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# RLJ

**Russian Language Journal**

Special Issue

In Honor of Olga Kagan

# RLJ

Russian Language Journal

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# RLJ

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## **Introduction to the Special Issue**

This issue of *Russian Language Journal* is dedicated to the life and work of Olga Kagan, who passed away on April 6, 2018. Olga was a giant in the fields of heritage language learning and Russian language pedagogy. She served for nearly 20 years on the Board of Directors of the American Council of Teachers of Russian, the organization that publishes this journal. Therefore, it is our pleasure to present this volume of articles dedicated to theory, research, and methods in the teaching of Russian.

To commence our volume, we have selected two of Olga's articles previously published in *Russian Language Journal*. The first article, "Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile," published in 2010, represents a groundbreaking study examining the capabilities and the needs of Russian heritage language learners in the United States. The second article, "Heritage Language Learners of Russian and L2 Learners in the Flagship Program: A Comparison," published in 2012, compares the Russian of second language (L2) learners at the Intermediate-High level of proficiency with the Russian of heritage learners. The purpose of the study was to determine whether these two groups of learners could benefit from the same curriculum design.

These two articles demonstrate what Rifkin, in the first original article of this issue, calls a "pedagogy born of compassion," in that Olga sought to understand learners' capabilities rather than their deficits and sought out teaching approaches that would best meet the needs of all learners. In that spirit, the contributions to this issue honoring Olga focus on pedagogy and, in some ways, embody the pedagogy of compassion. Though we have divided this issue into two parts: "Pedagogy and Practice" and "Linguistic Approaches to Pedagogy," the distinction between these parts is somewhat arbitrary. Authors of submitted papers relate their research to the teaching of Russian in recognition of Olga's dedication to excellence in language teaching. Each part contains four articles aimed at improving and enhancing teaching practice while also contributing to theory and scholarship.

The first part of this issue, “Pedagogy and Practice,” encapsulates the pedagogy of compassion, by directly addressing compassion as a learning outcome (Rifkin), promoting methods to reach all learners (Leaver and Corin), describing techniques for engaging with the broader Russian-speaking community (Roby), or proposing feedback and assessment practices that take into account learners’ current competence (Ableeva and Thomason).

Rifkin’s article, “Teaching Compassion in the Russian Language and Literature Curriculum: An Essential Learning Outcome,” honors Olga’s compassion for heritage speakers, reconceptualizing “intercultural competence” as a form of compassion. It suggests ways in which Russian language teachers, in particular, can cultivate compassion in their learners.

Leaver and Corin’s article addresses a significant gap in the literature with regard to “Fields of the Mind” by employing the Ehrman and Leaver (E&L) Cognitive Construct. In particular, the researchers de-conflate the perceptual and manipulation aspects of cognition by expanding the field concepts (field dependence and independence as well as field sensitivity and insensitivity) into a quadrangular construct of two parallel categories. This clarification recognizes that learning styles are not necessarily “either/or.” As such, the construct allows instructors to be more sensitive to the instructional preferences of their students and to tailor instruction in order to meet the needs of the whole classroom.

Roby’s article, “Designing and Integrating a Community-Based Learning Dimension into a Traditional Proficiency-Based High School Curriculum,” explores how to engage language learners with the broader community of target-language speakers. Roby offers practical suggestions for implementing cultural learning within a proficiency-oriented curriculum. This kind of engagement within a broader community also may contribute to the development of compassion, as learners develop an ability to comprehend other perspectives.

Ableeva and Thomason report on the use of dynamic assessment to facilitate the acquisition of Russian inflections and to promote the development of listening ability among students at the Intermediate level. Dynamic assessment is, in effect, a method of dialoguing with students about form by providing scaffolded assistance to help them

notice grammatical forms, make hypotheses, and draw conclusions. It is an approach to feedback that meets students where they are, reflecting the pedagogy of compassion that characterized Olga's work.

The second part of this issue focuses on linguistic approaches to language pedagogy. Kisselev's article on "Word Order Patterns in the Writing of Heritage and Second language Learners of Russian" combines both of Olga's research interests. Using a corpus of learner writing, Kisselev compares word-order choices of native speakers, heritage speakers, and second language learners of Russian, concluding that explicit instruction is necessary for both heritage and second language learners to use non-canonical word order in Russian appropriately.

Janda's article likewise makes use of corpus data. Janda presents the Strategic Mastery of Russian Tool (SMARTool), which facilitates learning inflectional morphology by strategically focusing on the highest-frequency word forms and the contexts that motivate their use. While under the tutelage of Olga in the early 1980s, Janda came to appreciate the emphasis that Olga placed on authentic language usage, and the SMARTool reflects an outgrowth of that approach to language learning.

Talalakina, Brown, and Kamrotov examine the degree to which stated proficiency levels for L2 Russian curricular materials align with frequency-based corpus data. The authors draw on textbooks published in the United States, the choice of which partly reflects an homage to Olga—a champion of L2 curricular materials designed for the Intermediate and Advanced levels. The researchers compiled a corpus composed of lexical items from the aforementioned textbooks and compared them with the general vocabulary lists of the 5,000 most frequent words by Sharoff, Umanskaya, and Wilson (2013) and fiction and mass media lists by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009).

The final article by Six focuses on the teaching of verbs of motion to students at the Novice level and suggests categories that may be particularly helpful to students at the beginning levels of language learning. She further suggests story-telling and visualization techniques that will help learners to see verbs of motion "through Russian eyes," potentially leading to better retention and production.

Special thanks to our peer reviewers for their careful review of each submitted article. In keeping with the journal's standard editorial

practices, all submissions underwent a double-blind review. The time and effort of the reviewers help us to maintain our high standards.

With great appreciation and affection for the tireless efforts of Olga Kagan, we commend to you the 69th volume of *Russian Language Journal*.

Tony Brown, Guest Editor  
Jennifer Bown, Editor

## Russian Heritage Language Speakers in the U.S.: A Profile <sup>1</sup>

OLGA KAGAN

Originally published in RLJ in 2010

### Introduction

Brecht and Ingold (2002) advocate systematic efforts to develop heritage language (HL) pedagogy to remedy U.S. language deficits: "...because of [heritage language learners' (HLLs')] existing language and cultural knowledge, they may require substantially less instructional time than other learners to develop these skills. This is especially true for speakers of the less commonly taught languages" (p. 1).

Russian is one of those less commonly taught languages in the U.S. that is critically important for national security and the global economy. Since the early 1970s, when a large wave of Russian-speaking immigrants began to settle in the U.S., American universities have had to adjust their teaching of Russian as a foreign language to accommodate these immigrants' children. Students who spoke Russian at home and enrolled in Russian programs that mainly catered to learners of Russian as a foreign language have become a familiar sight in Russian programs in the nearly forty years that have since passed.

Nevertheless, HL teaching methodology is still a subject of lively debate, and most programs continue to struggle in their efforts to blend heritage and non-heritage curricula into one coherent whole. Additionally, with an emphasis on high level proficiency (cf. Flagship mission), learning how to teach these students may lead to more Americans speaking Russian at an advanced or superior level, an achievement that currently eludes most students of Russian as a foreign language.

This paper's main goal is to present a profile of Russian heritage speakers based on data from a survey by the National Heritage Language

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the 18th Congress of Scandinavian Slavists in Tampere, Finland in August 2010.

Resource Center.<sup>2</sup>

Linguists are primarily interested in HL *speakers* (e.g. Polinsky, 1997, 2006), while teachers are primarily interested in HL *learners* (e.g. Kagan, 2005), i.e. HL speakers who study their HLs. There is a considerable body of research analyzing the linguistic lacunae of Russian heritage speakers (see, for example, *Heritage Language Journal*, 6(1), Spring 2008, special issue on Russian as a heritage language: <http://www.heritagelanguages.org/>). However, while research into HL speakers' linguistic features is necessary, it cannot serve as the only determining factor for curriculum design. Polinsky and Kagan (2007) attempted a study of both HL speakers and HL learners in a joint paper, but such collaboration between a theoretical linguist and a teacher is still rare.

A student's proficiency at the onset of a program as well as his or her potential proficiency may depend on a number of factors: age at immigration, use of language in the family, motivation and affect, etc. By reviewing various factors forming a multifaceted lingua-social portrait of a Russian heritage language learner, we hope to provide instructors and program designers with some background information, which could serve as a backdrop for program development.

### **Russian Speakers in the U.S.**

Limiting our discussion to the American context, a heritage speaker of Russian is an individual who grew up in the U.S. speaking Russian at home but was educated mostly or exclusively in English. Such an individual is a bilingual whose weaker language is Russian. "Russian heritage learners' [...] level of competency in Russian is directly tied to the amount of education they received in the former Soviet Union," which is, in turn, related to the wave of immigration that brought them to the U.S. (Kagan & Dillon, 2006, p. 87).

### **Immigration from the Former Soviet Union**

There were four waves of immigration from Russian-speaking countries in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The first wave left Russia after the revolutions of 1917. Most of these émigrés' went to Europe and came to the U.S. in the years preceding or immediately following World War II. A second wave consisted of those who found themselves outside of the

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Brecht has served on the Board of Directors since the Center's inception.

Soviet Union after WWII, and did not wish to go back. The third wave began leaving the Soviet Union in the early 1970s and was largely Jewish, settling primarily in Israel or the U.S. This wave lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union, which brought on a paradigmatic shift in the former Soviet republics' immigration policies. For more detailed discussion, see Kagan and Dillon (2010). Andrews (1998) wrote that according to the 2000 U.S. Census, most third-wave immigrants came from large cities, 92% of them had high school diplomas, and 51% had received some form of higher education; he called them "a sophisticated and cosmopolitan group of immigrants, appreciative of their rich cultural heritage who are consciously adapting to life in a radically different society" (p. 55).

The fourth wave started after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when it became easy to leave Russia and other former Soviet republics. Its composition was much more diverse in terms of ethnic and geographic origin, linguistic traits, and level of education. Many came from former Soviet republics where they grew up with two languages: Russian and the local language. Even if they did not speak the local language, it may have played a role in the baseline Russian they spoke. This consideration is of importance when we discuss Russian HL learners' linguistic needs. Some researchers (Zelenin, 2007) identify a "fifth wave," describing it as a "brain-drain wave" of high-level professionals who find jobs in the U.S.; they may intend to return to their country of origin, but stay so long that their children grow up in the U.S. According to the 2007-08 community survey (U.S. Census), there are over 851,000 Russian speakers in the U.S. The largest populations reside in New York, (29.5 %), followed by 6.3% in California.

### **A Russian HL Learner**

A heritage speaker of Russian who studies Russian at an American educational institution is a heritage language learner (HLL). Russian HLLs today are mostly children of one of the recent immigration waves, i.e., the first generation, who were born in the U.S., or the 1.5 generation, who were born outside of the U.S. but arrived at an early age. A fairly typical example of such a learner is Igor N. I worked with him individually for ten weeks in Spring 2010.<sup>3</sup> Igor met with me once a week for sixty to

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<sup>3</sup> UCLA IRB # G071103501. I do not mean to imply that all Russian heritage learners speak exactly like Igor. However, I am sure many of the readers who teach these learners

ninety minutes. The main task was discussing the text Igor was reading: Aleksandr Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaia dochka*). His experience with Russian is as follows: Igor was born in Moscow. His parents met as students at Moscow State University; his mother was from Krasnodar, and his father from Kirovograd. Igor's parents moved to the U.S. when he was two years old. He used Russian at home, and his grandmother taught him to read and write a little. In college, he majored in science, and he is currently a graduate student in nanoscience. He decided to take a Russian class in his senior year because he needed FL credit, had some free time, and wanted to improve his Russian. He could not take the first-quarter HL class because he had a class conflict, so his grandmother worked with him for a few weeks to bring his literacy up to par. He then took the second-quarter HL class (ten weeks in winter), at the end of which he read Pushkin's *Dubrovsky*.

In the spring quarter, Igor spent ten weeks doing an independent study with me. In addition to working on some grammar from the textbook *Russian for Russians*, he read Pushkin's *Kapitanskaia dochka*. We spent about one hour a week discussing the story. Igor's tasks were to recall the events and characters, to ask questions if he didn't understand, and to answer some of my questions. I followed some recommendations from the recall protocols research (Bernhardt 1983, Carlisle 1999) and recorded all of our meetings.

1. Instructor: 2-я глава называется «Вожатый» и что в ней было?
2. The second chapter is called "The Guide" and what happened/happens in it?
3. Igor. Там идёт интересная история как они попадают в / бу-ран и \ они случайно увидели человек, вожатый, кто их принёс в / постоянное / (забыл как называется) чтобы переночевать до тех пор как погода улучшится (Преподаватель:- постоянный двор; И. повторяет за ней). И / когда на следующий день Пётр подарил / человеку свой пиджак \ \ его \ крестьянь \ \ ну с кем он \ вместе везде идёт, он ему это не очень понравилась идея, но Пётр сказал, что ему нужно что-то дать, благодарить его. Вожатый он был по-моему тоже, как похоже пьяница и

ничего не делал/ это почему \ \ Сер, его только зовут по...  
Савел( )ича

there goes an interesting story there how they get into / a blizzard and \ they accidentally saw man, a guide, who carried them into / a permanent [postoiannoe] / (forgot what it's called) so as to spend the night until [the time when] the weather improves (Instructor: - staging inn [postoialyi dvor]; I. repeats after her). And / when the next day Peter gives / his jacket to the man as a gift \ \ his \ peasant [the student does not know the correct word for 'peasant' in Russian] \ \ well, the one with whom \ he everywhere goes, he to him this idea didn't appeal, but Peter said that he has to give him something, thank him. The guide he was I think also it looks like a drunk and didn't do anything/ that is the why \ \ Ser, he is only called by... Savel//ich's

4. Translation: It's an interesting story. The characters are caught in a blizzard when they happen to see a man, a guide. He escorts/leads them to a staging inn, where they can spend the night until the weather clears/improves. The following/next day, when Peter gives the man his jacket as a gift, his servant/peasant, who accompanies him everywhere, objects/doesn't like it. But Peter insists/says that he has to give (the guide) something as a sign of gratitude. I also believe the guide is a drunk and loafer/ne'er-do-well; this is why people refer to him using only... as simply Savel//ich.
5. Instructor: *зовут по чему?*  
call him by what?
6. Igor. *по отчестве... по отчеству*  
with the patronymic... by the patronymic  
Using only the patronymic.

Igor's narrative demonstrates the following:

1. Good aural comprehension.
2. Fairly good pronunciation with some inadequacies.
3. Igor has a high degree of fluency, if we understand fluency as a participatory exchange. McCarthy (2006) asserts that fluency cannot to be judged by monologic criteria, but is rather a joint

production: *conversations* (rather than individual speakers) are fluent or non-fluent, with the notion of *confluence* being central to conversational fluency.

4. Good and serviceable strategic competence (*забыл, как ... / I forgot how to say...*).
5. Ability to self-correct (*по отчеству / using his patronymic*)
6. Some evidence of complex syntax (*до тех пор, как / until [the time when]*)
7. Abundance of lexical and grammatical mistakes.
8. Some exceedingly long pauses.

This brief list contains both strengths and weaknesses, but the former outweigh the latter. Igor went from lack of literacy to reading Pushkin's novella in less than ten weeks. It would take a typical FL student of Russian several years of intensive study to accomplish the same.

This itself points to a difference between HL and FL students, and, consequently, between the optimal curricula for each group. In teaching a student like Igor, what should our focus be? To frame the question more broadly, what kind of curriculum would enable HL students to make the largest gains or, perhaps more importantly, would not hold them back?

### **A profile of a Russian HLL**

Research into the factors important for home-language preservation is still inconclusive. According to Fishman (1978), the loss of the immigrant language typically happens within three generations: the immigrant generation speaks the language, their children are English dominant but continue using the language (what we now call heritage speakers), and their grandchildren are typically monolingual. Lopez (1996) asserts that "[A]sian languages are hardly maintained at all beyond the immigrant generation" (p. 139). Examples of such rapid language loss are evident among Russian immigrants as well. Still, as teaching Russian HLLs shows, some second generation speakers preserve their HL better than others. What factors play a role in one's maintenance or loss of the home language?

According to Montrul (2008), the earlier a child comes into contact with the dominant language (English) and begins using it more than the HL, the weaker his or her knowledge of the HL is likely to be. Carreira

and Kagan (in press) show that the earlier heritage language speakers arrive in the U.S., “the less likely they are to use their HL and the more likely they are to use English to the exclusion of this language.”

These factors may be beyond anyone’s control, as they depend on the family’s immigration history and the parents’ choice of language use at home. Some other factors, though, may be controllable. Au (2008) speculates that “storage strength and retrieval strength of long-ago memory holds at least part of the answer” (p. 339) to language maintenance. She indicates two paths for keeping HL alive: using the language “beyond early childhood” (p. 347) and engaging in relearning the language. She shows that even overhearing the language in childhood helps adults relearn it.

Thus, both age of emigration and use of language at home become crucial factors of language maintenance. Using the language with peers and travel to the home country also help to preserve the language (Hinton, 2001); in fact, travel may promote use of language with peers. Hinton does not believe that attendance at afterschool, weekend, or church schools helps students maintain the language. Still, these programs may motivate (or demotivate) students, and may thus play a role in language maintenance or loss.

In college, many students decide to take courses in their home language in order to improve or relearn it. It may be useful to examine their motivations. An additional factor that may contribute to language maintenance is self-identity, which is always important in a child’s development and learning (Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 7). It is easy to see how self-identity would be a crucial factor in studying one’s home language, which was acquired first and was one’s dominant or only language in childhood.

I will examine the aforementioned factors (age, use of language, travel, attendance at weekend schools, motivation, and self-identity) in order to arrive at a typical profile of a Russian HLL.

### **The Survey of Russian HLLs**

The data comes from a survey conducted by NHLRC in 2007-2009. To date, 1,800 HLLs in 22 languages have taken the online anonymous survey. A total of 219 of the respondents were Russian HLLs. While the latter number may not in itself be impressive, in combination with and

comparison to the overall responses, the data provided by Russian HLLs may offer valuable insights.

Most of the Russian respondents were from New York and New Jersey, while the next largest group was from California. This distribution of Russian responses roughly corresponds to the distribution of Russian speakers in the U.S. (see discussion above). The majority of respondents were between 18 and 21, the age of a typical undergraduate. 60.6% percent of the respondents were women. Over 70% report being born in the former Soviet Union. This indicates that the U.S. Russian community is relatively new. 69% of all other HLLs were born in the U.S. Most of the Russian speakers, on the other hand, came at an early age; over 60% never attended school outside the U.S.

57% live at home with their parents while attending college, a somewhat higher percentage than for the other HLLs surveyed (45%). Students report that they began speaking more English than Russian after age five. 43%, however, continued speaking Russian at home. 42% have never traveled to a Russian-speaking country. Fewer than 3% travel to a Russian-speaking country every year. By comparison, 85% of Chinese and 87% of Korean HLLs travel to their home countries regularly. Even Persian-speaking students travel to Iran more frequently than Russian speakers travel to the former Soviet Union: 64% have been at least once.

Many Russian HLLs gain literacy late, in college. Lavretsky et al. (1997) note that Russian families “generally do not insist on speaking Russian to their children and grandchildren. It is quite common that children who came to this country before entering school or elementary school do not speak, read, or write in Russian” (p.337).

Even though families might not compel or encourage their children to speak Russian, 72% of the Russian HLLs surveyed spoke the language at home until starting school and, at times, knew no English up to that period. As one student writes, “Russian gave me a tough start with school in America, but after I learned English, it became more of a useful tool to me.”

Once these students start school, however, they seem to acquire English rapidly and may even cease speaking Russian altogether. Another student writes, “My mother would speak Russian and I would reply in English. I rebelled against speaking Russian and Russian culture until

about the age of 17/18.”

Even though the use of Russian reportedly diminishes after starting school, students continue using it in some way. 40% report using a “combination of Russian and English,” while 7% speak only Russian and 34% speak only English. 15% claim that they have no preference. Every immigrant population has a name for these combinations: “Konglish” (Korean and English), “Russlish” (Russian and English), etc. “Spanglish” is so widespread that it constitutes a popular discourse, with plays and TV shows written in the language. Carreira and Kagan (in press) report on a pilot study of 36 Spanish HLLs that shows how Spanish and English combine in their daily lives: “with grandparents, nearly all (91.67%) report speaking only Spanish. With their mothers, 25% speak only Spanish and another 33.33% speak mostly Spanish. On the other hand, with siblings, many report using English and Spanish in equal amounts (27.78%) or speaking mostly English (52.78%), and none reports making exclusive use of Spanish with siblings. All respondents reported mixing English and Spanish” when speaking either of the languages. A similar study of Russian speakers is in preparation (Kagan). It appears that the majority of the respondents are still exposed to Russian at some level, even though most of their communication is in English.

In answer to the question, “What did you do in Russian outside of class in the past six months?” students report speaking on the phone (90%), watching TV or video (69%), listening to music (75%), and visiting a website (52%). Between 30% and 40% read a newspaper or a book or a short story, but 18% report never reading in Russian; 26% read in Russian less than fifteen minutes a day, and 20% read fifteen to thirty minutes a day. That differs sharply from time spent reading in English: 70% report reading one to two hours or more outside of school. These numbers show that students’ exposure to Russian continues, mainly in the form of input, but some output (telephone conversations) is also in evidence.

A small percentage (14%) had attended community events. This particular finding underscores some basic differences and similarities between the Russian and some other language communities in the U.S. While, like their Russian counterparts, only a small percentage (16%) of Chinese respondents had attended community events, a full 50% of Korean and 30% of Persian respondents had done so. Another striking

characteristic of Russian HLLs is the fact that less than 15% have attended Russian community or church schools. This finding is very different in regard to Chinese (44% attended more than one year) and Korean (40% attended more than one year), but is similar to Persian (70% never attended weekend or community schools).

How do Russian HLLs assess their language ability? They feel that they are close to native speakers where listening proficiency is concerned, but are mostly at the intermediate level in all other skills, including speaking.<sup>4</sup>

In response to more detailed questions about their perceived proficiency in Russian, respondents felt that they were able to eavesdrop, understand humor (aural ability), use polite language, and be rude (oral proficiency). Their almost daily contact with the language for over 18-20 years certainly justifies such claims. These claims also differentiate HLLs from FLLs.

What do Russian HLLs want to learn in class? Respondents indicate taking Russian classes for three main reasons: (1) communicating better with family and friends in the U.S.; (2) learning about cultural and linguistic roots; and (3) communicating better with family and friends abroad.

When asked what they would most like to learn in class, the majority of respondents identify increasing vocabulary as their primary objective. That is also supported by other HLLs' responses, with the exception of Chinese students, whose main concern is learning to read and write.

In response to the question about what they want to read in Russian classes, students indicate novels and short stories (84%), followed by poetry (52%), which further evinces their interest in cultural roots. It also indicates that Russian HLLs are close to their families and are aware of the importance of literature and poetry in Russian culture.

The survey also addressed the issue of identity. The question was formulated in the following way: "How do you self-identify (e.g., American, Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American, etc.)?" Responses differed considerably, but most students indicated a dual identity, with a minority saying "Russian" or "American" alone. Here are a few examples:

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<sup>4</sup> These are not ACTFL scale assessments. The scale in the survey is a common sense range, Novice to Native-like.

“Russian/American,” “Ukrainian-American,” “American Russian,” etc. In a few cases, identities were more complicated: “Persian-Russian,” “Russian and Serbian and American,” “Russian American Jew.” Even if no additional identities, such as Persian or Serbian, are involved, Russian Jewish immigrant children, for example, must still “struggle with their position in three cultures—Russian, Jewish, and American” (Lavretsky et al., 1997, p. 339). The same may be true for children of families who came from the former Soviet republics. They may understand their identity as “Russian Armenian American,” “Russian Ukrainian American,” etc. It seems that students have a keen sense of their multiple identities and “hybridity” (Bhabha, 1994).

A few examples from the survey’s open-ended responses may help underscore the affective nature of Russian HLLs’ attitude toward Russian culture in their lives. Respondents’ spelling has been preserved.

*Example 1.* For half of my life, we lived in West Hollywood, so Russian was a big part of that. I guess it was helpful in the sense that it allowed me to communicate with various shopkeepers and neighbors.

*Example 2.* My knowledge of my heritage language has allowed me to communicate with my grandparents and other family members. It has also allowed me to go to my homeland and better understand the people who live there. At the same time, it has helped me have friends who come from a similar background.

*Example 3.* Speaking Russian is helpful because there are so many native speakers in New York City. I constantly overhear people speaking in Russian and it often just makes me comfortable to ask a stranger something.

*Example 4.* My HL is VERY helpful in my church, where 85% of the service is in Russian. And I speak Russian with all the people there and sing songs in Russian too. At home, I am able to communicate with my relatives, like grandparents who can’t speak any English. I have also been able to talk to strangers in Russian in the stores or ask for directions or something in public.

*Example 5.* i love knowing russian. i have made a great number of friends out of school because of my ability to speak russian especially in the local russian community.

I have tried to find instances of purely negative affect, but it is truly surprising how positively students' view their Russian heritage. We should, of course, keep in mind that all respondents were taking Russian at the time of the survey, i.e., the audience was, to a degree, self-selected. Below are a few examples that show that some respondents were at times made uncomfortable by their knowledge of Russian. However, some add positive comments to these responses as well.

*Example 1.* It only affected my experience in school when I was a child because I started kindergarden knowing no english at all. As for right now I don't think it affects my schooling. My SAT tutor says that it was harder for me to improve on my verbal part of the exam because I was not a native english speaker but i'm not sure how much of an impact that had.

*Example 2.* Since i have learned Russian first, it made it harder for me to learn English. I was able to learn to read pretty fast because i always loved to read, but i still had difficult time with writing essays. My heritage language also made me more shy and unsure of myself, therefor making it harder to make new friends.

*Example 3.* I find people's reactions to my heritage language to be sometimes annoying when I live in places where there is little diversity. I very often make friends on the basis of a second common language and a shared culture. Knowing Russian also helped make learning German a little easier. Russian is a good language to have for me because I am majoring in Mathematics, and many very good mathematicians speak Russian better than English, and it is a convenient language in the setting of (for example) an academic conference, or one on one with a professor.

*Example 4.* The only time that Russian made school difficult for me was when we first moved to the United States. I was young and did not know the language so it was very difficult for me to

communicate in school. However, I picked up English very quickly and after that knowing Russian never caused me a problem. Now, I want to learn how to speak better in Russian.

*Example 5.* I went to religious Jewish schools up until high school, and there, it was highly undesirable to be Russian. So Russian held a sort of stigma for me in that setting, but I liked to talk to people in Russian outside of school in Russian.

Whether positive or negative, their attitude to the language makes them different from learners of Russian as a foreign language.

### **A General Profile of a Russian HLL**

The following is the general profile of a Russian HLL in the U.S. that emerges from the survey:

1. First generation U.S.-born or 1.5 generation (arrived approximately before the age of 10).
2. Sequential bilingual: spoke Russian only before starting school.
3. Continues to use some Russian at home.
4. Retained some proficiency in speaking Russian and is comfortable with aural comprehension. Not infrequently starts speaking more Russian in late adolescence or young adulthood.
5. In college, becomes interested in learning about cultural and linguistic roots and improving language proficiency, particularly in expanding vocabulary.
6. Has a double or triple identity.

### **Curriculum Development Based on the Profile**

The profile above demonstrates that Russian HLLs are different from learners of Russian as a FL in their prior exposure to, experience with, reasons for studying, and emotional attachment to the language, as well as in their self-identification, which determines their motivation. As Au shows (see discussion above), the main difference may be between *learning* the language by FLLs and *relearning* it by HLLs. The question is not which group is better at learning Russian, but what curriculum they need in order to learn it well.

Also, considering HLLs' use of the language throughout their lifetime (no matter how limited or flawed it is), we can expect that they may be able to reach a higher level of proficiency faster than non-HLLs. Brecht and Ingold's recommendation quoted at the beginning of this paper can only be realized if we teach these groups differently and set different goals for each.

The following principles can be outlined:

1. An understanding of the importance of students' background, including their families' immigration histories. The age of arrival and exposure to language make a considerable difference in one's linguistic and cultural competency and ability to gain higher proficiency. This biographical information can help determine what program would best suit a certain group of students, and can be collected through surveys and interviews.
2. An understanding of the role played by motivation and affective factors stemming from the language used in the family. Since students indicate "communicating with family and friends in the U.S." among the main three reasons for taking Russian courses, the curriculum should be oriented toward fulfilling this goal. Better communication is impossible without cultural knowledge, which should constitute the core of the curriculum. This has also been recognized by researchers of other HLs. For example, Merino *et al.* (1993) propose including the home language and culture(s) of Spanish HLLs into curriculum design. They also stress utilizing Vygotskian principles in order to develop learning communities where students would interact not only with their instructors and other students, but also with family and community members [see also Faltis (1990); Rodriguez Pino (1994)]. The same approach would aid Russian HLLs. Like Spanish-speaking students, Russian HLLs come from many different countries that were part of the Soviet Union before its collapse in 1991. Consequently, their language may contain traces of others (both Slavic and non-Slavic). An effective teacher must understand why

students use certain ungrammatical forms, non-standard vocabulary, etc. He or she must also understand these students' multiple identities.

3. Focusing on what is important for students themselves and rethinking more traditional approaches to the curriculum. Increasing vocabulary emerges as one of Russian HLLs' main concerns. Targeting curriculum at vocabulary development may yield an increase in proficiency more directly than focusing on grammar and spelling. Research into methodology that foregrounds vocabulary expansion would be most helpful to the profession.

### **Conclusions and Further Research**

To conclude with another quote from Brecht and Ingold (2002), the U.S. has "an unprecedented need for individuals with highly developed language competencies" both in English and in many other languages. Given the importance of Russian in world history, diplomacy, the economy and intellectual development, teaching Russian to HLLs who can gain a high level of proficiency is not only a pedagogical, but also a societal need. I hope that the Russian HLL profile described in this paper shows convincingly that these students need a different curriculum than learners of Russian as a FL. In order to achieve better results in teaching Russian as a heritage language in the U.S., researchers and practitioners would benefit from a corpus of heritage learners' language, both written and oral, exploration of the attitude of families and communities regarding language preservation, and a database of existing programs of Russian as a heritage language. Such studies may lead us to a comprehensive programmatic approach to heritage language teaching in Russian. Because Russian teaching in this country has a long history and may be more developed than pedagogy in other less commonly taught languages, developments in Russian may also lead to improving teaching of heritage languages in general. Ultimately, the goal of improved pedagogy would be to prepare citizens "who are linguistically and culturally savvy" (Tse 2001, p. 49-51) to pursue their own educational and intellectual goals, to advance the international interests of the U.S., and to play an important role in the global economy.

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## **Heritage Language Learners of Russian and L2 Learners in the Flagship Program: A Comparison**

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### **1. Introduction**

In 2005, a consortium of schools consisting of Bryn Mawr College, University of Maryland, University of California Los Angeles, and Middlebury Summer School was formed in order to launch a Russian Flagship Program. Both participants and NSEP<sup>5</sup> felt that these universities would bring different strengths to the program: Maryland and Bryn Mawr, for example, would attract students returning from a year-long study abroad experience in Russia as administered by American Councils, and UCLA would attract heritage language learners from large Russian communities in both Northern and Southern California. As expected, the first cohort of UCLA Flagship students consisted of heritage language speakers only.

The Consortium was replaced in 2009 by several independent Flagship Centers, and the focus shifted from recent graduates or students in their senior year to undergraduate students at all levels. Since then, the UCLA Flagship program has steadily made a transition to a program with both HLLs and L2 learners.

In this paper, the term heritage language learners (HLLs) refers to students who grew up in a home where a language other than English was spoken, and whose language development was interrupted by a switch to English once students started school (Polinsky & Kagan 2007). As a result, heritage learners typically have some oral/aural proficiency in the home language, but may not have any literacy. Kagan and Dillon (2005) argued that “At the beginning of the 21st century in the United States, Russian

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<sup>5</sup> NSEP: The National Security Education Program was established in 1991 to promote expertise in languages and cultures critical to U.S. national security. NSEP provides funding for the Language Flagship.

heritage learners are the children of the third, fourth, and later waves of immigration whose level of competency in Russian is directly tied to the amount of education they received in the former Soviet Union.” However, many of the heritage students in our program were born in the former Soviet Union, but came to the U.S. at an early age and therefore did not receive any education in a Russian-speaking country.

Kagan and Dillon (2001) and Kagan (2005) assert that heritage and non-heritage learners need to be offered different curricula in order to make their language learning efficient. This argument is mainly a reaction against placing HLLs, whom Valdes (2005) calls “unique language learners,” and traditional L2 learners, in one *beginning level* class. Other researchers also provide arguments against “mixed” classes (McGinnis 1996; Campbell & Rosenthal 2000; Webb and Miller 2000; Sohn and Shin 2007; Gambhir 2001; Wiley 2008; Li and Duff 2008), reasoning instead for developing a special curriculum, textbooks, and other materials for HLLs (Carreira 2003, 2004; Potowski 2008; Potowski et al. forthcoming; Kondo-Brown 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Kagan and Friedman 2004; Carreira and Kagan 2011). Most of the comparisons between HLLs and L2 learners, however, have been limited to lower-level proficiency (e.g., Lynch 2003) or Intermediate level proficiency at most (Montrul 2008); the body of research devoted to advanced level proficiency in languages other than English is minimal (Leaver and Shekhtman 2002; Maxim and Byrnes 2004; Byrnes et al. 2010). In addition, there are very few publications devoted to HLLs at the advanced or higher levels of proficiency (Laleko 2010; Edstrom 2007; Alarcon 2010 can be mentioned here).

The reason for this may be quite simple: the MLA Report of post-secondary enrollments (Furman et al. 2010) shows that only a very small percentage of foreign language students in the U.S. continue into advanced level classes. As Malone, et al. (2004) note, “Of the relatively small number of individuals in the United States who learn languages other than English, an even smaller number achieve a high level of proficiency in the language(s) they study.” Furthermore, though it is typical of college programs to designate upper-division language classes as “advanced,” taking an “advanced” upper-division class does not mean that students are at the Advanced level of proficiency as defined by ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012). As research shows (Thompson 2000; Rifkin 2005), after three to four years of foreign language instruction, college

students typically graduate at the Intermediate level in speaking. Thus, their speaking competency may not be at the same level as typical HLLs without literacy or with minimal literacy (Yokoyama 2002).

In a Flagship program, however, an advanced class becomes advanced not in name only, but with regard to proficiency at the Advanced or higher-level in the domestic program, and Superior level proficiency in the Capstone overseas program. In a recent study, Moskover (2008) discusses placing students of different profiles in the same classroom and shows that, at the level beyond Intermediate, students of different language backgrounds can work well together. Taking this study as a starting point, then, our baseline will be students at Intermediate-High levels of proficiency, particularly as we typically accept students into the fourth-year Flagship class at this level of proficiency or higher. A recently completed study by NHLRC/ACTFL (Swender, in preparation) analyzed discourse of Spanish and Russian HLLs. Its results point to the similarities in the needs of higher level L2 students and HLLs. For more discussion, see the section on test results further in this paper.

To create a comprehensive picture of the students in the Flagship program, we will describe two recent cohorts of students.

## **Participants**

### **Class of 2008-09**

The second cohort to be featured here was Flagship students in the last year of the Consortium (2008-09), before the focus shifted to the undergraduate program. A total of six students (one male and five female) were enrolled in the Flagship courses. In order to enroll, students had to test at the Intermediate-High level or higher on the ACTFL scale, so each of these students were at this level or above. Three of the students came from Russian-speaking families: one student was American-born and acquired Russian literacy in college; another student grew up in Armenia and studied Russian for ten years as a second language; and the third HL student was born in Ukraine to a Russian-speaking family and came to the United States when she was nine. Additionally, one student was born in South Korea to Korean-speaking parents, but moved to Russia when she was eight. She attended an English medium school in Moscow for eight years, and studied Russian as a second language. Her fluency in Russian was therefore the result of both classroom instruction

and exposure to Russian in natural surroundings and in interactions with Russian speakers. Because of this background, her language had some similarity to the features displayed by heritage language speakers. The two remaining students were traditional L2 learners who both came to UCLA as post-undergraduates after taking Russian in college. One of them took two years of college Russian and spent a summer at Middlebury, the other took college Russian and spent a year in Russia on a study abroad program. At the beginning of the program, the unofficial OPI rating (conducted by a certified OPI tester) put all the students between the Intermediate-High and Advanced level. The HL students all scored at Advanced-Low.<sup>6</sup>

### **Class of 2011-2012**

Since 2009, the Flagship program has enrolled students at all levels of instruction and all levels of Russian proficiency. In order to compare the students to earlier cohorts, we will focus on two students who are currently attending the American Councils Overseas Capstone program in St. Petersburg (2011-2012 academic year), and seven students who plan to apply for the 2012-2013 program in St. Petersburg. We will analyse the same characteristics as for the 2008-2009 cohort, using data from the UCLA Flagship online survey in use since 2007.

Of six male and three female students, only two students are HLLs. One of the two HLLs grew up in a Russian-speaking family in Uzbekistan and immigrated when she was ten years old; the other was born in the United States. Additionally, one student spent two years in Russia as a missionary, and so his familiarity with Russian is higher than an average L2 learner's. The other students, however, can be considered typical foreign language learners. One of the L2s transferred to UCLA as a junior after teaching English in Russia for a year, and the other five students started language instruction in beginning Russian at UCLA. One of the five grew up in the United States in a Bulgarian-speaking family, one student spent two summers in Russia, and two students spent one summer in Russia. In Spring 2011, an OPI tester (unofficial OPI) rated one of the HLLs and four L2 students at the Advanced level. The second HLL was rated Intermediate-High, and

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<sup>6</sup> This data comes from an online survey filled out by all Flagship students in their last year at UCLA, before departing for the Capstone program in St. Petersburg.

two additional students scored at Intermediate-Mid. One student was abroad and could not be tested.

To complete this discussion of the 2011-2012 cohort, we will compare two interviews at the Intermediate-High level, and two at the Advanced level. In each pair, the first student is an HLL, and the second student is an L2 learner.

### Procedure

The data in this paper is drawn from the OPI interviews and Russian Federation tests of reading, listening, and grammar.

### Intermediate-High Interviews

The excerpts below are from the interviews conducted in Spring 2010-2011. Mistakes are bolded; correct forms appear in square brackets.

Question. *Каковы, по вашему мнению, преимущества и недостатки учёбы в большом университете?*

Answer. *Ну, я люблю, что это университет большой, что есть много студентов. Я думаю, что здесь **учат** [учатся] около, около сорока тысяч студен..., около сорока тысяч студентов, но, и это **мне** [для меня] хорошо, потому что значит, что я могу встретить ... встретиться с **многим** [со многими ], **многим** [многими ], **людей** [людьми ], но думаю, что плохо, потому что, особенно на, на первом курсе, на втором курсе классы очень большие и **профессоры** [профессора ] обычно не..., **профессоры** [профессора] обычно интересуются больше с собственным, как сказать, исследованием, чем, чем, и они не так интересуются **преподавать** [преподаванием], **преподавание** [преподаванием] **курс** [курсов]. (HLL)*

Translation.

Question. What do you feel are advantages and disadvantages of being a student at a large university?

Answer. Well, I think it's good that the university is large, that there are a lot of students. I think we have about forty thousand students, about forty thousand students, but it's good for me because it means I can meet a lot of people, but it's [also] not so

good because in the freshmen and sophomore years, classes are very large and professors, usually not professors... professors are more interested in their own research and are not so interested in teaching classes.

Question. *Какие у вас соседи по квартире?*

Answer. *Интересный вопрос... Сначала, я думал, что эти два соседа... эти ...я считал этого соседа, я считал этих **соседов** [соседей] моими друзьями, но, в конце концов, я нашёл что, я узнал, что, я просто не могу справиться с одним [из них]. Он **громкий** [шумный], он жадный, и, не знаю, просто не могу жить с ним. Поэтому я думаю, что, если я буду жить в квартире в будущем году, я буду жить с **другом** [с другим], да... есть разница между хорошим соседом и хорошим другом.... Ну, например, потому что... я слышал такой совет, что нельзя жить с ближайшим другом. Я думаю, что, я считаю его одним из моих ближайших друзей, но невозможно жить с ним .. (L 2 student)*

Translation.

Question. Who are your roommates?

Answer. That's an interesting question... At first I thought that these two roommates... they... I thought that this roommate, I thought that these roommates were my friends, but in the long run I found that, I realized that I just couldn't live with him, I can't cope with one of them. He is very loud, he is stingy, and, I don't know, I just can't live with him. That's why I think that if I live in this apartment next year, I'll have another roommate... Well, for example, because someone gave me advice that you shouldn't share an apartment with your best friend. I think I consider him my best friend, but I can't live [in the same apartment] with him.

As can be seen from the excerpts, both students produced paragraph length discourse, thereby demonstrating that they are on their way to Advanced level proficiency. At the same time, both have some incorrect case endings. There is also some misuse of morphological forms including reflexive verbs, particularly in the HLL's sample. In fact, both students display mistakes typical of foreign language learners at this level

of proficiency. The only differences are that the HL student has a near-native pronunciation and more general facility/fluency in speaking, and the L2 student is more adept at using parenthetical expressions.<sup>7</sup>

### **Advanced Level Proficiency Interviews**

The excerpts below are from the interviews conducted in Spring 2010-2011. Mistakes are bolded; correct forms appear in square brackets.

Question 1. Почему вы выбрали этот университет?

Answer. Во-первых, UCLA это очень, ... очень престижный университет, и плюс к **тому** [ этому ], он не стоит очень много денег каждый год, и .. он тоже близко от дома, и там очень... , этот университет предлагает очень разный интересный выбор специализаций и так далее ...

Question 2. Вы довольны своим решением?

Answer. Да, я очень довольна, потому что я считаю это, как бы , очень хороший выбор, и **тем не менее** [и в тоже время] он не является очень дорогим выбором. (HLL)

Translation.

Question 1. Why did you choose this university?

Answer. First of all, UCLA is a very... very prestigious university, and besides it does not cost so much every year, and... it is close to my house, and also this university offers a very interesting choice of majors and so on...

Question 2. Are you happy with your decision?

Answer. Yes, I am very pleased, because I think this was so to say a very good choice, and at the same time it is not so expensive.

Question. Удачен ли ваш выбор университета?

Answer. Да очень... я считаю, что мне просто повезло, что я .. меня приняли, вообще, что я смог здесь заниматься с такими хорошими профессорами, у нас очень хорошие профессора здесь по славянским язык... языкам. Просто я не только занимаюсь русским языком, но и чешским языком, и ,вообще, без флагманской программы у

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<sup>3</sup> The importance of parenthetical expressions is made clear by ACTFL description of Speaking levels (2012).

*меня не было бы возможность [возможности]... возможность [возможности] ездить [поехать] в Россию, в Петербург, чтобы учиться год... Значит, вообще, мне просто повезло..., это решение было очень хорошее ... (L2 learner)*

Translation.

