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Building Social Media Literacy in the Russian Language Classroom

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1. Introduction

This article presents ways to teach media literacy (ML) skills in Russian language classrooms with particular focus on developing proficiencies to navigate social media (SM) where information disorder is a critical concern. SM is understood broadly as "the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Zourou, 2012). Social media literacy (SML) is a concept based on media and digital literacy that integrates "the development of cognitive competences, where critical thinking, socio-emotional competences, and technical competences are fundamental, considering the social context" (Polanco-Levicán & Salvo-Garrido, 2022). Because critical concerns surround SM use, SML is "oriented towards the prevention of risks such as mental and physical health problems" and forestalling potential negative "consequences that can arise from interactions between people" (Polanco-Levicán & Salvo-Garrido, 2022).

Learners often come to the classroom with an established digital lifestyle and SM presence. Language classrooms are well positioned to maximize the interactivity and situated learning opportunities such social connectivity brings. The act of learning a language expands one's agency, voice, and identity, while attending to linguistic and compositional granularity. These conditions make language classrooms a practical and auspicious space to foster SML, because instructors inherently attend to cognitive processes and socio-emotional and transcultural competences.

Russian language instructors are in an advantageous position for developing and promoting SML. As we strive to advance cultural competencies in our lesson plans and learning outcomes, we negotiate the instruction of a strategically critical language and its attendant rationale and concomitants. We are sensitive to and often engaged in discourses about geopolitical and national security concerns and the salient problems of information disorder, propaganda, malware, and violence. While SM

in many ways focalizes these concerns, we are favorably positioned to tackle these realities in practical and actionable ways.

As higher-ed institutions establish STEM programs to address the need for algorithms that can identify deepfakes and misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation (MDM), it is a missed opportunity for language programs and humanities courses not to explore the socio-technical ecosystem of information disorder as well. Doing so fosters cross-campus collaborations to ensure that less commonly taught languages and the demographic fabric of the U.S. are not only represented in a balanced way, but also contribute to this burgeoning world of MDM identification and AI development. Our learning spaces provide psychologically safe environments where domestic and international critical concerns can be addressed in curricula. Building SML skills is a small-scale but deliberate and longitudinal approach to enact social justice best practices.

The following sections propose activities instructors can use to build SML skills that positively impact decision-making and behavior online. After outlining several theoretical considerations that inform SML, I will demonstrate how the proposed activities align with ACTFL's *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015) and the proficiencies of the COIE (*critical online information evaluation*) model outlined below. My intention is to show how instructors can equip learners with cognitive competencies that encourage emotional and social intelligence and increase sensibilities to questions of power when occupied in language learning practice and engaged digital citizenship on SM platforms.

2. The case for SML skill-building

Today we are mapping the possibilities and perils of the digital realm. Sauro and Zourou (2019) called it "the digital wilds": "informal language learning that takes place in digital spaces, communities, and networks that are independent of formal instructional contexts" (p. 2). With the advent of ChatGPT and other AI-based technologies, participatory digital cultures have been recoded so that "myriad human and posthuman interlocutors are networked and in play" (Lotherington et al., 2021, p. 145). There is growing apprehension about MDM and its long-tail effects on civil society, cross-cultural understanding, national security, and local and global perspectives.

SM offers ample opportunity to participate in authentic conversations where spontaneous, substantive communication and interaction are readily available, and it provides a space to explore identity and agency (Klimanova, 2021). SM fosters transparency and accountability, "giving voice to marginalized communities, improving representation, challenging stereotypes, and facilitating networks of support across geographically distant communities" (U.S. Department of State, 2022, p. 1). SM facilitates reception and production of language in line with how students already consume and produce knowledge (Garza, 2010) and can function as a force multiplier to advance Russian language skills (Groce, 2020, p. 175). SM is transforming the Russophone world—as it is all languages online—and learners should not miss out on these linguistic, cultural, and ideological shifts (Zvereva, 2012).

