

Strategies for reaching
Advanced proficiency

Dr. Cynthia Martin
Associate Professor of Russian
University of Maryland

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Helping students achieve
Advanced proficiency

- ▶ What does it mean for them?
- ▶ What does it mean for us?

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Students have to work harder
(much harder) than you do!

- ▶ Get student buy-in:
 - Do YOU really want to reach Advanced?
 - What does that mean? What will it mean for YOU?
- ▶ Self-assessment: Where are you now?
 - Guidelines (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012>)
 - Can-Dos (<https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements>)
- ▶ Students must become reflective, independent learners

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Clear expectations

- ▶ What: Functions required to be Advanced
 - Narrate in major time frames
 - Describe in detail
- ▶ About what:
 - Familiar topics of personal interest
 - Topics of general/community interest
- ▶ How:
 - Accuracy and comprehensibility such that you do not need a "sympathetic listener"
 - Responses organized in cohesive paragraphs

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Why do students need teachers at this stage?

- ▶ What do they need us (teachers) for?
- ▶ What can we do for them that they cannot do on their own? Ask them!
- ▶ Maximize in-class time for activities that we (and other speakers) need to be present for
- ▶ Maximize independent learning to prepare for in-class activities
 - Discuss with them the balance between in-class and independent learning outside of class
 - Typical university expectation is 2 to 1 ratio

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What can we do to help?

- ▶ Lots of exposure to authentic sources as models
 - Provide lots of models of Advanced-level language use
 - Have them memorize ☺ and "perform"
 - Pretend long before they can sustain it spontaneously
 - Performance vs. proficiency
- ▶ Teach them how to use resources
 - On-line
 - Dictionaries
 - Other speakers
 - Observe (in real time or online)
 - Engage

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What can we do to help?

- ▶ Work across modes improves speaking and all the skills/modes
 - Interpersonal speaking/listening
 - Interpretive listening and reading
 - Presentational speaking and writing
- ▶ Explore the same topic across modes
- ▶ Mix up the order of modes

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What can we do to help?

- ▶ Be pro-active learners
 - What topic domains do they want to develop?
 - Read about the issue
 - Initiate the conversation, even when it will be a "stretch"
 - Pay attention to the expressions and language used by Russians when discussing the topic
- ▶ Be reflective
 - Observe how Russians interact with one another (and what they say) in various situations, be a "fly on the wall"
 - Analyze instances when they feel challenged or are at ease

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What can we do to help?

- ▶ Do your activities and materials aim at helping learners who are struggling at the Advanced border?
- ▶ These learners generally have problems with
 - Grammar ☹
 - Limited vocabulary
 - Text type (not cohesive paragraphs)
 - Frustration because they know or sense what they don't know or cannot do

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What can we do to help?

- ▶ Normalize “discomfort” as a sign of progress to be used to advantage! Teach them to...
 - Recognize discomfort (and accept as normal)
 - Analyze the source
 - Think about how best to address it
 - Do the counter-intuitive thing: **run toward it!**
 - (or at least, don't run away from it!)
 - Reflect and record regularly (note cards, notebook, etc.)

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Use of Technology

- ▶ Current learning management system
- ▶ What can be shifted to independent learning?
 - Written/oral explanations
 - Resources
 - Models
- ▶ Submission of oral assignments and drafts prior to class
 - Via LMS if possible
 - Other options are available

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“Grading”

- ▶ Does your current approach encourage the development of
 - features (functions, content, accuracy, text type) required to reach Advanced?
 - behaviors that we wish to encourage, such as risk-taking?
- ▶ Is your grading more a punitive system or a reward system?
- ▶ Do you have assignments that are “low-risk” but important (pass/fail)?
- ▶ Individualized grading

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