Question. Are you happy with your decision to enroll at this university?

Answer. Yes, very [pleased] I think I am very fortunate that I was accepted, in general that I could study with such good professors, we have very good faculty here in the Slavic department. And I don't just study Russian, but also Czech, and in general without the Flagship Program I wouldn't have an opportunity... an opportunity to go to Russia for a year... That means I am really lucky, this decision was very good...

In their responses, both students produce paragraph length discourse. While the L2 learner uses parenthetical expressions appropriately, the heritage language learner makes several attempts at using the parenthesis, but the usage is nevertheless incorrect. Though the HLL's pronunciation and general fluency is better than that of the L2 (as is evident in the audio), the transcripts show that the students have very similar profiles.

We will now discuss the differences between the HLLs and the L2 learners in more detail, moving beyond the holistic assessment of functions and discourse. In order to do so, we will compare the results of two standardized tests.

### **Standardized Tests of Russian as a Foreign Language**

In this section, we will analyse the results of the Russian Federation tests (TORFL) given to all Flagship students. The first level test has been administered since 2009 and the second level test has been administered since 2010. It is important to keep in mind that, although the tests were administered to the Flagship students, they were also administered to students at large who shared their classes. The oral proficiency levels of all the students whose results are discussed below are Intermediate-High and higher.

In order to understand the requirements of the TORFL Certification and ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, a comparison is in order. A document compiled by the faculty of St. Petersburg University and the University of Friendship, Moscow Yurkov and Balyxina (<http://ruscenter.axelero.net/2/2/5/component/torfl2.pdf>) explains that the first level is typically reached over 440 to 460 academic hours, in addition to the hours required for the basic level—180 to 200 hours. To be admitted to a university in the Russian Federation, it is sufficient to perform satisfactorily at this level. According to Yurkov and Balyxina, a student at level one is able to meet the basic requirements, at an appropriate level of socio-cultural proficiency, for communication with native speakers of Russian in everyday situations (*в бытовой и социально-культурной сфере*). The second Certification level requires an additional 720 hours, with at least 340 of those hours dedicated to the professional domain. A student at this level can be expected to satisfy the requirements for advanced post-graduate study in the humanities, engineering or natural sciences at a Russian university. Level one therefore roughly corresponds to Intermediate-High (see ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012), while Level two is similar to Advanced and is likely to be somewhat higher. At the Level of TORFL three, there is a convergence with the ACTFL Superior/ILR 3 (Maria Lekic, personal communication, November 2011). The first test administered to Flagship students when they arrive in St. Petersburg is TORFL Level 2.

### **Results of the Russian Federation Certification Test of Russian as a Foreign Language**

At the end of the academic year (third year Russian), UCLA Flagship students take the First Certification level of the Russian Federation Test of Russian as a Foreign Language, *«Типовой тест по русскому языку как иностранному 1-го сертификационного уровня»*. This is a computer-based practice test, the content of which is derived from a booklet of TORFL practice tests (TORFL, Level 1 and 2). The tests are in multiple-choice format and are computer-graded.

#### **TORFL -1 Results 2009-11**

Nineteen HLLs and eleven non-HLLs took the first level test. The HLLs scored an average of 94 percent, with a range from 75-97 percent. Non-

HLLs scored an average of 89 percent, with a range from 80-97 percent. Both groups had difficulties choosing correct case endings (45 percent of HLLs and 75 percent of non-HLLs). The second most pervasive difficulty was choosing the correct lexical items. While HLLs mostly made mistakes using unprefixed verbs of motion, L2 students' errors were in the area of prefixed verbs. Both groups made mistakes on aspect (equal percentage) and complex syntax (HLLs did slightly better). Incorrect answers are bolded, and correct answers are in cursive.

Table 1. Test results: TORFL-1 2009-2011 <sup>8</sup>

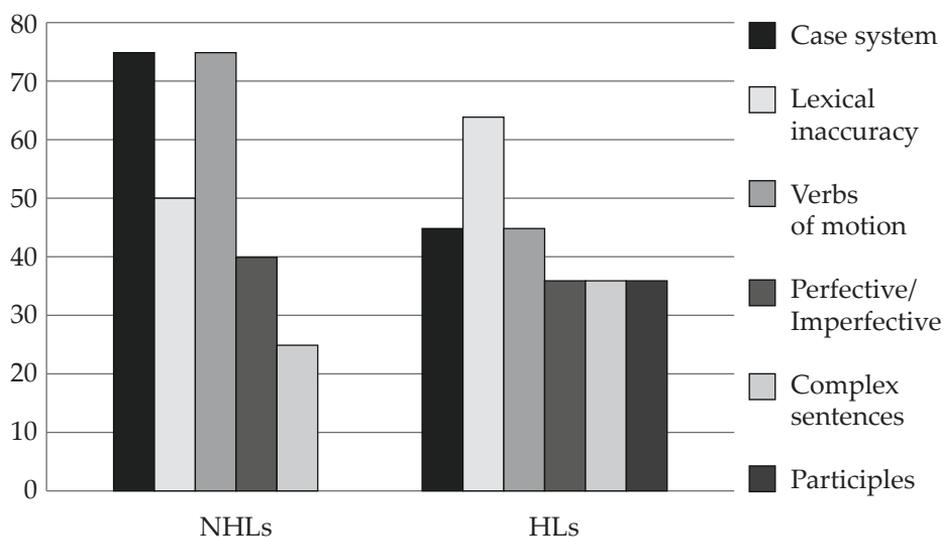
TORFL-1 Examples	
L2 (Non-Heritage) – 11 students	Heritage – 19 students
<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 75%:</b></p> <p>1. Case system:                      Работа водителя автобуса требует ... .                      а. <b>большое внимание</b>                      б. с большим вниманием                      в. <i>большого внимания</i>                      д. о большом внимании</p> <p>2. Verbs of motion (uni/multi directional):                      Почему Вы решили ... завтра во Владимир?                      а. <b>ездить</b>                      б. <i>ехать</i></p> <p>3. Verbs of motion with prefixes:                      На какой вокзал ... ваш коллега?                      а. <b>заезжает</b>                      б. <i>доезжает</i>                      в. <i>приезжает</i></p>	<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 64%:</b></p> <p>Lexical inaccuracy:                      Моя сестра не учится в школе, она ещё ... .                      а. <b>молодая</b>                      б. <i>маленькая</i>                      в. <i>младшая</i></p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 45%:</b></p> <p>1. Case system:                      Работа водителя автобуса требует ...                      а. <b>большое внимание</b>                      б. <b>с большим вниманием</b>                      в. <i>большого внимания</i>                      д. о большом внимании</p> <p>2. Verbs of motion (uni/multi directional):                      Навстречу нам ... девушка с цветами.                      а. <i>шла</i>                      б. <b>ходила</b></p>

<sup>8</sup> Multiple choice responses contain between two and four choices, depending on the nature of the grammatical category.

<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 50%:</b> Lexical inaccuracy: Моя сестра не учится в школе, она ещё ... а. молодая б. маленькая с. младшая</p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 40%:</b> Perfective/Imperfective forms: А где отец ... раньше? а. отдохнул б. отдыхал</p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 25%:</b> Complex sentences (ли/если, чтобы/что, который): Мама попросила, ... мы вернулись в 10 часов. а. чтобы б. что</p>	<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 36%:</b> 1. Perfective/Imperfective forms: Виктор шёл по улице и не ... родного города. а. узнавал б. узнал</p> <p>2. Participles (use of participle): Команда, ... игру с канадцами, стала чемпионом. а. выигравшая б. выигрывающая с. выигранная</p> <p>3. Complex sentences (ли/если, чтобы/что, который): Мама попросила, ... мы вернулись в 10 часов. а. что б. чтобы</p>
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The comparison below shows areas of most difficulty for each group. NHL stands for non-heritage learners and HLs for heritage learners.

Test results: TORFL-1



## Second Certification Level

At the end of the pre-Capstone academic year at UCLA, students take a second Certification level practice test. They take it again when they arrive at St. Petersburg University for the Capstone year.

## TORFL -2 Results 2010-2011

Thirteen HLLs and five non-HLLs took the second level test. The HLLs scored an average of 86 percent, with a range from 75-97 percent. Non-HLLs scored an average of 74 percent, with a range from 62-90 percent. A comparison of the results from the second level test shows an even higher rate of similarity between HLLs and non-HLLs than the first TORFL, even with regard to percentages. Incorrect answers are bolded, and correct answers are in cursive.

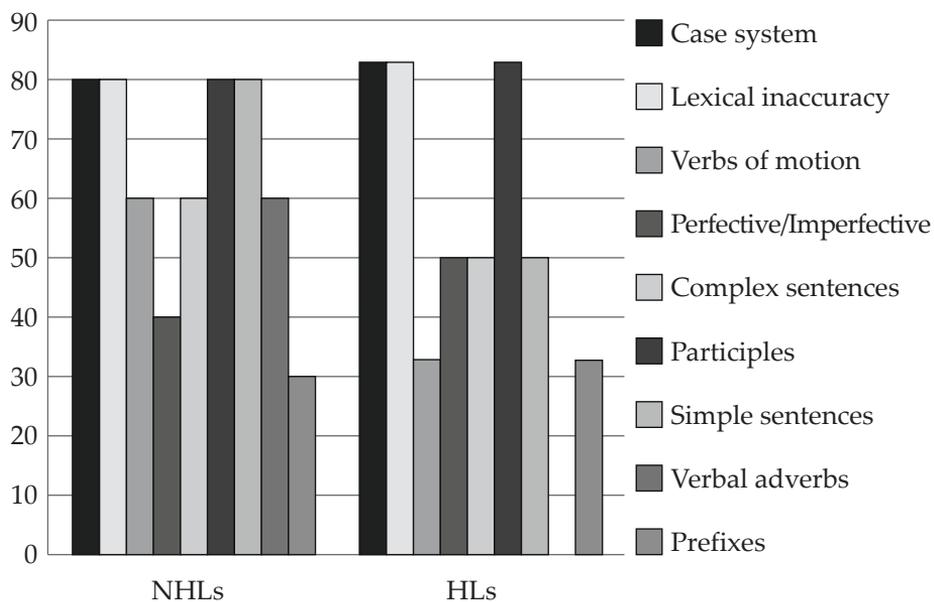
Table 2. Test results: TORFL 2 The comparison below shows areas of most difficulty for each group. NHL stands for non-heritage learners and HLs for heritage learners.

TORFL- 2 Examples	
L2 (Non Heritage) - 5	Heritage - 13
<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 80%:</b></p> <p>1. Case system:                      Вопреки ... ударили сильные морозы.</p> <p>a. <b>всех прогнозов</b>                      b. <i>всем прогнозам</i>                      c. <i>всеми прогнозами</i>                      d. <i>все прогнозы</i></p> <p>2. Lexical inaccuracy:                      Как хорошо, что я купил билеты на ... поезд!</p> <p>a. <i>быстрый</i>                      b. <i>срочный</i>                      c. <b>скоростной</b>                      d. <i>скорый</i></p>	<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 83%:</b></p> <p>1. Case system:                      Было интересно прочитать о взглядах учёных ... страны.</p> <p>a. <i>на экономическое развитие</i>                      b. <b>экономического развития</b>                      c. <i>экономическому развитию</i>                      d. <b>об экономическом развитии</b></p> <p>2. Lexical inaccuracy:                      За улучшение экологии выступает ... города.</p> <p>a. <i>общность</i>                      b. <i>общительность</i>                      c. <i>общественность</i>                      d. <b>общество</b></p>

<p>3. Participles: Сыну особенно нравится зелёный чай, <u>который привозят из Китая</u>.</p> <p>a. привозящий b. <i>привозимый</i> c. <b>привезённый</b> d. привозивший</p> <p>4. Simple sentences (“говорят-тип” sentences) : ... , используя только натуральные продукты.</p> <p>a. <b>Эти йогурты приготавливаются</b> b. Приготовление этих йогуртов c. <i>Эти йогурты приготавливают</i> d. Эти йогурты приготовлены</p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 60%:</b></p> <p>1. Complex sentences: Невозможно представить, ... Ольга ошиблась.</p> <p>a. как бы b. <b>если</b> c. <i>чтобы</i> d. как будто</p> <p>2. Verbs of motion: Завтра мы решили ... вещи на дачу.</p> <p>a. <b>переехать</b> b. <i>перевезти</i> c. внести d. перевести</p> <p>3. Verbal adverbs: Сейчас часто снимают фильмы, ... .</p> <p>a. <i>применяющие компьютерную технику</i> b. применяя компьютерную технику</p>	<p>3. Participles: Сыну особенно нравится зелёный чай, <u>который привозят из Китая</u>.</p> <p>a. <i>привозимый</i> b. привозящий c. привезённый d. <b>привозивший</b></p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 50%:</b></p> <p>1. Use of perfective or imperfective form of a verb: Финансирование этого проекта ... из года в год.</p> <p>a. <i>будет расти</i> b. <b>вырастет</b></p> <p>2. Simple sentences (subject-predicate agreement and “говорят-тип” sentences): ... , используя только натуральные продукты.</p> <p>a. <i>Эти йогурты приготавливают</i> b. <b>Эти йогурты приготовлены</b> c. Эти йогурты приготавливаются d. Приготовление этих йогуртов</p> <p>3. Complex sentences: Много воды утекло, ... мы расстались.</p> <p>a. в то время как b. <b>когда</b> c. пока d. <i>с тех пор как</i></p>
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<p>с. применяется компьютерная техника d. <b>при применении</b> компьютерной техники</p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 40%:</b> Use of perfective or imperfective form of a verb: Какой тяжёлый чемодан! Его невозможно ...!</p> <p>а. поднять b. поднимать</p> <p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 30%:</b> Prefixes: В нашей работе много недостатков, придётся её ... .</p> <p>а. <b>доделать</b> b. проделать c. <i>переделать</i> d. сделать</p>	<p><b>Categories of mistakes made by 33%:</b></p> <p>1. Verbs of motion: Завтра мы решили ... вещи на дачу. а. внести b. переехать c. <b>перевести</b> d. <i>перевезти</i></p> <p>2. Prefixes: В нашей работе много недостатков, придётся её ... .</p> <p>а. проделать b. сделать c. <b>доделать</b> d. <i>переделать</i></p>
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*Test results: TORFL-2*



### **Test Results and the Advanced/Superior Curriculum**

A recently completed study by NHLRC/ACTFL<sup>9</sup> (Swender, in preparation) analyzed discourse of Spanish and Russian HLLs (162 Spanish interviews and 132 Russian interviews) in order to inform the OPI tester training. The results show that for both language groups, talking about a current event was the most challenging task at the Advanced level, while sustaining functions was the most challenging at the Superior level. This was because interviewees lacked the ability to support opinion, deal with abstract topics, and hypothesize in cohesive and internally organized extended discourse. Only those who attended college in Russian-speaking or Spanish-speaking countries had that ability. Some results specific to Russian-speaking students are relevant to this paper. Specifically, when attempting to discuss a topic from an abstract perspective at the Superior level, half of the interviewees could not deal with topic, and two thirds initiated the task, but could not complete it. Another important result is that two-thirds used examples of personal experience in order to support an argument. Predictably, the study found that, even at Intermediate levels of oral proficiency, fluency and pronunciation could sound native-like.

The results of the study confirm what experience with teaching HLLs at higher levels of proficiency has already made clear: HLLs need training in high-level discourse in order to get to the Superior level. The study described above supports the reasoning behind the curriculum that the UCLA Russian Flagship program has been offering to both HLLs and L2 learners over the past five years. Our experience and the results of OPI tests given to our students determined that the program's focus needed to be on increasing students' ability to deal with abstract topics, and to hypothesize and engage in a more formal discourse. In the Flagship program, special attention is therefore paid to markers of academic/professional discourse, such as complex sentences, parenthetical expressions, and introductions and closings in a formal context. The year-long course covers education and work-related themes, economics and banking, geography, social issues, religions, art, health and environment, international affairs and the military.

In addition, Flagship students take two courses in Russian for Social and Cultural Studies. These are content-based courses that in

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<sup>9</sup> A study of HLLs' OPI results is a project funded by the National Heritage Language Resource Center, and carried out by ACTFL (E. Swender – PI) in 2009-2011.

the last four years have focused on Russian history in particular. The goal is for the students to not only gain knowledge of Russian history (they may already be familiar with it from courses taught in English), but also to understand topics that are frequently discussed by Russians. The first quarter-long course is dedicated to pre-Soviet history, and the second deals with the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. All upper-division Flagship courses integrate language, literature, history, and culture. There are frequent oral presentations and large amounts of written practice. Academic discourse is emphasized in all courses.

As an example of the work students perform at this level, we include here a transcript of an oral presentation. The student recorded herself during an exam. Focusing on the areas in which both HLLs and L2 learners need extensive training, students are expected to produce paragraph-length discourse and to use discourse openings and closings, as well as parenthetical expressions. We have bolded the opening and the closing as well as parenthetical expressions. Mistakes are bolded, and correct forms are in square brackets. Parenthetical expressions and conjunctions are in cursive.

#### 2010 (A.P. – HLL)

*Я хочу начать с того, что найти работу в Америке в данное время очень трудно, поскольку в стране происходит финансовый кризис. Благодаря агентств-ом [у ] по трудоустройству, возможно найти работу. Собственно говоря, американские работодатели ценят более всего опыт и высшее образование. Таким образом, работодатели ценят знание иностранных языков и умение работать на компьютере.*

*В общем, можно сказать, что мне не надо было заполнить анкету, но я предоставила три рекомендации, поскольку я работаю няней. На работе я ухаживаю за детьми. Я их забираю из школы, я им помогаю с уроками, и я готовлю обед, и кладу их спать. В заключение я хочу сказать, что даже если эта работа не имеет отношени-е [я] к мои [моей] специальности, в настоящее время, она меня удовлетворяет.*

Translation: I want to start by saying that it is not easy to find a job in America at present because the country is in the state of a

financial crisis. One can find a job through an employment agency. In fact, American employers value experience and a university degree more than anything. So employers value the knowledge of foreign languages and computer skills.

I work as a nanny, so I can say that I didn't have to fill out a questionnaire, but I submitted three letters of recommendation. My job is to take care of the children. I bring them home from school, help them do their homework, and I also make them dinner, and put them to bed. In conclusion, I want to mention that even though this work has nothing to do with my major, at this time in my life, I am pleased to have it.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Due to its small size, this is a pilot study. However, since few students reach advanced levels of proficiency in less commonly taught languages like Russian, we believe this study is an initial step toward research that will show whether HLLs and L2 students at the high levels of proficiency are able to work well together. We intend to add data as more test results become available.

### **Conclusions**

At the beginning levels of language instruction, HLLs and L2 students display diverse proficiencies: HLLs' speaking and listening comprehension is better than their L2 peers, while L2 learners have a more complete knowledge of the grammatical system. In addition, HLLs' knowledge of the language is not textbook-based, while L2 students typically depend on a limited textbook vocabulary. The disparity at lower levels is therefore marked, creating difficulties and leading to frustration for everyone concerned. However, while their linguistic profiles continue to differ (Swender, in preparation), once HLLs and L2s reach Intermediate-High/Advanced level of proficiency, the needs of both groups become very more alike. As has been shown, at higher levels of proficiency, they make similar morphological and syntactical mistakes, are similarly unaware of the intricacies of formal discourse, and require similar exposure to the topics that are typically explored at the Advanced/Superior levels. They therefore require similar instruction in order to move to higher levels of proficiency. This is confirmed by

the NHLRC/ACTFL study (Swender in preparation) referenced earlier in the paper.

We conclude therefore that, because of their comparable linguistic needs and profiles, at the Intermediate-High and higher levels of proficiency, heritage language speakers and traditional foreign language learners can be taught together in one classroom. Rather than creating the challenges for the instructor and the class that such placement creates at the lower levels, at a high level of proficiency, students tend to complement one another. At this level both HLLs and L2 learners can be regarded as a “national resource” (Brecht and Ingold 2002) as both groups are on their way to reaching professional level proficiency.

There are two steps that will strengthen this research: 1) broadening the study such that more students are compared and more languages are added; and 2) understanding how much time it could take a typical HLL to reach Intermediate-High or Advanced level of proficiency.

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## Teaching Compassion in the Russian Language and Literature Curriculum: An Essential Learning Outcome

BENJAMIN RIFKIN

One of Dr. Olga E. Kagan's most important contributions to the language education field was a reconceptualization of the perspective of the language performance of heritage speakers of Russian. In the past, heritage speakers' language was considered deficient in all the ways in which it diverged from Contemporary Standard Russian. Their lack of formal instruction in Russian or the interruption of their formal instruction due to their immigration from a Russophone country to North America was considered the source of numerous errors and anglicisms, which the Russian language curriculum was designed to eliminate. Teachers of Russian as a foreign language often viewed all heritage speakers as similar despite the fact that they had very different life stories and language profiles, as Dr. Kagan and colleagues ultimately proved in their research. Furthermore, teachers of Russian as a foreign language did not appreciate the richness of the speech of heritage speakers of Russian, all of the strengths they possessed in their language use by virtue of the fact that they used the language to communicate in their home environments. Dr. Kagan's groundbreaking work on the assessment of the language of heritage speakers of Russian and the development of instructional materials to facilitate the further development of the language skills of these individuals was a pedagogy born of compassion. And in that spirit, I share the following proposal to extend the pedagogy of compassion to be a cornerstone of the teaching of foreign languages and cultures, starting with the curriculum for Russian language, literature, and culture. To that end, I dedicate this article to the memory of our dear colleague, Dr. Olga E. Kagan.

The Liberal Education and America's Promise program (LEAP) of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, accessed July 29, 2019) identifies intercultural knowledge and global

learning as among the essential learning outcomes of a liberal arts education. Intercultural knowledge is defined as the ability to interpret “intercultural experience from the perspective of [one’s] own and more than one worldview” and the ability to “recognize the feelings of another group.” Global learning is defined as as helping students “engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one’s own . . . [and understanding] how one’s place in the world informs and limits one’s knowledge.” These outcomes are measured in two of the “VALUE Rubrics” (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education), as described by McConnell and Rhodes (2017).

Work on the question of intercultural understanding in higher education settings appears in the context of larger concerns about civility. Indeed, some observers have argued that compassion and empathy are in decline in the twenty-first century (e.g., Rosin 2019), and some have argued that this is particularly the case in the context of higher education (e.g., Dolby 2013). It is noteworthy that many scholars have studied intercultural competence, intercultural empathy, and intercultural understanding, including Bennett (1986, 1993, 1997), Byram (1997) , Deardorff (2006), Fantini (2010), Harvey (2017), Heyward (2002), Jackson (2015a, 2015b), Kealey (2015), Martin (2015), Papadopoulos et al. (2016), Uyaguari (2018), and Zhu (2011). Some of these scholars, such as Uyaguari and Zhu, have focused their attention on these constructs in the context of the foreign language and culture curriculum, and some, such as Heyward and Jackson, have focused on these constructs in the context of study abroad experiences or experiences working with international students in North America, but none of them has focused on these constructs in the context of the learning and teaching of Russian in particular.

I suggest that it is productive to operationalize the concept of intercultural competence as part of a larger construct of “intercultural performance,” with the understanding that “performance” is observable behavior. The Asia Society and Center for Global Education uses the term “global competence,” but operationalizes it with a framework of four areas for learner action, called “domains,” which speak to actual observable performance:

- 1) Investigate the world: demonstrate curiosity to learn about the world;
- 2) Recognize perspectives: understand that one has one’s own

particular perspective, which may not be shared by others;

- 3) Communicate ideas: communicate effectively, both verbally and non-verbally, with diverse audiences; and
- 4) Take action: make a difference in the world. (Asia Society and Center for Global Education 2018 a and 2018b)

Given these features of “intercultural performance,” I would argue that we can and should add to our definition of the term *compassion*. I argue that people show compassion when they do the following (from least to most challenging levels of performance):

- 1) Suspend culturally biased judgment in interpreting how individuals from diverse backgrounds meet their respective needs;
- 2) Demonstrate cultural self-awareness in the context of a multicultural world;
- 3) Exercise empathy for and take the perspective of individuals from diverse backgrounds;
- 4) Build cultural bridges to enhance intercultural understanding; and
- 5) Advocate for intercultural understanding among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

All these features of intercultural performance, summed up in the single-word construct “compassion,” are profoundly relevant to learning experiences throughout the liberal arts disciplines at the post-secondary level as well as in K–12 education more generally. The first question, then, is why instructors teaching in these disciplines should incorporate the teaching of compassion into courses and curricula, given our inherent time constraints and the ever-expanding volume of information we feel compelled to “cover.” In consideration of this essential question, I turn to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who wrote the following about education:

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals. . . . We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. (King 2019).

According to Dr. King, all of us in education should consider not only the substance or content of the disciplines we teach, but also the ethical perspectives of the application of that content to our lived experiences in the world. Indeed, the International Charter for Compassion states that: The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical, and spiritual traditions. . . . We call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality . . . and to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions, and cultures to cultivate an informed empathy . . . with all human beings . . . (Global Compassion Council 2009)

The thought leaders who wrote the Charter for Compassion advocate for the restoration of “compassion to the centre of morality,” emphasizing “informed empathy . . . with all human beings.”

Accordingly, I argue that we as college and university faculty in the liberal arts disciplines, in general, and the foreign language and culture disciplines in particular, ought to consider the exercise of learners’ “compassion muscles,” which I will define as the ability to respond with compassion to a new situation, as one of the learning objectives of our their courses and curricula. Indeed, professional organizations for many of the liberal arts disciplines identify something like “intercultural performance” or “compassion” as one of their desired learning outcomes. We certainly see this in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages ( 2015). The concepts of intercultural performance and compassion are embedded in the standards for culture and community, according to which learners are expected to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives and products of the cultures studied, so as to interact and collaborate with target-language speakers in their community and the globalized world. The Modern Language Association’s 2009 “Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature” states that students should “experience people and places that are different and distant from . . . [their] home communities” and should “apply moral reasoning to ethical problems,” emphasizing cross-cultural literacy (2). Indeed, Mar (2014) has reported on the relationship between the reading of prose fiction and the development of empathy; many faculty who teach Russian literature will agree that many texts in our canon support that instructional objective.

The teaching of compassion in the Russian language, literature, and culture curriculum is not merely a good idea ethically; nor is it simply a matter of lofty aspirations reflected in the documents of scholarly organizations. Indeed, the teaching of compassion is worthy as an activity reflective of the true purpose of a liberal arts education, to wit, the development of critical thinking skills and creative problem solving as applied to a broad range of complex problems, as described in the Essential Learning Outcomes of the Liberal Education and America's Promise program. When Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956), especially as revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2014), is considered as a map of thinking skills taught in educational contexts, the performance of acts of compassion is located at the highest levels of thinking because, in order to perform successfully in this context, students must understand their own biases, analyze a complex situation, and synthesize or create an appropriate response on the basis of that analysis.

Given that it is worthwhile to teach compassion in the Russian language, literature, and culture curriculum, the next question is how to do it. One of the problems of teaching such a complex matter is that there seems to be no inherent hierarchy of knowledge (by contrast, it is generally understood that one must learn algebra before tackling trigonometry and that one must master the Cyrillic alphabet before reading Tolstoy in the original). Another problem lies in the fact that it is difficult to measure the growth in our students' hearts or souls: even an X-ray will not quantify the changes we seek to promote in our students.

We must start, nonetheless, with the premise that if we are to teach compassion as relevant to our own discipline and if our students are to acquire it, we must develop and implement appropriate learning tasks in our curricula. Furthermore, at least some of these tasks must be graded so as to incentivize student engagement with the learning process. To conduct compassion-focused activities from time to time in the classroom without these activities contributing to a course grade would communicate to the students that the activities are, in fact, worthless. The students must understand that these learning tasks are worth something. Furthermore, these tasks must be regularly assigned so that the students have repeated opportunities to practice and enhance their skills.

The compassion tasks themselves should require students to respond to situations or scenarios, still or moving images (e.g., photographs or video-recorded commercial messages, excerpts from television broadcasts or films, or full television broadcasts or films), or audio recordings (e.g., radio or podcast). Learners could share initial responses, perhaps informed, at first, only by their monocultural framework. They can then review additional background information about the relevant culture, first considering how they might want to be treated were they to be strangers in or visitors to the given culture and ultimately trying to imagine how representatives of an ethnic, racial, sexual, or religious minority or foreigners among them might wish to be considered. Discussions, presentations, and writing projects can start with a comparison of stereotypical understandings of individuals from a particular group or culture (e.g., “some people believe that Americans are all racist cowboys” or “some people believe that all Russians are spies or mobsters”) with more nuanced understandings of intersectional identities. Activities might be conducted with initial individual reflection, small group discussion, and then wider class discussion, culminating in team projects that might include interviews with individuals from within or beyond the campus community.

Ultimately, students can be asked to write essays, create and deliver oral presentations, or create multimedia projects about how what they have learned changes the way they see the world, the discipline, their communities, or themselves with greater intercultural understanding; alternatively, they could be asked to write op-ed essays for a campus, local, or regional newspaper, create a public service announcement, run a talk-show panel discussion for a student media organization, or create a study guide examining an intercultural conflict for first-year students to better understand the intercultural context of their new academic home. Students could be asked to rewrite a section of their textbook, a Wikipedia entry, or another text they were assigned to read, enhancing its intercultural analysis or its inclusiveness and in this way contributing to their discipline from a perspective of compassion. All of these suggested learning tasks, which engage students in perspective taking and empathy, can be framed with expectations for students to connect their work product with the language, literature, and culture curriculum of the given course.

When we think about graded tasks in the language curriculum, we tend to think about vocabulary and grammar quizzes, listening and reading comprehension quizzes, chapter tests, oral exams and presentations, and compositions. Perhaps we also think of grades for class participation or participation in group cultural projects presented in English at lower levels of Russian language study or in Russian at higher levels. In order to help students exercise their compassion muscles in the Russian language classroom, they could also be asked to analyze intercultural conflict scenarios on their chapter tests, in English at lower levels or in Russian at higher levels, as part of their course grade. In these tests, students could be asked to identify aspects of an interaction in which an individual is disrespected—perhaps due to a lack of understanding of cultural differences—and propose alternative behaviors that would be respectful. Students could be asked to compare these intercultural interactions with interactions in their own communities and, at higher proficiency levels, describe how they would want to be treated or how they would want others to be treated in such situations. Students could also be asked to create a Russian-speaking avatar on a social media platform and connect with Russian speakers in that virtual space, asking and answering questions and sharing with them, demonstrating that they can understand the cultural perspective of the native Russian speakers; they could then print out the transcript of these interactions and submit it together with an intercultural analysis. Students could also be asked to interact with visiting Russians or with students from Russia on the campus and then write a reflection on cultural differences they observed in their interactions and how they managed those differences with empathy and compassion.

In the literature or film classroom, students could be asked to write about a character in a work they studied and why they do or do not feel compassion for that character, and how that character's experiences and perspectives are similar to or different from the experiences and perspectives of a similarly aged individual in North America, whether Tatiana in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, D-503 in Zamiatin's *We*, Bezdomnyi in Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, Rita in *Little Vera* (Vasilii Pichul, 1988), or Dima in *The Fool* (Yurii Bykov, 2014). They might write reflection papers on how they would have responded differently in a given situation represented in the literary or filmic text

or how they might have liked others to respond to them in a similar situation. Alternatively, they could write reflections on how they might coach Americans or Russians to engage in a difficult intercultural conversations and conclude with how negotiating intercultural differences is important for a deeper understanding of Russian culture. Russian literature and film are replete with situations and characters about whom students will find it easy to write, such as Akakii Akakievich main character from Gogol's "The Overcoat", whose plaintive cry—"I am your brother!"—is perhaps the clarion call of compassion in Russian literary culture. Learning tasks could include analyses of the behaviors of fictional characters or the nature of situations in which those characters find themselves in the short stories, novels, or films the students have read or viewed for class, comparing the characters and situations from the Russian texts to real-life situations students have experienced in their own communities. Reflecting on situations in which individuals demonstrate a lack of compassion and proposing alternative, compassionate behaviors could help students imagine how they might respond to situations in which they witness a lack of compassion. While it remains to be seen whether the exercise of compassion in one context (e.g., writing about a fictional character) can be transferred to the exercise of compassion in another context (e.g., responding to a live intercultural conflict in the community), one can hope that the practice of the compassionate response in the former context might enhance the effectiveness of a compassionate response in the latter.

In a culture class focusing, for example, on Russian architecture, iconography, music, or painting, students could be asked to connect the images of Russian culture in their historical context to the spiritual and emotional needs of the people of Russian communities and consider how aspects of the given works compare to analogous aspects in the same art form in communities in other cultures. Rather than dismissing cupolas as an exotic manifestation of a distant culture, students could be asked to compare this architectural feature and its place in Russian spiritual culture with the expressions of spirituality in American churches, synagogues, and mosques. Their analyses could be executed in class discussions, in a community-engaged learning project in which they interview native speakers, in papers, or in skits or public service announcements. Alternatively, students could be asked to draft a statement in defense of

plans to build a Russian Orthodox Church in a neighborhood where the residents are opposed to a foreign-looking structure with cupolas and consider how that discussion might be similar or different in the context of a proposal to build a mosque with a minaret.

As Bennett (1986, 1993) argues, success in learning a new skill is most often observed when the skill is taught developmentally, in accordance with the developmental stages suggested by both Bloom's (1956) taxonomy and Anderson and Krathwohl's (2014) revision of the taxonomy, with the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) "Interculturality Can-Do Statements" (2015), and with Griffith et al.'s (2016) "approach-analyze-act" framework. In other words, the integration of compassion in the curriculum is developmentally sequenced with opportunities to recognize situations, identify appropriate and compassionate responses in rehearsed situations, practice responding in rehearsed situations, and develop a deeper understanding of the abstract features of intercultural conflicts that beg for compassion and perspective-taking. For instance, students in a Russian language or culture class could be asked to recognize or identify a situation in which there is an intercultural conflict between Russian speakers and American-born speakers of English. Next, they could be asked to identify the different perspectives of individuals participating in the intercultural conflict. This might include, for instance, brainstorming possible motivations for the participants in the given intercultural conflict while practicing suspension of judgment and tolerance of ambiguity. At the next stage, learners could be asked to exercise their compassion muscles by taking up those perspectives, imagining themselves "in the other's shoes," so to speak, and presenting and advocating for the perspective of the "other" in a particular situation. For instance, they could role-play a situation in which a Russian speaker with limited English is trying to accomplish a transaction in English at a bank, post office, or grocery store in the United States. At first, those tasks could be designed within areas of interest for the given students, but gradually the tasks could extend to broader and broader areas at increasingly greater distance from the students' area of interest. At the next, higher level of performance, learners could be asked to describe an intercultural conflict or misunderstanding fully, but concretely,

explaining how each participant in the conflict approaches the particular situation from his or her own perspective.

We can consider implementing relevant tasks at higher levels in the learning taxonomy, as well. For instance, at a very high level, learners could be asked to analyze an intercultural conflict not merely from the concrete context of the given conflict or incident, but from a more abstract perspective, generalizing from the specific case to an entire category of such incidents. Furthermore, learners at this level could practice debunking stereotypes and hypothesizing how intercultural misunderstandings or conflicts could be avoided. At the highest level, learners could be assigned project-based learning tasks in which they take ownership of a project with real-life application, including, for example, interviews with individuals who live in a community beyond the campus about a problem they are experiencing in their neighborhood (for example, an oral history interview with immigrants from the former Soviet Union). This developmental approach to the teaching of compassion in the language and culture curriculum ultimately helps train students to participate spontaneously and successfully in authentic, unrehearsed settings in which intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts occur.

Instructors should schedule these tasks to occur at regular intervals throughout the course (and curriculum) to promote good learning outcomes in compassion-focused learning tasks, thus attaining the positive results associated with distributed practice. Because the topics around which intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts occur are often sensitive in nature, in that they may challenge students' deeply held but unexamined beliefs and assumptions, instructors should consider asking students to reflect individually on the intercultural conflict scenarios before asking them to work in pairs or groups. Students can be asked to work in pairs or groups to analyze conflict situations and create responses in speech, writing, or in a technology-mediated presentation. After they have had a chance to work in groups, they could be asked once again to work individually, producing individual responses (in speech, writing, or technology-mediated performance) demonstrating the exercise of compassion. These individual responses can be assessed in accordance with a rubric, such as the VALUE rubrics on intercultural knowledge or global competence, the global competence rubrics of the Asia Society, rubrics proposed by Deardorff (2006) or Harvey (2017), or

by a rubric the instructors create themselves. By scheduling several such tasks throughout each semester, instructors can hope to see students transition from states of denial, defense, and minimization to states of acceptance, adaptation, and integration, as suggested by Bennett (1986, 1993).

Instructors assessing student performance in the exercise of compassion could select one of the developmental rubrics described above (e.g., Asia Society, Association of American Colleges and Universities, National Council of State Supervisors for Languages-American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Harvey, or Deardorff) or adapt one or more of them for use with the tasks they have developed for their classroom. The assessment process could include a self-reflection based on student self-assessment with the rubric chosen or developed by the instructor, as well as a peer-assessment using the same rubric. By conducting compassion-based exercises periodically throughout the semester or the year and engaging students in the process of self-assessment, instructors will help focus students' attention on the value of growing in this critically important area.

Shekhtman et al. (2002) proposed a strategy for the teaching of language at the highest levels of instruction: "the Island Theory," which suggests that teachers can require students to memorize abstract discourses with complex language on rehearsed topics in order to have models of performance. Students with these "islands of performance" at higher levels of language production would use these models to create new, unrehearsed performances at similarly high levels. So, too, can faculty teaching compassion not only in language but also in literature or culture courses help students develop and enhance their sense of compassion by practicing these skills in rehearsed topics to create models of performance the students can subsequently use in unrehearsed topics.

When we include the teaching of compassion in our curriculum, we demonstrate to our students that we value compassion and show them that we expect them to grow into compassionate adults and citizens. In keeping with Dr. King's formulation of the true value of education, I suggest, in conclusion, that the best possible education in Russian language, literature, and culture is one in which students are asked to develop and hone their intercultural performance skills, or, in other words, their sense of compassion.

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## **Fields of the Mind: An Integral Learning Styles Component of the E&L Cognitive Styles Construct**

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### **1. Background**

The E&L Cognitive Styles Construct was developed in 1997<sup>10</sup> and copyrighted in 2002 by Ehrman, director of the Research, Evaluation, and Development Division at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), and Leaver, then an associate at the National Foreign Language Center. It was developed in order to organize the proliferation of validated cognitive styles into a single instrument with ten easy-to-understand subscales specifically for the field of foreign or second language (L2) learning and teaching (Leaver 1997, 2000;<sup>11</sup> Ehrman and Leaver 2002). The first two subscales, which relate to *FIELDS OF THE MIND*, however, have often created confusion or misunderstanding among users. This article clarifies these dimensions through deconstruction of the category of *FIELD INDEPENDENCE/FIELD DEPENDENCE* (henceforth *FIELD [IN]DEPENDENCE*), together with an examination and elucidation of the intrinsically related and intersecting category of *FIELD SENSITIVITY/FIELD INSENSITIVITY* (henceforth *FIELD [IN]SENSITIVITY*).

Fields of the mind—the individual tendency toward field dependence, field independence, field sensitivity or field insensitivity—have been among the most researched cognitive styles.<sup>12</sup> They have

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<sup>10</sup> The term E&L, standing for Ehrman and Leaver, was meant as a placeholder, not a formal name for the construct. Before a name could be assigned, however, colleagues began using the construct, referring to it as the E&L, and a new name was never proposed. In fact, while it has always been clear that E&L stands for Ehrman and Leaver, the construct has never been referred to by the authors' names nor copyrighted other than as E&L.

<sup>11</sup> Leaver (1997) is the first mention of the ectenic and synoptic overarching categories in print.

<sup>12</sup> The fields of the mind subscales of the E&L Cognitive Styles Construct are a fitting topic for this memorial volume because of Dr. Olga Kagan's abiding fascination with learning styles. They served as an essential part of her dissertation, which saw print in the form of the teaching methods book, *Учимся учить* (Akishina and Kagan 2002).

spawned an extensive literature in cognitive psychology—the discipline in which they originated—as well as in numerous other disciplines. Application of fields to L2 learning was referenced in the applied literature no later than 1978 (e.g., Birchbickler and Omaggio 1978) and continues to be the topic of both applied and theoretical articles.

Nevertheless, fields of the mind continue to be poorly understood and therefore poorly exploited in L2 learning. There is as yet no consensus on the definition and theoretical framework of the field concepts vis-à-vis L2 learning or on parameters and guidelines for their effective exploitation, and there is little to suggest that their exploitation is being broadly promoted and tracked.

There are a number of interdependent reasons for this state of affairs. First, the literature related to fields in L2 learning has proceeded at a modest pace (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015). Second, many L2 specialists are unfamiliar with the basic concepts on which the fields depend (including the definition of a field), as these emanate from the research experience of an external discipline—cognitive psychology—with which most L2-learning specialists share little common frame of reference.

A critical weakness in the particular field construct which has been predominant in the literature until the present has tended, furthermore, to undermine understanding of the basic concepts on the part of those who critically examine them. The problem derives from the conflation of two aspects of cognition: perception (specifically, locus of COGNITIVE CONTROL in perception) and process (specifically, COGNITIVE MANIPULATION). This approach has led to the incorrect view of field (in)dependence as a bipolar, equipollent category, each pole of which has its own positive definition.

This conflation of perception and process leads to incorrect predictions and untenable models that lend themselves to justifiable criticism. The problem, however, is not in the viability of the underlying insights concerning fields, but rather in their articulation.

Uncertainty in a number of other respects has also tended to undermine confidence in the field construct(s). One of these respects is uncertainty as to the status of fields as a matter of style versus ability, intelligence, and personality. This in turn creates further uncertainty as to the scope of effective implementation and its purpose. Finally, there has been a paucity of practically oriented literature that would demonstrate

the many ways in which awareness of fields can be effectively exploited to enhance the L2-learning process and experience.

The absence of definitive solutions to these issues has inevitably had an impact on the understanding and exploitation of fields in the service of L2 learning. Enthusiasm has been further damped by the rise of a movement that explicitly denies the relevance of fields or, more generally, any cognitive style construct to L2 learning or, indeed, any educational program. Some researchers appear inclined to oppose the concept of learner individuality on bases other than “abilities and prior knowledge” (Willingham, Hughes, and Dobolyi 2015, 269).

A further contributing factor has been the absence of follow-up to earlier crucial contributions aimed at resolving the above issues. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), in particular, note that the E&L (Leaver 1997; Ehrman and Leaver 2002),<sup>13</sup> which had shown considerable promise when first described, had not been widely used subsequently, in part because of the limited availability of the instrument.<sup>14</sup>

The present article seeks to ameliorate the current state of affairs in the following manner. Section 2 provides diachronic context by surveying the origin and development of the field concepts. Within this section, we define the concept of “fields” as it relates to field (in)dependence and (in)sensitivity. Section 3 provides synchronic context for understanding fields through an introduction to the E&L, of which fields are an integral component. Section 4 contains a focused discussion of fields within the context of the E&L. Section 5 includes a brief response to several critiques of the E&L’s approach to fields. Finally, Section 6 introduces readers to the range and manners of effective exploitation of fields for L2 learning. In the context of a journal article, this section will necessarily be limited to the identification of basic categories and a limited number of examples. Full exemplification of the practical potential for exploitation of the field concepts must await a book-length exposition (Corin and Leaver 2019).

