand the Russian culture and the Russian people more deeply. The students appreciated the extralinguistic discussions (conducted in their L1) on the Russian language and culture and sought more opportunities to compare cultural perspectives critically:

> "I would have liked a little more history/politics incorporated (we mostly discussed food and cinema)" (MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7).

> "I enjoyed material in this course related to general cultural habits of Russian-speaking people" (MIIS2018A1.1-12:13-4).

> "It's nice to be able to ask extralinguistic questions. […] It allows you to learn as much about the language as about the culture" (UdeM2014A1.1-23:7-3).

> "The projects were hard but have given me the opportunity to meet and understand Russian culture through the cultural tasks and also through speaking with native speakers about themselves and what their thoughts are on the cultural differences and similarities between my own country and their country of origin. It was very rewarding" (MIIS2019A2-2:7-2).

3.4 Authenticity

Regarding authentic materials, some students emphasized the importance of such materials and expressed excitement about using them in class: "I did enjoy reading original texts from Chekhov and BBC news in Russian, even though I had to look up every word" (MIIS2018A1.2-7:5-1). Yet the same students would get easily irritated at a lack of scaffolding: "Some songs just consisted of 90% of vocabulary I didn't understand. I wished we had a word-by-word translation" (MIIS2018A1.1-12:13-4).

The telecollaboration project provided many opportunities for working with authenticity in terms of the tasks, the language environment (the Russian social network), and the communities of target-language speakers. Some students found the project stressful and emphasized the fact that they were not ready for it: "With my level, I was not ready to communicate orally in Russian" (UdeM2016A1.1(B)Tel-16:83-10). Others focused on how they overcame the difficulties, considered the project as a valuable experience and a great opportunity for practicing and learning in a fluid and non-controlled environment, and found the challenges to be the most enjoyable, useful, and motivating aspects of the project:

> "[The most difficult thing for me was] the fear of making mistakes when writing on VK [social network VKontakte] […and] the stress of not being up to the task (we eventually acquired the proficiency as we went along)" (UdeM2016A1.1(A)Tel-17:80-7).

> "It was pretty hard to follow […] but I enjoyed it!" (UdeM2016A1.1(A)Tel-18:82-2).

> "I want to continue learning Russian even more!" (UdeM2016A1.1(B)Tel-16:83-2).

3.5 Need for Structure vs. Ambiguity Tolerance

Another crucial divide between the students was related to the structure of the class. Some students expressed concerns that the CA principles required a high level of tolerance for ambiguity. They were less ready to embrace the unknown (e.g., unfamiliar activity formats) and demanded more transparency, predictability, and a logical linear order in presenting new information:

> "I couldn't focus on some of the activities because I wasn't familiar with the format. For example when we were asked to brainstorm things together" (DLI2011B1B2-18:31-8).

> "Sometimes it seems like we jump ahead randomly and I'm not sure whether we are expected to know the information yet or not" (MIIS2019A1.1-10:17-1).

> "Very chaotic project" (UdeM2016A1.1(A)Tel-17:80-24).

They preferred to use the textbook, even at the proficiency level where the textbookless instruction is more appropriate (e.g., Intermediate High or even Advanced levels). To feel comfortable, they needed to have clear information about upcoming activities, such as a detailed lesson or a course plan:

> "It was helpful to have a textbook to review certain things in order" (MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7).

> "I wish the complete course syllabus with all the assignments had been made available at the beginning" (MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7).

> "The structure of the topics and the exercises gave me a sense of strong progression. I always knew what I'm expected to do" (MIIS2019B1-3:10-7).

They struggled to understand the instructional purpose of the communicative syllabus—for example, the principle of teaching grammar in chunks, in a spiral-like manner, when the material is introduced gradually with increasing complexity and a connection to specific topics. This method implies the gradual structuring of information by students themselves through a regular retrieval from memory and summarizing activities. The students felt frustrated not having tables and charts at the beginning of the course or when exposed to a curriculum with a modular open structure that does not follow the order of the textbook:

> "I wish we had more diagrams or charts of the grammar to make it all more concise" (MIIS2019A1.1-10:17-3).

> "The concepts were sometimes very scattered" (UdeM2011A1.1(B)-25:13-3).