At the same time, critical concerns accompany social network use. The affective nature of SM has ushered in "an era of spreadability, connectivity, and spectacle" (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 441) which can have positive and negative consequences. On one hand, SM platforms are "essential tools for 21st-century social movements" which can promote free speech for social, economic, and cultural good (Mundt et al., 2018). On the other hand, research suggests that a high level of SM use correlates to internalizing and externalizing problems such as depression, anxiety, attention-problems, bullying, loneliness, addiction, and online exploitation (Riehm et al., 2019). SM communication embodies an emotional, hyperconnected, and immediate architecture that is readily exploited, if not mobilized, often for political and commercial gain (Zvereva, 2021). These negative effects of SM use are increasingly characterized as a public health issue (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023). MDM is a security concern in the U.S. and globally (Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, 2023; Jankowicz, 2021; U.S. Department of State, 2020). Gendered disinformation is also a serious problem (U.S. Department of State, 2023; Jankowicz, 2022), and People of Color were targeted by malign actors on SM during the 2016 presidential election (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019).

Most SM users are aware that inaccurate information exists on the internet. Fifty-nine percent of adult Americans who get their news from a social network site expect it to be "largely inaccurate" (Shearer

& Mitchell, 2021). Gaultney et al. (2022) found that more students identified their friends, rather than themselves, as the ones who shared fake news (p. 68). News reporting has become increasingly personalized and democratized, transferring "mediatized conflicts and information wars to the sphere of leisure and consumption" (Zvereva, 2021, p. 12). Resnick et al. (2018) asserted that SM and search engines are now "the de facto gatekeepers of public communication, a role once occupied by publishers and broadcasters" and that this new role carries with it public responsibilities (p. 1).

3. Cognitive vulnerabilities on SM

Understanding how the human mind processes information and makes judgments is a universal place to begin the lifelong journey of SML. Learners tend to be familiar with logic and statistics, but heuristics is often overlooked. Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier (2011) defined heuristics as "strategies that ignore information to make decisions fast, more frugally, and/or more accurately than more complex methods" (p. 453) when faced with ambiguous or incomplete information and limited processing time. This is called the accuracy-effort trade-off, which assumes that effort or exertion is traded against accuracy. This trade-off embodies an ecological rationality: in some environments, "better"—not "the best"—is considered acceptable because the world of that environment is simply too large to identify an optimal strategy (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011, p. 456). We come to develop adaptive toolboxes comprised of cognitive heuristics, and we employ these toolboxes when we are online and off.

Creators of online content draw from heuristics when developing user interface design. Predictable interactions lead to trust on a platform; familiar words, icons, and images culled from real-world conventions and correspondences make the experience feel intuitive. The goal in user interface design is to create a *small world*:

> a situation in which all relevant alternatives, their consequences, and probabilities are known, and where the future is certain, so that the optimal solution to a problem can be determined (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011, p. 453).

Creators of online platforms seek to construct a digital virtuality where you feel comfortable and at ease. They knowingly employ the less-is-more effect, "when less information or computation leads to more accurate judgements than more information or computation" (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011, p. 453). Becoming aware of cognitive vulnerabilities and the concept of small worlds—and recognizing the role they play in our everyday lives, both within and outside of digital environments—can help us navigate the multimodal and multisensory aspects of SM.

Kahneman (2013) discussed two systems psychologists use to describe modes of thinking. System 1 thinking is fast and intuitive in nature. System 2 works more slowly and tackles difficult, attention-demanding problems (pp. 20-24). System 1 helps us make decisions effectively and efficiently while the brain processes an overwhelming amount of simultaneous data reception. We need such shortcuts to eliminate unnecessary stimuli from our cognitive processing and to multitask (talk and drive at the same time, for example). However, System 1, or fast thinking, increases our vulnerability to inaccurate perceptions, quick emotional responses, and manipulation. Acquiring skills to engage in *slow thinking* is an effective countermeasure to our cognitive vulnerabilities. This is especially true in SM contexts.

An additional vulnerability when navigating SM is homophily, or love of the same. Studies confirm that SM users preferentially consume information that aligns with their beliefs and behaviors (Bessi et al., 2014). In line with social identity theory (the idea that a person derives a sense of who they are based on group membership), this tendency can build a sense of homophily, establishing online communities where people congregate with like-minded users. SM can accelerate this process of homophily because the sharing of specific content influences the future information environment and aggregates users' beliefs and consumption patterns to such a degree as to be "a determinant for the virality of false information" (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2014). The information preferentially consumed and shared becomes more familiar and, in turn, more personal. The human tendency toward homophily aligns with and reinforces heuristic-systematic thinking. In a trusted or familiar social virtuality users can establish a "small world" and cognitive ease, which engages System 1 thinking.