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<sup>13</sup> The E&L Cognitive Styles Construct Questionnaire V. 3 and Self-Scoring Grid are available at <https://sites.google.com/view/fom-supplement/home>, see scannable QR code in the Appendix.

<sup>14</sup> This was due to the severe limitations on publishing by both of the authors of the E&L, due to their positions at US government institutions during subsequent years. Nevertheless, the E&L was validated at the FSI and widely deployed with thousands of students enrolled in US government language programs from 2002 to the present day.

## 2. Diachronic context

### 2.1. *Origin of the field concepts*

The field (in)dependence construct originated during the 1940s as an attempt by cognitive psychologist Herman Witkin and his collaborators to test competing hypotheses concerning the perceptual basis by which people determine upright (i.e., vertical to the ground) orientation of objects.<sup>15</sup> One hypothesis held that perception of the upright is determined primarily on the basis of internal (vestibular or gravitational) cues. According to the other hypothesis, upright orientation is determined primarily on the basis of visual cues from the surrounding VISUAL FIELD (i.e., the environment visible to the subject).

Through experimentation, Witkin and his collaborators established a more nuanced result. For one thing, they found variation among individuals along a continuum between polar opposite manners (or levels) of performance. These differences, moreover, were consistent for a given individual over a variety of tests and relatively stable for that individual over time (Asch and Witkin 1948a, 1948b; Witkin 1949). They determined this by placing subjects in an experimental setting in which they viewed a tilted visual frame or “field” (a three-dimensional room or a two-dimensional rectangular frame that was objectively tilted out of vertical orientation in relation to the ground). They then asked subjects to orient an object (e.g., a straight rod) into a position objectively vertical to the ground while viewing the tilted visual field. In such a situation, almost all subjects oriented the rod at a tilt to the ground under the influence of the visual field. These persons came to be known as “field dependent” (i.e., dependent on the visual field for determining upright orientation). A smaller number of subjects based their determinations on internal (vestibular or gravitational) cues. These subjects oriented the rod or other object at much less of a tilt, in some cases close to true upright orientation. These persons came to be known as field independent—that is, independent (relatively independent would be more accurate) of the visual field in determining upright orientation.

Even during their early work, Witkin and his collaborators had asked themselves whether the ability to act independently of the visual field in determining upright orientation might arise out of a broader

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<sup>15</sup> A brief and highly readable summary of the development through Witkin’s death in 1979 is presented by Goodenough (1986).

ability to deal with any given field analytically (that is, to perceive a part of a field independently of its surroundings; Witkin 1949). Field thus came to be interpreted more broadly, as the environment or context in which some other action or situation occurred.

## ***2.2. Conceptual expansion and conflation***

What all aspects of field independence had in common was the ability to separate out relevant components of some environment (field) and manipulate them independently of one another. Field-dependent persons, in contrast, perceived and acted upon the environment (field) as an undivided entity. It was in this way that a conflation of perception (cognitive control) and process (cognitive manipulation) came to characterize the definition and interpretation of field independence.

Parallel to the positive definitions of field independence vis-à-vis field dependence cited above, it was noted that this opposition also related somehow to personality or social behavior. In this latter area, field dependence was correlated with its own set of positively defined and, in many respects, beneficial characteristics that balanced against the apparent abilities associated with field independence.<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking, “field-dependent people tended to have an interpersonal orientation and field-independent people an impersonal orientation,” deriving from a tendency to rely primarily on external referents or on the self in psychological functioning (Witkin, Goodenough, and Oltman 1979, 1131).

The conflation of perception with process, together with the identification of positively defined characteristics of field dependence that were complementary to those associated with field independence, thus reinforced the view of field (in)dependence as an equipollent, bipolar stylistic continuum.

## ***2.3. Style versus ability***

Researchers’ insistence on field (in)dependence as a style rather than ability was strengthened by demonstrating the malleability of the styles—the view that training can help people with one style to develop certain strategies associated with the other (e.g., Witkin, Goodenough, and

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<sup>16</sup> See Asch and Witkin (1948a, 1948b) and Witkin (1949). Witkin and Goodenough (1977) provided an extensive literature review on field dependence and interpersonal behavior.

Oltman 1979). This view was further buttressed by establishing that field (in)dependence was closely correlated with cultural and socio-economic factors reflecting divergent patterns of socialization in early childhood (Witkin, Goodenough, and Oltman 1979).

This development led to a paradox. On the one hand, field (in)dependence was determined through tests of ability (to determine upright orientation or to disembed simple shapes from within more intricate surrounding patterns in the Embedded Figures Test). On the other hand, a range of other factors led researchers to see field (in)dependence as the two poles of a continuum of cognitive processing style, rather than of ability. This dichotomy of view has never been fully resolved, and it now appears that elements of style and ability may both be involved (Ehrman 1996).

Despite the efforts of researchers to paint a value-neutral picture of field (in)dependence, there appears to have been a broad popular understanding of field independence as a desirable characteristic correlated with greater achievement. The available tests for field independence had, after all, been designed as tests of ability.

#### *2.4. L2 learning applications*

The view of field independence as an ability (or at least as a skill) correlated with higher learning achievement appears to have carried over into early applications to L2 learning (Birchbickler and Omaggio 1978; Hansen and Stansfield 1981, 1982), with some researchers concluding that field independent learners exhibited higher learning achievement (Chapelle & Roberts 1986) which reflected the kinds of strategies and success evinced by studies on “the good language learner.”<sup>17</sup> Field dependence, in contrast, was viewed at least implicitly as a limiting factor for which remedial techniques might be applied.<sup>18</sup>

Hansen and Stansfield, however, suggested that research indicating greater L2 learning achievement by field-independent students might be skewed by the very design of curricula. In so doing, they were reflecting an insight enunciated earlier by Ramirez, Herold, and Castañeda

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<sup>17</sup> Some of the better-known work on “the good language learner” was published at about this time by Stevick (1990); Rubin and Thompson (1994); and Naiman, Fröhlich, and Stern (1996)

<sup>18</sup> This is indicated, for example, by the references to field dependence in Birchbickler and Omaggio (1978, 337–38).

(1974) and Witkin, Moore, Goodenough and Cox (1977) in regard to general education. “Since the social and interpersonal communicative abilities linked to field dependence do not seem helpful, perhaps the latter are not being demanded in any important way in the classroom. That is, linguistic acuity and manipulative skill may still be given more significance in texts, class activities, and assessments than social and interpersonal communicative competence” (Hansen and Stansfield 1982, 272). Certainly, the grammar-translation methods present in nearly all classrooms of the 1970s and early 1980s<sup>19</sup>, in which these studies were done, with their presentation of decontextualized grammar and expectation for memorization of decontextualized vocabulary, would tend to privilege field-independent learners.

Conversely, the emerging concepts of COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (Savignon 1972), alternatively referred to as communicative approaches, would theoretically privilege learners able to make use of the field, not those who easily extracted information from it. The new paradigm thus provided impetus for the de-conflation of the perception (cognitive control) and process (cognitive manipulation) aspects of cognition, which led to recognition of the distinct category of field sensitivity.

It was within this context that Ehrman (1996) overtly challenged the bipolar model of field (in)dependence. Ehrman noted that the term “field dependent” in existing literature had two definitions. It could refer either to the absence of field independence or to the presence of the positively defined attributes of field dependence. Ehrman termed the latter FIELD SENSITIVITY (a term she borrowed from Ramirez and Castañeda [1974])<sup>20</sup> and treated it as an independent category in which field sensitivity was opposed to lack of field sensitivity (now infelicitously termed FIELD INSENSITIVITY). This opened up the possibility of four combinations of high or low field independence with high or low field sensitivity, which could be illustrated by means of a chart divided into four quadrants (see Figure 1).

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<sup>19</sup> Though some leading educators (e.g., Paulston et al. 1975; Savignon 1972) were beginning at this time to experiment with communicative approaches, neither the wealth of literature nor the subsequent applications fully appeared until the 1980s (e.g., Canale and Swain 1980; Littlewood 1981; Savignon 1983), with the preponderance of communicative textbooks and programs surfacing in the mid-1980s through the current day.

<sup>20</sup> One group of researchers had renamed field dependence “field sensitivity” (see also Ramirez, Herold, and Castañeda 1974), an innovation that was not broadly accepted at the time.

Figure 1. A quadrangular typology of field independence and field sensitivity (adapted from Ehrman et al. 2003).

		Field Sensitivity	
		High	Low
Field Independence	High	Type 1 Most flexible	Type 2 Spotting what is important (as a matter of perception)
	Low	Type 3 Making use of the whole situation (as a matter of process)	Type 4 Least flexible

In this way, Ehrman freed the categories of field independence and field sensitivity from one another, redefining each as a distinct category. A person might thus simultaneously and independently possess both field independence and field sensitivity (i.e., what had previously been viewed as the positively defined attributes of field dependence). By the same token, a person might simultaneously lack both field independence and field sensitivity. This eliminated the formal paradox of the earlier bipolar equipollent model, within which presence to some extent of the positive attributes of field independence implied in principle (not merely as a tendency) absence to the same extent of the positive attributes of field dependence (i.e., field sensitivity). The new approach left open the possibility for people to exhibit primarily field independent or field sensitive styles but removed the formal straightjacket that had made it impossible even to conceive of the simultaneous presence or absence of both sets of positive characteristics.

Ehrman further acknowledged that field independence and field sensitivity might reflect both ability and preference, with the two probably in a “reciprocal relationship” (1996, 87). “Field independence as an ability probably leads to preference for learning in field independent ways (focused attention and analysis of material). Field sensitivity is similar . . .” (88).

Applying the dimensions of cognitive control and cognitive manipulation to L2 acquisition has required a more complex interpretation

of what one considers a field than domains (mathematics, science, biology, general studies<sup>21</sup>) used in earlier cognitive fields research because the cognitive fields in L2 learning occur within a verbal environment, not a physical one. For that reason, both perception (cognitive control) and process (cognitive manipulation) contribute to successful communication; considering only one or the other in defining the learning tendencies of L2 learners leads to an overly simplistic understanding of the role of the cognitive fields in L2 learning.

In regard to perception, the orientation in space associated with non-language domains is reflected in L2 learning as orientation within a text. Field independence (i.e., the preferred use of inner cognitive code) within a verbal text presents itself as the learner bringing inner control to the perception of the meaning of a text. This may be reflected as a tendency to focus on morphemes, syntax, phonetic cues, key lexical items, and other details separate from the gist or whole text. Field dependence presents itself as external control, with the text itself seen as a whole, such that grammar is not necessarily pulled out of lexical phraseology.

Limiting the definition of cognitive field to field (in)dependence (a matter of perception) would not account for how readers or speakers handle the complexity of verbal texts in communication. Texts, either for receptive or for productive purposes, must be manipulated. Field (in)sensitivity, which relates to cognitive manipulation of the verbal environment, describes a process critical to L2 learning and use. A field-sensitive learner would make use of the field (i.e., the environment as a whole) in learning, for example by figuring out lexical meaning from context and determining the gist from text structure or even background knowledge. Field-insensitive learners would not be comfortable or skilled in doing this, limiting themselves to manipulating particular details extracted from the field (and, in L2 learning, often missing the point of the text).

The interaction of field (in)dependence and field (in)sensitivity provides the more complex interpretation of “field” required to describe the working of the cognitive fields for L2 acquisition. Cognitive control and cognitive manipulation interact within each learner, who evinces

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<sup>21</sup> Other domains typically used in non-language research have included social and cultural applications. While, theoretically, these domains could be of interest to L2 instructors, the authors have chosen not to include them in this article due to limitations of space.

a specific preference for cognitive control and a specific preference for cognitive manipulation. Thus, one learner can be field independent and field sensitive, whereas a second can be field independent and field insensitive, a third field dependent and field sensitive, and a fourth field dependent and field insensitive. All four types occur naturally in the L2-learning population though some are more common than others. Each type has significance for the kinds of instruction that produce the most effective and efficient results and enjoyable learning experience.

### **3. The E&L Cognitive Styles Construct**

Between 1992 and 1996, Ehrman and Leaver, after more than a decade of exploring and using a variety of learning style instruments, including those testing for field (in)dependence, with literally thousands of students, decided to simplify this area of research and application. At the same time, they hoped to expand understanding of some of the styles they felt had been theoretically skewed. Among the latter was the concept of field independence and field dependence (Ehrman 1996; Leaver 1997).<sup>22</sup>

The E&L (Ehrman and Leaver 2002), which emerged from this effort, made several contributions to the field:

- (6) overarching categories that simplified and organized the ever-increasing number of cognitive styles identified by various researchers;
- (7) deconflation and splitting of the global-analytic juxtaposition, which did not seem to work for all learners (particularly those both global and analytic in orientation), by providing a quadrant approach to related styles: global versus local and synthetic versus analytic;<sup>23</sup> and
- (8) an expanded and deconflated conception of field (in)dependence and field (in)sensitivity as a quadrant system, adding a language-oriented description of each of the quadrants and a mechanism for

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<sup>22</sup> Development of the E&L also drew upon a general learning styles instrument, the American Global Studies Institute (AGSI) Learning Styles Instrument, which contained many of the same cognitive styles categories. The AGSI Learning Styles Instrument was developed by Leaver and Leaver in the early 1990s in Russian, was then consolidated and published in English in 1996, and later, nearly parallel with the formal and separate appearance of the E&L (Ehrman and Leaver 2002), was revised by Echo Leaver (2000) as the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) Learning Styles Assessment Tool. It was available for a several years thereafter at [www.actr.org/russnet/ALSAT/html](http://www.actr.org/russnet/ALSAT/html).

<sup>23</sup> For further discussion, see Corin and Leaver 2019.

determining L2 learners' preferences, as distinct from other areas of application (e.g., mathematics or orientation in physical space).

### *3.1. Overarching categories*

The need for a framework to simplify the existing plethora of cognitive style constructs became clear to Ehrman and Leaver as they tried to apply the various constructs (71 as of 2004; Zhang, Sternberg, and Rayner 2012) to their student bodies and research efforts. The use of any one model (lumpers vs. splitters,<sup>24</sup> for example, or the Kolb model<sup>25</sup>) limited the possibility for the model to explain the diversity in any given set of students well enough to allow successful adaptation of instruction to presented learning styles. Yet, the full range of possibilities remained too many to juggle, and selection from within that range could result in subjective, unreliable, and likely invalid generalizations.

To frame their response, Ehrman and Leaver surveyed the full body of theoretical and applied literature devoted to cognitive style constructs present at the time (and essentially to this day). Informed by this comprehensive aggregation of style information, they hypothesized that all validated learning style continua, each with its own opposing poles of style, might be seen as instantiations of an overarching category that they called *ECTENIC* versus *SYNOPTIC*. In the E&L, *SYNOPSIS* represents a holistic or condensing approach to perceiving and processing information. *ECTASIS*, the Greek antonym of synopsis, refers to a stretching out, devolving, or unraveling of information. In essence, "an ectenic activity represents conscious control of what a synoptic activity accomplishes preconsciously" (Ehrman 2001–2005, 51).

### *3.2. Subscales and cognitive style preference profiles*

Based on an analysis of evidence presented in the voluminous psychological research literature, a detailed comparison of the wide

<sup>24</sup> Lumpers and splitters, a category proposed by Messic (1976), is incorporated into the E&L, along with similar models, as levelers (synoptic learners) and sharpeners (ectenic learners); the latter terminology was first introduced in the 1950s.

<sup>25</sup> The Kolb model (Kolb 1976), later the Kolb Learning Style Inventory Version 4.0 (2011, Kolb and Kolb 2013), combined two continua to create a model with four quadrants: active experimentation, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and concrete experience. The E&L reflects these two sets of styles as a subordinate quadrant as well as two continua: reflective (ectenic) and impulsive (synoptic) learning and concrete (ectenic) and abstract (synoptic) learning. The continua were not unique to Kolb.

variety of models available at the time, and, to some extent, speculation informed by personally conducted research and case studies at US government language institutions spanning two decades and more than 10,000 students, Ehrman and Leaver chose to conceptualize both the overarching category and its subscales (ten in number, including the two fields of mind scales) as continua rather than as simple toggles. That is to say, both aspects (polar values) of each subscale are generally present in all learners, simply to a greater or lesser extent. Any given learner will be more ectenic or more synoptic, but any given ectenic learner is also likely to exhibit at least some weak synoptic traits and vice versa. Thus, for example, field independence would be seen as the far end of the continuum with field dependence being an increasingly greater absence of field independence as one moves toward the opposite end of the continuum, and the same would be true of field sensitivity versus insensitivity.<sup>26</sup> The preference profiles for all of the subscales, taken together, represent learners' overall LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCE PROFILE, which can extend from ectasis (ectenic learning) to synopsis (synoptic learning) with an essentially infinite variety of possible individual profiles for the various subscales.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. Fields of the mind subscales of the E&L**

As explained above, Ehrman and Leaver realized that the prevalent (especially prior to Ehrman 1996) definitions of field (in)dependence conflated multiple traits: the fields of cognitive control (field [in]dependence) and fields of cognitive manipulation (field [in]sensitivity).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, field (in)dependence and field (in)sensitivity represented continua rather than toggles. Ehrman and Leaver were also confronted with two additional questions:

- (1) Do the fields of cognitive control and cognitive manipulation fit

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<sup>26</sup> In fact, the prevalent view of field independence versus field dependence from the outset of research (cf. Asch and Witkin 1948a, 1948b) had been that it is a continuum.

<sup>27</sup> The ten E&L subscales are (1) field sensitive–field insensitive, (2) field independent–field dependent, (3) leveling–sharpening, (4) global–local, (5) impulsive–reflective, (6) synthetic–analytic, (7) analogue–digital, (8) concrete–abstract, (9) random (non-linear)–sequential (linear), and (10) inductive–deductive (Leaver 2019). Version 3 (the current version) of the E&L questionnaire, along with a scoring template that contains brief definitions of each subscale and the overarching categories, can be found at <https://sites.google.com/view/fom-supplement/home>, see scannable QR code in the Appendix.

<sup>28</sup> This same conflation had been problematically present in the then-accepted definitions of global and analytic learning (see Corin and Leaver 2019).

into the overarching categories of ectasis (ectenic learning) and synopsis, as suggested earlier in this article, and if so, how?

- (2) Is the Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT) adequate for determining both fields of cognitive control and fields of cognitive manipulation—and would application of the results to L2 acquisition be valid?

#### *4.1. Alignment of the cognitive fields with the overarching categories*

Ehrman and Leaver had initially aligned field independence with ectenic learning and field dependence with the synoptic group of learning styles. However, correlation studies by Ehrman at the FSI (including an initial validation study with  $n > 1300$ ) showed a consistently high correlation (as much as .8) between field independence and synoptic learning, as well as between field dependent learning and ectasis.<sup>29</sup> The results of testing by other researchers (Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh 2017; Yasuda 2019)<sup>30</sup> also showed a consistent alignment with the overarching categories as in the FSI studies.<sup>31</sup> A factor analysis by Yasuda (2019) on a group of 471 Japanese adult learners of English, including beginning to highly advanced levels of proficiency, showed a negative correlation between field dependence and field sensitivity, with both field independence and field sensitivity aligning with synoptic styles. Even more convincing was a finding by Kheirzadeh and Kassaian (2011), who conducted a study of success in acquiring listening comprehension in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Based on the presentation of a global task, they had expected field-dependent learners to perform better than field-independent learners. In fact, as in the E&L validation

<sup>29</sup> While FSI validation studies on the E&L have been mentioned in a number of publications (e.g., Ehrman and Leaver 2003), sharing of the actual data is difficult since the studies were conducted at a government institution and the results generally not made publicly available.

<sup>30</sup> These correlational studies were done on three different L2-learning populations: Iranian, Turkish, and Japanese, respectively. In the case of the Iranian and Japanese students, the results fully paralleled the FSI results, showing strong positive correlations between field sensitivity and field independence. In the case of the Turkish students, where the  $n$  (102) was much lower and might therefore be less reliable, a strong positive correlation was found between field sensitivity and field dependence and a weak positive correlation between field sensitivity and field independence. Of course, culture could also have played an undetermined role.

<sup>31</sup> These studies also supported their hypotheses that the fields were continua, not bipolar “toggles,” and not a singular trait (or two parallel traits), but a quadrangular nexus of traits.

studies, they found the opposite: field-independent learners performed better, indicating an alignment between synoptic (global) and field-independent learning.

Though such results initially seemed counterintuitive—and might not hold for fields other than L2 acquisition—Ehrman and Leaver concluded that they were reasonable for their learner populations and revised their original quadrant approach to that shown in Figure 2.

*Figure 2. Fields of mind quadrant of the E&L.*

<b>Synoptic</b>	<b>Ectenic</b>
Field independence (Trait A/cognitive control): perceives material separately from its context	Field dependence (Trait A/cognitive control): requires context and does not focus on anything in isolation
Field sensitivity (Trait B/cognitive manipulation): picks up material as part of context by “osmosis” and uses it, as needed, for understanding or production	Field insensitivity (Trait B/cognitive manipulation): makes little or no use of the whole context and excludes “incidental” learning

Explaining the alignment of field independence with synopsis, Ehrman and Leaver supposed that both of these preferences, one narrower and one broader, shared an inner-focused (i.e., self-dependent) orientation (noted above also in respect to the early field [in]dependence research based on physical space). Specifically, field-independent learners AUTONOMOUSLY PERCEIVE salient parts of the text in a decontextualized way<sup>32</sup> whereas the field-sensitive learner AUTONOMOUSLY USES the full language environment, including the actual text, background knowledge pertinent to the text, and even the social environment in which the learner is located, to process the meaning of the text (Leaver, Ehrman, and Shekhtman 2005).

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<sup>32</sup> Field-dependent learners, by contrast, tend not to make this type of separation and perceive the parts (words, syntax) together with the whole (text) as one piece, often memorizing, repeating, and using entire phrases in communication without regard to the grammatical or syntactic patterns within them.

#### **4.2. E&L versus GEFT**

The results of the validation studies stemmed from the use of the E&L Cognitive Styles Construct Questionnaire (Ehrman and Leaver 2002), which, for the fields of the mind subscales, focused exclusively on their application to verbal aspects of cognition and included both questions of perception and process.

The GEFT, on the other hand, had two weaknesses. First, it was originally proposed for students of mathematics and then stretched to include other areas of study, including application to L2 learning, without considering particular aspects of L2 acquisition that might make it different from acquisition of other kinds of knowledge. This included the emphasis on proficiency, rather than achievement, in contemporary classrooms. Second, it focused exclusively on field (in)dependence (perception), leaving questions of field (in)sensitivity (process) unexamined.

### **5. Critiques of the Fields of the Mind construct**

The more articulated, quadrant-based delineation of the cognitive fields proposed by the E&L Construct, along with the associated validation and factor analysis studies conducted on it, provide answers to concerns raised in critiques by Khoury (2013), Yasuda (2016), Cárdenas-Claros (2005), as well as others with similar criticisms not included in this article. It also makes it possible to explain earlier studies on student success.

#### **5.1. Khoury**

Khoury (2013), arguing from theory, contended that the E&L should have posited field sensitivity as the opposite of field independence. That is, he considered field sensitivity and field independence to be two polar opposite values of a single category, equating the absence of a particular kind of cognitive control (field independence) with the presence of a particular kind of cognitive manipulation (field sensitivity). In so doing, he made the error of conflating perception and process that has frequently clouded an understanding of the cognitive field concepts.

As noted above, research has shown that the alignment of the cognitive fields with the overarching categories is counterintuitive. Quantitative research, exploratory factor analysis, and validation

studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between field sensitivity and field independence,<sup>33</sup> not the negative correlation that would have been required by Khoury's proposed collapsing of the categories of cognitive control and cognitive manipulation. In Khoury's model (Option Two [Khoury 2013, 893]), field sensitivity would fall within the synoptic reaches of a collapsed cognitive field, but field independence would fall within the ectenic reaches, in contradiction to research findings.

Likewise, research about student preferences for error correction, conducted by Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh (2017), using the E&L, gave results in line with the predictions made by Ehrman and Leaver (2003) and Dörnyei (2005) that synoptic learners will tend to rely on subconscious control whereas ectenic learners will prefer to rely on conscious control. In line with these predictions, the results obtained from the Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh study showed that synoptic learners preferred indirect correction, while ectenic learners preferred to be corrected directly. According to Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh (2017), given that synoptic learners are often both field independent and field sensitive, they can be expected to be more autonomous, thereby explaining the desire for more indirect correction, whereas ectenic learners, as field insensitive and field dependent, could be expected to need and want direct correction.<sup>34</sup>

## 5.2. *Yasuda*

Yasuda (2016) opined that many learning-style concepts, especially those of the cognitive fields, are ambiguous due to poorly defined and unvalidated categories. This shared concern prompted Ehrman and Leaver to further define the concept of cognitive fields.

Yasuda's complaint that perceptual cognitive fields had been poorly defined and unvalidated for L2 learners could have been answered by the validation research conducted at the FSI if not for the unavailability of the data to the nongovernment academic community. Ultimately, Yasuda (2019) made a personal effort to validate the categories in the E&L, using the E&L definitions and including the full range of proficiency levels

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<sup>33</sup> See Ehrman and Leaver (2002) and Yasuda (2019).

<sup>34</sup> Other correlative subscale categories could also explain or reinforce these preferences in that synoptic learners tend to be inductive learners (moving from examples to rule), and ectenic learners tend to be deductive (moving from rule to examples or application). This category may have had as strong an influence on the results as the cognitive fields credited by Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh.

among the respondents as in the FSI study.<sup>35</sup> An exploratory factor analysis of 471 Japanese students learning English confirmed the definition and alignment of the subscales within the E&L. Field dependence correlated negatively with field sensitivity and with all the synoptic categories, placing it within the reaches of ectasis, in keeping with the findings of Ehrman and Leaver and Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh and providing yet another response to Khoury's criticism.

### *5.3. Cárdenas-Claros*

Based on a study of field-(in)dependent learners in a Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) environment, Cárdenas-Claros (2005) stated that no differences could be found between field-independent and field-dependent learners. Both groups displayed the same range of performance success, showed no statistical significance for preferred use of transcripts or for dictionary use, and exhibited no significant differences in tested behaviors.

The fact that Cárdenas-Claros did not find distinctions between field-independent and field-dependent learners does not mean that there are not distinctions in learning preferences associated with cognitive control and control manipulation. Cárdenas-Claros's failure to find preferences could stem from use of the GEFT, which was not developed with L2 learners in mind, or the results could have come from a skewed group in which more auditory learners were included than visual or motor learners. Yet another explanation could be that the study population came from a group highly balanced along the ectenic–synoptic continuum; even though the cognitive fields might not have been evenly distributed, the overwhelming influence of an ectenic–synoptic balance of the other eight subscales might have been sufficient to provide the study's result of no significant preference relative to cognitive fields.

## **6. Implications for learning and instruction**

This more articulated definition of the cognitive fields provides a basis for teachers to better understand learners' ways of approaching L2 learning, as well as a guide for curricular and instructional adaptation to support

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<sup>35</sup> Yasuda also expressed concern that the few cognitive field studies conducted on L2 learners inappropriately used the GEFT (which did not account for all aspects of L2 acquisition) and, more important, focused only on the lower levels of proficiency.

classroom diversity. Variability among students depending upon the strength of their field independence and field sensitivity has implications for teaching grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Instructors and program coordinators can make use of this kind of knowledge to minimize attrition and increase student success.

### ***6.1. Grammar instruction***

Grammar provides perhaps the clearest elucidation of all permutations of the field variants. Learning grammar as an abstract system out of context would be an example of a field-independent approach, while a field-dependent approach would involve learning grammar within its larger context, perhaps memorizing it as chunks of discourse. Field-sensitive learners would be able to determine grammar rules inductively through comparing a series of grammatical expressions or the appearance of a grammatical concept in multiple contexts. The field-insensitive learner may be uncomfortable doing this and need or prefer to have the grammar usage explained deductively by an instructor or textbook, unless that learner is also field dependent.

### ***6.2. Vocabulary instruction***

Similar differences prevail in the acquisition of vocabulary. In studies reported by Tinajero et al. (2011), field-independent learners used internal cues in the acquisition of new lexica, approaching the understanding of new words analytically, breaking them into component parts and restructuring them in ways that helped their comprehension and memorization. Field-dependent learners, on the other hand, approached the learning of new vocabulary through the mechanisms of passive data collection or trial and error. In some cases, field-dependent learners have misunderstood and misused vocabulary, even in their own language, for years before an “ah-ha moment” has hit them. Field-sensitive learners, who are usually broadly synoptic, can intuit the underlying lexical system of a language. Field-insensitive learners typically approach vocabulary learning in a rote fashion.

### ***6.3. Instructional adaptation***

For teachers wishing to adapt instruction to the learning styles of their students, choices can be complex. Learners are typically not at one pole

or another but exhibit a combination of weak and strong preferences along parallel and intersecting continua of which the cognitive fields are just two, such that every student will present a different profile. Nonetheless, broad swaths of students can be reached by ensuring that activities and materials have something for everyone. For every mode of communication, adaptive teachers can find ways to incorporate activities and materials compatible with all cognitive field permutations in teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking.<sup>36</sup>

#### **6.4. Error correction**

Error correction studies, in general, have resulted in contradictory results. Some have concluded that learners should be corrected on the spot (e.g., Khansir and Pakdel 2018). Others have concluded that learners should not be interrupted while speaking but corrected after they have finished, if at all, or that only certain kinds of errors should be corrected (Amara 2015); some of those who support this approach to error correction fear that overt and immediate correction can lead to the development of an affective filter, impeding learners' willingness to speak (Lightbown and Spade 2006). Yet others, more aware that other variables might be involved, have noted that their studies are inconclusive (e.g., Tedick and de Gortari 1998).

Leaver, in conducting applications of the E&L in a number of venues in the United States and abroad, began to notice that the learning style composition of a studied group predicts the effects of various approaches to error correction. The E&L thus helps to clarify weaknesses in the research design of some error correction studies that ignore cognitive-style differences among the studied populations.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Leaver proposed a decision-making tool (see Figure 3) for error correction, in which she differentiates between MISTAKE and ERROR. A mistake is an accident—misspeaking, misreading, miswriting, typo—in which case the correct form is known to the learner. An error

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<sup>36</sup> Additional research and further elucidation of the concepts can be found in *Fields of the Mind* (Corin and Leaver 2019) along with specific suggestions for adapting instruction to cognitive field preferences. Suggestions for each of the modes of communication can also be found at <https://sites.google.com/view/fom-supplement/home>, see scannable QR code in the Appendix.

<sup>37</sup> Note the similar conclusion by Martinez (2006), who suggests learning styles as one of the unexamined components that can influence the results of error correction and error correction studies.

may be a direct translation from the native language, some form of incorrect learning, or even a guess, in which case the correct form is not known to the learner.<sup>38</sup>

Figure 3. Error correction model.

	Synoptic	Ectenic
<i>Mistake</i>	DO NOT CORRECT	DO NOT CORRECT
<i>Error</i>	LATER	ON THE SPOT

Use of the grid, or model,<sup>39</sup> illustrated in Figure 3 has provided extensive anecdotal evidence<sup>40</sup> that differences in cognition warrant parallel differences in error correction in accordance with these criteria.<sup>41</sup> The model also reflects the findings of Moslemi and Dastgoshadeh (2017) in their error correction study exploring the relationship between cognitive fields and error correction preferences.

### 6.5. Variation with proficiency level

A search of the literature reveals no readily available research results correlating high levels of language skills, defined as native-like proficiency, with any of the cognitive fields. This is unsurprising for several reasons. Few subjects are available for study because few

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<sup>38</sup> The distinction between error and mistake as a construct for correcting inaccurate language was introduced at the FSI in the 1980s; to the best of the authors' knowledge, the FSI has not chosen to share these concepts with the L2 field except through personal communications and first-hand knowledge of one of the authors.

<sup>39</sup> Although the model differentiates simply between the two poles of the overarching synoptic–ectenic category, the supposition is that most synoptic learners will display field-independent and field-sensitive traits and most ectenic learners field-dependent and field-insensitive traits. If only the fields of the mind are known, it would thus generally be safe for an instructor to use the whole (the overarching category) for the part (the cognitive field subscales).

<sup>40</sup> While the model has been taught extensively throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and Latin America, including obtaining informal correlations of learning style and error correction preferences and effectiveness, formal validation studies have not taken place and are warranted.

<sup>41</sup> This is derived from use with thousands of learners in government language programs in the United States and a wide variety of academic programs in at least twenty-four countries where Leaver conducted faculty-development workshops on the topic of teaching to diversity, including error correction.

learners reach near-native levels (Martin 2014), few programs teach to the near-native levels,<sup>42</sup> and the demand for research at this level is low. Moreover, by the time learners approach near-native proficiency, they have refined their strategies, compensated for their weaknesses, and developed strong metacognitive skills superordinate to any style preferences.

The little available research suggests that variation exists in how students reach the highest levels, including how any one student reaches the highest levels in two different languages, with both ectenic and synoptic approaches needed (i.e., flexibility in learning style is advantageous). One of the few studies that can provide some insight into what the role of cognitive field preferences might be was conducted on initial-acquisition Russian-language learners at the FSI (Leaver 1986). This study examined the relationship between left-brain and right-brain dominance,<sup>43</sup> the curve of improvement in L2 proficiency over time, and the level of achieved proficiency in one year of intensive study and, for some, a follow-on six-month advanced course.<sup>44</sup>

Leaver found that left-hemisphere students (generally ectenic, most often field insensitive, and approximately 50% field dependent and 50% field independent) struggled at the beginning of courses taught via communicative language teaching. Once they reached professional levels of proficiency (ILR 3), however, they rapidly reached ILR 4. Of the 50% who did not reach ILR 4, most failed to reach even ILR 3. The successful left-hemisphere learners tended toward field independence, supporting some of the earliest cognitive field research, although most of that research focused on lower levels of L2 proficiency.

Most right-hemisphere dominant students (tending toward field independence and field sensitivity) encountered few obstacles at lower

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<sup>42</sup> State Department and Department of Defense language training goals, as well as the national flagship language programs, where one might expect native-like output, aim only to the professional (ILR 3) level, not to the near-native level (ILR 4), and with the exception of the Language Flagships, it is difficult to find programs routinely producing students at and above the ILR 4 (ACTFL Distinguished) level of proficiency.

<sup>43</sup> Hemisphericity was determined by Your Style of Thinking and Learning (Torrance et al. 1978).

<sup>44</sup> All students who enrolled in the FSI six-month advanced course at a professional level of proficiency (ILR 3) in the years 1984–1990 achieved the course goals of near-native (ILR 4) proficiency. US government language proficiency level descriptions (ILR levels) can be found online at <https://www.govtilr.org/Skills/ILRscale1.htm>.

levels of proficiency, but few surpassed ILR 3. Leaver hypothesized that the obstacle at this higher level of proficiency was lack of time to overcome fossilization.<sup>45</sup> Whereas the ectenic, left-hemisphere, atomistic, field-dependent learner<sup>46</sup> focused too closely on details at lower levels of proficiency, slowing progress, the right-hemisphere dominant, holistic, field-sensitive learner focused on global meaning, and as a result their language could get messy (“awfully” fluent). The left-hemisphere learners’ detail-orientation allowed them to avoid fossilizing in the first place and provided them with approaches and strategies they needed to refine their speech at upper levels.

## 7. Conclusion

The intent of this article has been to elucidate the fields of the mind as a component of the E&L. Of the ten subscales, the two reflecting the fields of the mind have been the least understood and often not applied, distorting the significance of the E&L and detracting from its usefulness. This article has sought to remedy this situation by providing sufficient theoretical understanding, together with an overview of some areas of concrete applications, to enable classroom instructors to understand how they might adapt instruction to serve their diverse student body better. A fuller overview of practical applications is beyond the scope of this article.

Clearly, further research is needed to fill a number of glaring lacunae. Very little is known, for example, about the relation of fields of the mind to achieving upper levels of proficiency or to the development of speaking skills. Another fundamental lacuna in the literature concerns our understanding of the interaction between nature and nurture in individuals’ cognitive field styles. Beyond our awareness of the presence of both groups of factors (e.g., cultural and socioeconomic correlations and the malleability of styles on the nurture side), little is known.

How a learner performs differs from how well a learner performs, and no learning style profile ensures either success or failure. Greater success depends on numerous factors. One of these, to be sure, is the

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<sup>45</sup> Ehrman (2002) delineated five kinds of fossilization: functional, iatrogenic, domain, affective, and strategic.

<sup>46</sup> The correlation of subscale styles has been validated by Bogen (1969), Gazzaniga (1970), and Torrance (1982).

degree of compatibility between learners' cognitive field preference profiles and the structure of their learning programs. This refers to both curriculum and instructional approach. The field preference profile of instructors can also play a role in student success. That role, moreover, can be a deleterious one unless instructors learn to modulate their manner of instruction to meet the needs of their learners.

## Appendix

Supplementary materials can be found at <https://sites.google.com/view/fom-supplement/home> or via scanning the QR code below



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## **Designing and Integrating a Community-Based Learning Dimension into a Traditional Proficiency-Based High School Curriculum**

**ELIZABETH LEE ROBY**

### **1. Introduction**

When considering the goals of language instruction, few would debate the importance of promoting a lifelong interest in learning language and culture in authentic contexts through engagement in multilingual communities. *The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (2015) state that, to meet the Communities goal, students should be able to “communicate and interact with cultural competence in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world” (9). Nonetheless, instructors often struggle to integrate authentic community engagement into the traditional classroom-based curriculum. The first years of language learning frequently include simulations and role-playing scenarios that duplicate situations in which students may find themselves when abroad. These assignments ask students to react as if they were in Russia; however, most students never make it to Russia.

There are multiple obstacles to integrating the Communities Standards consistently in the early years of language study, the most obvious of which is the perceived difficulty. The most frequently discussed examples of community engagement demand the adoption of a Russian-speaking community as a major structural principle in designing an entire course curriculum (school-to-school ePals or Skype connections, sustained community-service connections, etc.), which may seem too great a commitment or too difficult to arrange. In addition to being difficult to implement, community engagement may involve experiences (such as unmediated class or individual visits to cultural events, museums, or spontaneously invited guests) that feel tangential to the course’s goals due to their lack of integration into the course curriculum.

Another difficulty that instructors face is the need to adequately prepare students linguistically for these experiences. Instructors want to

avoid the scenario where students with Novice and Intermediate Low levels of oral proficiency<sup>47</sup> have an interaction with a native speaker or attend an event conducted in Russian only to conclude that they did not understand anything and feel that overall the experience was a waste of time. Some instructors likely will decide that this sort of interaction is best left until later in the curriculum, arguing that the language skills need to be developed first to support interaction with native speakers. While it may seem logical to delay the inclusion of community interaction until students can communicate meaningfully with greater comfort, a number of studies suggest that language proficiency is not the sole critical factor determining the quality and quantity of interaction when students are put in linguistically and culturally immersive settings. Baker-Smemoe et al.'s 2014 study of variables affecting foreign language (L2) proficiency gains during study abroad found that the strongest predictors of L2 gains were intercultural sensitivity and social network variables, both of which were influenced by the participants' pre-program understanding of the host culture and consequent comfort in seeking engagement with members of the host culture. Dewey et al.(2014) noted that a learner's openness to new experiences was a predictor of L2 use but also that program requirements could push less extroverted students to use the target language. Cadd (2012) and Lindseth and Brown (2014) noted significant gains in interaction with native speakers abroad only after implementing specific tasks into the study-abroad curriculum that required students to engage meaningfully with the host culture. All of these studies point to the fundamental importance of developing strong cultural competency skills alongside linguistic proficiency to ensure that students have the comfort and desire to seek interaction with native speakers. Cadd (2012) and Lindseth and Brown (2014) highlighted the fact that without the structure of required tasks to complete while abroad, many students, when placed in the immersive setting, do not automatically engage in meaningful interaction with the host culture. As a consequence, they frequently do not develop the social networks with the local population that would best support their linguistic and

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<sup>47</sup> Here and elsewhere in the article, proficiency levels are defined according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (2012). The following abbreviations for proficiency-level designations will be used: Novice Mid (NM), Novice High (NH), Intermediate Low (IL), Intermediate Mid (IM), and Intermediate High (IH).

cultural growth. Some structured tasks that require interaction provoke students to engage and often assist in setting up these social networks.

This research by Cadd (2012) and Lindseth and Brown (2014) emphasizes the critical role that educators play in assisting students in their process of immersion. The research parallels what I had witnessed over the past fourteen years in leading my own students of IL/IM oral proficiency abroad on short-term (eighteen-day) immersion programs in Russia that include tutorials and homestays. I have repeatedly witnessed students' engagement in the target language and culture be halted by their lack of knowledge of how best to interact with native speakers given their Intermediate-level language proficiency. In an attempt to address this issue, my co-leader and I hold three conferences with each student. The first takes place three days into the trip, when we discuss the transition and respond to individual student goals; the second takes place halfway through the trip and focuses on the students' level of engagement and progress towards their goals; and the final one takes place at the end to debrief the entire experience. During the first conference, students often express discontent with their language skills, admitting that they disengage from interaction after a simple conversation about their background, interests, and daily events. They often conclude, "I don't know how to say anything else." The conferences help students overcome frustration and better take advantage of their immersion environment. However, waiting to address these issues until the students are already abroad also relegates the first week of a short in-country experience to transition issues rather than to optimal engagement. As a result, I came to understand the absolute necessity of addressing extra-linguistic factors in an experiential way prior to the trip.

Watching my students struggle with the transition into their homestay in St. Petersburg, despite their adequate language skills and pre-trip orientation on how to engage in a homestay experience, made me realize the importance of addressing the Communities goal area of the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (2015) more consistently and effectively throughout my curriculum prior to taking students to Russia. In addition, I felt growing discomfort about lauding the necessity of global engagement through expensive international travel while ignoring the rich local opportunities for Russian language

use and cultural learning in our home city of Baltimore. These two realizations prompted me to design a community-learning project and integrate it into the traditional school curriculum each semester at each level of instruction.

The design of this community-learning dimension was initially based on three guiding principles. The projects should

- (1) develop self-awareness and strategies for learning in immersive environments;
- (2) raise general cultural competency skills; and
- (3) align with existing curricular goals for each level, so as to address overall course objectives for the development of language proficiency at a given level.