> "Some concepts are explained in several different places and it is complicated to make connections… [I would like to] have a table on the use of the plural" (UdeM2018A1.1(A)-20:7-5).

They did not enjoy combining tasks or open-ended tasks. For example, some were irritated by the fact that the guide for informal interviewers with partners "didn't have clear questions and some of the questions couldn't be answered by my pen pal" (UdeM2016A1.1(A)Tel-17:80-9). Usually, the same students had a clear idea about a certain "order" in which the course should be organized and delivered:

> "Grammar should not be taught in bits and pieces but in systematic presentations" (UdeM2013A1.1-n/d:4-1).

> "I feel that the cursive should be taught later on when one already knows the print alphabet" (UdeM2011A11(B)-25:13-2).

> "I recommend that, in the first two parts of the course, [three quarters of the time] be devoted to grammar and one quarter to communication. The teacher is competent, but the plan is not clear. She summarizes bits and pieces in an unsystematic manner" (UdeM2013A1.2-n/d:3-3).

On the other end of the spectrum, there were the students who appreciated the fluid structure of the communicative course and found the same aspects that their peers criticized as being "chaotic," to be "clear," "well-explained" and "well-structured":

> "I love the clarity of the teaching, the explanations" (UdeM2012A2.1-n/d:8-2).

> "Structured and very well delivered course!" (UdeM2016A1.1(B)-6:1-1)

> "I enjoy the most working in a coffee shop on Fridays. It was a nice break from the classroom" (MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7).

> "Just walking and having a normal conversation during the extra-curricular activities was my favorite" (MIIS2019A2-2:7-2).

3.6   Grammar Exercise vs. Task/Project Doing & Speaking

A particular case of the opposition need for structure vs. ambiguity tolerance was the large gap between the students who required narrow-focused exercises to master specific concepts and the students who preferred communication-oriented activities. Many English-speaking students, overwhelmed by the morphosyntactic complexity of Russian, associate learning the language with grammar drills and feel nervous about "not knowing enough grammar." Interestingly, explicit grammar learning is often in firm opposition to practicing (speaking) the language in the students' minds. The former is likely viewed as "real language learning and acquisition":

> "We need stronger focus on grammar exercises to understand how … to organize thoughts. Not just random outbursts of speaking" (MIIS2019B1-3:10-7).

> "Overall branch of grammar from the beginning—grammar is so important to forming sentences and would have liked that to be more emphasized from the beginning" (DLI2012A2-16:11-5).

> "Integrated the necessary exposure to grammar rules with helping us to use it as a tool. This reduced our initial frustration and total sense of inadequacy when trying to speak" (MIIS2019B1-3:10-7).

These students felt frustrated when exposed to the CA methodology aimed at acquiring structural properties of the language through multiple reproductions of patterns within meaningful conversations:

> "I suggest that the teacher spend less time interviewing each person. This time can be used to cover more material" (UdeM2011A1.1(B)-25:13-4).

> "There seems to be too much pressure to speak" (DLI2015B1B2-18:11-2).

> "Is making a movie a good language-learning activity? Shouldn't we do more grammar exercises?" (MIIS2019B1-3:10-7)

Meanwhile, other students appreciated the active learning approach that involved the communication-centric methodology and the dynamic engagement of the students with course material, as opposed to the passive learning, "where students sit and listen to a PowerPoint presentation for a few hours" (UdeM2018A1.1(A)-20:7-1):

> "Since this is a language course, it is important to have more oral practice. [The instructor] organizes little games in class so that students can practice communicating with each other in Russian. This is a very good idea and makes a nice change from all my other classes…" (UdeM2018A1.1(A)-20:7-1).

3.7   Need in Writing Support vs. Oral Practice

While some students praised speaking activities highly, others required written input and practice through written exercises:

> "I appreciated that it [the course] was mostly focused on speaking, which will be most valuable in my future career" (DLI2012B1B2-16:10-2).

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> "I wish that more of the theory was presented in the written form rather than orally, since I am more of a visual than an auditory learner" (UdeM2019A1.1(B)-14:4-2).