Homophily in and of itself is nothing more than a human tendency. However, MDM can be used to strategically guide the development of homophily, shared political and cultural beliefs, and, in turn, behavior patterns. Deixis, or the use of words or expressions whose meaning depends on context like *here*, *you*, *me*, *our*, or *that one there*, can create feelings of homophily. Morales-i-Gras (2020) considered link-sharing behavior and found that "algorithmically reinforced cognitive biases" facilitate the exclusivity of social groups and "prevent diversity of opinions to spread" (p. 3). When bad actors amplify MDM among self-aggregated groups, it is often through the impersonation of legitimate and sincere members, complicating its detection and prevention.

Homophily can create a "small world" in which users experience *cognitive ease*, "a sign that things are going well—no threats, no major news, no need to redirect attention or mobilize effort" (Kahneman 2013, p. 59); no reason to use System 2. The causes of cognitive ease are repeated experience, clear display, primed idea, and good mood (p. 60). These create a state of ease with specific conditions: feels familiar, true, good, and/or effortless (p. 60). Understanding cognitive ease begins to explain vulnerabilities that may permit our System 1 to accept a deepfake online, for example. Hwang (2020) asserted that "the spread of a deepfake depends on the receptiveness of the viewer" (p. 26).

Unreliable narrators may take advantage of cognitive vulnerabilities, a real-life phenomenon on SM that we already discuss in literature and culture courses. Key to identifying (a potential) unreliable narrator is critical thinking, reading, and listening know-how, as well as analytical dexterity when considering narratives. As cited above, Zourou (2012) defined SM as "the creation and exchange of user-generated content." She isolates three features: user participation, openness, and network effects. User participation involves numerous available actions and means to modify, multiply, and (re)mix content (Pegrum, 2011). The creation of user-generated content typically occurs in non-traditional spaces outside of professional routines and practices. Openness derives from the concept of open source and is understood as a horizontal structure in which users are allowed to be agile and mobile (Zourou, 2012). The term "viral" encapsulates the idea of network effects, which include various node-building opportunities, often with no-cost mechanisms. Conole and Alevizou (2010) identified five paradoxes, or causes and effects, that result from these features of SM.

Table 1. Cause and effect in digital and networked spaces (Conole & Alevizou, 2010, p. 57).

Cause	Effect
Expansive knowledge domain	Death of expertise / everyone an expert
Hierarchy and control less meaningful, content can be distributed and located in different ways	Multiple (co-)locations / loss of content integrity
Increasingly complex digital landscape	Beyond digital space / new metaphors needed
Power of the collective; collective intelligence	Social collective / digital individualism
Free content & tools; open APIs and mash ups	Issues re: ownership, value, business models

The five paradoxes of SM are significant given the loosely restricted broadcasting reach and unreliability of narrators and user-generated content across SM. From this unrelenting stream of content, satire has emerged as a ubiquitous literary activity online. Zvereva (2020) explored this digital literary tradition and found that satire and sarcasm were characteristic features of what she identified as the typology of trolling. Trolling texts are participatory, with three recognizable roles (troll—victim—reader), and they draw from a bounded set of scenarios/structures to illicit emotions and "school" readers or "feed" on the "clowns" who did not appreciate or recognize displays of wit and logical traps (pp. 127-128). The reality, however, is that many people do not recognize these communication structures for what they are, mistake them for truth, or become desensitized to satire in a way that allows it to be weaponized and escalated into MDM. Tolerance of satire has become higher, to such a degree that "what is labeled as 'satire' is hateful, polarizing, and divisive" (Wardle, 2020). Per Bogost (2022) what we face as SM users is

> a global broadcast network where anyone can say anything to anyone else as often as possible, and where such people have come to think they *deserve* such a capacity, or even that withholding it amounts to censorship or suppression.