What I did not know at the planning stage was that the outcomes of the community-learning dimension would be far greater than envisioned in my initial goals. Not only do the projects align with proficiency targets at each instructional level, but the projects also contribute significantly to increased proficiency gains. In completing the required project components, not only do students develop greater general cultural competency skills and strategies for learning in immersive environments, but they also engage every essential Life and Career Skill defined by the P21 “Framework for 21st Century Learning” (P21 Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2007) and develop many of the “habits of mind” that Costa and Kallick (2008) deem necessary for a successful life in today’s world.

The driving force behind both P21 and Costa and Kallick’s sixteen essential habits of mind is the conviction that for today’s students to be successful citizens and workers in a twenty-first century globalized world, they must acquire more than specific content knowledge and content-specific skill sets. They must develop the thinking abilities and the social and emotional competencies that will allow them to thrive in an ever-changing, diverse, multi-dimensional world. While P21 identifies five sets of attributes and abilities to be developed (Flexibility and Adaptability, Initiative and Self-Direction, Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, Productivity and Accountability, Leadership and Accountability), Costa and Kallick advocate for cultivating dispositions that support students to “behave intelligently.” Behaving intelligently involves aligning desired outcomes with one’s approaches to a task: persisting rather than giving up when

confronted with a challenge, thinking flexibly, generating many possible solutions, listening, and allowing one's point of view to be challenged when considering a complicated problem and confronted by multiple perspectives or new circumstances (Costa and Kallick 2008, 15–42). While there is significant overlap between the life and career skills of P21 and Costa and Kallick's habits of mind, the latter are not rigidly defined skills but rather are dispositions that serve people well when confronted with problems (15). Habits of mind determine "how students behave when they DON'T KNOW an answer" (16). While the P21 and Costa and Kallick's work address the need from two different angles, the central premise is the same: educators need to promote in students the learning approaches and behavioral habits that will lead to success. This conclusion is very similar to that of Cadd (2012), Lindseth and Brown (2014), and to my own conclusion in this study, as we have reflected on non-linguistic learning obstacles for students abroad and attempted to implement structures to improve student engagement.

In this article, I will provide a general framework for addressing the Communities goal area of the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (2015) by integrating student-driven community-learning projects for each semester of a four-year high school Russian program. These projects complement a traditional language curriculum in a way that furthers proficiency development, fosters self-awareness and strategies for learning in immersive environments, raises general cultural competency skills, and builds essential twenty-first-century life and career skills and habits of mind. The article will describe project components and a process for working with students on these projects at three different proficiency levels, provide guidelines for assessment and recommendations for student support at the various proficiency levels and at various points in the project, offer a selected list of project topics and three sample projects as examples, summarize students' reaction to the community-learning project, and share the instructor's reflections on the project outcomes.

## **2. Selecting a task for a community-learning project**

The large Russian-speaking population in Baltimore provides students with opportunities to learn through community observation and interaction, thereby developing a deeper connection with and understanding of the

Russian population in the United States and strengthening language and cultural competency skills. To these ends, students are required to select, propose, execute, document, describe, and reflect on one community-learning experience per semester.

Students are asked to choose a project site and are provided with a short list of possible places in order to facilitate the selection. They are given time in class to research other Russian events and community organizations in the Baltimore area on the Internet and to collaboratively create a list of ideas and options from which they can individually choose. Selecting a site for a community-learning experience in Baltimore is not difficult; a quick Internet search will reveal a number of Russian food stores and restaurants, bookstores, churches and synagogues, Saturday schools, and cultural events.

Once students select a site, they usually have little difficulty identifying a topic for investigation, but they consult with me when they do. For Novice-level students, the projects by design are largely exploratory experiences. The tasks that students create at this level are usually observation-based and not dependent on interaction with a specific person. Therefore, a planned task is usually executed easily. For IL-level students, the projects continue to be largely observation-based but include a requirement to engage with a native speaker in a transactional way. As this type of communication can be achieved by interacting with any number of native speakers in a setting, this task is not overly complicated. Students with IM or IH levels of proficiency are required to plan tasks that involve an extended conversation with a Russian speaker. Such reliance on outsiders can pose certain challenges, but in almost all cases, proper advanced planning ensures that adequate interaction is achieved. Often students are able to independently identify members of the community to interact with, such as a Russian-speaking priest or rabbi, a native Russian teacher at the Baltimore International Academy, or a Russian restaurant owner, and to arrange the conversation.

The projects are introduced to students at the beginning of each semester; while students must meet certain deadlines for the submission of project components, they are welcome to begin work on the project and to submit reports early. When the project is introduced, students (and parents by email) receive a general description of the project, guidelines for how to plan it, a detailed description of the three required written

reports, and the assessment criteria and rubric (see Appendix B in the online appendices). The level of detail within these guidelines for students ensures a serious level of engagement with the project at each step of the process.

### **3. Community-learning project: Design principles**

In designing the community-learning project, I followed five principles:

- (1) The community-learning setting would be selected by students.
- (2) The linguistic demands of the graded components of the project for each level would be aligned with the proficiency level of the students.
- (3) The linguistic demands of the graded components of the project for each level would further general course objectives for the development of proficiency for that level.
- (4) The structure of the project would be sufficient to ensure that linguistic and cultural competency goals would be met but flexible enough to encourage students to take ownership of the structure of the experience.
- (5) The structure of the project would be the same for all levels to ease the learning curve and to enhance learning from past experiences with this project.

Much of the challenge in designing the project lay in reconciling principle five with principles two and three. On the one hand, a consistent structure (principle five) facilitates student learning from past experience and feedback. A template assists students in understanding expectations and better anticipating opportunities for learning. Consequently, students approach planning with the wisdom gained from past experience. Learning occurs not only with the completion of and the feedback on a given project, but also in between projects as students plan for their next project by taking stock of the commentary received on their prior work. However, to be appropriate and effective, these projects need to be rooted in the curriculum for a certain proficiency level. They do not need to address topical course content, but they cannot have linguistic production demands that exceed the students' current ability (principle two). To be optimally effective as a language-learning exercise, the project should have linguistic demands that are in line with the skills taught and practiced at the appropriate proficiency level (principle three). . A model

for how this may be structured will be discussed in some detail in the “Integration with the classroom curriculum” section (6).

#### **4. Planning for the community-learning project**

One principle that remains constant in the community-learning projects, regardless of students’ level, is the basis for assessing them. Before students begin planning, they are told that they will be assessed on the degree to which they maximize both the cultural and the linguistic learning potential of the experience they select. To guide students in diving deeply into the experience, I provide them with a list of questions that address the tasks that they might consider doing before, during, and after the project. The comprehensive nature of these questions ensures a high level of student engagement in planning their chosen activity. The following are the questions provided to the students:

- (1) Before the experience: Did you do any pre-research/reading about the planned event? Did you make a list of tasks to complete during the experience (such as the model given to you by your teacher for the first semester)? Did you look up and list some vocabulary that you might need if your tasks will involve using your Russian language skills? Did you include the list of questions that you plan to ask during the experience? (Required for all Intermediate-level students.
  
- (2) During the experience: Did you note observations of the space, people, events, etc.? How did you engage in the event? How did you use your language skills? Did you learn new language where possible (from posters, menus, words written on objects, brochures, etc.)? Was there any print material available in Russian for you to take? Did you speak Russian with someone at the event? (IM/IH level students must select an experience that involves significant oral interaction with a native speaker.) Did you complete the tasks that you planned to complete? Did you adapt to the situation as it played out and did you complete other tasks?
  
- (3) After the experience: Reflect on the experience a bit. What meaning might you attribute to your observations? Was the experience

what you expected? What was your emotional reaction to the experience? Was it easier or harder than you expected? What factors made it that way? How did you handle the difficulties? What successes did you experience? Did you experience personal growth and if so, how? What cultural or cross-cultural conclusions can you draw? What follow-up research did you do to learn more? Did you find more information online on the event you attended?

NM/NH-level students: Did you create and learn a personal vocabulary list of at least twenty words on the topic of your experience?

IL-level students: Did you find information in Russian and make an essential list of new vocabulary to help you better describe the event and your experience in Russian?

IM/IH-level students: Did you have a follow-up conversation with a native Russian speaker regarding the event and your observations? (IM/IH students are required to engage in significant oral interaction with a native speaker at some point during or after the experience.)

## **5. Assessment structure**

The assessment structure remains consistent at all levels. Students at all levels (NM/NH–IM/IH) are required to submit three different written reports that are graded as summative assessments:

- (1) Proposal
- (2) Post-Experience Write-Up
- (3) Reflection on Learning

This assessment structure supports students at all proficiency levels to develop effective strategies for learning in immersive environments and to build cultural competency skills. Putting together a proposal with specific plans for engagement before, during, and after the event requires students to imagine how they could engage in a setting using the language skills that they currently possess and how this engagement could be enhanced by some pre- and post-event learning. This cognitive process alone has proved to be one of the significant benefits of the project, as in the past, students' inability to envision how engagement could occur with limited language skills was one of the greatest obstacles to growth on the immersion trip to St. Petersburg.

As the quality of the experience is often determined by the quality of the planning, students are required to submit the proposal a minimum of two weeks prior to the planned experience in order to allow time for feedback and revision. At this planning stage, students generally select tasks that are appropriate for their proficiency level and anticipate what they could do prior to the experience to best prepare themselves for the experience. When they fail to plan tasks appropriate for their language proficiency level, they are provided guidance and are required to rewrite their proposal.

The guidelines for the post-experience write-up hold students accountable for providing a factual report on how they maximized the potential for linguistic and cultural learning.” As we know, the best-laid plans sometimes come unraveled and sometimes the richest experiences are the ones that occur unexpectedly. It is important that students are able to envision and plan for successful engagement, but it is also essential in immersion environments that students are flexible enough to adjust expectations and goals as events unfold. The guidelines provide room for plans to change during the execution of the project and for students to abandon old goals and to create new ones if the new goals become more relevant. The guidelines simply hold students to a high level of engagement and require that they do not abandon the interaction when presented with obstacles. In this way, the project’s structure serves to engage many of Costa and Kallick’s (2008) habits of mind: students practice “persisting” as they become challenged to create alternative plans rather than giving up when their proposed plan has to be adjusted to real situations, they practice “thinking flexibly” as they conceive of these alternate plans, and they practice “remaining open to continuous learning” as their project goals are based on engagement, inquiry, exploration, and discovery. Reflection and learning should be occurring at all stages of the project (before, during, and after the experience). The focus is on developing ideal strategies for engaging in immersion learning by employing “intelligent behaviors” (to use Costa and Kallick’s term [2008, 15]), rather than on following specific, rigid goals that must be met. Building these habits of mind is an essential practice on the path to employing strategies for optimal learning in immersive settings.

All three sample projects included as online appendices (B, C, and D) illustrate some shifts between the proposed plan and the experience

that occurred. The project of the IL-level student presented in Appendix D significantly diverged from his original plan, as the student embraced greater opportunities to engage with the clerk in the Russian bookstore. This student conveys well the richness of learning that resulted from his increased comfort with interpersonal speaking, as he allowed himself to be led by the conversation and suggestions from the store clerk. In the other two projects included here (Appendices C and E), the students failed to fully execute their plans (the N-level student did not meet with the priest as planned and did not learn the meaning of the Orthodox rituals, and the IM-level student did not complete the planned research on the *медовник* 'honey cake'). In both projects, the students did not replace the missing elements with anything else during the experience, so as part of my feedback, I suggested what might be done after the experience to compensate for the missing parts. In all such cases, I want students to complete a post-event task in order to extend their learning. If students heed my suggestions or choose to fill in the learning gap in another way, they may resubmit their reports for a revised grade. My intent in assessing the projects is not to penalize students for their failure to perfectly execute a plan, but rather to teach them to conceptualize how they might maximize their learning given the situation.

The recognition that not all learning must happen during the experience serves as an important lesson for students throughout this project. Students learn that targeted preparation (particularly in terms of creating potential questions to ask and anticipating topical vocabulary needed) can help them to engage more fully in an upcoming cultural experience. They also learn that they may leave a cultural experience not having understood everything but that post-experience research can be done to fill in some gaps in understanding. Since the rich potential of pre- and post-event learning is laid out explicitly for students in the project guidelines, students are trained to see the experience in these terms, to build these strategies for learning, and to see themselves as the primary agents of their learning. The structure encourages them not to fear that which they do not understand in the moment but to seek greater understanding after the fact. The following quote from an IL-level student whose project was a visit to an Uzbek restaurant illustrates this point:

After we finished eating, I asked the waiter about the preparation of my dish, *plov*. He told us about the traditional Uzbek way of

preparing the dish. I didn't understand a lot of what he said, but after I went home I looked up a recipe and was able to piece together his story. It seems that *plov* is a very traditional Uzbek food, and it is cooked in a very big pot. First they cook the lamb, onions, and the carrots, which were "cut like french fries" (in his words). They add pepper and cumin, and then this is all simmered in water. He then told me that the rice is washed many times to get rid of excess starch, so it is less sticky. Then the rice is cooked in water on a medium (*менло*) heat until the water has evaporated off. The rice is then added to the simmering pot with more water, where it continues to cook altogether. I'm glad that I looked up a recipe when I got home, because his story definitely made more sense with the extra explanation. I could get a fairly good grasp of what he was saying, but there were a lot of words that I didn't know.

While the structure of the proposal and the post-experience write-up serve to support the development of certain habits of mind and effective strategies for learning in immersive environments, the required reflection on learning targets the development of cultural competency skills. In their reports, students reflect on cultural products, practices, or both; draw comparisons with their own native culture; and consider personal issues related to their projects. The depth of reflection on the part of the IL-level student (Appendix D) is outstanding, while the Novice- and IM-level students (Appendices B and D, respectively) could improve in this area. The questions I provided to these students in my feedback were intended to help them develop greater depth in their personal and cultural reflection. If they wished to get a higher grade, they could address the feedback in a revised and resubmitted report (for more information on my revision policy see "Deadlines and Revision Policy" in Appendix B). Again, the goal of the structure is not to assess students on their current strengths and weaknesses or on their initial attempts at learning prior to having received guidance, as much as it is to support students in the process of developing more sophisticated skills of cultural, personal, and metacognitive reflection. The greatest growth often comes through a dialogic process. An advantageous feedback-revision loop motivates students to engage in this dialogic process.

## **6. Integration with the classroom curriculum**

While project components and assessment structure remain constant regardless of the proficiency level of the student, the content of the proposal, in terms of the type of tasks that students set for themselves, must be aligned with a student's proficiency level. That is to say, tasks appropriate for a Novice-level student are insufficient for an Intermediate-level student, and tasks appropriate for an IM- or IH-level student are too difficult for an IL- or Novice-level student. Projects should not demand that students produce Russian above their current proficiency level because this can cause frustration and a sense of defeat. Similarly, for students to feel a sense of accomplishment and growth, the linguistic demands of the experience (as they have conceived it) and of the reports should further the course objectives at their instructional level. Students should be practicing in a new context the types of linguistic constructions that they are learning or have learned in class. For this to happen, there needs to be a level of coordination between the community-learning projects and the standard classroom curriculum.

The first step in aligning such projects with classroom curriculum is an honest acknowledgement of what students at various instructional levels in your own program are capable of producing. Instructors must take stock of what their students are able to do in the language and adapt their expectations and assessments accordingly. With the assessment structure presented here, students must be of at least IL-level proficiency in order to have the skills to write the proposal and post-experience write-up in Russian, even on a very basic level. That is, they must be capable of creating with the language and of producing basic future- and past-tense narration. At a minimum, students must possess basic knowledge of the case system, so as to be able to create original (albeit simple) sentences, as well as have familiarity with verbal aspect in order to communicate future plans and recount past events. Until these linguistic features have been covered in the traditional classroom-based curriculum, expecting students to produce texts that require them is not appropriate.

Students in my program complete the reports in Russian only starting in the second semester of grade ten (IL/IM). Grade nine (NM/NH) and first-semester grade ten students (NH/IL) submit reports in English. My decision to have lower-proficiency students complete the reports in

English, instead of using a level-appropriate assessment tool in Russian, is informed by the principle that not all necessary learning is linguistic; requiring students to reflect in writing on their plans, immersion learning strategies, affective responses, and habits of mind grows students' ability to learn in immersive settings.

My last section (Assessment Structure) demonstrates how the three written reports (proposal, post-experience write-up, and reflection on learning) support students of all proficiency levels in developing effective strategies for learning in immersive environments and building cultural competency skills. As a result of the reports' structure, important strategy and skill-building occurs parallel to language proficiency development. Furthermore, while Novice students are unable to create the written reports in Russian, they do use their language skills during the task itself. Foreign-language educators should fight the inclination to prioritize expressive language production and should remember instead that input must precede output and that interpretive communication is one of the three communicative modes. Novice-level students are required to learn language from this experience by using their interpretive (both listening and reading) skills as well as general skills of observation to gather both linguistic and cultural information from an authentic setting. NH-level students are required to create tasks where they can use their interpersonal speaking skills to communicate in Russian in transactional situations and basic question-and-answer formats—the same skills practiced in the traditional classroom curriculum at this level of instruction.

The goals of my grade eleven classroom curriculum include developing the ability to describe in detail and building facility with past- and future-tense narration. Students work toward building IM-level proficiency. In grade twelve, this focus is expanded. Students are pushed to develop advanced discourse functions by being challenged to explain, describe, and share emotional reactions, opinions, and reflections on events, people, actions, and culture in great detail. Another goal is to develop increased fluency in narrating in all time frames while using more connected, extended discourse (see Appendix A for more information on curricular goals at each level of instruction). The demands of the community-learning project in terms of presentational communication (both writing and speaking) are therefore aligned with my curricular goals

at both grades eleven and twelve, and that alignment is demonstrated in my project description demands:

- (1) Grade nine (NM/NH) and first semester grade ten (NH/IL) students write all reports in English.
- (2) Second semester grade ten students (IL/IM) write the proposal and post-experience write-up in Russian using strings of simple sentences (paying attention to tense and aspectual choice, verb form, and case usage and endings). The reflection is written in English.
- (3) Grades eleven and twelve students (IM/IH) write all three reports in Russian. In writing the reflection on learning, students should integrate expressions from the handout "How to express opinions and emotions." Grade twelve students use connected discourse and focus on integrating detailed description with narration in the appropriate time frame.
- (4) All students with Intermediate-level oral proficiency (second semester grade ten and higher) have a final oral assessment in Russian in which they describe (without notes) their experience and their reactions while showing pictures and responding to spontaneous questions. The final oral assessment is conducted after students have received feedback on all of their written reports.
- (5) Students with Novice-level oral proficiency (grade nine and first semester grade ten) submit a personalized list of new vocabulary learned, on which they are assessed.

The inclusion of the final presentational and interpersonal speaking assessment for Intermediate-level students ensures not only that students demonstrate that they can produce reports in the language, but also that they actually acquire the language of the reports. Since the addition of this assessment component two years ago, the linguistic outcomes of this project have been much greater.

## **7. Working with students of various proficiency levels**

Students engaged in the community-learning project at different proficiency levels present a variety of needs. The sections below provide helpful strategies for working with students across various proficiency levels.

### ***7.1. Working with Novice-level students***

Upon introducing the community-learning project to Novice-level learners, I questioned whether it is an appropriate choice that most of the work submitted to me will be in English. After considering the option of designing some Novice-level tasks in Russian for students to complete, I decided not to impose that structure, as in doing so, student choice of experience and student initiative in designing tasks would need to be sacrificed. Now, having seen the result of the project as designed, I can attest to the significant learner outcomes from this project even at the Novice level.

In introducing the community-learning project to Novice-level students, I compare the structure of the project to the structure that students find in their textbook *Russian Stage One: Live from Russia!* (Lekić, Davidson, and Gor 2008) when working with reading texts or video activities. The pre-reading/pre-viewing tasks in their textbook provide students with contextual information to assist with initial orientation, the reading/viewing activities provide scaffolding for understanding the text/viewing experience, and the post-reading/post-viewing activities provide practice with language to master. The required proposal in the community-learning project services a function similar to pre-reading/pre-viewing exercises and the reading/viewing structure. Students propose and complete pre-experience reading, research the topic or theme, or conduct other preparation meant to enhance their experience. In creating tasks realistic for their proficiency level to be completed during the experience, students are asked to anticipate and learn language that would assist them during their experience. At the Novice level, I encourage students to focus on the power of observation during the experience (impressions formed from what they see and hear) and to record information of interest to them, focusing on what they can understand or could understand after some post-experience research. After the experience, students decide what language they encountered they want to master and what cultural content they want to explore in more detail. Students then engage in post-experience learning activities, which help them to draw deeper conclusions from their learning and to master the core vocabulary that they have identified. These post-experience learning tasks reinforce their learning in much the same way as the post-reading and post-viewing activities in their textbook do. Some Novice-level students elect to speak

Russian during the experience, but that is not a requirement during the fall semester. Not requiring students to speak Russian during the experience allows students to approach the project eagerly and without anxiety. During the spring semester, a small language production component is added, as students are required to ask three simple questions in Russian during the experience, which at that point they do without anxiety.

The focus for all Novice-level students is on observation; listening; gathering of information before, during, and after the event; and learner reflection. Student reports are astounding in level of reflection, power of observation, and strength of listening skills. During this project, students fulfill the second Standard in the Communities goal area (*World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* [2015]) because they “set goals and reflect on their progress in using language for enjoyment, enrichment, and advancement.”

Students who began doing the projects at the Novice level are now significantly less anxious when conducting Intermediate-level projects than were their predecessors who did not have this experience at the Novice level. Experience at the Novice level makes these students more comfortable in the authentic multilingual contexts and more adept at utilizing a greater variety of communicative strategies and means of negotiating meaning.

## ***7.2. Working with IL-level students***

IL-level students demand the most support throughout this project, both in the creation of appropriate tasks that align with their proficiency level and in the completion of the reports in Russian with an acceptable level of language control. While this project can be done largely outside of class with Novice-level and IM/IH-level students, it is wise to devote some class periods to working with IL-level students. My experience has shown that assisting students in the creation of tasks during the proposal stage is essential in helping them to understand their own current proficiency level in the language and realistic expectations for communicative goals. Focusing on having them create concrete questions that they can pose during their experience is helpful to the goal-setting process, as is assisting IL-level students in understanding that their interaction will involve not only speaking but also listening and observation. These students still struggle with basic Russian syntax and do not have control of aspectual

choice as they are just learning to narrate in the past and in the future. In addition, their vocabulary is fairly limited and does not typically include words expected in a report.

IL-level students benefit from in-class writing, because they can ask questions while composing and can focus on the new vocabulary items. Working in class also limits the temptation to turn to Google Translate when students feel challenged by a writing assignment. Students are aided by opportunities to receive feedback and revise their writing. At the same time, IL-level students may write their learning reflection in English because they do not possess the language skills to express detailed emotional reactions and nuanced reflections in Russian. Allowing IL-level students to write the reflection on learning in English also provides an outlet for them to exercise and demonstrate their higher-order thinking skills.

Another practice that has provided significant support to my IL-level students has been the completion of a teacher-structured community-learning project during the preceding semester in the place of a student-structured one. The fall semester of grade ten (NH/IL) is an awkward time in students' language development in my program. Students have not yet learned verbal aspect and so are unable to write a proposal or a post-experience report in Russian, but they have significantly advanced from grade nine in terms of their interpersonal speaking ability. They are able to create a significant variety of questions and use their language skills much more comfortably in transactional situations. All students are at least on the cusp of IL-level proficiency if not already there, and yet they usually experience difficulty in conceptualizing appropriate language tasks that demonstrate their growth beyond the Novice level. Given these challenges, I determined that students would benefit from a model project targeted to their level. Students at this point have just covered a unit devoted to food, during which they learned how to function in a restaurant (discussing a menu, asking about menu items, asking for a recommendation, ordering food, asking for the check, etc.). Capitalizing on this learning, my teacher-structured project involves a visit to a Russian restaurant. Students are given two tasks to complete before the visit, six to complete while at the restaurant, and three to complete after the visit; these assignments show how the students can use language at their current proficiency (see Appendix F). After students are introduced to

verbal aspect later in the year, we return to this project to collaboratively write in Russian a sample proposal and a post-experience write-up for the restaurant visit. The students enjoy merging their realities into a single report, and this common experience provides us with a context to practice formulating future and past tense narration. Students then have these texts to use as models the next semester when they engage in their own student-structured community-learning project. Providing students with such model texts has been instrumental in supporting students to write with greater language accuracy at the IL level.

### *7.3. Working with IM- and IH-level students*

The in-class practice at the writing stage provided to IL students ensures a level of language control that is needed for students moving forward. These same students at higher instructional levels demonstrate comfort in creating accurate past and future tense narrations in the context of their projects because they have done it a year earlier with support. Writing the reflection still challenges students at the IM/IH level, and to guide them, they are provided with a list of useful expressions and constructions.

During the fall semester of grade eleven, IM-level students have the option to either complete a teacher-designed community-learning project (Appendix G) that coincides thematically with a unit they have recently finished in their textbook (a visit to a Russian store) or design their own project. If they create their own project, students use the teacher-designed project as a model. Much as the teacher-structured restaurant visit project functioned a year earlier, this more advanced example provides students with the vision necessary to understand how to create level-appropriate tasks. IM/IH-level students should be encouraged to do pre-experience reading on their proposed project in order to establish the vocabulary base necessary to support comprehension and communication during their experience.

Occasionally, IM/IH students struggle to propose a topic that will adequately challenge them linguistically or culturally. The demand to engage in significant oral interaction with a native speaker at some point during or after the experience" requires IM/IH-level students to go beyond proposing a mere visit to a Russian restaurant or a Russian store with planned tasks that require no more than transactional language use. The experience must include an extended conversation with a

native speaker. One student, for example, proposed a visit to a Russian bookstore to purchase a Russian film. Included in her tasks was soliciting the advice of the store clerk regarding a suggested film for purchase and relaying the details of the clerk's recommendation. That alone was not a sufficient task, but the student enhanced the task by proposing a follow-up discussion of the film with the clerk. What followed was an interesting conversation on the differences in their perspectives on the film, complicated by the fact that the clerk was sick and absent from work on the original day planned for the discussion and the student had to call the clerk to reschedule. When students suggest a setting-based project, they often need to be reminded to construct open-ended HOW? and WHY? questions and to seek opinions from people in order to increase the likelihood of an extended conversation. Many IM/IH-level students choose an interview with a Russian émigré because a planned interview ensures that they will have an extended conversation. In this case, however, students sometimes submit only the most basic biographical questions for the interview. It is helpful to remind students of the need to engage in backward planning and to anticipate the guidelines for the reflection on learning. Encouraging students to tie their simpler questions to a few significant cultural questions has also proven successful in helping them to strive toward greater cultural and cross-cultural learning.

### **8. General advice on implementing community-based projects**

Providing students with adequate and timely feedback and allowing time for revision (see section 5 Assessment Structure) is important to ensure the development of both language and cultural competency skills. The feedback-revision process must provide adequate time and structure for student revisions as well as motivate students to revise. In the four years that I have worked with students on these projects, my process of providing feedback has changed more than any other component of the project. The grading rubric (provided in Appendix B and included in the sample projects listed in Appendices C, D, and E) has not changed over the years, but my method of providing feedback on language control has gone through three iterations. Originally, I circled mistakes without giving any indication as to the type of mistake. Students could revise for a higher grade on language control if they could correct their mistakes and provide an explanation. This method was not successful with the weaker

students because it was too difficult for them to weigh all of the possible options and provide the correct form and explanation for their mistake. The second approach involved indicating the category of the mistake (i.e., subject/verb agreement, wrong aspect, needs genitive case, etc.) and asking students to correct the form. This approach initially seemed more effective because it yielded more accurate student corrections by a greater number of students. However, student writing did not appear to be improving through this method, as students would continue to repeat the same mistakes. My most recent approach to providing feedback has involved full correction of student work (grammatical, syntactical, and semantic mistakes) and asking students to comment on the discrepancies they see between their original text and my corrected text. As students type their reports in a shared Google Docs file, it is easy for me to manipulate their original document and provide a side-by-side corrected version. Students then use the comment function in Google Docs to explain the mistakes they can identify. At the end of their report, they make a list of their most prevalent patterns of error. After these steps are completed, students receive a final grade for language control. Students like this method and seem to be learning more through the process, as evidenced by fewer occurrences of the same types of mistakes in subsequent reports. This method also has the benefit of providing students with a model from which to study for their final presentational and interpersonal speaking assessment (the fifteen-minute presentation to me with follow-up questions).

In addition, I provide feedback on project content and students' reflections with the help of Google Drive, which has also revolutionized this part of feedback. I require students to comment on my comments, essentially engaging them in dialogue about their learning. As these documents with all corrections and feedback remain in shared community-learning Google folders that the students use over the course of four years, students have in essence an archive or portfolio of their community-learning work. Each new project begins with a review of projects and comments from past semesters. Students enjoy seeing their language growth and rereading their own comments and mine. They are able to re-reflect on their learning—both struggles and accomplishments—and take that all into consideration when planning their next community-learning experience.

While students benefit from my feedback over the course of the project both in terms of language production and project content, they do not benefit from peer feedback during the course of the project and do not formally share their final products with their classmates. This is a rich opportunity lost. Occasionally, when a student has done a particularly interesting project, especially one with unique circumstances that render it “unrepeatable,” that student is offered the opportunity to present to the class and often elects to do so. I do not do this more often or provide room for peer collaboration throughout the process, not because I do not recognize its merits, but because I fear that students will begin repeating past projects rather than engaging authentically in a project of their own design. However, students often informally share anecdotes about their experiences and their emotional reactions, and when we engage in a teacher-designed community-learning project, the entire class participates in a post-experience reflection.

### **9. Sample projects**

In the online appendices, readers can find three unedited, first-draft sample projects, one per proficiency level, Novice, IL, and IM/IH (Appendices C, D, and E), in addition to the two teacher-structured community-learning project plans (Appendices F and G). A short list of additional student project topics follows in Appendix H.

### **10. Student feedback**

Students’ feedback on community-learning projects has been overwhelmingly positive. Based on spontaneously shared comments and the content of their submitted reflections on learning, students tend to be most enthusiastic when

- (1) they have been able to make a personal connection through extensive conversation with a Russian speaker;
- (2) they have learned something that they consider significant about Russian culture from the experience;
- (3) they have understood a long story told to them by a Russian speaker;
- (4) they recognize that their language competency exceeds their expectations;
- (5) they have been successful in using their language to communicate

something of personal importance to them (like dietary restrictions or allergies in a restaurant).

Their enthusiasm is connected with a sense of accomplishment and meaningful connection. While many students are truly inspired by the projects and even more students at least recognize their significant value, the affective response to the community-learning project can vary widely, even between two students of equal proficiency level. The two following reflections provide a good example. Both students were members of the same Russian class, were approaching IM-level proficiency, and were even coincidentally at the same Russian restaurant at the same time and had the same server (though they were sitting on different sides of the restaurant).

Student A:

It was an incredibly interesting and eye-opening experience to go to the Silk Road Bistro and attempt to converse entirely in Russian with the staff there. . . . When we asked her [the server] where she was from, she ran with the question, giving us far more information than we had expected to understand, and giving us a look into her life, both as an individual and as a fellow Russian student who had also learned Russian in high school (she grew up in Moldova and only ever really knew the Cyrillic alphabet as a child), who had switched into Russian from a language quite different in sound and alphabet (her first language was Romanian), and who had struggled with the grammar and syntax until she finally reached fluency (she moved to Russia for a while as an adult). It was beyond interesting to hear her story, and I for one was amazed at how much of it I could understand, with her speaking at a normal pace and not trying particularly hard to make sure we were following. It was also touching when, after filling us in on her journey to mastery of the Russian language, she asked us where we were in school, how long we had been taking Russian, and how we were enjoying it. I did my best to respond that I had been taking Russian for three years. . . .

. . . It was a touching moment when the owner stopped by our table, with another young man, presumably a waiter, and both of them commended us in Russian for taking the time to learn a new language, and for coming to their restaurant to practice it. They told us that really the only way to learn the language is

through practice and immersion, so they were happy to speak to us in Russian and to help us if necessary, because they were just glad we were speaking as best we could. After that, I entirely stopped worrying about the mistakes I was making in trying to express myself and just enjoyed talking to them.

. . . All told, the experience was a huge success. The food was incredibly good (I thoroughly enjoyed my PLOV and one of my mother's SAMAS) and the wait staff were beyond positive, helpful, and encouraging. I fully intend to return to the Silk Road Bistro again, and hopefully more times as my language skills increase and I'm able to understand more, at higher speeds, and respond with greater ease, eloquence, vocabulary, and fewer anglicisms.

Student B:

It is always frightening to be thrust into new situations or stressful situations that have not been experienced in a while. I've found that this is a common occurrence while learning a foreign language, the most recent being the community-learning project our class was assigned. In this project, we had to complete a variety of tasks at a Russian restaurant. This required planning, as written through a thoughtful proposal. I had to fit this lunch into my busy weekend, placing it between a basketball game and more homework. . . .

. . . I was faced with one of the most confusing moments at that point, when our waitress asked me in Russian whether my mom wanted a regular or diet coke. I could not pick out the word for regular, which I knew, or the word for diet, which I didn't, so I looked helpless until the waitress helped me out. That left me both embarrassed and defeated, so I remained quiet for a while. . . .

. . . Now approached the most difficult part of this assignment: asking three questions. First, I asked if she was from Uzbekistan. In easily the most confusing portion of this experience, she explained to me how she grew up in Moldova and learned Russian in school and college, telling me not to worry and that my Russian was good and I could learn a lot with hard work. . . .

. . . I was overwhelmed the whole time I was talking to her, praying for a much smaller, and hopefully, slower response from her. . . .

In the above two responses, personality type is the factor that shapes the affective reaction of the students. The anxiety felt by Student B is palpable, interfered with completing the project in a way that satisfied the student, and kept him from developing the habits of mind (willingness to take risks, openness to continuous learning/learning in the moment, resilience, persistence, flexibility, patience with oneself) that support actual success in completing such a task as well as the perception of success. After reading Student B's reflection on learning, I met with him in person to discuss how his anxiety affected his enjoyment of the task and how it prompted his negative thinking. The student is now aware of how this negative thinking negatively impacts his perception of reality and his impressions of his own abilities. Indeed, from the information that Student B shared about his server, it is clear that he understood significantly more than what he gave himself credit for. I was able to point this out to him in a follow-up conversation. Together we were able to identify his perfectionist tendencies as the underlying source of his anxiety and were therefore able to identify strategies for reducing his anxiety in an immersive setting. He is now eager to practice these strategies in his next community-learning project.

Perfectionist tendencies, more than any other personality trait, proved to be the greatest obstacle to optimal engagement in the community-learning projects. "Perfectionists" were less able to be flexible in the moment and less able to connect and communicate, often missing opportunities to engage. Often students noticed the drawbacks of perfectionism themselves and conveyed this realization in their reflections on learning, as seen in the following quotes from three students:

- (1) I am disappointed because I feel that I did the amount of speaking mandatory for the project, but not any more. This was a combination of me wanting to be perfect and my waiter not being there very often. Next time, I would try to speak more because that was the part that really helped me grow . . . .
- (2) If I were to repeat this experience, I would want to prepare in a different way. Before I went I was drilling myself with the restaurant dialogues and wanting to perfect them. When I got to the restaurant I found that they weren't that important because I wasn't there to have pre-planned conversations. Drilling

these dialogues just made me more nervous about having a spontaneous conversation because I hadn't memorized the needed language . . . .

- (3) Something else also hit me, but only after my visit had already taken place. I realized that I was trying too hard to keep my grammar consistent and correct, and that rather than trying to make my Russian perfect, I should have just been focused on saying what I needed to say and keeping the conversation flowing. The more that I think about it, the more I realize that non-native English speakers speak in broken English all the time, and yet what they intend to say is perfectly clear. I wish I had had that revelation a little earlier so that I could have actually put it to use during my visit, but it's a bit too late for that now, and now I know that I can try out this method in the future . . . .

The second factor that has most influenced the quality of the experience for my students appears to be prior experience in immersion settings. The first time that I implemented a community-learning project (in the fall of 2013), my then grade eleven students (approaching IM oral proficiency) were assigned to visit a Russian store and complete some tasks that I had devised (Appendix G). To my great chagrin, many of the students responded negatively to this assignment after the fact, expressing that they felt self-conscious and awkward and that the Russians working in the store did not appreciate their presence and were irritated with them. I and a heritage student in that class were surprised to hear this, as we both frequent this store and have found the store personnel, as well as the Russian clientele, to be very friendly and eager to engage. Upon further explanation, both the heritage student and I understood that the students' reactions were largely due to a combination of them misunderstanding the reactions of the Russians working in the store: they interpreted neutral Russian intonation as harsh, felt ignored since the clerks were waiting to be beckoned before serving them, and assumed that peoples' stare signified irritation rather than curiosity (since a curious person would obviously ask a question, according to them). This was the start of a rich conversation about the dangers of projecting our culturally informed expectations on another culture and about the vast room for cultural miscommunication. Students also acknowledged the role that their own discomfort might have played in making them "less

approachable.” Three groups of students have done this project since this first group, and the reaction of this first group has not been repeated, which could be explained by the fact that the more recent students have had past immersion experiences and do not feel as awkward and self-conscious when engaging with native speakers. Notably, Novice-level students who have never been in an immersive setting have always expressed interest and felt comfortable in doing the community-learning assignments, even the first time around, because they are free to simply observe, without the pressure to engage.

Of the students who have had prior experience in immersive settings, it is the IL-level (not the Novice) students who have expressed the most apprehension. My IL-level students often lack confidence in their ability to use the language spontaneously because of the structured nature of their classroom experience. One IL level student articulated this well:

In spite of the amount of time I spend studying Russian, seldom do I have an opportunity to genuinely converse in Russian. Most often, the speaking I do is restricted to learned phrases for dialogues, or speaking in class with the core of words with which I feel most confident. It was hard to imagine myself just being able to speak without practicing in advance. That was the hardest thing about being at the Russian store.

Many students at the IL level express fear of failure or embarrassment. They fear that they will not be able to execute the task, will not be understood by native speakers, or will not understand what is said to them. Many, however, comment in their reflections on how confidence builds throughout the experience. When confidence does not build, that is usually due to either their perfectionist tendencies or their own unrealistic expectations of the language that they should be able to produce. “I wasn’t able to say exactly what I wanted to say to her. We also were not able to connect because we only talked about facts, not personal details or emotions.” In addition to assisting students to build the habits of mind that would best support comfort in learning in immersive environments, teaching students to align their expectations with their proficiency level is an important gateway to leading them toward greater comfort and appreciation for opportunities for immersion learning. While language proficiency plays a significant role in the students’ affective response to

the tasks, it is, in fact, the intersection between language proficiency and students' own expectations for language production that most determines student comfort with the project.

The written reflections on learning provide much evidence of students' growth as learners. In addition to rich reflection on Russian culture and cultural comparisons, students have expressed achieving a heightened level of self-awareness. They have credited the community-learning experience with leading them to understand obstacles to their learning in immersive environments that are rooted in their personalities (discomfort with unstructured learning and spontaneous language production, fear of failure or embarrassment, a lack of patience with their own skill limitations, an inclination to shy away from challenge, perfectionist tendencies, or lack of resilience). Often this realization, combined with their genuine desire to improve their language skills and their ability to comfortably interact with Russian speakers, has led them to formulate their own personal best strategies for learning in immersive environments, as evidenced by the following reactions from four different students:

- (1) I really had a great time at the restaurant. Everyone was excited to help us speak Russian and make the most out of this cultural experience. I relearned from this evening that there will be things I just do not know how to say correctly, and not to worry about it. The important thing is just to speak and to speak as much as I can . . . .
- (2) As a Russian speaker, I grew through allowing myself to make mistakes. In my everyday life I am a perfectionist, which hinders my ability to act in an improvisational speaking scenario most of the time. Finally, I was able to liberate myself of this by telling myself that I did not have to worry about my grammar being correct all the time. Instead I just had to make sure that I got the ideas across to the waiter. Of course, this was a huge challenge for me at first. I wanted to say everything perfectly, so I would take a long time to respond. I would understand what the waiter was saying, but I wouldn't know exactly how to respond. This was a major cause of stress during this excursion, but I did not want to let it ruin the dinner, so I decided to push through it, and I am so glad I did. I will try now to make this a habit . . . .

- (3) At this point, I was going to ask our waitress where she was born, but instead froze and could not bring myself to say anything but “thank you” in Russian. I recognize that out of nervousness I often step away from opportunities to speak and am jealous when others tell of their amazing conversations, and so I just realized that I need to force myself to ask questions as a first step. And so, when our server came back with dessert, I asked her where she was born. It was a big first step for me . . . .
- (4) I also struggled with understanding some of the things he said sometimes, but I learned that I am good at figuring out these things through context. For example, the waiter would use words that I did not know, but it was easy to get the context from the rest of the sentence and then be able to come up with an appropriate response. I was very pleased to discover this strength, and I believe that it will help me in future immersion scenarios . . . .

Repeated experience with the project and instructor’s feedback assist students in developing their ability to accurately assess their current language skills, accept where they are at, and understand where they are going. Recently, fewer students have been expressing unrealistic expectations for their current language production and instead many students have been rephrasing current disappointments into goals for the future. I am receiving more and more comments like the following:

X and I agreed that it would be a very worthwhile place to go on a semi-regular basis. After all, what could be better than Russian vocabulary fueled by good food? It will be fun too to see how much more we can say each time we come as we get to know people here and are capable of more sophisticated conversations with greater fluency. Today, I asked simple questions and understood the answers well. Maybe next time I can plan for a conversation. A year from now I hope to be able to have a real conversation without planning for it. Is that realistic?

In their reflections, students have expressed goals for future experiences without even being prompted to do so. The motif of “next time I will . . .” or “next time I want/hope to . . .” is pervasive in their reflections, echoing the central tenet of the Lifelong Learning Standard: “Learners set goals and reflect on their progress in using languages for enjoyment, enrichment and advancement (National Collaborative Board,

2015, 9).” As students set personal goals, they develop a growth mindset. Gradually over the last couple of years, students have moved further away from an “I can’t . . .” sensibility to a “not yet” understanding. They are seeing that given time, effort, and experience, they can develop both the habits of mind and the linguistic and cultural competencies necessary to engage deeply with Russian speakers.

## **11. Learner outcomes**

This project has exceeded expectations with regard to learner outcomes. Working on the projects, students demonstrate progress on each of the two standards in the Communities goal area: School and Global Communities and Lifelong Learning. Students have engaged locally in global communities through face-to-face engagement in Russian community venues throughout Baltimore and have built the skills for lifelong learning by devising their own projects based on personal interests and individual goals. In addition, students have developed cultural awareness, cultural competencies, and strategies for learning in immersive environments, which have in turn furthered cultural curiosity and extended students’ desire to interact with Russian-speaking communities and their confidence in doing so. Student reports on learning testify to this growth. The nature of the project design and the process of its execution have pushed students to build all of the essential twenty-first century life and career skills, as defined by P21 and to develop many of the habits of mind that Costa and Kallick (2008) deem necessary for a successful life in today’s world. Furthermore, such goals and outcomes have not served as a distraction from proficiency development but rather have assisted in furthering the proficiency goals that already formed the foundation of this proficiency-based classroom curriculum.