> "Written classroom exercises would be nice too. I have a hard time understanding when the material is mostly spoken" (UdeM2017A1.1-16:8-4).

3.8   Pacing and Material Volume

Some students—especially beginners—were sensitive to the pacing and the material volume in the course. They felt the course was moving too fast for them and there was too much material to learn:

> "Everything goes so fast that I feel rushed. I have the impression that the level is too high for Russian 1" (UdeM2012A1.1(B)-n/d:7-1).

> "Too much material in too little time" (UdeM2013A1.1-n/d:4-2).

The theme of excessive pacing and volume was regularly correlated with a lack of structure and the need for the explicit grammar instruction and written support:

> "I had a hard time absorbing so much material so quickly. I wish that more of the theory was presented in written form rather than orally" (UdeM2019A1.1(B)-14:4-2).

> "[The instructor] moves through the material excessively quickly […] Sometimes it would be better to clearly review the rules of the language being taught (at the end of the class and at the beginning of the next class)" (UdeM2014A1.1-23:7-1).

However, other students were completely happy with exactly the same pacing and the volume:

> "What surprised me the most in this course was how quickly I was able to master concepts. The pedagogy […] is EXCELLENT! The teaching method allows for quick assimilation of the concepts and in a short time I was able to develop a vocabulary and an understanding of the Russian language" (UdeM2019A1.1(A)-24:7-3).

3.9   Group Work

Another trend was a clear separation between the solo students who preferred individual, autonomous learning activities and the so-called social butterflies who enjoyed group work. Some arguments against teamwork included a fear of "picking up" peers' mistakes, anxiety of speaking in groups, or unwillingness to assume the responsibility for group results:

> "I wanted to hear a lot more Russian from the instructor right from the beginning. Instead I had to listen too much to fellow students and all their mistakes (during the group work)" (MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7).

> "I was afraid I'll pick up pronunciation mistakes from my classmates" (MIIS2017A1.2-12:17-4).

> "Everyone in my class was super slow. I would manage faster alone" (UPitt2021A2B1-6:13-4).

> "I can't speak in large groups—I just watch everyone else speaking" (UPitt2021A2B1-6:13-4).

Other students appreciated teamwork and collaborative projects:

> "It was nice to relax and talk to fellow peers in groups" (MIIS2018A1.1-12:13-4).

> "I felt like I learned most in group activities […] the best learning experience was hands-on group projects" (DLI2011InterHigh-18:31-8).

3.10   Readiness to Contribute to Syllabus Design

The students' comments often went beyond simple appreciation or criticism. Especially if they were asked, the students provided argumentation and demonstrated not only the ability and willingness to offer methodological advice but also awareness of the language-learning process overall and the metalanguage we used to describe it. For instance, one participant in the collaboration project argued that it is "much easier to learn and interiorize vocabulary and grammar rules via a true discussion with a Russian native speaker" (UdeM2016A1.1(B)Tel-16:83-30). Another suggested introducing "a fun task" where students learn new grammar/a new expression from a partner and then teach it to the other students in class. According to this student, "this exercise could increase motivation" since it encourages students to "learn something new and not just stick with what they already know" (UdeM2016A1.1(B)Tel-16:83-46). A participant in an intensive program found it exciting that students "could contribute to the syllabus by picking what topic we wanted to explore next. I never had such an experience before. They [instructors] should do it more for other subjects too!" (MIIS2019A2-2:7-2).

4.   Discussion and Implications

From the findings presented here, we can conclude the following: First, the methodology used in the Russian L2 classroom plays an important role in building students' motivation. It constitutes a crucial factor in the dynamic interaction between the learner and the environment, including the teacher "as a person" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001) and teacher's methodological choices. Second, with identical parameters of study (same classroom settings, teacher, methodology, and proficiency level), students tend to form two contrasting groups in terms of their attitudes to the CA: what is highly praised by some students is harshly criticized by others. Third, the findings suggest that students' openness to the CA can be related to their attitude to novelty and tolerance of ambiguity, which confirms the statement quoted above about "tolerance for messiness and ambiguity" as a constitutive feature of the CA (Oprandy, 1999, p. 44). Forth, the Russian beginner learners, more often than the advanced learners, demonstrate a negative perception of using the CA in the classroom, especially the pace, the volume of the material, the lack of explicit structure, and the written support. Finally, students have a reasonably clear intuitive understanding of how languages should be learned and what drives their (students') motivation. Surprisingly, they never commented on their right to have a 'voice and choice' in the

curriculum design process. However, once asked, they appreciated this opportunity and demonstrated a willingness to contribute.