Satire and parody are the bedrock of information disorder, an inclusive term used to encapsulate the phenomenon of MDM, propaganda, and "fake news." The figure below, developed by Wardle (2017), shows seven different types of information disorder, which exist on a sliding scale from a low level of falseness and/or intent to harm to a high level of falseness *with* intent to harm.

Figure 1. Seven types of mis- and disinformation (Wardle, 2017)

SATIRE OR PARODY	**MISLEADING CONTENT**	**IMPOSTER CONTENT**	**FABRICATED CONTENT**
No intention to cause harm but has potential to fool	Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual	When genuine sources are impersonated	New content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm

FALSE CONNECTION	**FALSE CONTEXT**	**MANIPULATED CONTENT**
When headlines, visuals, or captions don't support the content	When genuine content is shared with false contextual information	When genuine information of imagery is manipulated to deceive

Satire, when removed from its original messenger or context, can be misunderstood. SM actions, such as re-posting, commenting, reviewing, tagging, liking, sharing, aggregating, and curating, can dislodge satire from its original context and orienting intent. Wardle (2020) asserted that

> intelligent satire and effective parody should be considered forms of art. The challenge in this age of information disorder is that satire is used strategically to bypass fact checkers and to spread rumors and conspiracies, knowing that any pushback can be dismissed by stating that it was never meant to be taken seriously. The reason that satire used in this way is so powerful a tool is that often the first people to see the satire often understand it as

such. But as it gets re-shared, more people lose the connection to the original messenger and fail to understand it as satire. On social media, the heuristics…are missing.

Burgers and Brugman found that satirical news has "a substantive learning effect of satire for audience members who do not consume regular news" (Burgers & Brugman, 2022, p. 986). Polyakova extends this condition of information disorder into the future: "Whereas most Russian disinformation content has been static (e.g., false news stories, memes, graphically designed ads), advances in learning AI will turn disinformation dynamic (e.g. video, audio)" (Polyakova, 2018). Dynamic disinformation will function within an ecosystem of services like ChatGPT and TikTok. This will create a "democratization of disinformation" that requires no literacy on behalf of the operator and cascades a "liar's dividend" when inconvenient truths become easier to deny (Chesney & Citron, 2019, pp. 150-151).

Identifying and evaluating satire is an important skill when navigating SM. Reading satirical content in both language classes and content courses and analyzing what makes it satirical is an invaluable starting point to counteracting information disorder in any language. When does humor become weaponized? In what ways? How? And under what conditions is the audience an "insider" and/or "outsider"?

The sections above have demonstrated how the recursive nature of content facilitates conditions for the recognition of heuristic and associative effect. The contemporary high-choice media market functions as an effective platform for the dissemination of information disorder meant to polarize. Malign actors engage computational propaganda strategies "through the control and organization of media input" (Thomas, 2016). This overtly weaponized content can result in a cognitive war engaged through a culturally synthetic narrative strategy that blurs threats/response(s) to such an extent as to evoke an existential struggle (Connell & Vogler, 2017). There are identifiable discursive elements and argumentation schemes that facilitate homophily and solder identities from disparate amalgams of individuals (e.g. deixis). Populist rhetoric, for example, offers a model of motivational dynamics that uses strategies to amalgamate individuals and groups who are marginalized and/or disaffected by politics.

Populism is an oft-debated academic concept due to its uneven discourse within and across national borders. Populism can be explored through an ideational approach—permitting it to be a discourse, ideology, or worldview—which serves as a host for a specific political ideology or personalist agenda (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Postill emphasized that, while populism emerges from "thick tangles of economic, cultural, existential, and other factors", it requires a rhetorically constructed but easily adaptable "Other": some sort of social imaginary that threatens ordinary people's lives with a perpetual state of crisis (Postill, 2018, p. 757).

Gerbaudo et al. (2023) suggests that such counter publics engage the inherent duality of SM—current populist discourse (the people's voice) and collective action (the people's rally)—in a way that reflects an elective affinity between populism and SM. Soft-power techniques are often used to control information flows in combination with legislation and populist communication repertoires (scapegoating, appeals to nostalgia, cult of personality). Wodak outlined micro-politics and how far-right populist parties normalize "politics of fear" and instrumentalize uncertainty and emotions (Wodak, 2021, p. 6). In this way, state-backed actors can create a *gray zone*, whereby SM users normalize the idea that it is impossible to find the truth (Zvereva, 2019).