### ***11.1. Proficiency development***

The requirements for the community-learning project reports (past and future narration, expression of emotion, and support of opinion) reflect curricular goals at grades eleven and twelve (see Appendix A). The projects simply provide a more interesting, memorable, and authentic context in which to practice developing such discourse. The fact that students repeat this project each semester reinforces not only their developing cultural competency skills, but also their communicative skills. With

each experience, they become more comfortable in authentic immersion situations and communicate with greater facility both in interpersonal exchanges and in narrating events and expressing personal emotional reactions, cultural reflections, and cross-cultural comparisons. The final presentational and interpersonal speaking task are conducted without notes for all Intermediate-level students, which ensures that students not just produce but actually acquire the language necessary to describe their experience.

Since the inception of this project in the fall of 2013, I have seen a rise in the oral proficiency ratings earned by students on the OPI section of the Prototype AP® Russian Exam administered in the spring of their senior year. Prior to 2014, IM was the expected proficiency rating earned by strong classroom learners finishing the five-year pre-college sequence, with the IH rating earned primarily by strong students who had also benefited from a National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) summer immersion experience. In 2014–2016, only three of the IH ratings were earned by students who had additional immersion experience beyond the eighteen-day school trip.

*Table 1. Oral Proficiency Interview results 2006–2013 vs. 2014–2016*

Proficiency	Friends School Prototype AP® Russian Exam OPI Results (2006–2013) (N = 54)	Friends School Prototype AP® Russian Exam OPI Results (2014–2016) (N = 32)
Novice High	3.7% (2)	0% (0)
Intermediate Low	35.1% (19)	6.3% (2)
Intermediate Mid	46.3% (24)	37.5% (11)
Intermediate High	14.8% (6)	56.3% (19)

With the community-learning project, students, on average, graduate one sublevel higher than those who studied Russian before the inception of the community-learning project. While the relationship between the proficiency gains and community-learning projects must, of course, be seen as correlative rather than causal, the proficiency gains are nonetheless notable. It is not surprising that more students are reaching

the Advanced threshold (IH) thanks to the significantly increased time devoted to Advanced-level discourse functions (narration in all time frames, integration of detailed description with narration, detailed explanation, expression of cultural comparisons, etc.). As a result of the community-learning projects, eleventh- and twelfth-grade students have also been better prepared to engage confidently and extensively with Russians during their eighteen-day spring break trip to Russia, compounding the impact of that experience on their overall language gains.

### ***11.2. Communities standard: Global and school communities and lifelong learning***

The community-learning projects require students to engage locally in global communities through face-to-face engagement in Russian community venues throughout Baltimore. In their very design, they address the Global and School Communities goal area of the Communities Standard. More notable is the fact that, as a result, students (and their families) since the inception of this project have a much greater knowledge of the rich offerings of their local Russian community and often take advantage of it now outside of school assignments. They have learned that opportunities for engagement are ten minutes away, not across an ocean, and many students have indeed shown evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment beyond the classroom. Students have engaged in personally inspired visits to Russian commercial establishments (especially restaurants and stores) and attendance at Russian cultural events (concerts and festivals), as well as more extensive engagement in Russian-speaking communities. On a number of occasions, initial contact made through the completion of a community-learning project has resulted in an extensive (thirty-hour or more) community service project or a month-long senior work project. Friends School seniors have served as teacher's aides in total-immersion Russian classrooms for a month during their senior work project or as summer camp counselors for a Russian-immersion summer camp program; they have served lunches, organized activities, and taught basic computer use in Russian at a retirement center for Russian-speaking residents from the former Soviet Union. One girl even served for a month as a prep cook and server in a Russian restaurant. By senior year, many students are ready and eager to seek out unique and more extensive

opportunities to engage in Russian with the Russian-speaking community in Baltimore. Even students who do not seek to engage beyond their community-learning projects have experiences as part of these projects that cause them to reflect on cultural products and practices and to draw cross-cultural comparisons. With repeated exposure to the Russian community, increased reflection, and increased opportunities to discuss their observations with their peers and instructor, the Friends School of Baltimore Russian students draw cultural and cross-cultural conclusions that have become more mature and nuanced; the students are developing deep understanding rather than shallow knowledge and are learning to appreciate diversity and to listen to and view others with understanding and empathy. They are truly global citizens in the making. The *World-Readiness Communities* goal area is being met, along with many other objectives deemed necessary for a twenty-first century education.

## 12. Conclusion

This article has provided a framework for addressing the Communities goal area of the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (2015) by offering a template for student-driven community-learning projects and by illustrating how these projects may be integrated into a traditional proficiency-based classroom curriculum for each semester of a four-year high school Russian program. The project guidelines address not only the Communities Standard but also the life and career skills put forth in the P21 “Framework for 21st Century Learning” (P21 Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2007). Participating students are assessed on how thoroughly they demonstrate engagement with the Community Standard. The structure of the projects helps them cultivate essential life and career skills and habits of mind that enable them to overcome any roadblocks on the way to successful completion. Without this structure, students are not able to maximize their engagements with real-world speakers. The Communities Standard and the essential twenty-first century life and career skills provide the *WHAT TO DO?* guidelines for student projects while the habits of mind provide the *HOW TO DO IT?* guidelines for student engagement.

While this article is not based on empirical research and cannot substantiate a conclusion that desired learner outcomes have been achieved, the increased oral proficiency of graduating seniors corresponds to the

inception of the project. Much additional evidence (provided through students' detailed reflections on their learning) suggests significant learner outcomes in developing cultural competency skills, essential strategies for learning in immersive environments, and the habits of mind necessary for students to fully engage in learning opportunities in immersive settings.

While designed for a high-school program, this framework could be just as applicable in a post-secondary setting, as it provides a template for how to structure a community-learning project at various proficiency levels to support the development of skills essential for immersion learning, irrespective of the learner's age. The obstacles that I witnessed my students experience with engagement during their first experience abroad are not unique to high-school learners. Indeed, Cadd (2012) and Lindseth and Brown (2014) have addressed these same issues with post-secondary students abroad. Language instructors can provide students with opportunities prior to their study-abroad experience that will help them develop necessary skills for engagement with native speakers, build confidence, and strengthen the dispositions necessary to "behave intelligently" (Costa and Kallick, 16) when engaging with global communities.

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## **Piloting a Dynamic Assessment Model: Russian Nominal Morphology as a Building Block for L2 Listening Development**

**RIMMA ABLEEVA  
OLGA THOMASON**

### **1. Introduction**

Second language (L2) Russian research identifies listening comprehension as the least developed language ability among university students and points to the importance of listening instruction in Russian programs (e.g., Rifkin 2005; Comer 2012a; Isurin 2013). For example, Rifkin (2005, 11) states that students typically exhibit an “intermediate-low level of L2 listening proficiency” after completion of a 4-year Russian program. According to Isurin (2013, 39), the survey conducted among L2 Russian learners and instructors acknowledged “listening comprehension as the most problematic area in students’ language proficiency in general.” Comer (2012a) attributes poor listening ability to insufficient teaching materials and activities as well as inadequate exposure to authentic Russian listening input.

Another important branch of L2 Russian research has dealt with complex Russian inflectional and conjugational paradigms that exhibit numerous patterns, complicated by allomorphy, stress shifts, assimilations, and weakening. A number of studies have discussed the morphological richness of the Russian language regarding its acquisition, processing, and production of morphology by L2 learners and suggested paths for improvement of L2 instruction (e.g., Kempe and MacWhinney 1998; Sheen 2008). Russian textbooks for beginners, such as *Nachalo I* or *Golosa I*, present the basics of Russian nominal and verbal morphology to L2 learners with the hope that students will build their skills based on given prototypes. Intermediate textbooks, such as *Nachalo II*, *Golosa II*, and *V Puti*, offer a general grammatical overview of inflectional and conjugational systems. Russian introductory courses explain phonological features that sponsor morphological complexity, but often leave it up to students to retain and refresh the reasons for different types of inflectional variants,

conjugational paradigms, and patterns of allomorphy. Additionally, oral activities at the intermediate level are focused on the acquisition of new lexemes, syntactic structures, or intonation patterns and rarely target morphological complexities.

At the same time, L2 research reports on the difficulties encountered by native English learners while processing Russian inflectional morphology. For instance, Chrabaszcz and Gor (2014) conducted a study in which they exposed L2 learners to the listening tasks that involved the Russian hard/soft phonological contrast. The results of the study demonstrate that L2 listeners experienced the perception difficulty while processing phonological contrasts, for example, *балет* (ballet) – *болеть* (to be sick). This difficulty is due to learners' "unstable and unreliable perception of L2 phonological contrasts [that] renders words discriminated on the basis of these contrasts ambiguous and confusing" (447). In a similar study, Gor and Vdovina (2010) suggested that learners benefit greatly from explicit instruction on Russian morphology. The findings of their study showed that students who had structural formal instruction on morphology outperformed those who were exposed to abundant native input but lacked explicit teaching.

To effectively address L2 learners' difficulties in comprehending Russian oral productions, it is important to consider precisely which language features might impede overall listening comprehension. Therefore, the present study is motivated by research involving the contribution of both L2 listening comprehension and the perception of Russian inflectional morphology. The study examined the effects of the Dynamic Assessment (DA) approach on listening comprehension development and piloted a set of activities to facilitate the development of listening ability and the acquisition of Russian inflectional morphology. This longitudinal study represents a first attempt to implement a DA model into third and fourth semester intermediate Russian courses.

The goal of this two-semester investigation was twofold: the development of listening ability and the acquisition of inflectional morphology. However, it should be emphasized that, due to space constraints, the present paper is limited to the use of DA to enhance learners' comprehension of Russian morphophonology in oral productions, as one of the building blocks for successful listening comprehension.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. *Dynamic assessment*

DA is a pedagogical approach based on the theoretical concept of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). DA integrates mediation and assessment into a unified activity in which mediation should be sensitive to learners' ZPD, and it is recognized as the resource of development. According to Vygotsky, the development of the child (or the learner) involves the appropriation of humans' cultural experience in collaboration with adults (or teachers) and includes two levels, i.e., actual level and potential level of development. The actual level presumes the child's independent problem-solving and corresponds to the zone of actual development. The potential level of development presupposes adult-child collaboration during problem-solving activities. These learning activities are intended to reveal the child's abilities that are in the process of maturation. The potential level is associated with the ZPD and is understood by Vygotsky as

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined by problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky 1978, 86)

For Vygotsky, when exploring what the child (or the learner) can do independently, one explores the previous or actual level of child's development, whereas studying what the child is able to do with a more-skilled other (e.g., parents, peers, teachers) allows one to determine the child's (or the learner's) potential development. Therefore, what the child can do now only under the guidance of more skilled others and tomorrow without them comprises the ZPD, which emerges when the child (or the learner) is engaged in a learning activity (Leontiev 2001).

Importantly, Vygotsky (1997) claimed that development is not always smooth and straightforward. It can occur at changing rates and can include not only progressive but also regressive moves. With regard to regression in development (including L2 development), the following view should be considered:

If, as Vygotsky insists, development entails dialectical reorganization of mental processes it ought to be virtually impossible for a normal (e.g. non-brain damaged or non-psychotic) individual to return fully

to a previous developmental stage (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991, p. 176). What should be possible, however, is for the individual to move from a higher to a lower stage, but this “would not constitute retracing of a previously traversed path in development” (ibid); rather it would represent a partial unraveling of the higher functional system. (Lantolf and Aljaafreh 1995, 621)

DA is a relatively new approach in the field of L2 assessment. It was introduced to the L2 research and education community by Lantolf and Poehner (2004). In their article, they provided the following definition of DA:

Dynamic assessment integrates assessment and instruction into a seamless, unified activity aimed at promoting learner development through appropriate forms of mediation that are sensitive to the individual’s (or in some cases a group’s) current abilities. In essence, DA is a procedure for simultaneously assessing and promoting development that takes account of the individual’s (or group’s) zone of proximal development [and his/her responsiveness to mediation]. (Lantolf and Poehner 2004, 50)

Such a conceptualization of DA emphasizes a contrast between traditional assessment, which focuses on already-matured abilities, and DA, which aims at promoting functions maturing in the ZPD and in so doing prioritizes learners’ future development.

According to Lantolf and Poehner (2004), DA consists of two types: interventionist and interactionist. The interventionist type of DA includes intervention from the examiner during the test procedure, but it is a more formal and standardized approach. During interventionist DA, the examinees are given instruction item by item and if they cannot solve the item correctly, they are given prefabricated hints. Interactionist DA involves mediation emerging from interactions between examiner and examinee. During interactionist DA, leading questions, hints, or prompts are not planned in advance; instead, they emerge from mediated dialogue (or collaborative interaction) between the examiner and the examinee in which the examiner reacts to the examinee’s needs and constantly recalibrates his or her mediation. It is important to note that within DA, the examiner–examinee relationship is based on the idea of teaching and helping; for example, learners are allowed to pose

questions and receive immediate feedback. Within both formats of DA, the instruction may be given in individual or group settings (Poehner and Lantolf 2013).

## **2.2. Interactionist DA**

A number of interactionist DA studies investigated the DA framework to capture L2 development in one-on-one settings. DA has been reported as an effective tool for revealing the source of L2 learner difficulties while helping learners to overcome these difficulties. For example, Antón (2009) introduced a study that she conducted in 2003. This study pioneered the effectiveness of a DA procedure to test language proficiency of advanced L2 Spanish learners. Poehner (2005) adopted an interactionist DA procedure to enhance the use of verbal aspects (*passé composé* and *imparfait*) among advanced L2 French university students. Ableeva (2010) used an interactionist DA to develop and promote L2 listening ability among intermediate French university students. In her study, students were asked to listen to a series of increasingly complex authentic French texts and to recall them independently in English. The mediator helped the students whenever they encountered problems recalling specific portions of a text. Through learners' responses to mediation, Ableeva determined the specific nature of their problems and assisted them to overcome the problems. The study results showed that grammatical and phonological problems were more salient than what previous listening comprehension research had argued.

Ableeva and Arshavskaya (in preparation) conducted an interactionist DA study pertinent to L2 Russian research and instruction. They investigated the capacity of DA to identify the source of problems with comprehending audio texts among L2 Russian intermediate students. During one-on-one sessions, Ableeva and Arshavskaya observed that in some cases, learners' inability to distinguish appropriately nominal endings resulted in text miscomprehension. The following excerpt from a DA session exemplifies this observation:

**Extract from the audio text.** The speaker said:

*Аня думает, что профессия учителя трудная, но ей нравится эта профессия.*

'Anya thinks that the profession of a teacher is difficult, but she likes this profession.'

After listening to the text twice, a participant in the study recalled the above extract as follows: “And umh . . . I caught that she thought one of her professors was difficult and she didn’t like him.” The student’s recall demonstrates his failure to recognize a word he already knew well, i.e., *профессия* ‘profession.’ Even though the noun *профессия* is a cognate and was repeated twice in this audio extract, the student’s comprehension resulted in minimal understanding of the excerpt. Through teacher-student DA-based interactions that occurred later in this session, the researchers revealed that the source of students’ poor listening performance resided in his inability to discriminate appropriately the endings, and instead of *профессия* he heard *профессор*. In fact, the findings from Ableeva and Arshavskya’s study provided the impetus for the present DA project.

### **2.3. Interventionist DA**

To date, the most representative L2 study that has explored interventionist DA is the research project *Computerized Dynamic Assessment of Language Proficiency in French, Chinese and Russian* (<https://calper.la.psu.edu/content/coda>). It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a full discussion of this project (for more details, see Poehner and Lantolf 2013). This project developed online tests of listening and reading comprehension in three languages for intermediate L2 learners. The tests can be administered to an individual learner or to a group of learners.

Each test item includes five multiple-choice options to assess learners’ independent performance and graduated assistance to observe learners’ mediated performance. Graduated assistance consists of three prescribed prompts that provide learners first with implicit prompts and then gradually with more explicit prompts. This type of gradually mediated intervention allows more fine-grained diagnoses of learner abilities and allows instructors to capture through computer-mediated prompts how much support each individual learner needs to complete a reading or a listening test. Each test includes near-transfer tasks.

### **2.4. Transfer tasks**

Transfer tasks are one of the most salient features of DA and have been used in several L2 studies (for more details on transfer assessments in

L2 settings, see Poehner 2005, Ableeva 2010, Poehner and Lantolf 2013, and section 3 of the present paper). Poehner and Lantolf described transfer tasks as follows:

Transfer holds that introducing assessment tasks that follow the same principles as earlier ones but are more difficult or complex can offer insights whether learners have internalized mediation previously offered. (2013, 17)

The purpose of transfer tasks is to determine the extent to which learners are able to extend the abilities they developed during mediation to similar activities. In other words, to assess development fully, one must incorporate the following three pieces of information: the person's independent performance, the person's mediated performance, and the person's ability to transfer what is gained through mediation to other similar tasks.

The "multiple transfers" approach originates from DA psychology research and was proposed by the group of Brown and her colleagues, who viewed several transfer sessions as a highly desirable design feature of the DA framework. For example, Campione, Brown, Ferrera, and Bryant (1984) used a set of three transfer sessions conducted directly after the post-test. The set of transfer sessions included: near transfer, far transfer and very far transfer tasks. To assess the "near transfer," the test-takers are given problems that are based on the same principles as the original problems but are presented in new combinations. To test "far transfer" and "very far transfer," test-takers are invited to solve problems similar to the original but more complex.

### **3. The study**

This two-semester study was carried out in 2016–2017 at a large public university in the southeastern United States. The project developed and piloted a DA-based model for L2 Russian instruction and assessment and investigated how to embed the DA model into intermediate teaching resources and a language course. The focus of the study was on the development of listening comprehension and the acquisition of Russian morphophonology among intermediate university students. The areas of Russian morphology selected for this study were nominal inflection, verbal conjugation, stress shifts, and allomorphy.

### **3.1. Participants**

The participants were 16 intermediate students enrolled in a third semester Russian course<sup>48</sup>. Four students who self-evaluated their proficiency in Russian as below average volunteered to participate in all experimental sessions of the study. These enrichment learners are marked as EL 1–4. The control group consisted of 12 students, identified below as CG 1–12. Student numbers were assigned randomly in no particular order and do not bear any significance. All participants were native speakers of English, aged between 18 and 21 years. The experimental group consisted of 4 female students and the control group was a mixed-gender group.

### **3.2. Materials**

The materials developed in this study are based on Chapters 1–8 of *V Puti: Russian Grammar in Context* (Kagan, Miller, and Kudyma 2005). As part of the study, we developed sixteen pseudo-authentic audio texts (two per chapter) that stylistically parallel the texts from *V Puti*. The topic of each text is related to the topic of each chapter and is based on grammar and vocabulary materials of each chapter. In addition, the study created eight sets of audio phonological exercises for Chapters 1–8. These exercises were used during the enrichment program of the study.

### **3.3. Research design and methodology**

The DA model piloted in this study adopted the methodological suggestions advocated by Poehner and Lantolf (2013). The computerized DA instrument described by Poehner and Lantolf (2013, 325) follows an interventionist approach to DA that privileges “scripted prompts arranged hierarchically and administered sequentially.” The advantage of this approach regarding its implementation into a language course is that “it enhances efficiency in terms of the number of students that can be simultaneously assessed” (2013, 325), in contrast to the interactionist DA approach, which is usually employed in one-on-one settings.

The research design of the present study included three stages for each of eight chapters: (1) the pre-test, (2) the enrichment program, and (3) the post-test (near transfer assessment). The pre-test included two diagnostic assessments: one listening assessment to check audio-text comprehension and one assessment designed to test a morphological

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<sup>48</sup> One of the authors of the study taught this course.

item. The pre-test assessments did not include a DA procedure; the pre-test involved only independent performance of participants in order to diagnose their ability to understand the audio-texts and the acquisition of a morphology item.

The enrichment program involved one-on-one tutoring sessions and was focused on learners' morphology problem areas, which were identified during the pre-test stage. To cope with the selected Russian morphophonological phenomena, the study developed a series of exercises, which were used during the enrichment program. These exercises were divided into two parts: those that offer listening and production assignments on the level of a word and those that provide training on the level of phrases and sentences. Only experimental learners participated in the enrichment program.

The post-test included two transfer assessments: one listening assessment to check text comprehension and one assessment of a morphological item in order to track the extent to which experimental learners could internalize and extend the mediation provided throughout the enrichment program. The post-test involved independent performance of participants and mediated (or DA-based) performance in cases where the independent performance was not successful.

### ***3.4. Procedure and DA model***

The sessions for each of the eight chapters followed the same design procedure and format and included three stages:

**Stage 1:** Diagnostic assessment (independent performance, no DA at this stage)

**Stage 1a.** Listening assessment: comprehensive listening activity based on Text 1 (a pseudo-authentic audio-text connected to the topic of a given chapter).

**Stage 1b.** Morphology assessment: discriminative listening activity based on Text 1 (a morphophonology exercise related to the grammar of a given chapter).

**Stage 2:** Enrichment program

**Stage 2a.** Level of a word: exercises.

**Stage 2b.** Level of phrases and sentences: exercises.

**Stage 3:** Near-Transfer Assessment

*Independent performance*

**Stage 3a.** Transfer listening assessment: comprehensive listening activity based on Text 2 (a pseudo-authentic audio-text connected to the topic of a given chapter, similar to Text 1 but not the same).

**Stage 3b.** Transfer morphology assessment: discriminative listening activity based on Text 2 (a morphophonology exercise related to the grammar of a given chapter).

*Mediated performance*

**Stage 3c.** DA prompts (only if needed)

**Stage 3d.** Explanation (only if needed)

Mediated performance included a menu of three DA prompts, arranged from the most implicit to the most explicit:

**Prompt 1:** Offering a choice based on three options (providing learners with three options, one of which includes the key morphophonology item)

**Prompt 2:** Offering a choice based on two options (providing learners with two options, one of which includes the key morphophonology item)

**Prompt 3:** Pointing to the mistake(s) and asking learners to correct and explain mistake(s) on their own

Stage 3d (Prompt 4) involved the instructor’s explicit explanation if Prompts 1–3 did not result in a correct answer. The graphic presentation of the DA model is summarized in Table 1.

*Table 1. The DA model.*

Pre-test	Enrichment Program	Post-test	DA Prompts
Independent Performance		Independent Performance	Mediated Performance DA
Stage 1a	Stage 2a	Stage 3a	Stage 3c
Stage 1b	Stage 2b	Stage 3b	Stage 3d

The control group participated only in stage 1b and stage 3b, whereas the experimental group took part in all stages. To illustrate the use of the DA model, this paper considers the assessments of genitive

forms developed for chapter 4 of *V Puti*. Given space constraints, we focus our discussion here on stages 1b, 3b and 3c.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Control group and experimental group: Independent performance

During the stage 1b diagnostic assessment, participants were asked to listen to Text 1 and write down the omitted endings that they heard. This diagnostic assignment targeted genitive forms of nouns, a grammar topic examined in Chapter 4 of *V Puti*. Text 1 included 16 omitted genitive endings.

Figure 1. Results of EL1–4 and CG 1–12 on stage 1b diagnostic assessment: discriminative listening activity based on Text 1.

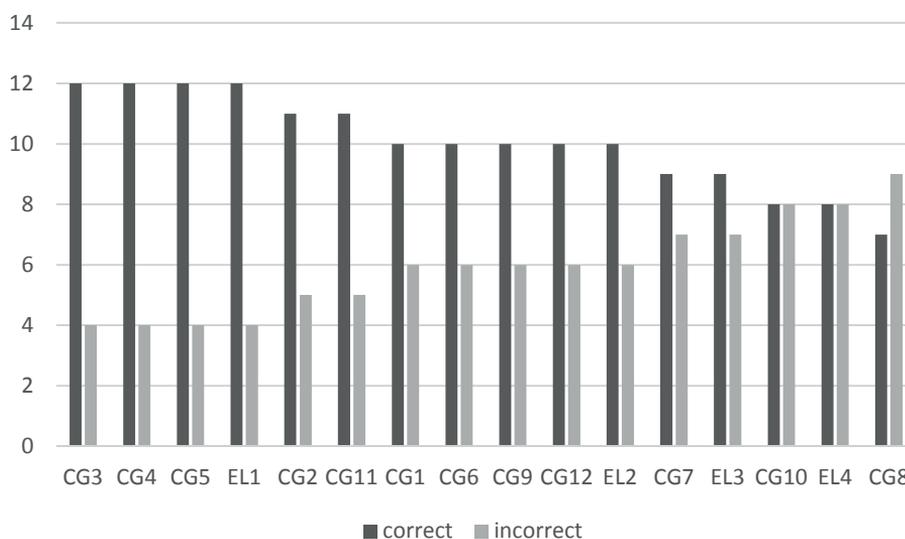


Figure 1 demonstrates that neither the ELs nor the CGs were able to complete this task without errors. Furthermore, the best result achieved at this stage was 75% (12 correct answers; achieved by CG3, CG4, CG5, and EL1)—a score generally interpreted as barely satisfactory performance. CG8, CG10, and EL4 achieved the lowest scores: CG8 scored 44% (9 correct answers) and CG10 and EL4 scored 50% (8 correct answers). The average score of all the ELs and the CGs was 63%. Thus, the stage 1b results demonstrated that nearly a third of participants completed the

diagnostic assignment unsuccessfully and with great difficulties. Figure 2 represents the types of nominal constructions proposed to students during the pre-test, while completing the discriminative listening activity based on Text 1.

Figure 2. Errors by nominal phrases in results of EL1–4 and CG1–12 on stage 1b diagnostic assessment (symbol \* indicates the form being analyzed below).

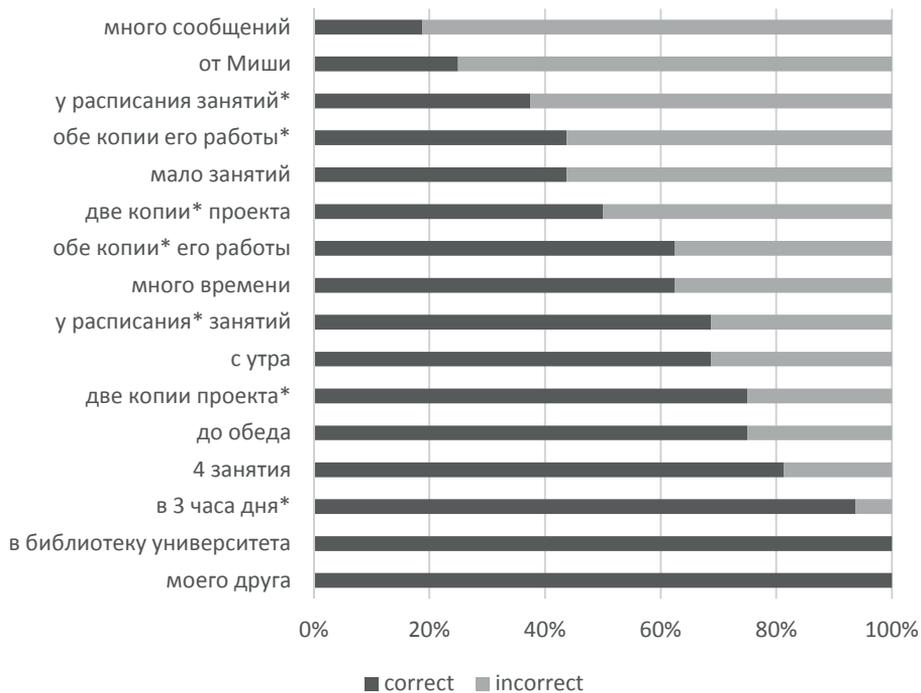


Figure 2 presents phrases, not as they appeared in Text 1, but based on the number of errors that were encountered. Figure 2 demonstrates that genitive singular for the hard-stem masculine nouns was the least problematic, even in those instances where the genitive form complemented another phrase. For example, students successfully processed the phrase *в библиотеку университета* 'to the library of the university.' The success rate for this phrase was 100%. However, students were less successful comprehending these forms when they were part of a prepositional construction. Students exhibited a lower success rate with the constructions *с утра* 'from the morning' and *до обеда* 'until lunch':

69% and 75%, respectively. The difficulty was not with the genitive form itself, but rather with prepositions, which are typically not stressed in Russian and are pronounced together with their complements. Our data show that students did not suggest any variants for the ending in these cases but simply left them blank. It is probable that the participants were having problems comprehending these forms even though they had a written version of Text 1 in front of them.

The instance of *обе копии его работы* ‘both copies of his work’ is also noteworthy. The success rate for this phrase was only 44%, even though *работа* ‘work’ is a hard-stem feminine noun that students learn as beginners. Two factors complicate the comprehension of this phrase. On the one hand, *его работы* ‘of his work’ is a complement for another nominal construction. On the other hand, its genitive ending is unstressed and, as a result, a listener does not hear [i]. In unstressed positions, the high vowel /i/, which can be written in Russian as *и* or *ы*, is slightly lowered to [ɪ] (Comrie and Corbett 2006). The discussion of stressed and unstressed vowels generally occurs at the very beginning of Russian courses for beginners (Lubensky et al. 2002; Robin et al. 2012a). These discussions are focused on unstressed /a/, /o/, and /e/, stating that unstressed vowels are reduced quantitatively and qualitatively and tend to merge, but they do not explain unstressed /i/. Most of the exercises that aim to train students’ production and listening comprehension of unstressed vowels offer practice involving isolated words and do not expose students to phrases, sentences, or texts (cf. Robin et al. 2012b). The students’ erroneous results in our study demonstrate that students hesitated in their selection of the ending for *его работы* ‘of his work,’ trying to choose between *е*, *а*, and *й*. This hesitation demonstrates that intermediate students might be aware of differences between stressed and unstressed vowels but lack practice that would help them succeed in listening comprehension in these complex cases.

Figure 2 shows that most of the errors involved soft-stem feminine and neuter nouns, such as *копия* ‘a copy’ and *занятие* ‘a class.’ The genitive singular forms *копии* (of a copy), *занятия* ‘of a class’ and the genitive plural forms *занятий* ‘of classes’ and *сообщений* ‘of messages’ accounted for the largest number of errors in our dataset: as shown in Figure 2, students had only a 19% success rate (3 correct answers) with the phrase *много сообщений* ‘many messages.’ In addition to the unstressed vowels in the ending, these

phrases contain a combination of vowels (-ии, -ия) or of a vowel and a glide (-ий). Russian vowels, which are pronounced as a separate nucleus when combined and do not create a diphthong that native English speakers expect based on phonetic properties of their mother tongue.

Our data shows that the mistakes the participants made consisted of either suggesting different vowels in place of an expected glide or erroneously believing that they heard a glide instead of a vowel. For example, for *много сообщений* 'many messages,' students suggested the incorrect variants *много сообщения*, *много сообщение*, and *много сообщении*, and for *обе копии* 'both copies,' they suggested *обе копий*. The incorrect variant *много сообщения* could involve a grammatical error where a student failed to apply the rule for usage of the genitive case after quantitative adverbs, but we cannot offer the same explanation for the rest of the examples. Furthermore, our data presents numerous instances when participants made mistakes thinking that they heard a single vowel instead of a combination of sounds. For example, participants offered the form *копи* for *копии* 'copies' and *сообщение* for *сообщений* 'messages.'

The low score for the phrase *от Миши* 'from Misha' should be attributed to interlinguistic orthography interference in addition to problems with the unstressed ending. It is common for L2 Russian learners to confuse the English letter *e*, which often spells [i:] as in *see*, and the Russian letter *е*, which corresponds to [ɛ]. Several participants offered the erroneous form *от Мише*, showing that this obstacle remained even at the intermediate level.

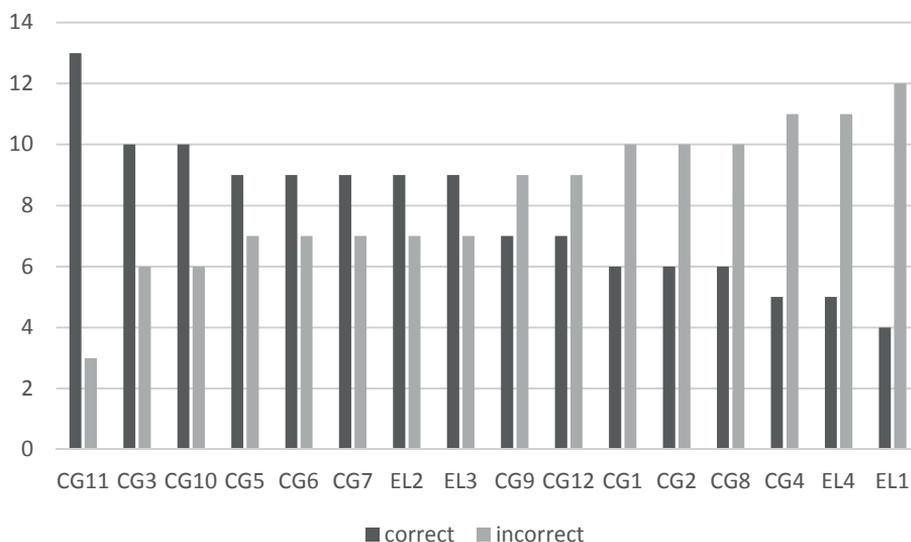
Following stage 1b, the CGs received no enrichment treatment whereas the ELs participated in two sessions of the enrichment program offered during stages 2a and 2b.<sup>49</sup> Both groups participated in regular classroom activities covered in chapter 4.

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<sup>49</sup> Stage 2a begins with the explicit explanation of differences between stressed and unstressed vowels and the specifics of pronunciation of vowel+vowel and vowel+glide combinations. The exercises range from listening assignments where students listened to and repeated separate nominal nominative and genitive forms, paying attention to the pronunciation of endings, to discriminative tasks where students had to select only the form(s) that they heard from the suggested list. Stage 2b also offered activities where students had an opportunity to compare phrases that share lexemes but differ in forms (e.g., *не печатал сообщения* 'did not type a message' and *не печатал сообщений* 'did not type messages') and to choose the construction that they heard. At the end of stage 2b, students worked with familiar exercises that required them to fill in the blanks in passages for forms that they heard.

During the stage 3b transfer morphology assessment, participants were asked to listen to Text 2 and write down the genitive endings that they heard. Text 2 was a continuation of the story in Text 1 and contained similar lexemes and expressions. The total number of omitted endings in Text 2 was 16, the same number as in Text 1. Figure 3 shows the result for the enrichment learners and the control group for stage 3b.

*Figure 3. Results of EL1–4 and CG 1–12 on stage 3b Transfer morphology assessment: discriminative listening activity based on Text 2.*

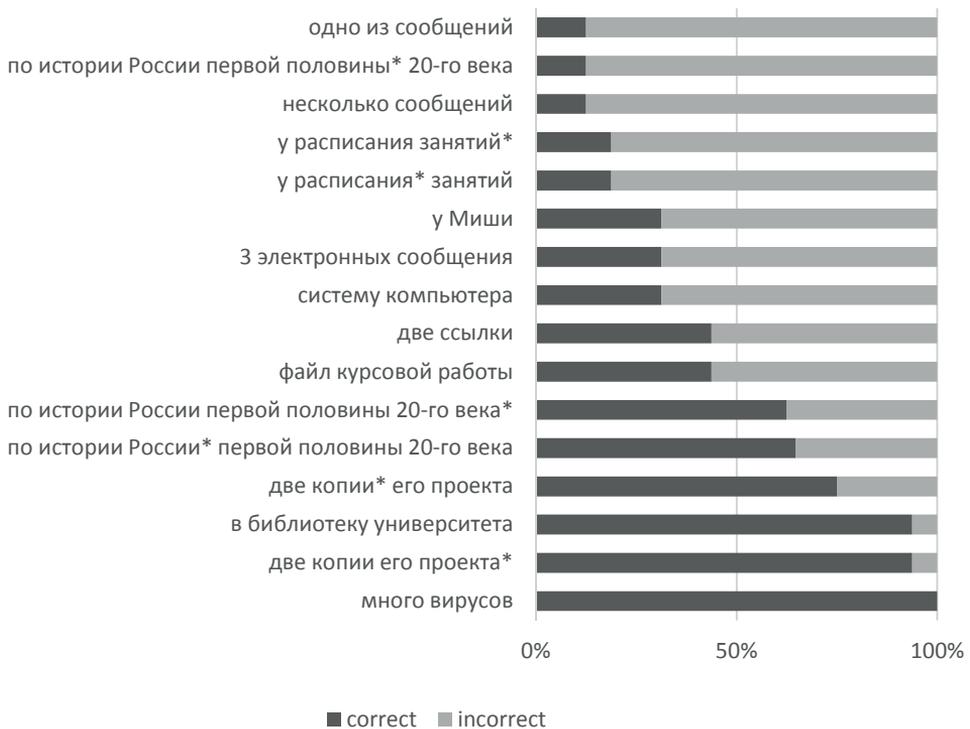


We should specify here that while the identification EL1–4 in Figure 3 and Figure 1 correlate to the same students, the numbers used for the tags referring to the participants from the control group do not correlate to the same students. For example, the tag CG11 in Figure 1 and the tag CG11 in Figure 3 do not refer to the same student. Students in the control group agreed to take part in this project only anonymously. For this reason, we have no way of tracking the progress of learners from the control group. But Figure 3 still carries important information for our study since it documents a holistic representation of the progress of students who had no exposure to enrichment exercises.

Figure 3 demonstrates that once again neither EL nor CG students were able to complete the assignment successfully. Moreover, the overall

results worsened. Even though the highest score (CG11) was 81% (13 correct answers), the lowest (EL1) dropped to 25% (only 4 correct answers). The scores averaged 49%. EL1 displayed a drastic change in scores: during stage 1b this student was among the leaders attaining 75%, but during stage 3b EL1 showed the worst results among ELs and CGs. EL2, EL3, and EL4 also showed a decline. The types of nominal constructions used in Text 2 and the results of the diagnostic assessment on stage 3b are summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Errors by nominal phrases in results of EL1–4 and CG1–12 on stage 3b diagnostic assessment: discriminative listening activity based on Text 2 (symbol \* indicates the form being analyzed).



The situation is similar to the one portrayed in Figure 2. The genitive forms of hard-stem masculine nouns remained less problematic while soft-stem feminine and neuter nouns continued to cause problems for the listening comprehension of L2 Russian learners.

One possible explanation for this abrupt drop in learners' ability to discriminate the genitive endings during stage 3b can be illustrated

by findings from L2 reading research. Comer (2012b, 239) asserted that L2 Russian advanced “readers can generally parse adnominal genitive phrases when they contain just two nouns and the vocabulary is known or suggestive.” It should be noted that while Text 1 (the pre-test) contained a number of phrases with multiple genitive forms, e.g., *две копии его проекта* ‘two copies of the project,’ Text 2 (the post-test: transfer) included longer chains of genitives, e.g., *по истории России первой половины 20 века* ‘in the history of Russia of the first half of the 20th century.’

Another possible explanation for such low performance is the fact that stage 3b included the transfer task, which was based on a more complex text. L2 researchers have previously commented on the low performance of participants during near-transfer tasks (e.g., Poehner and Lantolf 2013). Further research is needed to examine students’ performance throughout consecutive assignments that could determine how students perform during multiple transfer sessions.

#### ***4.2. Enrichment learners: Independent and mediated performance***

Mediated performance occurred during stage 3c of chapter 4 and involved only three experimental learners: EL1, EL2, and EL3.<sup>50</sup> During stage 3c, EL1–3 were offered Prompt 1, which asked them to listen to Text 2 again and to select an appropriate ending from the three suggested variants. If participants were not completely successful in completing this task, they were offered Prompt 2, but this time they had to select a fitting ending from two variants. If the students continued to experience difficulties, stage 3d provided explicit explanations of a problematic case with a review of the theoretical material under the mediated assistance of the instructor. Figure 5 portrays EL1–3’s raw scores for their independent and mediated performance during the post-test assessments at stages 3b and 3c.

Figure 5 demonstrates differences in results between independent performance (the actual level of development) during stage 3b and mediated performance (the potential level of development) during stage 3c. It should be remembered that EL1–3 completed the enrichment program activities before stage 3b.

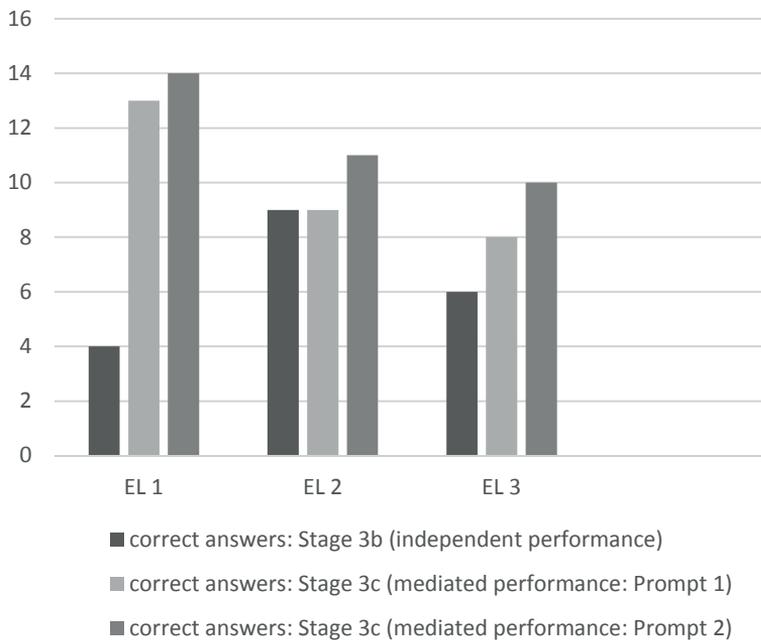
The analysis of answers provided by EL1–3 shows that the more

<sup>50</sup> EL4 could not participate in stages 3c and 3d. The demands of her courses at the end of the semester prevented EL4 from participating in the mediated portion of chapter 4

complex nature of the transfer task (Text 2) triggered a drop in learners' correct answers during stage 3b, as compared to stage 1b. However, the increase in correct answers during mediated assistance involving Prompt 1 and Prompt 2 provides evidence of the students' maturing ability to cope with a more challenging listening task based on a text that contained long chains of genitive forms.

With regard to stage 3c, the number of correct answers provided by EL1 demonstrates that she addressed the difficulties brought to the surface during stage 3b: she returned to the leading position already after Prompt 1 and improved her result even further after Prompt 2. Interestingly, the analysis of EL1's data shows one persistent error throughout her three attempts to complete the task. In stage 3b (independent performance), she wrote *первой половине* instead of *первой половины* 'of the first half.' Despite the choices offered during stage 3c (mediated performance), Prompt 1 (*половин е /а /ы*), and Prompt 2 (*половин е /ы*), she delivered the same incorrect answer, i.e., she selected the ending 'е' in both cases.

Figure 5. Performance of EL1–3 on stage 3b and stage 3c.