4.1   A Return to Learning Styles in the Discussion of Motivation in the L2 Classroom?

The significant divide we discovered in students' attitudes toward the CA matches the concept *of cognitive and learning styles* (CLSs). Ehrman and Oxford (1990, p. 211) defined CLSs as "preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning and dealing with new information." CLSs are considered as one of the major factors in forming L2 learners' individual differences (IDs), along with motivation, language aptitude, learning strategies, and self-regulation, among others (Skehan, 1989). In research on CLSs (e.g., CANAL-F theory), the ability to cope with novelty and ambiguity has been seen as a mandatory cognitive condition for successful L2 acquisition (Grigorenko et al., 2000, p. 392).

Dörnyei (2009) rejected the 'IDs myth', and thereby the relationship between L2 learners' motivation and their cognitive habits, as irrelevant for the dynamic motivation theory. From the perspective of the poststructuralist conception of motivation, the major issues with CLSs are the following: 1) the controversial nature of this concept that refers to both the biological constitution and socially determined habits, 2) the fact that the vast majority of CLS research and diagnostic methods utilize the typologies based on psychological data rather than on empirical observation from L2 classrooms (Dörnyei, 2009, Chapter 5), and finally 3) the approach of attributing causality to one variable without taking into consideration the timing and the context (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006, p. 563). We also should not dismiss the disillusionment with the concept of CLSs in the field of education due to misleading reductionist conclusions from the CLS theory that the optimal instruction should be tailored to students' learning styles (Yates, 2000; Pashler et al., 2008), often understood only from a sensory perspective (visual vs. auditory learners). Thus, during the last years, the mainstream discussion on motivation in the L2 classroom has been developing without its significant connection to IDs studies.

However, our research suggests that IDs contribute to the L2 students' attitude toward teaching methodology as an environmental factor of motivation and, consequently, motivation itself. As the language aptitude parameters have not been measured within our research, the collected data do not allow us to determine to what extent language aptitude (and specifically individual tolerance for ambiguity) supported students' comments. We encourage further research to explore the connection between students' attitude toward the CA and their language aptitude (including the ability to cope with novelty and tolerance for ambiguity).

Our findings also suggest that the proficiency level may play an important part in students' motivation in the communicative classroom. It has been noted in the literature that many early beginners demonstrate a general trend toward not being able to simultaneously attend to form and meaning while processing input within the meaning-based instructional paradigm (Van Patten, 1996; Ellis, 2009). The challenge becomes more severe when learning a language with rich morphology and typologically different from the students' mother tongue. These cognitive dif-

ficulties can be also understood in terms of the low ability to cope with novelty and low tolerance for ambiguity. As this type of low tolerance for ambiguity relates to the proficiency level and specific L2s rather than individual cognitive styles or language aptitude, we should naturally expect beginner learners of Russian to resist the CA more in comparison to their more advanced peers. A variety of solutions mostly based on cognitive approaches to L2 instruction has been proposed in response to the issue of integrating the CA in the Russian language instruction at the low beginners level[3]. In the next Section (4.2), we will discuss a complementary solution based on our research findings.

Our findings also suggest the possibility of revising the concept of CLSs in the light of the "emergentist" approach to motivation. From this perspective, the cognitive style of the L2 learner could be seen as a cluster of cognitive habits and preferences that result from the dynamic interaction between individual language aptitudes and beliefs and the environment, including the teaching method. It follows that learners' initial motivation and attitude toward the CA could be changed through successful exposure to the approach that takes into account (but is not tailored to) the learners' preferences. The revised concept of CLSs could be useful for explaining not only why some students are open to and more motivated for certain types of activities, but also how we could change their motivation through adjusting the method and reinforcing the cognitive abilities (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity) required for successful L2 learning.