This credibility gap and constructed, perpetual state of uncertainty is where the vital need for SML arises. Populism is everywhere on SM platforms, in every language, with more than one state or charismatic actor at a given time. The characteristics of populist communication, and information disorder broadly, align well with the features and dynamics of SM and can become "viral" in "small worlds" given the conditions of cognitive vulnerabilities like heuristics, homophily, and cognitive ease, the nature of satire, and the prevalence of unreliable narrators as explored above. Incorporating these theoretical considerations into our content course discussions and innovating ways to fold them into language acquisition pedagogical frameworks is necessary in the 21st century.

4. Media literacy instruction

There is no agreed upon definition of ML, largely because it intersects with other literacies. Educators play an important role because classrooms are where ML proficiencies are taught, assessed, implemented (e.g., through educational policy), and innovated. The U.S. Department of State (2022) ranked "instruction via formal education" as the leading intervention

model for developing ML (p. 16), acknowledging ML as a critical skill and a lifelong learning journey. There are several extant models for building ML, including lateral reading and fact-checking (Wineburg & McGrew, 2017), and repositioning SM for connectivity, compassion, caring, and civic impact (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). Other scholars are concerned that traditional ways of assessing credibility are "rooted in an analog age" and that instructors could inadvertently be "educating for misunderstanding" (Wineburg et al., 2020, p. 8).

Weisberg et. al. (2023) proposed a method of ML curriculum and assessment design called the *critical online information evaluation* (COIE) model based on three key competencies—investigate, analyze, and synthesize—and an additional eight proficiencies. COIE is grounded in three perspectives: (a) New Literacies (the notion that evolving technologies influence continuous changes and updates in social structures and ways of doing things); (b) multiliteracies (the notion of additional modes of literacy beyond just language); and (c) critical media literacies ("how truth is presented, by whom, and for what purposes") (Weinberg et al., 2023, p. 22). COIE developers regarded their model as a "holistic and recursive curricular roadmap" that allows for the metacognitive and sociocultural consideration of worldviews, biases, and modalities (p. 23)

Figure 2. COIE conceptual model (Weisburg et al., 2023, p. 19).
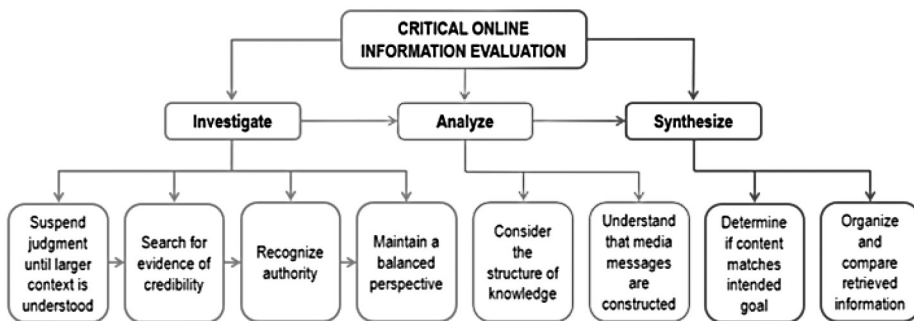
Classroom activities and course content to facilitate general civic awareness, socio-emotional competencies, and SML are provided in the sections that follow. The recommendations correlate with the COIE model and the World-Readiness Standards (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015).

5. Recommended classroom activities

All suggested activities aim at encouraging *slow thinking* (Kahneman, 2013) and critical analysis of "small worlds" in digital spaces. Given the nature of information disorder, any activity that can introduce learners to humor and satire is invaluable, essential to becoming an educated citizen with global competence (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015, p. 3; 15-16), and necessary for building SML. The goal areas and the Cultures Framework triangle articulated in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Russian*, as well as in numerous sample progress indicators (Shuffelton et al., 2020), already thoughtfully address SML skill-building, because they seek to foster an "integrated view of culture" (Garza, 2020, p. 101) and socio-emotional competencies.