The progress was not straightforward for EL2 and EL3. The analysis of errors made by EL2 reveals her inability to cope fully with the transfer task. Even though EL2 had the same number of correct (9) and incorrect (7) answers at stage 3b (independent performance) and stage 3c (Prompt 1), she made different errors during these two attempts to complete the task. For example, she wrote a correct ending for *у расписания занятий* 'near the schedule of classes' during stage 3b. However, when offered a choice during Prompt 1 (*занят **ии** / **ий** / **ия***) and Prompt 2 (*занят **ии** / **ий***), she selected '**ии**' in both attempts. In addition, she consistently provided incorrect answers for the same ending in *несколько сообщений* 'several messages' and *одно из сообщений* 'one of the messages' during stages 3b and 3c. The examination of EL3's performance demonstrates her struggle to discriminate the genitive forms for soft-stem feminine and neuter nouns where one has to distinguish between combinations of vowels and vowel+glide. Stages 3b and 3c provide evidence of consistent errors in EL3's performance in those instances where she had to distinguish '**ий**' from '**ия**' or '**ие**'.

All ELs exhibited almost identical difficulties during their mediated performance. A possible explanation for this situation is that the enrichment program in this study was limited to only two thirty-minute sessions. The constant errors with the same endings pointed to the fact that the learners still required instructional assistance and more practice to discriminate the endings that contain groups of vowels with a glide in listening tasks. It should be also highlighted here that the development of some language features (e.g., genitive forms) is not even and can take more time and instruction than other language features.

## 5. Limitations and conclusion

While this study offers empirically based insights into the development of L2 learners to comprehend nominal inflections in audio texts, it also faces several limitations. First, the number of control and experimental learners was too small to possibly generalize beyond the context of this two-semester project. However, the small number of participants did not negate the importance of listening comprehension in L2 teaching and learning. Second, this study was further limited by the duration of the enrichment program, which included only two sessions and prevented the experimental learners from getting expanded listening

practice. Finally, the study was limited by the number of transfer tasks to track the development of learners' ability to discriminate morphological features during listening tasks.

Notwithstanding, the results of the study demonstrate that intermediate learners from the control and the experimental group encountered problems in understanding the genitive phrases during independent performance. However, the findings show that although the experimental learners had difficulties in recognizing the genitive forms independently, they were able to attain a better result through mediation, that is, through the prompts and the mediated guidance of the instructor. Even though the experimental learners still required mediation, their responsiveness to mediated assistance demonstrates that their capacity to discriminate the genitive endings while listening to a text, was in the process of maturing and was in their ZPD. From the perspective of Vygotsky's theory, responsiveness to mediation is an important indicator of ongoing development and is indispensable for understanding the learner's future developmental trajectory.

Based on this pilot study, we conclude that the data obtained throughout learners' independent and mediated performance provide clues for possible paths of development in language acquisition and calls for further research that would investigate mediated performance of L2 Russian learners, gathering data from a larger set of participants.

## Appendix

### Listening materials (audio texts)

#### Глава 4. WWW. Всемирная паутина

<b>Text 1</b> <b>(Pre-test: Diagnostic assessment)</b>	<b>Text 2</b> <b>(Post-test: Transfer assessment)</b>
<i>Сегодня утром, когда я открыла свою электронную почту, то увидела там много сообщений от Миши, моего друга. Он прислал мне эти сообщения в 7 часов утра. Миша написал, что у него завис</i>	<i>Итак, в 3 часа дня я пошла в библиотеку университета и встретила с Мишей у расписания занятий, чтобы отдать ему две копии его проекта. Его проект - это</i>

<p>компьютер и он не может распечатать свой проект. Ему надо сдать проект сегодня в 3 часа дня, а у него с утра и до обеда будет 4 занятия в университете, и он просит меня помочь распечатать две копии проекта в библиотеке.</p> <p>Мне кажется, что я смогу помочь Мише, потому что у меня сегодня мало занятий и у меня будет много времени, чтобы распечатать его проект.</p> <p>Сначала я пойду в библиотеку университета, а потом встречу с Мишей в 3 часа у расписания занятий и отдам ему обе копии его работы. [16 items]</p>	<p>курсовая работа по истории России первой половины 20 века. Когда я увидела Мишу, я его не узнала. Он был очень расстроен. Он сказал, что у него всё еще есть проблемы с компьютером. После того как утром компьютер завис, Миша перезагрузил компьютер. А когда он его включил опять, то увидел, что файл курсовой работы не сохранился. Еще он увидел на мониторе несколько сообщений о том, что в компьютере много вирусов. Тут он вспомнил, что вчера получил 3 странных электронных сообщения на свой аккаунт в Рамблере и открыл одно из сообщений. В сообщении было две ссылки, он открыл эти ссылки... И вот после этого-то у Миши и завис компьютер, и теперь, наверное, надо будет менять операционную систему компьютера. [16 items]</p>
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### Excerpts from the materials used during Stage 3.

#### **Stage 3b. Independent Performance**

*Listen to the text again and write down the ending that you hear.*

Итак, в 3 часа дня я пошла в библиотеку университет \_\_\_\_\_ и встретила с Мишей у расписан \_\_\_\_\_ занят \_\_\_\_\_, чтобы отдать ему две коп \_\_\_\_\_ его проект \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Stage 3c. Mediated Performance**

*Prompt 1 (Implicit). Listen to the text again, and select the ending that you hear*

Итак, в 3 часа дня я пошла в библиотеку университет **а / ов / о** и встретила с Мишей у расписан **ия / ие / ий** занят **ии / ий / ия**, чтобы отдать ему две коп **ии / ий / ия** его проект **ов / а / у**.

**Prompt 2 (Less implicit). Listen to the text again and circle the ending that you hear.**

Итак, в 3 часа дня я пошла в библиотеку университет **а / ов** и встретила с Мишей у расписан **ия / ие** занят **ии / ий**, чтобы отдать ему две коп **ии / ий** его проект **ов / а**.

**Prompt 3 (More explicit). Listen to the text again together with a student and point out the errors. Ask a student to correct and explain the indicated mistakes independently.**

### **Stage 3d. Mediated Performance (instructor's explicit explanations)**

**Prompt 4 (Explicit). If a student is not able to correct a mistake independently, provide correct answers and explanations.**

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## **Word Order Patterns in the Writing of Heritage and Second Language Learners of Russian**

**OLESYA KISSELEV**

### **1. Introduction**

Word Order (WO) variability is an important feature of the Russian language. Appropriate use of WO patterns makes a Russian text meaningful and coherent and has larger implications for the grammaticality of sentences and the ability of the language user to interpret and convey the meaning of the utterance. In the words of the late Olga Kagan, “every learner and teacher of Russian would agree that acquisition of native-like WO is one of the most challenging hurdles on the path to the higher levels of language performance” (Kagan and Dillion 2004, 89). Despite this widely shared opinion, little is known about the development of WO variability in Russian interlanguage, both in the case of mainstream foreign learners (L2) of Russian and in the case of speakers of Russian as a heritage language (HL) (Laleko and Dubinina 2018).

The purpose of the current study is to address the gap in the existing research literature and to explore WO variation in written Russian learner data as well as to discuss the implications for pedagogy. The study investigates the use of WO patterns from the developmental perspective by comparing the use of WO patterns by students at the intermediate level of language proficiency and the use of WO patterns by students of more advanced language proficiency. Additionally, the study compares the use of WO patterns in the writing of learners from different linguistic backgrounds, L2 and HL. The study is exploratory in nature: with few previous studies addressing WO in Russian learner production, the research aim is formulated broadly as an attempt to describe the patterns of use of different WOs in the writing of learners of Russian and to explore the abilities of the learners to express meanings coded in variable WOs.

## 2. Russian WO in the light of discourse-pragmatics

The Russian language belongs to the so-called variable WO languages, which—due to their rich inflectional systems—do not have to rely on the order of sentence constituents to mark grammatical functions (see, e.g., Yokoyama 1986; Comrie 1987; Bailyn 2012). Morphological marking can typically help distinguish subjects, objects, and, where available, indirect objects, allowing the constituents to linearize variably. Using this logic, a simple transitive sentence with the proposition can potentially result in six variations of WO: SVO, OVS, SOV, OSV, VSO, and VOS. Despite the availability of all six variations, the actual distribution of the WO patterns appears to be skewed, and Russian NSs show a strong preference for producing some WO patterns over others (Bivon 1971; Kallenstinova 2007), with up to 80% of all Russian sentences realized as SVO. The apparent imbalance in the frequencies of WO patterns is a result of FUNCTIONAL properties of linearization properties.

Largely, variability of WO patterns in Russian is tied to basic discourse functions, which could be described as follows:

1. introducing a NEW TOPIC or referent to the stretch of discourse, usually by asserting the existence of the referent in some “possible world” (Yokoyama 1986, 182);
2. providing ADDITIONAL INFORMATION about the topic or referent that has been introduced earlier (or activated); and
3. providing a STANCE or evaluation of the topic or referent.

Based on these functions, the Russian language is thought to operate with the three basic types of WO patterns: presentational, informational, and expressive (Grenoble 1998; Yanko 2001).

INFORMATIONAL WO is the most frequent and prototypical (basic) of the WOs in Russian (Grenoble 1998, 161). Its main discourse goal, as implied by its name, is to provide additional information on already-known discourse referents or topics, thus developing the discourse further. Consider (1)(b) below. The TOPIC of the sentence (namely, the person named Émma) is the information already known to the listener (as evident in (1)(a)). The new information, i.e., the discipline that Émma studies in college, is the COMMENT on the known topic; it bears the greatest informational load in the sentence.

(1)

a. – *Что изучает Эмма в колледже?*

‘What does Émma study in college?’

b. – *Эмма изучает психологию.*

Émma studies psychology.

The WO realizing the function of introducing new discourse topics is called PRESENTATIONAL WO (Grenoble 1998, 163). Consider (2) (b) below. The prepositional phrase *в её жизни* ‘in her life’ is the type of easily identifiable information that follows from the previous sentence that in some ways describes Émma’s life (her being at the university). However, the predicate and the subject group (*‘появились’* and *‘новые друзья’* respectively) are all new information; both bear the information load of the sentence.

(2)

a. – *В прошлом году Эмма поступила в университет.*

‘Last year, Émma started college.’

b. – *В её жизни появились новые друзья.*

‘New friends entered her life.’

In addition to the core sentence constituents (predicate and subject), presentational WO often contains another element, known as the LOCALIZER or the DETERMINANT SENTENCE CONSTITUENT (cf. Russian *детерминант* [Shvedova et al. 1980]). In (2)(b), it is expressed with the phrase *в её жизни* ‘in her life’.

An important difference between informational and presentational WO is how this functional distinction is grammaticalized: if the default WO found in the informational sentence type is SV(O), the presentational WO is NORMALLY VS.

The third discourse function is communicated through EXPRESSIVE WO (Grenoble 1998, 161). This type of WO fronts a sentential constituent that bears the greatest informational load, to create either an emphatic or a contrastive reading. In an EMPHATIC sentence, a fronted constituent characterized by an emphatic stress has to introduce new information to the hearer, as in (3)(b); in a CONTRASTIVE sentence, a fronted constituent normally represents identifiable information, as in (4)(b) (Kallestinova 2007).

(3)

a. – *Кто съел все пирожные?*

‘Who ate all the pastries?!’

b. – *Эмма съела все пирожные!*

‘It was Émma who ate all the pastries!’

(4)

a. – *Кто из ваших детей изучает психологию, Федя?*

‘Which one of your kids studies psychology, Fedia?’

b. – *Эмма изучает психологию.*

‘It is Émma who studies psychology.’

It is important to note that the so-called expressive focus is a result of the interaction between WO and intonation. Prosodically, information focus is distinguished by a normal sentential stress (Dyakonova 2004; Kallestinova 2007). In a prototypical sentence that is organized in accordance with the “given first/focus second” principle, focus bears the main prosodic prominence of the sentence (see Chomsky 1971 as cited in Dyakonova 2004, p. 91). Consider the neutral sentence in (2)(a), in which the sentence stress is a normal sentential stress, with a rising contour Low High concluded by a falling tone High Low on the segment denoting the information focus (i.e., *поступила в университет* ‘entered the university’).

Expressive focus, on the other hand, is characterized by emphatic stress: the intonational contour in (b)(3), for example, is realized by an emphatic focal stress (falling High Low) on the fronted element *Эмма* ‘Émma.’

There is a wealth of literature that explicates the role of intonation in the ordering of sentence constituents (see, e.g., Yokoyama 1985, 1986; Yanko 2001; Kiss 1987; Paducheva 2004, 2010). And although prosodic means have a lowered significance in writing compared to speech, in principle, the same parameters apply to written speech, with perhaps greater usage of lexicogrammatical and syntactic means of information highlighting, such as focusing constructions, that highlight fronting of focused material (Callies 2009, 5).

In addition to information-structure consideration, syntactic (or grammatical) WEIGHT has been reported to contribute to positioning of sentential elements. Syntactic weight (sometimes referred to as HEAVINESS)

is understood in terms of the internal structure of a sentence constituent as measured in number of words/syllables and/or morphosyntactic complexity. The preference for LIGHTER constituents to be placed to the left of the HEAVIER ones holds cross-linguistically (Siewierska 1988). The tendency for more complex parts to occur in clause-final position is known as the principle of increasing constituents or “end-weight” principle (Quirk et al. 1972). In accordance with this principle, such light elements as personal, possessive, and demonstrative pronouns, as well as monosyllabic adverbs, are likely to be placed before longer (read, heavier) elements, such as full determiners and determiner phrases (Laleko and Dubinina 2018, 195). Notice that in (5)(b), the light element expressed by the pronoun *eë* ‘she.ACC’ is placed left-ward of the verb, resulting in SOV WO. This WO is a highly preferred (if not the only felicitous) WO in cases where no other heavy constituents (such as obliques) are present along with subject, predicate, and light element. (5)(c) is informationally infelicitous since it places light (and known) elements in the focal position.

(5)

a. – *Вы знаете Надю?*

‘Do you know Nadia?’

b. – *Да, я её знаю.*

‘Yes, I know her.’

c. – \**Да, я знаю её.*

‘Yes, I know her.’

In a study that presents evidence from a corpus-based analysis and elicitation experiments, Arnold et al. (2000) reported that both information status of sentence constituents and the syntactic weight of constituents strongly correlate with sentence position. In a different corpus-based study, Wasow (1997) offered an explanation of the end-weight principle in cognitive terms, that it helped the speaker plan the utterance. Light elements can “buy time” in the on-line process of speech production. Although investigations of syntactic weight typically focus on the structural properties of discourse rather than its information structure, the principle of weight-end is related to the principle of “focus second.” As observed by Arnold et al. (2003), elements that have been introduced in the previous stretch of discourse can now be referred to using deictic

markers, typically anaphoric pronouns, which are short (i.e., light in grammatical weight). The elements that introduce new information are more likely to be heavy (34). At the same time, the relationship between syntactic weight and sentence position, especially when it comes to the Russian language, is relatively understudied and many questions pertaining to the variability in placement of light constituents remain unexplored.

### **3. WO in Russian learner language**

One of the earlier studies examining WO in the production by American learners of Russian was Thompson (1996). Thompson regarded WO errors in the speech of L2 Russian speakers as a case of discrepancy between the English fixed WO, which itself marks grammatical relations in the sentence and the Russian flexible WO, which necessitates marking the grammatical relations with the help of morphological markers. Similarly, she explained the lack of the VS WO in the speech of American learners of Russian as being due to the absence of such a structure in English. In her paper, Thompson provided a number of examples of erroneous sentences, but her analysis, unfortunately, did not provide a comprehensive or even numeric picture of the results; she also did not consider any of the discourse-pragmatic qualities of different Russian WOs. The Russian researcher Khavronina (2005–2006), surveying WO errors in the speech of learners of Russian from various L1s, concluded that WO is difficult for all learners of Russian, regardless of L1 and level of proficiency (128). Khavronina suggested that the errors in WO stem from the learners' lack of awareness of the "sentence bipartition" (i.e., the differences in the informational load as given or old information). Although the paper is descriptive in nature and lacks any numerical data or analysis, it, too, gives additional credence to the general observations regarding the difficulty learners of Russian face when dealing with Russian WO patterns.

The somewhat more numerous studies of WO in HL Russian have yielded mixed results. One of the earlier studies, by Polinsky (2006), suggested a relatively strong retention of the VS WO in the oral production of HL speakers regardless of the general level of language proficiency (237). However, this optimistic conclusion was not universally upheld in other studies. Kagan and Dillon (2004), for example, found a

significant reduction in the use of VS patterns in their HL data. Having examined a small corpus of elicited oral narratives (n=18) produced by HL students (age of emigration from 0 to 10), the authors found a mere five clauses displaying the VS pattern in all 18 HL narratives (compared to 11 sentences in just one NS story). Most importantly, all VS WOs in the HL data were a type of cliché *жили-были* (cf. English “There once were X”) used at the beginning of stories.

Kagan and Dillon’s (2004) findings were supported in a later study by Isurin and Ivanova-Sullivan (2008), who found an equally small number of VS instances (n=8) in narratives elicited from six HL speakers. The authors reported that this number of VS clauses in the HL data amounted to 2.1% of all patterns, compared to VS clauses amounting to 6% of patterns found in the monolingual Russian NS data (99). Interestingly, an even smaller percentage, only 1%, was found in comparable L2 data. The authors argued that there exists a link between the occurrence of the VS pattern and the length of exposure to Russian among both HLs and L2 learners (100); however, Isurin and Ivanova-Sullivan recognized that the relatively small participant sample in their study may have hampered the ability to generalize their findings about noncanonical sentences over the population of Russian L2 and HL learners.

Even if the general observation regarding the reduction in WO flexibility and overreliance on SVO WO in HL (and likely L2) language is correct, the “specific manifestations of such general reduction in WO variation have not been discussed at length” (Laleko and Dubinina 2018, 197). Most importantly, the variability (or lack of thereof) in WO was not discussed in those papers in terms of discourse-pragmatics, the underlying reason for the existence of such variability.

The most comprehensive account of WO as a product of discourse-pragmatic requirements is presented in Laleko and Dubinina (2018). Unlike previous studies, Laleko and Dubinina (2018) found a considerable proportion of HL clauses to fit the noncanonical category, i.e., the non-SV(O) pattern (22%), although this percentage was statistically smaller than that for the NS data (32%). The authors further examined the types of noncanonical patterns, namely, INVERSION (presentational WO in my terminology) and DISLOCATION (expressive WO in my terminology, such as OSV), as well as the CONTEXTUAL APPROPRIATENESS of the chosen WOs. Again, both HLs and NSs aligned in their preferences

for dislocated patterns versus inversed patterns; however, the HL data contained a considerable proportion of informationally infelicitous WOs. The canonical WOs contained the least amount of errors: only 3% of all canonical clauses were categorized as informationally infelicitous. There was a greater proportion of infelicitous VS constructions (9%) and an even greater percentage of infelicitous clauses with dislocation (30%). The authors concluded that the HLs employ “different strategies” in the use of the two types of WO patterns; more specifically, they use dislocation more frequently overall but “nevertheless fall short of using dislocation in a target-like way, possibly as a result of non-target-like principles governing its occurrence” (205). The VS pattern, on the other hand, is used less frequently but far more appropriately, which “indicates a more target-like control of principles that govern its use” (205).

The detailed account on the use of WO in HL Russian presented in Laleko and Dubinina (2018) reconciled some of the controversial findings in the previous literature. More importantly, by teasing apart the complexities of WO use (or underuse) in bilingual production, the study underscored the necessity of further exploration of WO patterns in their relation to the discourse-pragmatic distinctions they realize.

The overall conclusions regarding the studies of Russian L2 and HL learners’ use of WO patterns—however few studies there are on this topic at the moment—seem to align with the results and generalizations made in research on other language pairs. A growing number of studies (e.g., Schachter and Rutherford 1979; Rutherford 1983; Von Stutterheim, Carroll and Klein 2003; Green et al. 2000; Bohnacker and Rosén 2008; Callies 2009; Jackson and Ruf 2017) all come to the overall conclusion that L2 speakers exhibit non-native preferences for ordering of sentence constituents not only at the sentential level (at the level of syntax) but more broadly in the domain of information organization. At this level, a learner has to figure out not only possible alternatives and their functional properties but also the constraints on the use of possible WO patterns. Transfer of principles from the dominant language to the L2 results in texts that are “unidiomatic” and “not fully cohesive from the perspective of a native speaker” (Bohnacker and Rosén 2008, 534).

The aim of the present study is to contribute to a growing body of research on WO variation in Russian learner data. By examining the discourse-pragmatic functions of Russian WO in the data produced by HL

and L2 speakers of Russian, I set out to evaluate whether naturalistic and early exposure to the target language results in a more target-like use of WO patterns. By comparing the use of WO patterns between students at a lower level of language proficiency and those of more advanced language proficiency, I explored whether (and how) the ability to manipulate WO patterns grows with proficiency.

## **4. Methods**

### ***4.1. Participants and data collection***

The data in this study are drawn from a corpus of essays drawn from the annual American Council of Teachers of Russian National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest (hereafter, Contest). Hundreds of students, representing 30 to 40 U.S. universities and colleges, voluntarily participate in the contest each year. The students are grouped according to their approximate exposure to the language. For L2 learners of Russian, the grouping is determined by the number of instruction hours they have received by the time of the contest (e.g., fewer than 100 hours for the lowest proficiency group, 100–250 hours for the next proficiency level, and so on). For HL learners, the level is determined by the approximation of naturalistic exposure to the language (level 1 includes HL learners of Russian who were either born in the United States or had emigrated before the age of six and had no formal instruction in a Russian-speaking country prior to enrolling in a college-level course).

The parameter used for distinguishing the HL groups is clearly less than perfect. It does not take into account many factors that contribute to the overall proficiency of a HL speaker, such as the amount of language exposure at home or experience with semi-formal instruction in Russian through after-school activities. Nonetheless, the number of authors in the sub-corpus allows us to reasonably expect that the possible contamination of data has been well mitigated.

In this study, I focus on the more proficient L2 learners of Russian, since coherent and cohesive discourse (and, thus, a clear need to mark the discourse-pragmatic distinctions) emerges in L2 learners at Intermediate-Mid level on the ACTFL scale, a level that could be expected of the students after more than 250 hours of instructed Russian language study. Direct comparison of language proficiency levels in L2 and HL groups is difficult to make (although HL speakers normally place at Intermediate

level in speaking), and I do not assume similar writing abilities in the HL and non-HL students. The purpose of this study is to investigate the different groups of writers in their own right.

For the comparison, a set of essays ( $n$  ranging from 21 to 23) were randomly selected from the two higher-proficiency L2 groups (the “FL3 group”, i.e., the L2 learners with approximately 250–400 hours of instructional experience, and the “FL4” group, i.e., the L2 learners with more than 400 hours of instructional experience) and the HL group, including only the learners who were either born in an English-speaking country or emigrated before the onset of schooling. To have a comparable reference corpus that would be of a similar genre and created in similar experimental conditions, I collected essays on the same topic from 17 Russian NSs, young adults who were either living in Russia or who recently arrived in the United States. The descriptive statistics of the four sets of data are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Number of word tokens and sentences in HL, FL3, FL4, and NS sub-corpora*

<b>Group</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
<b>HL</b>	Tokens	5,348	232.3	133.151	97	605
(N = 23)	Sentences	454	19.74	10.230	8	45
<b>FL3</b>	Tokens	5,298	238.00	97.350	85	419
(N = 22)	Sentences	478	21.95	10.472	9	55
<b>FL4</b>	Tokens	6,241	296.48	111.558	95	576
(N = 21)	Sentences	504	24.00	8.803	10	40
<b>NS</b>	Tokens	5,309	295.59	82.129	165	484
(N = 17)	Sentences	410	22.94	8.112	12	44

The texts obtained through the Contest are a unique set of data representing dozens of language programs across the country (and, therefore, various instructional approaches) as well as various proficiency levels and language-learning backgrounds. Additionally, the data are collected in similar settings with the same constraints

and affordances for all participants. The fact that the topic is the same across programs and levels also allows for more meaningful comparisons among the groups. Although the Contest participants are not instructed to write in any specific genre, I found that in response to the prompt *What is a friend?*, most reacted with a short expository essay with elements of narration (e.g., autobiographical events). Since WO patterns—just as other linguistic categories—are found to be distributed differently in texts of different communicative purposes (Turner 2006; McAnallen 2009), analyzing texts COLLECTED through similar procedures and for similar purposes makes the between-group comparisons more meaningful.

#### ***4.2. Data preparation and annotation***

All selected texts were separated into clauses for further coding and analysis. The scope of the study was narrowed to include only the more canonical type of clauses, namely, a declarative indicative clause with an overt nominal or pronominal subject in the nominative case<sup>51</sup> and a predicate ( $S_{\text{nom}}$ ). The advantage of considering more canonical sentences is that they allow us to assume with a greater degree of confidence that the actual WO pattern produced by the learner is not prompted by a difficulty with a rarer or more specific syntactic construction and that that WO pattern is the result of the interplay of the two requisite forces—the concerns of discourse-pragmatics and the rules of sentential grammar. Each clause was then coded for WO pattern and discourse-pragmatic felicitousness of the WO pattern. It is important to note that the infelicitous-use category here includes only errors in the ordering of major constituents; all other structural issues (such as misplacement of adverbs or particles, or morphosyntactic errors) are disregarded for purposes of this study. Secondly, each clause was examined with regard to its specific intended discourse function. Coding for discourse-pragmatic felicitousness was executed by two NSs of Russian with training in linguistics; the few discrepancies were discussed and resolved. A clause was deemed infelicitous only when the chosen WO clearly resulted in a breach in the flow of discourse.

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<sup>51</sup> A very small category of subjects also included in the final dataset consists of subjects expressed through quantifier+NP (e.g., two friends, many people), which some linguists consider noncanonical subjects.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Quantitative results

The numeric results for coding the declarative  $S_{nom}$  clauses for WO patterns are presented in Table 2. The table reports the first six WO patterns in the order of NS “preference” for specific WO realizations found in Kallestinova (2007). The two additional WO patterns (SV and VS) were tallied separately and are reported directly below the order into which they are traditionally subsumed; thus, the SV clauses can be seen below the SVO numbers, and the VS clauses can be seen directly below the OVS numbers. The data are presented in this way in order to allow for a more straightforward comparison with past research that addresses WO distribution patterns (specifically, Kallestinova 2007).

*Table 2. Raw and prorated frequencies of WO patterns in the HL, FL3, FL4 and NS sub-corpora*

WO patterns	HL	FL3	FL4	NS
N. of $S_{nom}$ clauses	592	622	636	385
<b>SVO</b>	210 (35%)	267 (43%)	294 (46%)	161 (42%)
<b>SV</b>	252 (43%)	269 (43%)	237 (37%)	134 (35%)
<b>OVS</b>	42 (7%)	42 (7%)	50 (8%)	45 (11.7%)
<b>VS</b>	6 (1%)	5 (1%)	20 (3%)	21 (5.5%)
<b>SOV</b>	73 (12%)	34 (5%)	28 (4.5%)	16 (4%)
<b>VSO</b>	0	0	1 (0.15%)	2 (0.5%)
<b>VOS</b>	0	1 (0.1%)	0	3 (1%)
<b>OSV</b>	9 (1.5%)	4 (0.5%)	6 (1%)	3 (1%)

As demonstrated in Table 2, the relative proportions of the WOs in the NS sub-corpus follow the order of preference for various WOs reported in the previous studies.

Importantly, the types of clauses produced by the L2 learners in both the FL3 and the FL4 groups follow the same distributional pattern,

with some differences in the percentages of these distributions. More specifically, the FL3 and the FL4 learners' SVO and SV WOs are the most frequent, similar to the NS controls; however, the percentage of the SV(O) WO is higher in the L2 data: the SVO and SV clauses combined account for 84% and 86% of the WO patterns found in the FL4 and FL3 data respectively. The percentage of the (O)VS clauses in the L2 data is smaller than those found in the NS data: 11% for the FL4 learners and 7% for the FL3 learners.

The HL learners can also be said to prefer the SV WO to a greater extent than the NNs: in addition to SVO and SV clauses (which together account for 78% of WO patterns combined), the HLs produced the largest number of SOV clauses of all four groups (an additional 12% of all data, a number that stands in contrast to the rest of the writers). The (O)VS clauses in the HL sub-corpus are almost as infrequent as in the FL3 data and amount to 8% of all clauses. A chi-square analysis showed that the differences in the proportion of different WO patterns across the four data sets are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 82.388$ ,  $p < .0001$ )<sup>52</sup>. Pairwise chi-square analyses further revealed differences between the HL and FL3 groups ( $\chi^2 = 32.49$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), the HL and FL4 groups ( $\chi^2 = 34.485$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), the HL and NS groups ( $\chi^2 = 33.677$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), and the FL4 and FL3 groups ( $\chi^2 = 14.957$ ,  $p < .01$ ). While the difference between the NS and FL3 groups is significant ( $\chi^2 = 23.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the difference between the higher-proficiency FL4 group and the NSs was found to be not significant ( $\chi^2 = 6.471$ ,  $p = .263$ ).

Another important perspective on the differences in the WO usage between the four groups emerged from the comparison of all patterns in which the subject occupies pre-verbal position (SV-pattern) to all patterns in which the subject occupies the post-verbal position (VS-pattern). As expected the VS clauses are less numerous in my data, aligning with the general observations about Russian WO. However, all three learner groups produced notably fewer VS clauses than the NSs. It appears that the learners relied more heavily on the canonical WOs. The percentages of SV clauses formed a cline, with the FL3 group producing the largest amount of SV clauses (92%), followed by the HL learners (91%), followed by the FL4 group (89%).

<sup>52</sup> A note on the chi-square analysis: the counts for the VSO and VOS clauses were excluded from the analysis since the numbers are very small (from zero to 3) and a chi-square test does not allow zeros in its calculations.

*Table 3. Raw and prorated frequencies of SV WO patterns and VS WO patterns in the HL, FL3, FL4, and NS sub-corpora*

Types of clauses	HL	FL3	FL4	NS
N. of Snom clauses	592	622	636	385
SVO	210	267	294	161
SV	252	269	237	134
SOV	73	34	28	16
OSV	9	4	6	3
The sum of all SV-pattern clauses	544 <b>91%</b>	574 <b>92%</b>	565 <b>89%</b>	314 <b>81%</b>
VOS	0	1	0	3
VS	6	5	20	21
OVS	42	42	50	45
VSO	0	0	1	2
The sum of all VS-pattern clauses	48 <b>8%</b>	48 <b>8%</b>	70 <b>11%</b>	71 <b>18%</b>

Pairwise chi-square analyses demonstrated that these differences in the proportions of SV- vs VS-patterns are significant between the HL and NS groups ( $\chi^2= 23.288$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), between the FL3 and NS groups ( $\chi^2= 26.247$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), between the FL4 and NS groups ( $\chi^2= 11.071$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), and between the FL4 and FL3 groups ( $\chi^2= 4.039$ ,  $p = .04$ ). The HL writers occupy a middle ground between the lower- and the higher-level L2 learners: they are neither statistically different from the lower-level L2 learners, nor statistically different from the higher-level L2 learners. The differences between the HL and either the FL3, or the FL4 group do not reach statistical significance ( $\chi^2= 2.99$ ,  $p = .0834$  and  $\chi^2= .064$ ,  $p = .8002$  respectively).

Overall, the results indicate that all groups of learners utilized all the same WOs that are available in standard Russian. More importantly, they utilized the various patterns in the same order of preference established in the NS data (in the current study, as well as in previous research). In the same manner as the NSs, the learners produced a significantly larger proportion of SV-patterns than the VS-patterns. However, the statistical tests reveal that all three learner groups relied a lot more on the canonical SV-patterns than the NSs did, underutilizing the noncanonical WO. The statistical test also revealed differences between the learner groups: the lower-level L2 learners were more likely to produce a canonical SV-pattern than the higher-level L2 learners. The HL learners are not statistically different from either L2 group.

These patterns indicate that the learners underutilize WO as a linguistic tool and may miss opportunities to use variable WO to signal important pragmatic meanings.

### *5.2. Qualitative analysis*

To account for the apparent underuse of the particular WO types, I further examined each WO pattern with regard to its discourse-pragmatic function.

First, each clause extracted for analysis in this paper was marked as pragmatically felicitous or infelicitous. Numerically, only a small proportion of clauses in the learner data represented a clear misuse of the chosen WO (these cases are listed as *INFELICITOUS USE* in Table 4 below).

However, even a small number of clear misuse of the appropriate WO coupled with the “missed opportunities,” i.e., contexts in which an alternative WO would have been preferred, reflected in the significant differences of the different types of WO patterns reported above, suggest that learners experience difficulties in choosing appropriate WO to achieve the specific communicative goals. The analysis that follows provide a further exploration of various WO patterns in learner data, with the exception of VOS and VSO patterns, which do not appear in the learner data and are too rare in the NS data to arrive at any conclusions.

Table 4. *Infelicitous clauses across types of WO patterns in HL, FL3, FL4, and NS sub-corpora*

	HL	FL3	FL4	NS
N. of S <sub>nom</sub> clauses	592	622	636	385
SV(O) clauses	462	536	531	295
Infelicitous use of SVO and SV WOs	8	13	4	n/a
SOV	73	34	28	16
Infelicitous use of SOV WO	7	5	5	n/a
OSV	9	4	6	3
Infelicitous use of OSV WO	3	4	2	n/a
(O)VS clauses	47	47	70	46
Infelicitous use of (O)VS WOs	1	1	3	n/a
VOS	0	0	0	3
VSO	0	0	1	2
Infelicitous use of VOS/VSO WOs	0	0	1	n/a

### 5.2.1. *SV-pattern clauses*

As follows from the numerical results, all three learner groups are apt users of the canonical SV(O) WO. The function of providing additional information on the known topics is well mastered by all learners. Nonetheless, infelicitous SVO clauses (on top of general patterns of SVO overuse) do appear in the learner data, with the lower-proficiency group performing somewhat worse than the other two groups. Both the FL3 group and the HL group (albeit in fewer instances) produced SV(O) clauses instead of the obligatory VS presentational WO constructions, as in the example below, where the learner produced an SVO clause instead of an obligatory VS (three such errors were found in the HL data and six in the FL3 data).

(6)

a. *Иногда, когда я дома мне всё скучно.*

Sometimes, when I am home, I am bored.

- b. *Но потом мой друг пришёл.*  
 But then my friend came (comes?).  
 (FL3\_2264)

The higher-level L2 writers did not appear to use SVO instead of the required presentational VS.

In addition to its primary function, the SV-pattern also appears in learner data in its expressive function, a type of clause in which new information is placed at the beginning of a sentence to create either an emphasis or a contrastive reading. However, the lower-level proficiency L2 group cannot be said to have mastered this pattern: all 18 SV(O) clauses with NEW subjects were categorized as infelicitous. The HL learners and the FL4 learner produced fewer SV(O) clauses with NEW subjects (n=13 and n=9 respectively) with four such clauses in each group being marked as infelicitous. Thus, in regards to expressive SV(O), the HL speakers may have a slight advantage over instructed L2 learners; however, the level of proficiency in L2 speakers clearly plays a role in the ability to produce an SVO expressive clause.

Another type of expressive SV-pattern is OSV. In this construction, the leftward position of the object<sup>53</sup> may be motivated by an intention to place emphasis on the object.

Although the OSV pattern is rather infrequent in my data, it was used by all four groups of writers. The NSs used three OSV clauses; while the HL learners and the FL4 learners produced a slightly higher number of the OSV clauses than the NS controls did: nine OSV clauses by the HL learners and six OSV clauses by the FL4 learners. Examples of successful realization of OSV patterns are shown below in (7)(b) and (8)(b):

- (7)  
 a. *До того времени я считал их друзьями,*  
 b. *А Джерри я считал человеком, как отец.*  
 'Before then I considered them my friends, but Jerry, I considered to be father-like to me.'  
 (FL4\_5716)

<sup>53</sup> The position of an object or an adjunct in the pre-verbal position is termed DISLOCATION in many theoretical and empirical works on WO (see Bailyn 2012), including the paper by Laleko and Dubinina (2018) reviewed above.

(8)

а. Он встречался с девушками,

б. но любовь он никогда не знал и не понимал.

'He was dating girls, but love, he never knew nor understood.'

(HL\_2223)

Although not all of these clauses were felicitous like (7)(b) and (8) (b), the percentage of errors is low: two infelicitous OSV clauses were found in the HL sub-corpus and one in the FL4 sub-corpus. The FL3 learners, on the other hand, seemed to be less apt in dealing with the OSV pattern; they attempted fewer OSV clauses (n=4), and all four were found to be infelicitous.

### 5.2.2. VS and OVS WOs

As demonstrated above, all groups of learners used comparable numbers of VS-patterns, all three underusing this pattern in comparison to the NSs. At the same time, all learners appeared to use the (O)VS WO in its appropriate discourse function, i.e., introducing new discourse topics. Some important differences in the use of presentational WO by different learner groups also persist. For instance, the FL3 writers' use of localizers in this structure is limited; there are only three clauses expressing presentational WO that have a temporal or spatial determinant. And although sentences like (9) are grammatically correct and WO-felicitous, the use of a localizer (such as *в России* 'in Russia') could have helped to anchor the following new information.

(9)

*Есть поговорка, «Доброе слово и кошке приятно.»*

'There is a saying: "Even a cat will appreciate a kind word."'

(FL3\_9438)

HL and FL4 learners, on the other hand, utilized more presentational WO constructions, and they appeared to use more localizers, which help establish the shared context between the writer and the reader. However, unlike the HL data, the FL4 data contain multiple examples of positioning locatives at the end of the clauses, in accordance with the preferred information structure of the English sentence (cf. (10)(b) produced by a learner to (11)(b) Standard Russian).

(10)

a. *Вопрос о том, что такое друг, сложнее, но в основном я думаю, 'The question of What is a friend is more complex [than this], but overall I think.'*

b. *что есть культурная разница в понятии слова «друг».*

*localizer*

*'that there is a cultural difference in the notion of the word "friend".'*

(FL4\_0158)

(11)

a. *Вопрос о том, что такое друг, сложнее, но в основном я думаю,*

b. *что в понятии слова «друг» есть культурная разница.*

*localizer*

(Standard Russian)

### 5.2.3. SOV WO

The SOV WO is a particular variation of the canonical SVO WO, in which the order of the subject and the verb in relation to one another remains canonical (SV), but the object is placed in the pre-verbal position, rendering the whole construction a noncanonical WO in Russian.<sup>54</sup> The difference between the SVO and SOV patterns is that in the latter both S and O are known information (whereas in SVO an object can – but not necessarily – mark new information). Most importantly the object in the SOV clause is highly likely to be realized by a syntactically light element.

As shown in Table 2, the SOV pattern is well represented in all four sub-corpora. To summarize, both in absolute numbers and in percentages, the SOV pattern appeared on a cline, with the NSs producing the least amount of SOV clauses (n=16, 4% of all WO patterns), followed by the FL4 learners (n=28, 4% of all WOs), followed by the FL3 learners (n=34, 5.5%), and with the HL learners producing the largest number of SOV patterns (n=73, 12%), a substantial proportion of all WO patterns the HL learners produced.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> In structuralist approaches, such a variation on the canonical WO is referred to as DISLOCATION, as opposed to INVERSION, whereby the order of subject and verb is realized as VS.

<sup>55</sup> These numbers do not account for temporal, locative or manner obliques, which are considered light elements and tend to “move” leftward. In this analysis, I considered only elements that were coded as obligatory arguments and were given the code “Object.”

(12)

*Иногда я его ненавижу.*

*light Object*

‘Sometimes I hate him.’

(HL\_7649)

All groups of learners appeared to adhere to “end-weight” (Quirk et al. 1972) principle by placing light elements in the preverbal position. Yet, the HL learners’ relative preference for utilizing the SOV pattern is striking. One explanation is that errors in object placement contribute to the overall large tallies; yet, the number of such errors is relatively small (n=3), with one HL speaker producing two of them. This observed HL preference for leftward placement of light constituents aligns with the observations made in Laleko and Dubinina (2018), who found grammatical weight to emerge “as a strong predictor of leftward movement in the heritage language, compared to the baseline” (208). To provide a satisfactory explanation of the observed trend, future studies of syntactic weight in heritage languages are needed.

## 6. Discussion

The first tangible and important finding of this study is the fact that all learner groups produced all six grammatically possible WO variations and that they produced them on the scale of NS preference established in earlier studies (Bivon 1971; Kallestinova 2007) as well as in this work. The fact that the types of clauses produced by the HL learners and both L2 groups follow the same distributional pattern as the clauses produced by the NSs is noteworthy: it shows that learners of Russian (at least at intermediate and higher proficiency levels) have an overall understanding of the availability of WO patterns and their distributional patterns. More importantly, from the perspective of discourse-pragmatic functions of Russian WO, the learners appeared to be able to distinguish the three basic discourse functions and, overall, appeared to have a good grasp on how the underlying discourse principles are realized in WO. The learners fulfilled the function of providing additional information on known topics by using the SV(O) WOs. They introduced new discourse topics or new referents by employing the (O)VS WO. The learners were also found to use patterns that front some sentence constituents to create an emphatic reading of the utterances.

However, the proportions of different WO patterns across the four data sets were found to differ significantly. The most relevant perspective on the differences emerged from the comparison of all patterns in which the subject occupies pre-verbal position (SV-pattern) to all patterns in which the subject occupies the post-verbal position (VS-pattern). The statistical tests reveal that all three groups of learners relied a lot more on the canonical SV-patterns than the Russian NSs, while at the same time underutilizing the noncanonical WOs. The percentages of SV-pattern clauses formed a sort of cline, with the FL3 group producing the largest amount of SV clauses (92.2%), followed by the HL learners (91.8%), followed by the FL4 group (88.8%). The difference between the FL3 and FL4 group was found to be statistically significant. Evidently, the use of SV(O) becomes more target-like—at least numerically—as language proficiency increases. This conclusion supports the observation of Isurin and Ivanova-Sullivan (2008), who attempted to explain the conflicting results of their study by implicating language proficiency as a factor in the ability to produce variable WO.

Variability of learner proficiency likewise contributed to the type of infelicitous WOs produced by the three groups. For instance, the FL3 learners (and to a lesser extent the HL learners) were found to use the canonical SV(O) WO when the context required the presentational WO (this tendency, of course, is also reflected in descriptive numeric analysis, which demonstrated learners' overreliance on SV-type patterns). This error is more pronounced in the data of the lower-level L2 learners (the percentage of such errors in the FL3 data is 4.8% compared to 3.8% in the HL data).

Proficiency level differentiates the two L2 groups in their use of presentational WO. Not only did the FL3 learners produce fewer presentational VS patterns, but their use of these constructions was extremely rigid: by omitting localizers, they missed opportunities to establish the topic and shared knowledge space where the new information could be anchored. Higher-level L2 learners were found to use a greater variety of presentational WOs, and their use of these constructions was contextually more appropriate and grammatically correct. These learners were closer to NSs in terms of numbers (although still statistically lagging behind), and an overwhelming majority of the (O)VS structures in the FL4 data were structurally sound and

informationally felicitous. Many examples showed that the more advanced learners used variable localizers and a variety of existential verbs with added semantic meanings to fit the context. Clearly, language proficiency plays a role in the use of presentational WO; at the same time, early exposure to language, may also be advantageous for this construction, as the HL learners in this study were found to masterfully use the localizer+VS constructions.