The dynamic conception of motivation could be reinforced by considering students' and teachers' cognitive styles, which often determine the attitude toward the teaching methodology and consequently the motivation for L2 learning. From the same perspective, we could also review the role of the metacognitive discussion in the L2 classroom (Anderson, 2002), the way the L2 teachers implement a given method, and the role of teachers' own CLSs in their methodological decisions (Oxford & Ehrman, 1991).

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[3] Some researchers suggest an intensive pre-training focused on grammar before exposing students to communicative activities (Corin, 1997). Others try to find a way to adapt the CA to early beginners' needs. For example, Krasner (2018, 2020) suggests an approach based on a gradual release of teacher's control and involving a transition from a linear, more traditional scope to the textbookless CA through adapting task-based activities from traditional textbooks to the Internet environment. Corin (2020, 2021) develops the 'vertical spiraling' model providing a theoretical foundation for implementation of the CA at the low beginner level: the approach is based on the statement that all language task types—*naming, description, narration, argumentation*—independently of their cognitive complexity can be successfully performed at any level of language proficiency yet at different language complexity levels. Kogan and Bondarenko (in press) introduce a set of principles to adopt the task-based approach to the Russian language instruction at the low beginner level. Klimanova and Bondarenko (2018) and Bondarenko and Klimanova (in press) elaborate on the conceptual framework (including the concept of digital literacy) for text-based telecollaboration via social media for the beginning L2 classroom.

4.2 L2 Learners as Experts in L2 Learning: Toward a "Consultative L2 Pedagogy"

There is an emerging trend in L2 acquisition research that urges to separate L2 learners' cognitive abilities and naturally restricted linguistic skills in the acquired L2 (e.g., Martel, 2016; Corin, 2020, 2021). The same should apply to learners' metacognitive skills: adult L2 learners are most likely to have experience or even expertise in L2 learning even though they may lack the skills in the language they learn. In other words, even a beginner adult student can be an experienced language learner and take responsibility for his/her learning process. Our findings have shown students' metacognitive awareness and readiness to participate actively in the decision-making process with regard to the L2 classroom methodology. This awareness and readiness are mainly built on students' metacognitive knowledge and the previous successful experience of L2 learning. In the context of fast-spreading multilingualism, many Russian language learners already have advanced proficiency in more than one foreign (or second) language that qualifies them as language-learning experts.

This opens the door to a more consultative approach, which meets the principles of participatory and transformative L2 pedagogy (Leaver et al., 2021). We propose to use the term "consultative L2 pedagogy approach" to indicate students' active participation in the process of curriculum design, including the decisions related to teaching methodology. The concept of consultative L2 pedagogy pushes learner-centeredness further toward egalitarian teacher-student relationships within emerging transformative pedagogy, where "learners of all levels […] participate in the design, development, and execution of the curriculum" (Leaver & Campbell, 2020, p. 56). In this regard, learners' attitudes toward a particular methodology matter as much as teachers' ones. The participation in curriculum design might have a positive impact on students' motivation at all levels of language proficiency. First, it allows students to express their doubts, preoccupations and difficulties resulting from their specific cognitive styles and previous L2 learning experience. Second, it creates room for negotiating teaching methodology (from both the teacher's and students' sides). Finally, it provides the teacher with the opportunity to explain their methodological decisions, the purpose of such decisions, and their scientific grounds. Student surveys, a popular tool in L2 education for assessing students' needs, CLS diagnostics (Leaver & Campbell, 2020), and the exploration of students' attitudes and motivation (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 75) could be eventually employed as instruments in consultative L2 pedagogy.