Ariantini et al. (2021) ranked in order of popularity the top five types of activities they found English as a Foreign Language instructors conduct via SM platforms (p. 100):

1: sharing/finding information, media, or material
2: posting assignments, summaries, or videos
3: making/doing group activities, Q&A, or online discussion
4: practicing language skills, vocabulary, grammar, or spelling
5: joining, following, or making educational accounts

This typology identifies trends of instructional uses of SM, data that is sorely lacking and inconsistent across disciplines; this lacuna has created a situation which has impeded the development of reliable assessments (Pikhart & Botezat, 2021). Ariantini et al. (2021) simplified an approach to tracking SM use independent of the target language. Their typology offers a helpful progression of activities and proficiencies that attend to technical and linguistic skill needs (with room for cognitive, socio-emotional, and cultural competency development) which could function as a shorthand in lesson and course planning. Because SM platforms evolve quickly, knowing how to navigate the applied aspects of these platforms is an adaptability we all require. This is not only a skill to be built among children and youth; it is also a major concern over time among adult and elderly learners, to include highly proficient and native speakers.

Reinhardt (2020) proposed new metaphors that can serve to expand how students engage with SM. Instead of conceptualizations like "tool" and "tutor," which may embody more static or hierarchical connotations than intended, words like "window," "mirror," "doorway," and "playground" might be more productive ways of looking at SM activities for language learners. These metaphors are transcultural universal frameworks that accommodate for diverse instructional communities, contexts, and priorities, to include age or grade, language level, sensibilities (e.g. worldview), access, and available resources of a specific learning environment and group at a given moment. Unfortunately, learners can stumble upon offensive, destabilizing, traumatic, illegal, and dangerous information, or potential malware during SM activities. As will be seen below, Reinhardt's proposed metaphors lend themselves to pedagogical guidelines for safety and privacy that can match the context, values, and needs of a specific learning community in a meaningful way. For example, assumptions about what, when, and how particular age groups "look through, look at, go through, and play in spaces" (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 240) are shared and culturally understood by a community and generally well-articulated in formal classrooms.

Per Reinhardt (2020) the window metaphor allows learners to "observe how native and expert users of a language interact, socialize, and otherwise live their lives, often in public ways" (p. 237). The "view" from the window can be adjusted for age, language ability, learning outcome, access to technology, and topic. "Lurk" is SM parlance, but it need not have negative connotations. Learners have an opportunity to "collect and observe genuine sociopragmatic uses of the language, which are often absent or artificially presented in textbooks" (p. 237). The value of such "lurking" is that it is already a common SM engagement practice for most people in their established digital lifestyles. Lurking represents a low-stakes orientation to SM in the target language that offers models of behavior. There are openings for analysis of audience and purpose, humor and satire, the use of emojis or hashtags, and cultural observations and/or comparisons, as well as introduction to vocabulary, accessible even to Novice-level learners (лайк [like], пост [post], канал [channel], сторис [stories], лента [thread]).

Learners with established digital lifestyles will likely be familiar with using SM much like a diary (photo album, culinary journal, fitness

accountability tracker) and business platform (product reviews, brand promotion). The metaphor of SM as mirror fits this characteristic purpose of SM: "to allow users to carefully construct and present an identity that reflects one aspect, or an idealized aspect, of their identities," often through profile pages, selfies, and selected imagery (Reinhardt, 2020, p. 237). The mirror metaphor facilitates activities that foster an understanding of the "purposefully reflective" aspect of SM, how meaning is made multimodally, and what cultural factors affect self-presentation (p. 238). This is the nexus of the Cultures Framework triangle in the *World-Readiness Standards*: to ask about the intersections of products, practices, and perspectives (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015).

SM also offers a doorway to the target language, the learner's first steps in engaging with dynamic, online-content generation, as well as a playground for the learner: "bounded spaces where users can learn and play in informal, autonomous, and gameful ways" (Reinhardt 2020, p. 239). Intermediate and Advanced-level learners can practice in a controlled digital environment, such as a Facebook group of their own, or can produce product reviews (text or video) to practice and build confidence. Advanced learners could participate in Reddit conversations—a "like" *is* active learning—or "lurk" on SM to identify, collect, and analyze instances of humor, emotional appeal (emojis make this easier), or political rhetoric in profiles.