It appears that all learner groups experienced difficulties with the less frequent types of clauses, specifically, clauses with fronted referents. Although all learners exhibited some understanding of the fact that SV(O) WO can realize an expressive function, they produced a large proportion of informationally infelicitous and/or structurally problematic clauses of this type.

A similar picture emerged from the analysis of the OSV and OVS clauses, in which the object is fronted. Object-fronting, which offers an opportunity to add emphasis to the proposition and/or create cohesion between the two clauses, was avoided by the FL3 learners, and the few clauses (n=4) that the FL3 learners attempted were all classified as informationally infelicitous. Higher-level L2 learners and, even more so, the HL learners produced more object-fronted WOs. However, because these clauses require manipulation of the syntactic structure of the sentence, the learners often produced somewhat infelicitous or structurally deviant sentences. It is likely that the discourse function of the expressive WO exists on the conceptual plane; however, when it comes to choosing the appropriate linguistic form (including WO), the learners experience difficulties.

Even though it appeared that the L2 learners were improving their use of WO, the fact that even advanced learners significantly underused the variability of patterns indicates that they continued to miss opportunities to produce more nuanced and more coherent discourse. This is likely a result of instructional history. WO is rarely discussed in Russian language textbooks, and the topic is at best provided a few cursory remarks. None of the textbooks more frequently used in the United States include a functional explanation of WO variation. The case of HL speakers in my study shows that relying on exposure (or implicit learning) when it comes to WO does not guarantee development and explicit instruction of this topic is in order.

The ability to comprehend and create pragmatically appropriate discourse in Russian is dependent on understanding the underlying principles of variability of Russian WO patterns. The examples of a functional approach to teaching Russian WO do exist. The Russian textbook “Word order in Russian sentences” (Krylova and Khavronina 1976) is known to be used in study-abroad programs. Although the effort of Krylova and Khavronina is laudable (if not entirely unquestionable), integrating a stand-alone book intended for advanced learners of Russian into a regular beginner to intermediate level syllabus is unfeasible, since most examples and activities in the book employ more advanced lexicon and syntax. I believe that discussion of WO and the discourse-pragmatic principles that underlie WO should be dispersed throughout the curricula, beginning in the first semester when “basic” structures such as *У меня есть X* ‘I have X’ and *Там есть X* ‘There is X’ are first introduced. WO should be regularly revisited as more complex lexicogrammatical structures are introduced to the learners (such as *В этой статье рассматриваются вопросы*, ‘The article focuses on such issues as...’). In the absence of such an integrated approach, instructors are unlikely to explicitly deal with pragmatic errors that stem from infelicitous WOs. Thus, the augmentations of the teaching resources do not need to entail a complete overhaul of teaching curricula; rather they should take a form of better and function-based explanations of variable WO that learners are exposed to.

I believe that greater awareness of the importance of information-structural aspects in realizations of linguistic form will also lead to more questions about how it impacts learner language. This, in turn, may spark greater interest in information structure as a topic in Second Language Acquisition studies. One of the reasons why we see so few studies on information structure and, consequently, WO is that the question of what constitutes advanced proficiency in a second language has been and remains focused on mastering grammatical competence, i.e., sentence-level syntax.

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## **Businessmen and Ballerinas Take Different Forms: A Strategic Resource for Acquiring Russian Vocabulary and Morphology**

**LAURA A. JANDA**

### **1. Introduction**

Included in the tasks facing a language learner is the acquisition of a lexicon and a grammar. However, when the target language has inflectional morphology, these two parts of the language-learning task intersect in the paradigms of grammatical word forms because each open-class lexeme has a number of forms that allow it to express various combinations of grammatical categories. Among major world languages, Russian is relatively highly inflected, meaning that the challenges of acquiring vocabulary are compounded by the need to master the inflectional morphology. Even a modest basic vocabulary of a few thousand inflected lexemes has over a hundred thousand associated word forms. Recent research (Janda and Tyers 2018, described in more detail below) suggests that there could be an advantage to learning only a handful of high-frequency forms for each lexeme. Section 2 reviews distributional facts about paradigms, their theoretical implications, and the results of a computational experiment that simulates the learning of Russian paradigms either in their entirety or based only on the most frequent word forms. Section 3 presents a free public net-based resource, the Strategic Mastery of Russian Tool (SMARTool), which takes up the challenge of providing strategic input for second-language (L2) learning of Russian vocabulary. The design functions and some pedagogical applications of the SMARTool are detailed. Conclusions are offered in Section 4.

This article is a tribute to Olga Kagan's innovative spirit in the teaching of Russian. I was in the very first class of graduate students that Olga Kagan taught advanced Russian to in the early 1980s. Her steady focus on the practical aspects of teaching and learning Russian based on authentic usage has served as a model to me throughout my career, and is, I believe, also realized in the SMARTool that I present here. For many years, I assumed that mastery of Russian morphology required the ability

to recognize and produce all paradigm forms, but recently I was forced to rethink that assumption, and that process inspired the creation of the SMARTool.

## 2. Paradigm Model Versus Usage-Based Model Of Russian Word Forms

On the face of it, paradigms seem to be rather straightforward tables listing all the word forms that express the various grammatical categories associated with a given part of speech, as in Zalizniak (1980). These tables can be called the paradigm model of inflectional morphology and probably do not adequately represent the mental grammar of the language. In Russian, nouns express combinations of six cases and two numbers, yielding twelve paradigm slots; adjectives have twenty-eight slots in their paradigms (six cases combined with three genders plus plural, plus four short forms); and verbs have over a hundred paradigm slots (varying depending upon aspect and how one counts the participles). If we follow the paradigm model of morphology, the task of the L2 learner is to master all those tables of word forms.

In its extreme form, the paradigm model was implicit in the traditional grammar and translation method of language teaching, which is now largely obsolete. However, although this focus has diminished considerably in contemporary textbooks, paradigms are by no means gone. For example, the online introductory course *Между нами* (deBenedette et al. 2013) offers declension and conjugation charts under the *Таблицы* menu prominently located right at the top of its homepage, and reference grammars aimed at learners (such as Wade 2011) rely on paradigms to present Russian morphology. While paradigms have been backgrounded, no systematic pedagogical replacement for the paradigm model that would aim at native-like mastery of the morphology has been offered. As Comer (2019, 112) notes with respect to the presentation of vocabulary in *Между нами*, it “does not manage to completely cover the range of morphology that learners need to master to progress to higher levels of proficiency.”

When one looks closely, several problems crop up with the paradigm model. There is considerable variation across paradigms, and furthermore, the mathematical facts of the distribution of word forms in natural language cast substantial doubt on the paradigm model. A usage-based model that reflects authentic language usage is offered here as an alternative.

Some details about variation in inflection are described in standard reference works. For example, some Russian nouns have more than twelve forms if we include forms like the second genitive (as in *выпить чаю* ‘drink some tea’), second locative (as in *на мосту* ‘on the bridge’), second accusative (as in *он пошел в солдаты* ‘he joined the ranks of soldiers’), old vocative (as in *господи!* ‘lord!’), and new vocative (as in *Саша!* ‘Sasha!’). Some nouns have fewer than twelve forms, as in the case of nouns that are *singularia tantum* (such as *молодежь* ‘young people’), *pluralia tantum* (such as *ножницы* ‘scissors’), or have paradigmatic gaps (such as the genitive plural of *мечта* ‘dream’). Similar variations occur for adjectives (particularly with respect to the presence of short forms) and verbs (particularly with respect to certain combinations of aspect with participles and gerunds). Furthermore, both the presence of additional forms and the lack of certain paradigm forms are often variable across speakers and registers.

If variations like those listed here were the only challenges to the paradigm model, perhaps they could be swallowed as exceptions and that model could be retained. However, the distributional facts of word forms in an inflected language present much bigger threats to the paradigm model due to the inexorable power of Zipf’s Law.

### *2.1. Zipf’s Law and what it means for word forms*

In 1949, Zipf discovered that the frequency of any word in a corpus is inversely proportional to its rank. If we take English, for example, the most frequent word is *the*. The second-most frequent word, *of*, is 1/2 as frequent as *the*. The third-most frequent word, *and*, is 1/3 as frequent as *the*. Fourth comes *a*, which is 1/4 as frequent as *the*, and so it goes, ending in a long tail of what are called “hapaxes,” words that appear only once. This distributional fact is called “Zipf’s Law.” Remarkably, Zipf’s Law holds true not just for English, but for all other languages that have ever been tested, even including constructed languages (Janda under submission) as well as numerous other (nonlinguistic) distributional phenomena. Zipf’s Law has a number of surprising entailments. For example, approximately 50% of the unique lexemes in any corpus are hapaxes<sup>56</sup>, and only 135

<sup>56</sup> Baayen (1992, 1993) demonstrates this based on Dutch and English data, and Kuznetsova (2017, 96) shows that more than half of nominal lexemes in the modern subcorpus of the Russian National Corpus appear in only one word form.

vocabulary items are needed to account for half of a corpus of one million English words (cf. the Brown Corpus). The following three facts connected to Zipf's Law are relevant to the discussion of word forms in this article: (1) Exposure to language can be likened to a big corpus, (2) Zipf's Law scales up infinitely, and (3) Zipf's Law applies to word forms too. I briefly elaborate on each of these facts below.

### ***2.1.1. Language exposure as a big corpus***

There are many types of language corpora, and even those that are carefully balanced may not perfectly represent the language that a typical native speaker is exposed to, particularly in terms of the way in which language is embedded in other realia. However, a large corpus is a close approximation to the lifetime linguistic input for a native speaker, which is estimated at about five to ten million words per year (cf. Hart and Risley 2003). There is no reason to expect significant deviations between a corpus and native input in the relative frequencies of lexemes, which necessarily follow Zipf's Law. In other words, what we find in terms of Zipfian distributions in large corpora (with millions or billions of words) reflects distributions of what a native speaker is exposed to over the course of a lifetime.

### ***2.1.2. Zipf's Law scales up***

Scalability has been tested by Manning and Schütze (1999) and Moreno-Sánchez, Font-Clos, and Corral (2016) with the conclusion that Zipf's Law, along with its entailments, scales up infinitely. This happens because the number of low-frequency items expands at scale as the size of the corpus increases, keeping the relative frequencies stable. This means that the Zipfian distributions remain the same regardless of corpus size, and the entailments hold even for very large corpora, like those that approximate a speaker's exposure to his or her native language.

### ***2.1.3. Zipf's Law applies to word forms too***

The Zipfian curve characterizes not just words, but all word forms as well. This has two implications for paradigms: (a) one concerning the distribution of forms within a paradigm and (b) another concerning the representation of entire paradigms. Within the paradigm of any single lexeme, we expect to see large differences in the frequencies of word forms, and this is borne out by the facts. For any given Russian lexeme of overall high frequency ( $\geq 50$  per million words), one word form is most frequent, a couple more might be attested regularly (accounting

for >10% of attestations of the lexeme), and the remaining word forms are rare or unattested (Janda and Tyers 2018). For example, *бизнесмен* ‘businessman’ is attested fifty times in the SynTagRus corpus<sup>57</sup> of just over one million words. Sixteen of those attestations (32%) are of the genitive plural *бизнесменов*, ten attestations (20%) are of the nominative plural *бизнесмены*, seven attestations (14%) are of the nominative singular *бизнесмен*, most other word forms are rare, and three word forms (accusative singular, locative singular, and locative plural) are unattested. For some lexemes, the distribution is more extreme: over 90% of attestations of *балерина* ‘ballerina’ are of the instrumental singular form *балериной*. For low-frequency words, this effect is even more pronounced, usually with only one or two word forms attested – and recall that the presence of low-frequency lexemes expands proportionately with the size of a corpus.

The implications of Zipfian distribution of word forms for the representation of full paradigms are even more surprising. Since one word form in a paradigm will be of highest frequency, with the frequency of other word forms dropping off along the Zipfian curve, and since most unique lexemes are not of high frequency (recall that half of the unique lexemes in a corpus are hapaxes), the rate of fully attested paradigms declines sharply as the number of paradigm slots increases. For example, the SynTagRus corpus contains attestations of 21,945 unique Russian nominal lexemes; however, only thirteen of these lexemes are attested in all twelve forms of the nominal paradigm, equivalent to only 0.06% (Janda and Tyers 2018, 8). This statistic, in combination with the above observations about language exposure and the scalability of Zipfian distributions, means that a native speaker of Russian encounters all twelve paradigm forms of less than 0.1% of nouns that they are exposed to in the course of a lifetime. Conversely, for 99.9% of Russian nouns, the full paradigm is never realized. Since they have larger paradigms, the portion of adjectives and verbs that are attested in all paradigm forms is vanishingly small, for all practical purposes zero. These implications for paradigms are not limited to Russian but have been observed across languages and appear to be universal (cf. Malouf 2016).

<sup>57</sup> The SynTagRus corpus is available at <http://www.ruscorpora.ru/instruction-syntax.html>. SynTagRus is the only human-corrected corpus of Russian containing comprehensive morphological annotation that disambiguates syncretic word forms. For more about this corpus, see Diachenko et al. (2015).

Some readers are no doubt experiencing a degree of discomfort with these facts, particularly native speakers who have the intuition that the full paradigms are cognitively real. Oddly enough, the intuition that full paradigms are cognitively real is not necessarily incompatible with the data on Zipfian distributions. This paradox is addressed in relation to the Paradigm Cell Filling Problem in the next subsection.

## ***2.2. The Paradigm Cell Filling Problem***

Acknowledging the Zipfian implications for paradigms, Ackerman et al. (2009) express a linguistic conundrum they term the Paradigm Cell Filling Problem, namely the fact that native speakers of languages with complex inflectional morphology routinely recognize and produce forms that they have never been exposed to. For example, the lexeme *тамада* 'toastmaster' has no attestations of dative plural or locative plural forms in the Russian National Corpus (<http://ruscorpora.ru/>; the main corpus contains 283,431,966 words as of April 2019), and it is likely that many native speakers have never encountered these word forms. However, all native speakers of Russian can be expected to readily understand the forms *тамадам* and *тамадах* and to produce them in appropriate contexts.

In Janda and Tyers (2018), we provide statistical evidence that the word forms in the paradigm of an inflected part of speech (in other words, nouns, adjectives, or verbs) can be modeled as a multidimensional space. The entire space is the full paradigm. For Russian nouns, for example, the space is defined in terms of case and number and the distribution of word forms. Each nominal lexeme populates some part of that space. Taking our examples from above, *бизнесмен* 'businessman' most strongly populates the genitive plural, nominative plural, and nominative singular parts of the space, while *балерина* 'ballerina' most strongly populates the instrumental singular part of the space. Other nouns populate other parts of the space, with many nouns overlapping in their contributions to the space. In aggregate, the attestations of word forms for nouns populate the entire space, creating the sense that it is a whole, and making it easy for native speakers to triangulate from attested word forms to fill in gaps. This solves the Paradigm Cell Filling Problem and also explains the intuitions of native speakers. But what might the Zipfian distribution of word forms mean for the acquisition of inflectional morphology? This question is addressed in a learning experiment.

### *2.3. Results from a computational learning experiment*

In Janda and Tyers (2018), we present a computational simulation of the learning of Russian inflectional morphology for all open-class inflected parts of speech: nouns, verbs, and adjectives. This experiment is based on data from the SynTagRus corpus. The dataset contains the single most frequent word form for each of 5,500 unique lexemes that appear at least fifty times in that corpus. The experiment had both a learning task and a production task. The experiment was run in two versions: the full-paradigm version, in which the learning task was to learn the entire paradigm of each lexeme, and the highest-frequency-word-form version, in which the learning task was to learn just the single highest frequency word form and the lemma (dictionary) form. The production task was the same for both versions, namely, given the lemma form of a previously unseen lexeme and the parse set for that lexeme's most frequent word form, to predict the word form. For example, given the lemma *жизнь* 'life' and the parse set "genitive singular," the production task would be to predict the form *жизни*.

The experiment was run in parallel in the two versions (full paradigm vs. single form), in fifty-four successive iterations. In both versions a computer simulated learning of Russian morphology. In the first iteration, the training set was based on the 1–100 most frequent word forms in SynTagRus, and the production set consisted of the 101–200 most frequent word forms of unique, unseen lexemes (i.e., lexemes that did not appear in the training set). The full-paradigm model learned the entire paradigms for 100 words, while the single-form model learned only the single most frequent form and the lemma form. Both models then predicted the 101–200 most frequent word forms given only the lemma and the parse set for each. In the second iteration, the training set was based on the 1–200 most frequent word forms (and their paradigms for the full paradigm model), and the production task was based on the 201–300 most frequent word forms of unique unseen lexemes. This procedure was repeated through fifty-four iterations, each time adding the data from the production task of the previous iteration into the training data for the successive iteration. Thus the size of the training set increased across the two models, but at different rates, such that the full-paradigm model learned over 200,000 word forms, while the single-form model learned only 5,400 word forms plus the associated lemmas.

At each iteration, the predictions on the production task were measured for both models, in terms of both overall accuracy (number of correct predictions out of 100) and severity of errors measured in Levenshtein distance (i.e., the number of letters needed to change to arrive at the correct form). In terms of overall accuracy, both models failed completely on the first two iterations. For the next eight iterations, the full paradigm model did better than the single forms model, but both models were still quite poor, with 40% or fewer correct predictions. On iterations eleven through fifteen, the performance of the two models was similar, at about 45%–62% correct. Thereafter, for the remaining thirty-eight iterations, the single-form model outperformed the full-paradigm model every time. The learning curve of the full-paradigm model flattened out in the 60%–70% range, while the single-form model performed in the 80%–95% range. In terms of average Levenshtein distance, when errors were made, in the first six iterations the full-paradigm model made less severe errors than the single-form model, but both models performed rather poorly (average edit distance of >3 letters). In the seventh iteration, the scores were nearly identical. After that, for all remaining iterations except one (iteration thirty-five), the single-form model made less severe errors when it did make errors (average edit distance in the range of 1–2.5).

In summary, our computational learning experiment shows that, after exposure to about 1,000 lexemes, learning that focuses only on the most frequent word forms consistently outperforms learning based on full paradigms both in terms of the accuracy of predictions of word forms of previously unseen lexemes and in terms of the severity of errors. Learning full paradigms does not appear to be the most effective way to acquire Russian inflectional morphology — it might simply overpopulate the search domain to the point that producing word forms gets harder rather than easier.<sup>58</sup>

#### *2.4. What these facts mean for L2 acquisition of Russian*

We can summarize the contents of the previous three subsections as follows. The distribution of word forms according to Zipf's Law means

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<sup>58</sup> It is not possible in the scope of this article to address the inevitable differences between the human mind and a computational model. However, it seems reasonable that one should not expect the human mind to outperform a computer in terms of the memorization required by the full paradigm model.

that only a fraction of word forms of any given lexeme are encountered frequently, while the majority of word forms are encountered rarely, and many word forms may never be encountered. Different lexemes have different patterns of attested word forms, and overlapping patterns populate the conceptual space of the paradigm. Despite the usage-based facts of distribution, native speakers easily recognize and produce even rare and unattested word forms. Evidence from a computational learning experiment suggests that when learning focuses only on the most frequent word forms, the ability to produce specific word forms for new lexemes is better, both in terms of overall accuracy and severity of errors.

In light of these facts, asking L2 students to memorize and produce entire paradigms for all lexemes when learning Russian vocabulary is probably ill-advised. It makes more sense to utilize existing quantitative data on the distribution of Russian word forms to inform teaching in a strategic fashion. Corpus data can guide the design of teaching tools by showing us both the frequency distribution for Russian word forms and the contexts in which they most typically appear. In the next section, I describe a resource inspired by the research outlined above.

### *3. Design Of The Smartool*

The SMARTool is a free resource publicly available at <http://uit-no.github.io/smartool/>. In this section, I detail the design of the SMARTool, including the selection of vocabulary and word forms, the presentation of contexts of use, and additional features, such as audio, translations, and filters.

Among technological resources for second-language learning, corpora have not been used to their full potential largely because they are devised by and for corpus linguists rather than for L2 learners and rate low in terms of user-friendliness, particularly for students at lower levels (Golonka et al. 2014, 78; Chun, Kern, and Smith 2016, 72). The SMARTool is a purposeful technological resource that bridges the gap between the facts of Russian morphology that can be gleaned from a corpus and the needs and abilities of L2 learners at various levels of proficiency, including that of the novice.

#### *3.1. Vocabulary selection*

The initial goal of the SMARTool is to represent word forms of 3,000 Russian lexemes, distributed across the first four Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels<sup>59</sup> and their ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) and Russian equivalents (ТЭУ = Тест элементарного уровня, ТБУ = Тест базового уровня, ТРКИ = Тестирование по русскому языку как иностранному), as displayed in Table 1.

*Table 1. Distribution of SMARTool lexemes across L2 acquisition levels*

CEFR Level	ACTFL Equivalent	Russian Equivalent	SMARTool number of lexemes
A1 “Beginner”	Novice Low-Mid	ТЭУ	500
A2 “Elementary”	Novice High	ТБУ	500
B1 “Intermediate”	Intermediate Low-Mid	ТРКИ-1 I Сертификационный уровень	1,000
B2 “Upper Intermediate”	Intermediate High-Advanced Low	ТРКИ-2 Второй уровень	1,000

This distribution of lexemes is designed to provide a basic vocabulary for the first four semesters of Russian study for L2 learners. Since the architecture supporting the SMARTool is now in place, it will be possible to expand the vocabulary at these levels and also to add vocabulary at the C1 “Advanced”/ Advanced Mid-High/ ТРКИ-3 and C2 “Mastery”/ Superior/ ТРКИ-4 levels in the future.

Of course it would have been possible to simply harvest the highest-frequency lexemes from a corpus or frequency dictionary. However, the vocabulary needed by an L2 learner cannot be derived that simply, since there are numerous topics that are more specific to the experience and expectations of L2 speakers (cf. Comer [2019, 96] for a comparison of the needs of learners with frequency dictionaries). Lexemes were selected from a merged list of vocabulary from five Russian language textbooks (Hertz et al. 2001, Chernyshov 2004, Robin,

<sup>59</sup> For more on CEFR levels as established by the Council of Europe, see <http://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/home>.

Shatalina, and Evans-Romaine 2012, deBenedette et al. 2013, Bondar' and Lutin 2013) plus the *Лексический минимум по русскому языку как иностранному* (Andriushchina et al. 2014–2015) for the corresponding levels. A panel of experienced teachers of Russian from three universities in Russia and Europe collaborated on the selection of lexemes (see SMARTool team members listed in the Acknowledgements).

Because the goal of the SMARTool is to provide input for acquisition of inflectional morphology, only open-class inflected lexemes are targeted in the SMARTool: nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Closed-class lexemes, such as pronouns, and uninflected lexemes, such as prepositions, are not represented. The SMARTool aims for a distributional balance across nouns, verbs, and adjectives that reflects the overall distribution of these parts of speech in Russian.<sup>60</sup> In most cases, both the perfective and imperfective partners of verb pairs are represented (provided that both are of reasonably high frequency). Supplying missing aspectual partner verbs expanded the number of verb lexemes.

### 3.2. Identification of high-frequency word forms

The next task was to identify the highest-frequency word forms associated with each lexeme. One challenge in this task was the presence of syncretism in Russian paradigms. For example, the form *радости* could potentially be any of five word forms of *радость* 'joy': the genitive singular, dative singular, locative singular, nominative plural, or accusative plural. Even the disambiguated subcorpus ("*снятник*") of the Russian National Corpus is not adequate for this task, since it has not been thoroughly corrected manually. The only substantial corpus of Russian that has 100% manually corrected disambiguation is SynTagRus, which belongs to the class of "gold standard" corpora with reliable morphological tagging (which is why SynTagRus is cited also in Section 2 above). According to SynTagRus, *радости* is most often the genitive singular form, which is the second-most-common form of this word, after *радость* as the nominative singular and before *радостью* as the instrumental singular.

<sup>60</sup> Endresen et al. (2016) report the following figures on attestations of parts of speech from the disambiguated subcorpus ("*снятник*") of the Russian National Corpus: 1,707,312 attestations of nouns, 1,007,526 attestations of verbs, and 784,340 attestations of adjectives. Given these figures, the distribution among open-class inflected lexemes is approximately 49% nouns, 29% verbs, and 22% adjectives.

The selected lexemes were queried in the SynTagRus corpus to determine the frequency distributions of their word forms, also known as “grammatical profiles” (cf. Janda and Tyers 2018). Like *бизнесмен* ‘businessman’ and *балерина* ‘ballerina’ cited above in Section 2, each lexeme has a unique grammatical profile with a small subset of word forms that occur often, while the rest of the forms are rare or even unattested. For each lexeme, we selected the three most common word forms. However, if over 90% of attestations for a given lexeme were accounted for by only one or two forms, then only those forms were selected. For example, for *бизнесмен* ‘businessman’, the three most common forms were selected: the genitive plural *бизнесменов*, the nominative plural *бизнесмены*, and the nominative singular *бизнесмен*. For *сентябрь* ‘September’ two word forms account for over 90% of attestations: the genitive singular *сентября* and the locative singular *сентябре*, so only those two forms are represented in the SMARTool. And since over 90% of attestations of *балерина* ‘ballerina’ are the instrumental singular form *балериной*, only that form is selected for the SMARTool. In total over 9,000 word forms are represented in the SMARTool.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3. Identification of typical contexts

The next task in building the SMARTool was to determine, for every single word form, what grammatical and lexical contexts were most typical. In other words, what grammatical constructions and lexical collocations motivate each word form. For a few items, the answer to this question was trivial, as in the case of *сентябрь* ‘September’, for which the genitive singular *сентября* and the locative singular *сентябре* are motivated by typical constructions involving months, as in *первого сентября* ‘on the first of September’ and *в сентябре* ‘in September’. But for the majority of word forms, this was a labor-intensive task, entailing some research, such as queries in the Russian National Corpus, in the Collocations Colligations Corpora (<http://cococo.cosyco.ru/>), and in the Russian Constructicon (<https://spraakbanken.gu.se/karp/#?mode=konstruktikon-rus>). For example, a typical context for the genitive plural *бизнесменов* involves the collocation *защищать интересы бизнесменов* ‘protect the interests of

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<sup>61</sup> As mentioned above, the goal of providing both perfective and imperfective partner verbs somewhat expanded the number of verbs, and this compensated for the reduction in forms due to highly skewed grammatical profiles for words like *балерина* ‘ballerina’ and *сентябрь* ‘September’.

businessmen’, whereas a typical context for the instrumental singular *балериной* is *мечтать стать балериной* ‘dream of becoming a ballerina’.

After typical contexts have been determined, we provide an example sentence showing the use of each word form, as in these examples:

*Новый закон защищает интересы бизнесменов.*

‘The new law protects the interests of businessmen.’

*Бизнесмен должен быть честным.*

‘A businessman has to be honest.’

*Российские бизнесмены протестуют против повышения налогов.*

‘Russian businessmen are protesting against a tax increase.’

*Первого сентября начинается учебный год.*

‘The academic year starts on the first of September.’

*В сентябре начинают опадать листья.*

‘In September the leaves begin to fall.’

*Анна Павлова с детства мечтала стать балериной.*

‘As a child, Anna Pavlova dreamed of becoming a ballerina.’

The example sentences are inspired by corpus examples but are adjusted to take into account the needs of learners at various levels. At the time this article was written (April–June 2019), all of the most frequent word forms had been identified for all lexemes at all four CEFR levels (A1, A2, B1, and B2), and example sentences had been supplied for all word forms at the A1 and A2 levels and for most of the word forms at the B1 level, and all of those items are currently available through the web interface with all of the features described in the next subsection. Work is ongoing and is expected to be completed through the B2 level in 2019.

### ***3.4. Using the SMARTool: Additional features***

The SMARTool interface provides access to the word forms and sentences. In each sentence, the relevant word form is highlighted in blue to make

it easy to spot. After the end of the sentence, there is a parse of the word form. For example, for *бизнесменов* the parse is given as “(Gen.Plur).” Next to the parse is a “?” that the user can mouse over to get the full name of the parse, if needed. In this case, it would be “Genitive Plural.” After the parse, there is a speaker button that activates an audio rendering of the sentence. This audio rendering can be accessed in either a male voice or a female voice by making the appropriate selection above the sentence. Audio is provided via a text-to-speech synthesizer. While this solution may not always provide ideal renderings of intonation contours, it is very effective at delivering accurate placement of stress and accompanying vowel reduction, which are important for learners.<sup>62</sup> There is additionally a “Show translation” button that the user can click on to get the English translations of the sentences.

To use the SMARTool, one first needs to select the appropriate CEFR level. Thereafter it is possible to filter items in three different ways: search by topic, search by analysis, and search by dictionary. Alternatively, the user may choose “All Levels,” in which case vocabulary from all levels is available through the filters.

### **3.4.1. Search by topic**

The lexemes in the SMARTool are categorized according to eighteen topics inspired by the textbooks consulted: *внутренний мир* ‘mental experience’, *время* ‘time’, *еда* ‘food’, *животные/растения* ‘animals/plants’, *жильё* ‘home’, *здоровье* ‘health’, *люди* ‘people’, *магазин* ‘shopping’, *мера* ‘measurement’, *общение* ‘communication’, *одежда* ‘clothing’, *описание* ‘description’, *погода* ‘weather’, *политика* ‘politics’, *путешествие* ‘travel’, *свободное время* ‘leisure’, *транспорт* ‘transportation’, and *учёба/работа* ‘study/work’. When the user selects “Search by topic,” the menu of topics opens up, giving both the Russian and the English names for each topic. A given lexeme can appear with multiple topics; for example, *бизнесмен* ‘businessman’ is categorized with both *люди* ‘people’ and *учёба/работа* ‘study/work’. When the user selects one of the topics, lexemes are represented one by one with sentences illustrating the use of their word forms. For example, if one selects Level A1 and the topic *люди* ‘people’,

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<sup>62</sup> An alternative solution might have been to insert stress marks in the Russian example sentences. However, recent research shows that L2 learners of Russian derive very little, if any, benefit from stress marks; they just ignore them (Hayes-Harb and Hacking 2015). The only stress information given graphically in the SMARTool is the dieresis over *ë* as in *лётчик* ‘pilot’.

the second word that appears is *бизнесмен* 'businessman', with the three Russian sentences using that word given in the examples cited above. When searching by topic, the user can move on to the next lexeme by clicking on the right-arrow (→) button and return to the previous lexeme by clicking on the left-arrow (←) button.

### **3.4.2. Search by analysis**

Every word form in the SMARTool is tagged with a parse of the grammatical categories that it expresses. For nouns, this includes case and number, while adjectives can also express gender. The parse of verbs always includes aspect and can include person, number, tense, infinitive, imperative, gerund, and longer parses for participles (including their adjectival attributes). When using the "Search by analysis" function, the user views a menu listing the parse options. The user then chooses one item from the menu and gets an inventory of just the sentences with word forms with the chosen attributes. For example, if in Level B1 the user selects "Ins.Sing" for instrumental singular forms, in addition to the sentence with *балериной* 'ballerina', given above, the user receives sentences with other high-frequency instrumental singular forms, such as *кровью* 'blood', *лётчиком* 'pilot', *картошкой* 'potatoes', *гимнастикой* 'gymnastics', etc. Each sentence has all of the options for getting the English translation, audio rendering, and full description of the parse that are described under the "Search by topic" function described above. The "Search by analysis" function has already been found to have important pedagogical uses, since it allows users (including instructors) to instantly locate examples of lexemes that are frequently found in the given paradigm form. This can be useful, for example, when reviewing the meanings of the Russian grammatical cases and the use and form of difficult parts of the verbal paradigm, such as imperatives, participles, and gerunds.

### **3.4.3. Search by dictionary**

When the user selects "Search by dictionary," a menu with the dictionary form of every lexeme at the given CEFR level appears. Lexemes are listed in Russian alphabetical order, and each lexeme is accompanied by an English equivalent. When the user selects an item from the menu, the three (or two or one) sentences illustrating the highest-frequency word forms of that lexeme appear with all the features (options to access audio, translation, and parse explanation) described above.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is certainly the case that the authors of Russian textbooks have always tried to represent the word forms that L2 learners are most likely to encounter. However, today it is possible to realize this goal in a more precise manner by taking advantage of existing data on the authentic use of Russian word forms.

The SMARTool takes a usage-based approach to modeling Russian inflectional morphology. Inspired by research on the distribution and simulated learning of Russian word forms, the SMARTool strategically focuses the acquisition of a basic Russian vocabulary on the highest-frequency word forms and the contexts that motivate their use. In so doing, the SMARTool reduces the task of learning a basic vocabulary of about 3,000 lexemes by over 90%. While learning the entire paradigms of that many lexemes would entail mastery of over 100,000 word forms, with the SMARTool only about 9,000 word forms are needed. The SMARTool provides a variety of search options to support both lexical and grammatical approaches to the learning of vocabulary and morphology. Because the SMARTool is an online resource, it can be continually updated and expanded and can also be custom-tailored to excerpt specific vocabulary, for example, in connection with given lessons.

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## Lexical Profile of L2 Russian Textbooks

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### 1. Introduction

Traditionally, the link between vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension has been examined through the prism of lexical thresholds and vocabulary coverage (Milton 2009). Lexical thresholds represent the most frequent words in a language (i.e., lemmas, or dictionary forms of a word) and usually come in increments of 1,000. In relation to the Russian National Corpus, knowledge of the 1,000 most frequent lemmas allows for comprehension of 60% of a text's vocabulary, 2,000 lemmas – 69%, and 10,000 – 85% (Lyashevskaya and Sharoff 2009, v). These figures support an earlier estimation by Brown (1996, 2), who claimed (without elaborating on what grounds) that a passive knowledge of the 8,000–10,000 most frequent lexemes allows for “reasonable confidence” in reading Russian for general purposes.

While vocabulary frequency and text coverage are one measure of the difficulties that a learner might have in reading authentic texts, the question of how many words learners need to know to demonstrate reading proficiency levels according to the ACTFL Guidelines (2012) was addressed by Hacking and Tshirner (2017). They investigated the relationship between second language (L2) Russian vocabulary size and ACTFL proficiency levels among US college students and postulated that the 1,000-word band correlated with a rating of Intermediate Low, the 2,000-word band – Intermediate Mid, the 3,000-word band – Advanced Low, the 4,000-word band – Advanced Mid, and the 5,000-word band – Advanced High. These data on vocabulary knowledge and its link to reading proficiency levels raise interesting questions for our field; for example, do commonly available textbooks designed for the Intermediate and Advanced levels of instruction cover the 5,000 most frequent words in Russian, since, absent widely available graded or extensive reading programs, most classroom learners will likely encounter new vocabulary

through textbooks? Furthermore, the data raise the question of to what extent textbook authors should account for frequency data in constructing learning materials.

## 2. Literature review

Previous studies addressing vocabulary coverage in L2 textbooks have documented a significant deviation from frequency lists. Keller (1991)<sup>63</sup> compared five “core” textbooks (i.e., G. A. Bitextina and D. Davidson, *Russian: Stage One*; B. T. Clark, *Russian*, 3rd ed.; V. G. Kostomarov, *Russian for Everybody* [adaptation by R. L. Baker]; R. Leed and A. Nakhimovsky, *Beginning Russian* [2 vols.]; and G. and L. Stilman and W. E. Harkins, *Introductory Russian Grammar*) against a frequency list of 3,500 Russian nouns in order to determine both the lexical profile of the textbooks and the pedagogical value of the textbooks’ most frequent words. The study revealed that vocabulary used in these textbooks reflected a significant departure from the frequency list. Keller concluded that textbook authors need to put greater emphasis on vocabulary recycling<sup>64</sup> in their materials.

Rifkin (1992) reiterated the importance of word recycling in connection with the influence of the communicative approach movement on Russian-language textbooks. He also noted that some introductory textbooks included vocabulary that had questionable usefulness for general purposes, such as *бетон* ‘concrete’ and *крановщица* ‘female crane operator.’ Based on a frequency dictionary produced by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009), *бетон* falls within the most frequent 7,000 words, while *крановщица* does not even make the top 20,000-word cut and likely would be beneficial only to students specializing in construction. Although as of 2019 the textbooks Rifkin reviewed are no longer in use, the two aforementioned examples illustrate the inclusion of low-frequency words of a highly technical nature that potentially place an extra burden on students since these words distract their attention from learning more frequent words that could be used in a larger range of contexts. Even if they were included solely for the purpose of pronunciation or grammar training, high-frequency vocabulary items could have just

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<sup>63</sup> Admittedly, Keller (1991) represents dated research, but it provides a useful point of departure, if for no other reason than to illustrate strides made in the field.

<sup>64</sup> In the present study, the term “recycling” refers to the repetition of a word in any form and, thus, indicates the number of tokens (i.e., running words in a text; Gardner 2008).

as easily fulfilled such a purpose, which raises the question of how textbook authors select vocabulary items. Rifkin likewise pointed out that, with few exceptions, Intermediate and Advanced textbooks generally fall short in terms of “selection, sequencing, and presentation of vocabulary” (p. 480), which observation further supports a call for a more careful consideration of lexis in textbook design.

As part of a case study of the beginning Russian textbook *Mezhdu nami*, Comer (2019) offered a comprehensive review of existing studies that examine vocabulary input in foreign language textbooks. Among the findings reported, the study shows that the textbooks introduced a relatively low proportion (32.1%) of the most frequent 5,000 words (based on the Russian National Corpus by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009) and the minimum vocabulary expectations established by the Russian Federation for three major levels of the Test of Russian as a Foreign Language), which is consistent with data for other languages mentioned in the study. Comer attributed the above finding to the word composition of the corpus itself, which reflects language from written texts rather than spoken language.

Davies and Face (2006) looked at active vocabulary from Spanish textbooks and compared it to lemmas from the Corpus del Español and the new *Frequency Dictionary of Spanish: Core Vocabulary for Learners*. They discovered that “whatever N number of vocabulary words a textbook includes, only 10–50% of those are among the N most frequent lemma in the language” (p. 142). Thus, they found that some words numbered among the most frequent 1,000 lemmas were underrepresented, whereas other words that lie beyond the most frequent 5,000 lemmas were overrepresented. According to Davies and Face, such a finding speaks to the semantic fields chosen by the textbook developers and, hence, the need to align textbook vocabulary with real-word usage across a variety of genres, discourse types, and semantic fields.

Underrepresentation of high-frequency vocabulary in L2 textbooks was recorded in a number of other studies as well. Lipinski (2010) found that only 53–64% of vocabulary items from the 1,000 most frequent words<sup>65</sup> were found in the three introductory textbooks on L2 German examined in her study. Wagner (2015) compared textbooks of French to a Frequency Dictionary of French and found that first- and second-year L2 textbooks

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<sup>65</sup> Leipzig/BYU Corpus of Contemporary German.

offer fewer than 1,464 words out of the most frequent 5,000, which finding led Wagner to conclude that students may be missing essential input for those levels. Similarly, according to research conducted by O'Loughlin (2012), three textbooks of English from Elementary to Intermediate level introduce a combined total of 1,500 out of 2,000 high-frequency words.<sup>66</sup> Findings from these studies highlight a lack of high-frequency vocabulary in lower-level textbooks.

Two studies posit explanations for the mismatch between vocabulary input and the stated level of a textbook. Catalán and Francisco (2008) analyzed vocabulary in four English as a Foreign Language textbooks and concluded that publishing houses do not agree on the number and type of words to which students should be exposed at a given proficiency level. This difference of opinion stems from a lack of explicit standards for vocabulary selection in materials design and likewise explains a gap in the stated level of learning materials and the vocabulary input associated with those levels. Criado and Sánchez (2009) illustrated this gap by way of an EFL textbook marketed for the Intermediate level, but which, judging by the use of high- versus low-frequency vocabulary, was more appropriate for higher levels of proficiency.

Although studies focused on textbook vocabulary input consistently argue in favor of a careful selection of lexis, no relevant studies to date have investigated the current state of affairs in the field of L2 Russian vocabulary coverage in textbooks pitched at Intermediate and Advanced levels. The current study addresses this gap by analyzing four L2 Russian textbooks in order to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does the lexis choice in the textbooks reflect proficiency levels targeted by these textbooks?

RQ2: To what extent is the lexical coverage in the Intermediate and Advanced textbooks under question representative of the vocabulary of contemporary works of fiction and texts in the mass media and, thus, contributive to students' ability to read a range of genres?

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<sup>66</sup> Citing related research on this subject, O'Loughlin (2012) asserts that "high frequency vocabulary provides the most benefit to learners, as the most frequent 2,000 word families cover over 80% of text (Carroll et al. 1971) and account for nearly 95% of spoken language, thus providing learners with the lexical foundation to engage in everyday conversation (Adolphs and Schmitt 2003, 433)" (O'Loughlin 2012, 256).

### 3. Methodology

For the present study, the researchers compiled a corpus that comprised four textbooks published between 2007 and 2019 by Routledge and Yale University Press: Murray, J., *Intermediate Russian: A Grammar and Workbook* (T1); Kagan, O. E., A. S. Kudyma, and F. J. Miller, *Russian: from Intermediate to Advanced* (T2); Kagan, O. E., and A. S. Kudyma, *Russian Through Art for Intermediate to Advanced Students* (T3); and Rifkin, B. and O. Kagan, *Advanced Russian Through History* (T4).

Textbook choice partly paid homage to the late Olga Kagan—a champion of L2 curricular materials pitched at the Intermediate and Advanced levels and the person to whom this special issue of *Russian Language Journal* is dedicated. Recognizing the importance of analyzing alternative perspectives, the researchers selected Murray, J. and S. Smyth's *Intermediate Russian*, which, consistent with the Kagan et al. textbooks under consideration, targets the Intermediate and Advanced threshold. However, to a large extent, availability of eBooks governed the choice of whether to incorporate a textbook into the corpus, since comparative statistical analyses of tokens both within and across textbooks necessitated such a format as a point of departure. Three of the four textbooks used in this research were purchased from the publisher in eBook format, while the fourth was shared in electronic format by one of the authors.<sup>67</sup> Aside from availability, textbook choice reflected a deliberate attempt on the part of the researchers to represent equitably both traditional and content-driven textbooks.

T2 and T3 explicitly reference the ACTFL scale, whereas T1 and T4 do not, but these textbooks still state that the materials are intended for learners at both Intermediate and Advanced levels. Descriptions associated therewith contributed to the decision on the part of the researcher to include the textbooks in the corpus under consideration.

The data from the textbooks were analyzed using R statistical software (ver. 3.5.2<sup>68</sup>), while the words were lemmatized using Yandex (MyStem 3.1). The corpus contained a total of 180,695 tokens (i.e., running words in the text in Cyrillic, including headers and footers, appendices, and

<sup>67</sup> Special thanks to Benjamin Rifkin for graciously sharing electronic files of essays in Rifkin, B., O. Kagan, and A. Yatsenko, *Advanced Russian Through History*, for which Yale University Press does not offer an eBook.