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6. Appendix

#	Institution Country	Type of course, schedule, methodology	Type of survey	Proficiency level: CERF, ACRF, DLPT (Defense Language Proficiency Test)	Institution Year Level (Group: A,B) Project - Number of students participated in the survey: Number of comments in total - Number of comments related to the research topic	Open question(s)
1	University of Montreal, Canada (UdeM)	Traditional semester-by-semester language program; one or two 3-hour classes per week Basic principles of the communicative approach, elements of flipped classroom and the neurolinguistic approach	Standard questionnaire at the end of the course	A1.1	UdeM2019A1.1(A)-24:7-**3** UdeM2019A1.1(B)-14:4-**2** UdeM2018A1.1(A)-20:7-**6** UdeM2018A1.1(B)-14:4-**1** UdeM2017A1.1-16:8-**4** UdeM2016A1.1(A)-5:2-**1** UdeM2016A1.1(B)-6:1-**1** UdeM2014A1.1-23:7-**3** UdeM2013A1.1-n/d:4-**3** UdeM2013A1.1(B)-n/d:8-**3** UdeM2012A1.1-n/d:7-**5** UdeM2011A1.1(B)-25:13-**5**	Commentaire des étudiants: auriez-vous des suggestions qui permettraient d'améliorer ce cours [Students' comments: Do you have any suggestions for improving this course?].
				A1.2	UdeM2019A1.2-21:7-**2** UdeM 2018A1.2-5:2-**1** UdeM2014A1.2-12:2-**2** UdeM2013A1.2-n/d:3-**3** UdeM2013A1.2-16:5-**4** UdeM 2011A1.2-15:10-**5**	

2	Middlebury Institute of International Studies, USA (MIIS)	Intensive 8-week program; daily 5-hour daily classes with optional tutoring and co-curricular activities Content-based instruction	Standard questionnaire in the middle and at the end of the course	A1.1 (Novice-Mid)	MIIS2019A1.1-10:17-4 MIIS2018A1.1-7:13-4 MIIS2017A1.1-12:26-7	If there's anything else you'd like to share about your choice [of a numerical score], please add it here. Please provide some comments that help explain your rating.
				A1.2 (Novice-High)	MIIS2018A1.2-7:5-1 MIIS2017A1.2-12:17-4	
				A2 (Inter-Low)	MIIS2019A2-2:7-2	
				A2 (Inter-Mid)	MIIS2019A2-4:2-2	
				B1 (Inter-High)	MIIS2019B1-3:10-7	
3	Defense Language Institute, USA (DLI)	Intensive 9-month program; daily 7-hour classes with optional tutoring and co-curricular activities Content-based, task-based instruction with the level of audio-lingual and grammar-translation methodology		A2 (1; Inter-Low / Inter-Mid)	DLI2015A2-18::11-6 DLI2014A2-2121-8 DLI2013A2-11:7-1 DLI2012A2-16:11-5 DLI2011A2-18:9-3	Do you have any comments on the teaching skill of this teacher? Do you have any comments about how this teacher interacted with students? Do you have any comments about the communications skills of this teacher? How did this teacher help you learn? Do you have any additional comments about this teacher?
				B1 / B2 (1+/2; (Inter-High/ Adv-Low)	DLI2015B1B2-18:11-2 DLI2014B1B2-21:17-4 DLI2013B1B2-11:5-0 DLI2012B1B2-16:10-2 DLI2011B1B2-18:31-8	
4	Concordia College Language	Intensive 2-week Russian program; daily 4-hour classes with		B1 / B2 (1+/2; Inter High/ Adv-Low)	Con2019B1B2-15:6-2 Con2018B1B2-21:8-1	Please comment on the overall course and experience and setting for this iso-immersion training.

	Teaching Center, USA (Conc)	mandatory 6-hour co-curricular activities		B2 / C1 (2+/3; Adv-Mid / Adv-High / Superior)	Con2018B2C1-20:20-9	Please comment to help instructors fine-tune their instructional approach for iso-immersion trainings like this. Please comment on the above assessment tools and to what extent the self-assessment and tracking pieces helped motivate you and guide your engagement and learning. Are there other assessment tools that you think would be more appropriate and applicable to this iso-immersion training? Please comment on activities in which you participated. Which were your favorites, and why? Least favorite, and why? What could be done to improve them or the activities offered? What other activities would have been more appropriate and helpful? What did your engagement in these activities teach you that you otherwise might not have learned?
5	University of Pittsburgh, USA (UPitt)	Intensive 8-week Russian programs; daily 4-hour online classes with optional tutoring and co-curricular activities		A2/B1 (1/1+; Inter Low /Inter Mid /Inter High)	UPitt2021A2B1-6:13-4	One thing I don't like about the course. One thing I enjoy about the course. My recommendations to future GO Narva students.