Reinhardt's SM metaphors reflect the comprehensive goal of cultural competency put forth in the *World-Readiness Standards for Russian*, what Garza (2020) described as "knowledge of cultural products and practices within a given environment but also the ability of the learner to operate comfortably within it" (p. 101). The rationale behind Reinhardt's metaphorical models resonates with the cultures framework articulated in the *World-Readiness Standards* (Shuffleton et al., 2020, p. 28)—the culminating outcome of the 5Cs of Language Study (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities) (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2015, p. 3)—and the COIE model. The table below provides recommended Russian language activities and identifies corresponding models and/or competencies when applicable.

Table 2. Recommended Russian language activities

Activity	SM Metaphor (Reinhardt, 2020)	World-Readiness Standards for Learning Russian (Shuffelton et al., 2020)		Typology (Ariantini et al., 2021)	COIE Proficiency (Weisberg et al., 2023)
		Targeted Standard	**Performance Descriptor**		
Learners develop (share) a SM dictionary of Russian terms (independent or group work)	Window Doorway Playground	• Interpretive communication • Presentational communication • Language Comparisons • Acquiring Information • School and Global Communities	• Novice • Intermediate • Advanced	1,2,4	• Investigate • Synthesize
Learners are shown/ identify/ engage with examples of humor in Russian online (jokes, anecdotes, comics, cartoons, memes, videos, podcasts, etc.)	Window Mirror Doorway Playground	• Interpersonal Communication • Interpretive communication • Presentational Communication • Cultural Practices • Cultural Products • Cultural Comparisons • Making Connections	• Novice • Intermediate • Advanced	1,2,3,5	• Investigate • Analyze • Synthesize
Learners analyze an example of a "small world" online; consider what causes/ conditions have created cognitive ease (familiarity)	Window Mirror Doorway Playground	• Interpretive communication • Presentational Communication • Cultural Practices • Cultural Products • Cultural Comparisons • Making Connections	• Novice • Intermediate • Advanced	1,2,3,4	• Investigate • Analyze

Learners follow an influencer, celebrity, or politician and evaluate the authority heuristic; identify a troll *Suitable for content courses	Window Mirror Doorway	• Interpersonal Communication • Interpretive communication • Presentational Communication • Cultural Practices • Cultural Products • Cultural Comparisons • Making Connections • Acquiring Information • School and Global Communities	• Novice • Intermediate • Advanced	1,2,3,4,5	• Investigate • Analyze
Learners analyze/ find an example of commercial-ized pop-culture merchandise that promotes polarizing or state-backed priorities and describe/ analyze it for emotional appeal *Suitable for content courses	Window Mirror	• Interpretive communication • Presentational Communication • Cultural Practices • Cultural Products • Cultural Comparisons • Making Connections • Acquiring Information • School and Global Communities	• Novice • Intermediate • Advanced	1,2,3,4	• Investigate • Analyze
Learners select an event and utilize geospatial intelligence techniques to (a) explore the context of an event and/ or consider and collect meta-data found in comments, users' profiles; and/ or (b)	Window Mirror Doorway Playground	• Interpersonal Communication • Interpretive communication • Presentational Communication • Cultural Practices • Cultural Products • Cultural Comparisons • Making Connections • Acquiring Information	• Novice • Intermediate • Advanced	1,2,3,4,5	• Investigate • Analyze • Synthesize

compare real-time user reporting to traditional or commercial-based reporting agencies, to include American vs. Russian		• School and Global Communities			
*Suitable for content courses					

6. Conclusion

Some of the recommendations and activities outlined above are based on a general understanding of human cognition and are therefore less bound to our contemporary historical moment, while others may reflect critical concerns happening today such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, election security concerns, the climate crisis, and efforts to tackle systemic racism and social disparities in the U.S. and globally. The intention of this article is to suggest impactful practices that lead to thoughtful, actionable, and inclusive instruction to build SML now and into the future. Most of all, the above recommendations seek to support safe digital citizenship for language learners as they explore the exciting and unbounded unknown of "the digital wilds." Suggested starting points include fostering an awareness of cognitive vulnerabilities by focusing on heuristics, homophily, satire, unreliable narrators, and populist rhetoric. Further discussions of the critical topic of SML in language and area studies courses could advance the development of a conceptual framework and assessment standards.

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