<sup>68</sup> The following packages were used: readtext 0.74, future.apply 1.2.0, data.table 1.12.2, stringr 1.4.0, readr 1.3.1, tidyverse 1.3.1, and matrixStats 0.54.0.

glossaries). Whenever a word was composed of multiple parts without a hyphen, each part was handled as a separate token (e.g., *потому что* was handled as two separate words), and all hyphenated words were addressed as single tokens. In solving contextual disambiguation issues, we relied on a built-in MyStem 3.1 algorithm that proved to be highly efficient in handling cases like *есть* ('there is' vs 'to eat'), as our experiments showed.

Lemmatization was needed in order to compare the textbook tokens to the 5,000-word general vocabulary frequency lists by Sharoff, Umanskaya, and Wilson (2013) and fiction and mass media lists by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009), both of which appear in the form of lemmas. In their study, Hacking and Tschirner (2017) explicitly cited the aforementioned lists in regards to aligning the most frequent Russian words with ACTFL reading proficiency levels. The use of the same frequency list by Sharoff, Umanskaya, and Wilson (2013) guaranteed the validity of inferences regarding the levels of proficiency in the present study.<sup>69</sup>

In order to analyze the lexis of L2 Russian textbooks, the researchers used the framework of the Lexical Frequency Profile (LFP) by Laufer and Nation (1995). Within this framework, the words in the text are classified according to their belonging to the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth thousand frequency band. The LFP shows the lexical richness and sophistication of a text by providing the percentage of the text covered by the words from each of those bands. Findings by Hacking and Tschirner (2017) enabled the researchers to match coverage levels with reading proficiency levels and served as the methodology by which the researchers answered the first research question regarding the frequency portrait of the words in the textbook.

The researchers subsequently checked lemma frequency from the textbooks against fiction and mass media frequency lists compiled by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009), which were based on the Russian

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<sup>69</sup> The decision to use the list by Sharoff, Umanskaya, and Wilson represents the outcome of a careful selection process from a number of important lexical lists, including one by Lyashevskaya and Sharoff (2009), based on the Russian National Corpus and the lexical minimums for each level of the Test of Russian as a Foreign Language (TORFL)/Тест по русскому языку как иностранному (ТРКИ) (Andrjushina and Kozlova 2006; Andrjushina 2008; Andrjushina 2009). The former represents a slightly earlier version of Sharoff, Umanskaya, and Wilson (2013), so the deviation in results should not necessarily be significant. The latter is pegged to the TORFL levels, which have not been empirically validated in relation to the ACTFL levels. Thus, for the sake of validity, the researchers chose the same source as the one used in the Hacking and Tschirner (2017) study.

National Corpus. Such an approach gave primacy to genres—in particular, (1) fiction, (2) mass media, (3) fiction and mass media, and (4) neither fiction nor mass media—and helped to determine the percentage of words from the textbooks in each category. The data that emerged enabled the researchers to make inferences about the lexis types in each of the textbooks and thus answer the second research question regarding the contributive effect of lexical coverage on students' ability to read a range of genres.

#### 4. Results

Table 1 presents frequency data for the total number of tokens (including proper nouns and abbreviations) and the number of types (i.e., the number of unique lemmas). In addition, Table 1 sets forth data regarding lemmas grouped (G) in 1,000 word increments (G1=1,000; G2=2,000; G3=3,000; G4=4,000; G5=5,000; G6=6,000; and beyond) and the corresponding reading proficiency level from the Hacking and Tschirner (2017) study.

*Table 1. Frequency profile of textbooks by coverage*

	T1	T2	T3	T4
Stated level(s)	Intermediate	Intermediate/ Advanced	Intermediate/ Advanced	Advanced
Number of tokens	27,214	79,151	37,504	36,826
Number of types	4,313	6,209	3,301	5,877
G1 coverage corresponding to IL Reading	64.5%	60.2%	51.8%	52.8%
G2 coverage corresponding to IM Reading	8.7%	9.8%	10.8%	11.2%
G3 coverage corresponding to AL Reading	4.9%	4.8%	6.6%	5.6%
G4 coverage corresponding to AM Reading	2.7%	3.3%	2.9%	3.6%
G5 coverage corresponding to AH Reading	2.1%	2.8%	3.2%	3.3%
G6+ <sup>70</sup> coverage	17.1%	19.1%	24.7%	23.5%

<sup>70</sup> Words beyond the 5,000 frequency band.

The above findings indicate that all four textbooks under consideration generally fall within the respective level, as evidenced by target lexis at the Intermediate level that ranges from 70.0–73.2% (G1+G2 combined coverage, T2 and T1 respectively) and at the Advanced level from 75.3–76.5% (G1–G5 combined coverage, T3 and T4 respectively). All four textbooks present a considerable number of high-frequency vocabulary from the first 2,000 most frequent words, in contrast to the number of words at the 3,000-5,000 range (9.7% in T1, 10.9% in T2, 12.7% in T3, and 12.5% in T4).

Figure 1. Frequency profile of textbooks by lemma types

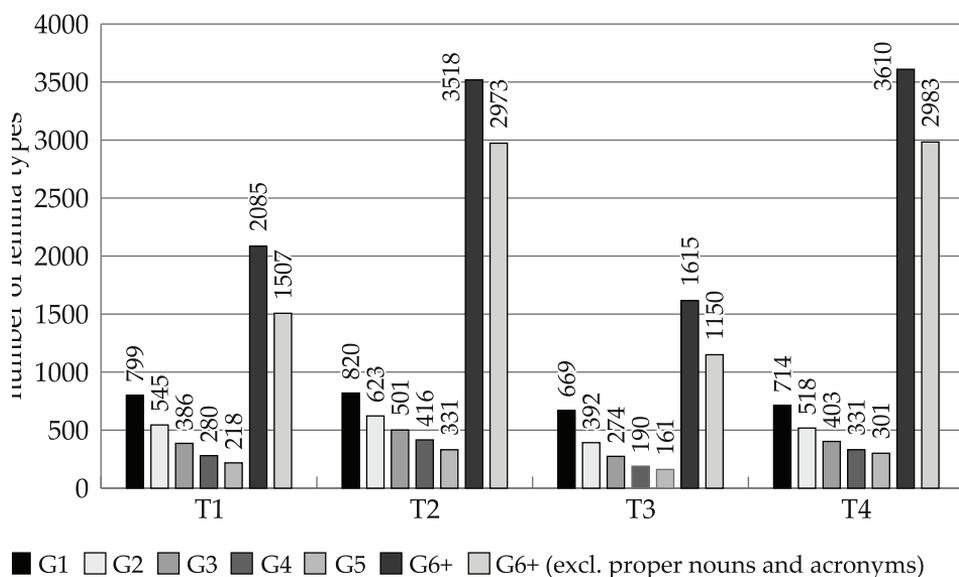
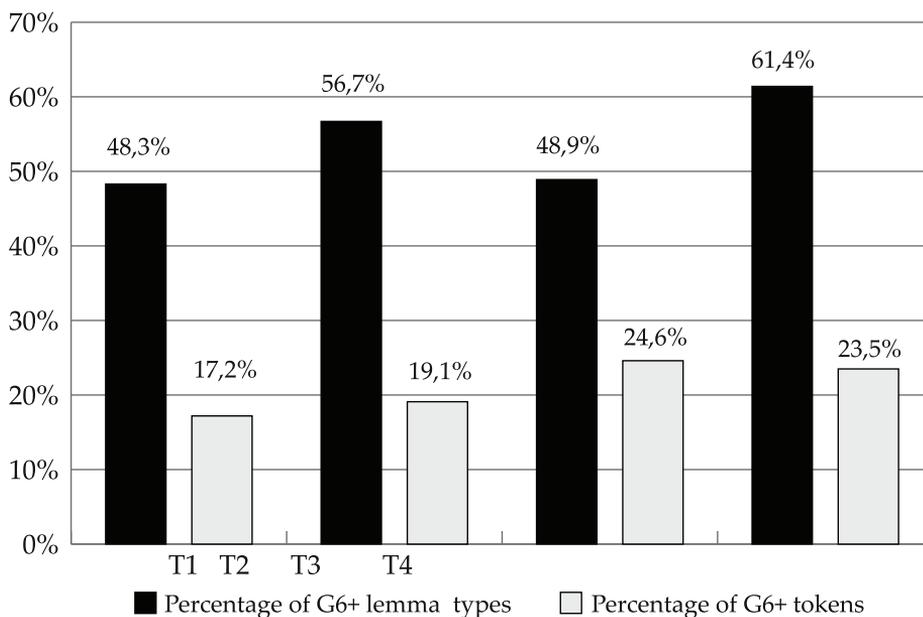


Figure 1 illustrates the profile of each textbook by number of word types within each increment of the most frequent 5,000 words. Count by word types reveals a sizeable imbalance in favor of low-frequency vocabulary: G6+ word types, even with proper nouns and acronyms excluded, account for a considerable portion of the types and play an important role in targeting a culture-specific component of language studies.

Although G6+ vocabulary used in the textbooks accounts for a large percentage of lemma types, it occupies a smaller percentage of tokens, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Percentage of G6+ words in types and tokens



Given the large number of G6+ words, determining the degree to which textbooks recycle them becomes essential in order to make inferences about incidental vocabulary learning (i.e., vocabulary learning without an intent to learn; Laufer and Hulstijn 2001). In a comparison of reading exposure to incidental learning of lexis, Schmitt (2010) asserts that exposure must occur 8–10 times in order for learners to develop a passive knowledge of words. Table 2 breaks down G6+ frequency information by textbook.

Table 2. Text frequency of G6+ words in textbooks

Textbook	Number of words that appear 8+ times	Number of words that appear only once
T1	70	1167
T2	471	1491
T3	308	559
T4	156	2201

An examination of words counted in the second column of Table 2 reveals that, in most cases, word choice fits the topics discussed in the textbooks (e.g., T3=308 and T4=156 represent specialized vocabulary and proper nouns relevant to art and history respectively). However, in the case of T1, one finds words with dubious general-purpose usefulness such as *калоша* ‘galosh’ and *ди-джей* ‘DJ,’ which appear 23 and 10 times respectively, whereas words of higher usefulness, such as *продуктовый* ‘grocery,’ *угощение* ‘treat,’ *задерживаться* ‘to be late,’ *побеспокоить* ‘to disturb,’ *скандалить* ‘to make a scandal,’ *гибкий* ‘flexible,’ *замужем* ‘married,’ and *рейс* ‘flight’ appear only once. Data in column 3 reveal significant skewness towards incidental vocabulary in all cases except T3. Overall, the choice of vocabulary beyond the 5,000 most frequent words aligns well with textbook topics.

Table 3. Types from fiction and mass media lists by percentage of words and coverage

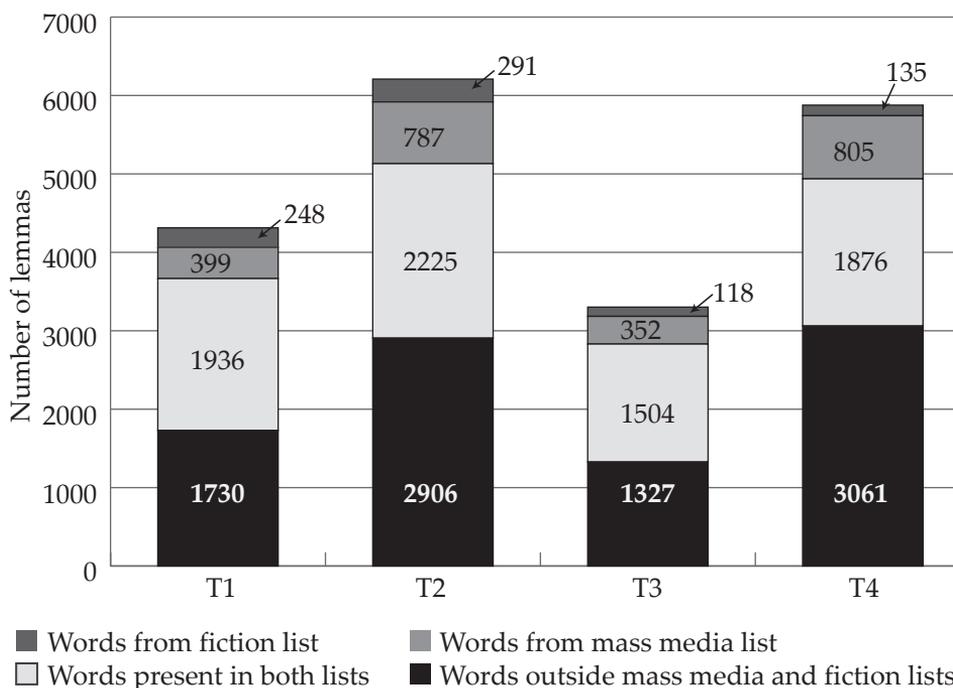
	T1	T2	T3	T4
% of lemma types (and number) shared by textbook and fiction list	50.6% (2184)	40.5% (2516)	49.1% (1622)	34.2% (2011)
% of lemma types (and number) shared by textbook and mass media list	54.1% (2335)	48.5% (3012)	56.2% (1856)	45.6% (2681)
Coverage by shared lemmas from fiction list	83.1%	78.9%	73.6%	71.6%
Coverage by shared lemmas from mass media list	84.5%	84.9%	79.7%	80.2%

Genre characteristics of vocabulary likewise represent a point of interest in terms of the vocabulary profile of the textbooks. Textbook data were checked against fiction and mass media frequency lists. These lists were compiled using corpora of texts dated from 1950–2007 (45 million tokens and 49 million tokens in fiction and mass media corpora respectively). Lists included all functional parts of speech. As in the present research, each service word containing multiple parts was treated as multiple separate words (e.g., *потому что* was handled as two separate words). Words in lists were characterized by statistics on frequency, range,

and dispersion. The latter was measured by Juillard's D coefficient which shows how uniformly a word is distributed across different parts of the corpus. Table 3 lays out the percentage of types found in fiction and mass media frequency lists, as well as their coverage of the text. Given that fiction and mass media lists overlap, Figure 3 illustrates the total number of types distributed across four categories, in particular, (1) words outside mass media and fiction lists, (2) words present in both lists, (3) words from mass media list, and (4) words from fiction list.

The above data indicate that, although lexis from fiction and mass media accounts for 34.2–56.2% of all word types in the textbooks, the coverage of those words ranges from 71.6–84.9%, thus suggesting that the majority of material spans both genres. Figure 3, which illustrates significant overlap between fiction and media words in the texts, reinforces the claim of a universal nature of vocabulary genre presented in all four textbooks, despite the fact that two of the four pertain to specialized fields, namely art and history.

Figure 3. Number of lemmas per textbook lexis across four categories involving text genre



## 5. Discussion

Clearly, word lists are corpus-dependent and, accordingly, their utility varies from one corpus to another. As such, exclusive focus on frequency information from one list can prove pedagogically unsound owing to a certain degree of deviation between lists, which likewise supports findings by Keller (1991). Based on an overview of textbook studies, Milton (2009) asserts that language textbooks often display a balanced number of high- and low-frequency vocabulary, and the textbooks analyzed in this study reinforce that claim.

In terms of level-appropriate vocabulary by textbook, findings from this research indicate that G1 vocabulary gives way to lower-frequency vocabulary in proportion to increases in proficiency level; however, one should also take into consideration the number of mid-frequency words in a given language. Mid-frequency vocabulary in English ranges from 4,000 to 8,000 words, which, according to Schmitt and Schmitt (2014), represents an essential lexicon for proficient language use in spite of a number of pedagogical challenges associated with the acquisition of such vocabulary items. In regards to Russian, findings from this research indicate that textbooks underrepresent vocabulary in the 3,000–5,000 range. Consulting frequency lists may help authors of future upper-level textbooks to include more words from these ranges.

With regard to the amount of lexis presented in each of the textbooks, a lemma-to-token ratio offers important insights into word recycling; in particular, the lower the ratio, the higher the chance of word recycling. For T1 and T4, the ratio equals 0.159 (each lemma appears 6 times on average in the corresponding corpus); for T2 and T3—0.079 (13 times on average) and 0.088 (11 times on average), respectively. Accordingly, words in T2 and T3 are recycled more frequently than words in T1 and T4—a finding supported by data in Table 2 in relation to G6+ words that appear over eight times. That being said, all of the textbooks have a large number of words that appear only once (from 1,167 to 2,201), with T3 standing in sharp contrast to the other three (559). This raises the question of long-term benefits associated with exposing L2 learners to large numbers of “truly incidental” words (i.e., words that appear only once), since it is doubtful that students will learn those words through absent recycling. Alternatively, both Schmitt (2008) and Milton (2009) assert that maximizing exposure does not lead to vocabulary overload if

the students are properly engaged with the material.

In addition, research carried out by Laufer and Rozovski-Roitblat (2015) shows that one or two carefully designed exercises involving a word can benefit students more in the way of retention than 18–21 exposures to a word. In light of such findings, material developers should consider tracking so-called “one-timers” in their texts and evaluating their usefulness. In the case of words of low usefulness, material designers might consider omitting or substituting them with mid-frequency synonyms; conversely, in the case of words of high usefulness, incorporating them in exercises may increase the chances of L2 learners acquiring them.

## **6. Conclusions**

A frequency measure of vocabulary use can assist textbook designers in making data-driven decisions regarding the content of foreign language textbooks with a communicative emphasis. Past research addressing frequency data in textbooks shows that significant deviations from frequency lists occur, and this finding has particular relevance for curriculum designers. This study presents a frequency analysis of four textbooks and reveals that although vocabulary frequency in the textbooks reflects the word knowledge needed at specific levels of reading proficiency, a gap exists in the type and treatment of vocabulary introduced from the 3,000–5,000-word range.

And yet the data also reveal that all the textbooks include a large number of vocabulary items representative of the 6,000 and beyond threshold (G6+). By implementing both intentional and incidental learning techniques, L2 learners stand to benefit from exposure to vocabulary in these textbooks owing to a balanced selection of vocabulary across genres. In order to ensure mastery of vocabulary at the Intermediate and Advanced levels, material designers should make a conscious effort to limit the amount of lexis beyond the 6,000 threshold in favor of lexis in the 3,000–5,000 range.

In addition, this research demonstrates how frequent vocabulary recycling can provide learning opportunities within each textbook and illustrates the potential for uninterrupted learning and maximal retention across levels. All in all, the present study shows that vocabulary measures can inform data-driven decision making in material and curriculum design.

## 7. Limitations and directions for future research

Given the similar composition of author teams for the materials under consideration, one may reasonably expect to find a certain lexical similarity across textbooks. Future research examining frequency data in Russian L2 textbooks likely will benefit from increased diversity with regard to source material authorship.

Although Schmitt (2010, 63) characterizes frequency as “arguably the single most important characteristic of lexis that researchers must address,” others criticize the approach for promoting ambiguity, since the most frequent words often have multiple meanings (polysemous), which eventually leads to processing difficulty (Crossley, Cobb, and McNamara 2013). While the lemmatization algorithm used in the present study claims to distinguish between words that have the same spelling but different meanings (context homonyms), it does not distinguish between polysemous words, so words may be used in two textbooks but with different meanings.

In addition to frequency, usefulness and difficulty play an important role in lexis selection (Laufer and Nation 2012; He and Godfroid 2019). “Usefulness” refers to the capacity of lexis to help satisfy general needs that learners have in regards to a second language. It also includes lexis for special needs, as in the case of T3 and T4—textbooks with specialized vocabulary that cater to the needs of students in art and history, respectively. “Usefulness” also refers to words in multi-word units, which present-day computer algorithms can only partially tackle, so the judgment of the material designer in some instances may prove more reliable than a computer algorithm. Studies in ESL have shown that native speakers make reasonable judgments on word usefulness up to the 7000-word level in terms of frequency (Okamoto 2015). As for difficulty, one can measure it in two ways: (1) through the set of criteria outlined in the study by Laufer (1990) that involves morphology, synonymy, connotations, etc.; and (2) through readability formulas (Chen 2016), which are not widely available for Russian. Thus, research that looks beyond frequency measures as a way of building the lexical profile of textbooks stands to benefit the field at large.

As for the type of lexis presented in the textbooks, a comparison with fiction and mass media lists reveals an overall balance. The field of ESL benefits from the aforementioned LFP, which enables one to compare words with an academic vocabulary list (Hsu 2009); however, to date, Russian lacks such an academic vocabulary list and stands to benefit greatly from

future research carried out in this regard. In addition, as Flowerdew (2009) notes, research on corpus linguistics reveals that frequency patterns may vary across registers. Thus, future comparisons with word lists reflecting the most frequently used words in spoken language corpora could shed needed light on the peculiarities of a lexical profile.

In the case of T2—one of the longer Advanced textbooks in the field—one would expect to find a more exhaustive coverage of vocabulary relative to the first 1,000 most frequent words, and yet the data suggest otherwise. Discerning whether this incongruity stems from the lexicon under consideration simply not appearing frequently in written texts or from some other reason will require additional investigation.

With regard to materials design, this research points out that all four textbooks reveal insufficient coverage of G2–G5 vocabulary, which represents core vocabulary items across the levels of reading proficiency. Accordingly, the researchers recommend that materials designers target words from the most frequent 2,000–5,000 words more intentionally and incorporate them into scaffolding exercises. In this regard, the study also raises the question of vocabulary-building exercises in Intermediate- and Advanced-level textbooks and the degree to which such exercises actually target words from levels appropriate to the book's intended audience. While such a question exceeds the scope of the current study, the authors view it as a potential point of departure for future research.

Ultimately, findings from this research suggest that the textbooks under consideration expose learners to around 3,000–6,000 lemma types, the mastery of which positions a learner for achieving Advanced-level reading proficiency. This research further confirms an observation made by O'Keeffe, McCarthy, and Carter (2007), namely, that concentrating on words beyond the 6,000-word band yields a limited return on investment in terms of vocabulary acquisition. Ultimately, material designers promote language uptake by integrating scaffolding exercises in the form of intentional lexical work that promotes long-term learning of lexis.

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**«В каком контексте?»:  
A Context-Based Approach to Teaching Verbs of Motion**

**IRINA SIX**

**1. Introduction**

Anyone who has studied or taught Russian using the textbook *В пути*, authored by Olga Kagan, Frank Miller, and Ganna Kudyma, is probably familiar with the following thought-provoking prompt: *В каком контексте?* 'Think of a situation when you could say': *Ты звонила домой сегодня? – Ты позвонила домой сегодня?* 'Did you call [imperfective] home today? – Did you call [perfective] home today?' or *Они не приходили. – Они не пришли.* 'They did not come [imperfective]. – They did not come [perfective]' (Kagan, Miller and Kudyma 2006, 79). This is one of the rare examples of assignments where Russian as a Second Language (RL2) students are asked to explicitly describe the context of an element of Russian speech. While this is a typical task for native Russian speakers (such assignments are routinely used in Russian middle school textbooks), RL2 learners are seldom prompted to provide an explicit description of the context in which the Russian utterance occurs and usually find this task challenging.

This article builds on the context approach to teaching verbal aspect in *В пути* and expands upon it to include the introduction of verbs of motion (VoM) at the novice level. Developed for beginning learners of Russian, the context-based approach first teaches the different contexts in which the verbs of motion occur and only then introduces the verb forms. It also guides the students on how to select the appropriate Russian equivalent of the English language generic verbs GO and COME through simple rules (the NO GO rule, the ABC principle). Contrary to the implicit strategy, which suggests that the students will eventually acquire the feel for context after multiple exposures to various language examples, the context-based approach proposes explicit instruction about the basic contextual situations from the very beginning and a different sequence in the instruction about

tenses. The suggested method has yet to find followers and supporters; however, the empirical observations of its results suggest significant progress in VoM retention and production.

## **2. Theoretical issues and terminology**

There is an apparent paradox in teaching VoM to native and non-native Russian learners. Native Russian speakers do not see verbs of motion as a challenge. They experience no more difficulties with them than with other verbs in first language acquisition (Gagarina 2009, 464). They never consider multidirectional and unidirectional meanings and do not see VoM aspect pairs as peculiar. Rather, native speakers see these pairs as a core part of the verbal system and in full conformity with the general principles of Russian morphology. This paradox has been widely discussed in linguistic studies. Some scholars suggest that there appear to be some “procedural rules” (Tseitlin 2015) for such categories as verbal aspect and VoM, which Russian native speakers acquire at an early age. Unfortunately, most of these rules are not included in Russian language textbooks.

The suggested context-based approach to teaching Russian VoM to English-speaking learners is not intended to contradict any theoretical findings or the ample discussion about these verbs. It does not add any new theoretical approach that needs to be explained to students. Rather, it is about what should be excluded from the explanation to beginners. The proposed method looks for the bare minimum in terminology paired with visuals and a meticulous explanation of context. With the purpose of simplifying the conceptual presentation and terminology, the explanations are shortened to three oppositions: past versus present tense, directional versus non-directional stem, and ongoing single directed versus all other cases motions.

### ***2.1. Context: past tense versus present tense***

Most of the confusion in teaching VoM comes from different logic implied in the past-tense and present-tense forms. Since Russian present-tense forms are only imperfective, the two tenses are semantically dissimilar. Coupled with the challenge of directedness versus non-directedness, switching tenses in VoM remains one of the most challenging tasks for RL2 learners. However, changing the sequence in presentation of tenses

and building on the general specifics of Russian tenses may help in overcoming some difficulties.

Contrary to the methodology used in most RL2 textbooks, which starts with imperfective unidirectional and multidirectional VoM in the present tense, the context-based approach advocates starting with the past tense. For the initial input, it proposes a storytelling of a narrative about a completed round trip within the sequence of events with parallel drawing of pictograms.

In the case of VoM, the differences between present- and past-tense forms are crucial. The context-based approach therefore starts with assignments on separation of the VoM in the context of the past tense (Context Situation 1) and the present tense (Context Situations 2 and 3).

## ***2.2. Stem: directional versus non-directional***

The suggested approach recommends focusing students' attention on VoM differentiation based on two different stems for the two different concepts. Described in detail in a recent publication by Zalizniak (2017, 6, 12–14), the two stems are also dissimilar in prefixation and word-formation models. For the methodology, it is important that a directional stem implies a vector whereas all VoM with non-directional stems (regardless of the wide range of their meanings) are “essentially static”, as Launer (1987) observed, and do not foresee subject displacement. Focusing on “stem” and “stem semantics” allows for grouping together prefixed and non-prefixed verbs, such as *пошёл, шёл, пришёл* versus *ходил, сходил*.

## ***2.3. Motion: single direction versus all other cases***

Russian motion verbs are presented as uni- and multidirectional in most RSL textbooks without utilizing Isachenko's (1960) division of VoM into two categories: (1) ongoing motion in a single direction and (2) all other cases. Isachenko's categories highlight the semantics of the representation of motion in Russian. The division of VoM into these categories can provide students with a simple principle for the correct stem choice in present tense forms: For single ongoing motion events, utilize a DIRECTIONAL stem. For all other meanings, use a NON-DIRECTIONAL stem. Application of this rule takes away the notorious distinction into prefixed and unprefixed VoM and simplifies the choice of verb form regardless of prefixation: *иду* versus *вхожу, прихожу, хожу, перехожу*.

In the context of present tense, events in Russian are perceived as activities in progress observed simultaneously with the moment of speech (*Я читаю книгу сейчас*, 'I am *reading* a book now'), and also in a broader context with no reference to the moment of speech (*Он хорошо говорит, но не читает по-русски*, 'He speaks well, but doesn't *read* Russian'). Relevant to all Russian verbs in general, this distinction is crucial in the case of VoM. Observable motions in progress may be coded with VoM of both stems (*А я иду, шагаю по Москве*, 'And I am *walking*, marching across Moscow.' *Я хожу по комнате*, 'I am *walking* around the room). Among non-observable events, repeated events may also be coded by VoM of both stems and an indicator of habituality (*Каждый день я иду на работу. Каждый день я хожу на работу*, 'Every day I *go* to work'). For a broader context (abilities, skills, action in general) with no reference to a specified moment, only verbs with NON-DIRECTIONAL stems are used (*Ребёнок уже ходит*, 'The child is already *walking*.' *Сюда ходит автобус, а не трамвай*, 'The bus *comes* here, but not the tram.' *Солнце всходит на востоке, а заходит на западе*, 'The sun *comes up* in the East, and *goes down* in the West.' *Эта газета больше не выходит*, 'This newspaper is no longer *in print/comes out*.').

### 3. Suggested methodology

In accounting for order to mediate the basic oppositions and dissimilarities discussed above, this article suggests the following sequence in teaching VoM:

#### **3.1. Step 1: Looking at motion through Russian eyes (via Context Situations)**

Teaching VoM at the novice level starts with highlighting the importance of being specific in motion description in Russian. The three major Context Situations are then presented. The suggested input (in Exercise 1A) urges students to apply the tactics of looking at a motion event through Russian eyes. Students begin by learning to separate motion events that have already happened (described in Russian in the past tense) from events that happen habitually or are currently happening (described in the present tense). Among motions in the present tense, students are taught to distinguish single directed ongoing motions from all other cases. These divisions create three major contextual situations:

(1) Context Situation 1. Motion event in the past-tense context: a

description of the round trip within the sequence of events.

- (2) Context Situation 2. Motion in the present-tense context: ongoing in a single direction.
- (3) Context Situation 3. Motion in the present-tense context: all other cases.

The first teaching task (Exercise 1) draws the English speakers' attention to nuances that English language lacks. In Exercise 1A, students examine the three Context Situations in which the verbs of motion occur. In Exercise 1B, students assign a Context Situation number to English phrases, a simple but valuable task that raises students' awareness of the differences between the Context Situations and prevents mistakes in translation of motion verbs (especially, GO and COME) into Russian.

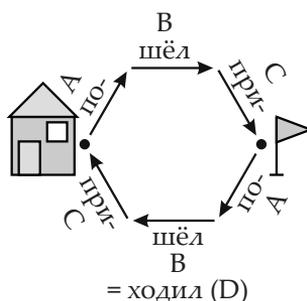
### **3.2. Step 2: Introducing VoM in the past tense (via ABC story)**

The input of actual VoM starts with a narrative in the past tense (Context Situation 1). The round-trip story presented to students includes VoM (perfective and imperfective, with directional and non-directional stems) introduced in contextual distinctions via storytelling coupled with a step-by-step drawing of pictograms on the board. Other visualization techniques are possible; however, simple methods of input seem to work best for displaying contextual differences in the classroom. At the novice level, we suggest inputting perfective and imperfective forms without specifying their aspect, but implying visualization and storytelling for explanation of their semantic differences in the past forms, as in the ABC story in Exercise 2.

The first two stories (presented as childlike narratives in Exercises 2 and 7) are designed to visualize Russian-language equivalents related to the English-language concepts of the verbs GO and COME. More importantly, these stories visually display the difference between verbs with non-directional stems (A, B, and C verbs) and directional verbs (D verb). Depending on the language skills of the audience, the stories can be altered, spiced up with or stripped of words and details, but the stories should never lose the three legs of the route: A verbs (*пошёл, поехал*) signifying the action's inception, B verbs (*шёл, ехал*) signifying the action in progress, and C verbs (*пришёл, приехал*) signifying the arrival. The round-trip story is summarized with the D verb signifying an EVENT OR ACTIVITY (*ходил,*

ездил). The sample round-trip story presented in Exercise 2 follows the storyline of a Russian Winnie-the-Pooh cartoon, which might be briefly shown to students for informational purposes. In parallel to telling (or reading) the story, the step-by-step drawings that support the storyline should be completed as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1.



It is equally important to invest time into honing the skill of correctly rendering go into Russian through the sequence presented in Exercises 3-5, urging students to analyze and memorize English equivalents to the ABC story phrases.

Contextual presentation of VoM via storytelling with the A-B-C backbone allows students to create their own retrospective mini-stories shortly after the initial introduction of VoM. Exercise 6 provides verb scaffolding to present the students with an opportunity to create their own simple stories.

The next step introduces a second storytelling activity built on the same ABC principle and filled in with another set of VoM that are also translatable as GO and COME (Exercise 7). Traditionally in RL2 textbooks, the difference between *идти/ходить* and *ехать/ездить* is portrayed as the distinction “on foot” versus “by vehicle”; however the semantic analysis of Koshelev (1999) suggests that it is the nature of the subject’s contact with the road surface that plays the decisive role in the verb meanings. The characteristic features relevant to the concept of *ехать* are (a) UNINTERRUPTED indirect contact with the road surface (*непрерывно опираясь*), (b) SOLID road surface (*на твёрдую поверхность*), and (c) UTILIZATION OF A SUPPORTING BASE that provides a permanent direct contact with the ground

(с фиксированной опорной областью). These characteristics (and not the traditionally emphasized means of transportation per se) permit the use of *ехать* in the example *Мальчик едет с горки на спине/ногах*, ‘The boy goes down the hill on his spine/legs’, even though no mean of transportation is used, while precluding *Колесо едет*, ‘The wheel is going’, as no permanent fixed unmovable support secures the wheel’s contact with the road (Koshelev 1999, 44–49). For the purpose of RL2 teaching, the traditional distinction “on foot” versus “by transport” might be recast as “by itself, no supporting base” versus “utilizing a supporting base” for easier lexicalization of phrases with direct and figurative meaning, such as *Она ездит на нём всю жизнь*, ‘She has been using him all her life’. *Ты можешь ездить на моей*, ‘You can use my car’.

The sample story presented in Exercise 7 is an adaptation of a song, “*Мы едем, едем, едем*, ‘We are going, going, going’” featured in a Russian cartoon, which is recommended for brief familiarization. The input is focused on the storytelling (text) based on song lyrics and has been purposely simplified for the novice level. Instructors may make as many changes to the sample stories as they wish as long as they preserve the “ABC equals D” formula and the relevant VoM (as in Exercise 8).

For visualizing the second story, the same sequence of exercises resulting in a similar final drawing and the similar formula of “going by vehicle” is recommended (Exercises 8–11; Figures 4 and 5). The summary chart “The Six Ways to Go” (Exercise 12) brings together all six possibilities for translating the verb go as exemplified by the two stories, giving consideration to the “vehicle” versus “no vehicle” opposition.

Additionally, teaching VoM through storytelling utilizing the “ABC equals D” formula and the pictograms contributes to contextualizing aspectual differences untranslatable into English. In the ABC stories, A verbs (*пошёл, поехал*) and C verbs (*пришёл, приехал*) exemplify the basic aspectual notion of specific single or sequential events of perfective verbs. In the pictograms, A verbs are depicted as vectors starting from a point, while C verbs are depicted as vectors ending at a point to accentuate their starting and ending connotations and the nature of these verbs as events. B verbs (*шёл, ехал*) embody the fundamental aspectual notion of progression of imperfect verbs

and are depicted as vectors only (with no starting or ending points). Furthermore, both sample texts contain context indicators mandatory for verbs of progression (Soboleva 2014, 169–70), such as the need for simultaneous action for single directed B verbs: *Пух шёл домой и думал о Кролике*, 'Роoh was walking home and thinking about Rabbit'. *Дети ехали и пели* 'The children rode and sang.' D verbs (*ходил, ездил*) exemplify the aspectual notion of general validity of imperfect verbs. They are not depicted as vectors but are rather applied to a picture summarizing all steps of the round trip (Figure 3 and 5).

### 3.3. Step 3: Contextualizing single directional motion in the present tense (via B verbs)

Due to the specifics of Russian aspect, the ABC story (Context Situation 1) is not entirely transferable into the present tense: A verbs (*пошёл*) do not exist in the present, while C verbs (*пришёл*) function only in the context of repetitions (*Он часто приходит к нам в гости*, 'He often comes to visit us'). On the other hand, B verbs (*шёл*) and D verbs (*ходил*) may serve as helpful tools in bridging the past and present tenses.

Context Situation 2 describes either a speaker's current motion for a certain goal or an ongoing motion observed by a speaker in the moment of speech, which may or may not be indicated by *сейчас*, 'now' (*Она идёт по улице*, 'She is walking down the street'). Since goal-based orientation is more fundamental for *идти*-type verbs than destination-based orientation (Maisak and Rakhilina 1999), the students' task prioritizes usage of *идти* with the following infinitives signifying goals (*Спокойной ночи! Я иду спать*, 'Good night, I am going to bed'). *Идите обедать!*, 'Go eat!'). Emphasizing goal orientation connotation permits for easier explanation of typically disregarded cases, such as *Корабль идёт в порт*, 'The boat is heading into port' and *Самолёт идёт на посадку*, 'The plane is coming in for a landing' (Maisak and Rakhilina 1999). Emphasizing current duration connotation allows for practicing the usage of *идти* to express ONGOINGNESS at large (*Фильм начался? – Да, фильм уже идёт*, 'Has the film started? –Yes, it's already going/playing').

Context Situation 2 implies the SOLITARY usage of B verbs in the present tense (VoM with directional stems without prefixes, like *идём* and *едём*), including the situations when English uses COME (Morozov 1999, 85; Paducheva 2002, 121–22), compare: *Обед готов! – Иду!* 'Lunch

is ready! – *Coming!*; *Автобус идёт. Наконец-то!* – ‘Here comes the bus. Finally!’ To avoid possible mistranslations of COME in student exercises, the following input with reference to the ABC story proved helpful: C verbs (*пришёл, приехал*) describe arrival to a final destination, an event, depicted in pictograms as a vector’s target point (Figures 1). In the context of the present tense, C verbs do not belong to Context Situation 2, which indicates ongoingness.

Regarding repetition, however, C verbs are applicable to Context Situation 3, and therefore acquire a non-directional stem (*Каждый понедельник Пух приходит в гости*. ‘Every Monday Pooh comes for a visit’).

It is important to note to students that Context Situation 2 describes ongoing motions simultaneous with the moment of speech (observable) and also directed goal-oriented motions taking place in other time period (non-observable). In the latter case, time indicators will contextualize the meaning as either INTENTION (*Завтра я иду на концерт*. ‘I am going to a concert tomorrow’) or REPETITION (*Он каждый день встаёт и идёт на работу*. ‘He gets up and goes to work every day’).

#### **3.4. Step 4: Teaching all other VoM in the present tense (via D verbs)**

For VoM in the present tense, most RL2 textbooks customarily input multidirectional verbs as observable random motions (*Он ходит по парку*. ‘He is walking around the park’) notwithstanding their sporadic usage. The context-based approach recommends starting with the more frequent meaning of the round trips repetition, utilizing the concept of D verbs (*ходил*) from Context 1 as a bridge to Context Situation 3. Here is the possible simple explanation: Context Situation 3 unites all motions, except for ongoing motions in a single direction. Among them, the meaning of repetitions, such as repetition of the round trips indicated by D verbs in the ABC story, is most common. In short, Context Situation 3 is D verbs in the present: *Каждый день Пух ходит к Кролику, чтобы пообедать*. ‘Every day Pooh goes to Rabbit’s for lunch’. Already familiar with the concept of D verbs, novice students easily grasp the usage of the non-directional stems in such cases.

Other meanings, like motion in a generalized meaning (*Летом все ездят отдыхать*. ‘Everyone goes on vacation in summer’), ability to perform a motion (*Ребенок уже ходит*. The child is already walking’) or

random motions in the moment of speech (*Ребёнок ездит на велосипеде по двору. 'The child is riding around the yard on his bike'*) may follow at the novice level if time permits.

### **3.5. Step 5: В каком контексте? Practicing visualization in translation**

The context-based approach emphasizes translation as the most efficient way of acquiring Russian VoM. Translation allows students to visualize motion events through Russian eyes and select the correct Russian equivalent to the generic English motion verbs GO and COME. Translation assignments instantly reveal acquisition difficulties and allow the instructor to intervene with additional scaffolding (Wertz 1979, 240). While Exercise 12 presents a sample review, Exercise 13 offers a language-production check via translation, which is less challenging when students are equipped with knowledge of the Context Situations, the NO GO Rule, and the ABC principle.

## **4. Suggested sample exercises**

*Exercise 1. (A) Read about practices of analyzing the context for the verb GO.*

### Placing motion verbs in Russian context

Russian speakers are VERY SPECIFIC when they describe motion. To pick out the correct Russian equivalents of the English motion verbs GO, COME, FLY, CARRY, DRIVE, WALK, etc., look at a motion event “through Russian eyes.” Take the following steps:

- (1) separate events that have happened (they are described in Russian in the past tense) from the events that are happening or happen (described in the present tense);
- (2) in the present tense, separate single directed ongoing motions from all other cases.
- (3) these divisions create three major contextual situations:

Context Situation 1. Motion event in the past tense context: description of a round trip within the sequence of events.

Context Situation 2. Motion in the present tense context: ongoing in a single direction.

Context Situation 3. Motion in the present tense context: all other cases.

(B) Supply the number of the Context Situation to the English sentences below. You do not need to translate the sentences. Just practice analyzing the context.

- (1) We are going to a concert tonight. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (2) The children did not go for a walk because of the rain. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (3) Katya is on her way to the library. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (4) I go to my history class once a week. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (5) I returned from my friend's house at 4 pm. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (6) I go to my friend's house a lot to study. (\_\_\_\_\_)

Key to Exercise 1(B): (1) 2; (2) 1; (3) 2; (4) 3; (5) 1; (6) 3.

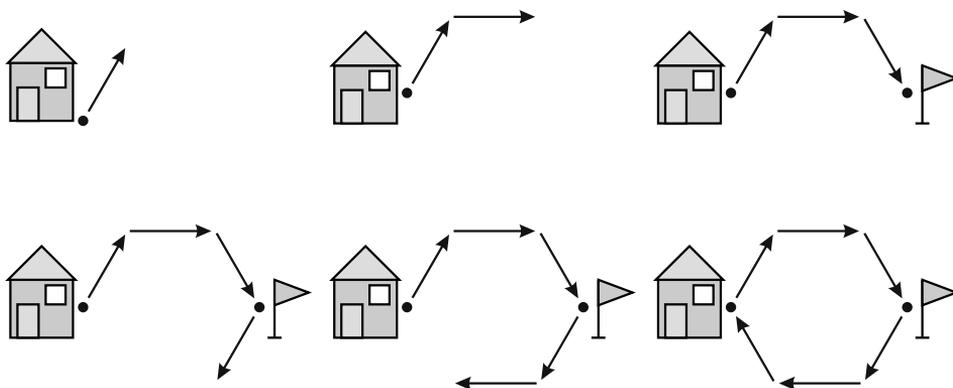
Exercise 2. Read the story about Winnie's trip to his friend Rabbit's place. Assign the highlighted verbs of motion to every next leg of the route at the pictures presented below. Identify the verb that signifies the completed round trip.

#### Винни Пух и Кролик

Один раз Винни-Пух пошёл в гости к Кролику. Он шёл и пел песню. Он пришёл к Кролику и съел весь его мёд. Потом он съел всё, что дал ему Кролик, ... и пошёл домой. Он шёл домой и думал о Кролике. Пух пришёл домой и лёг спать.

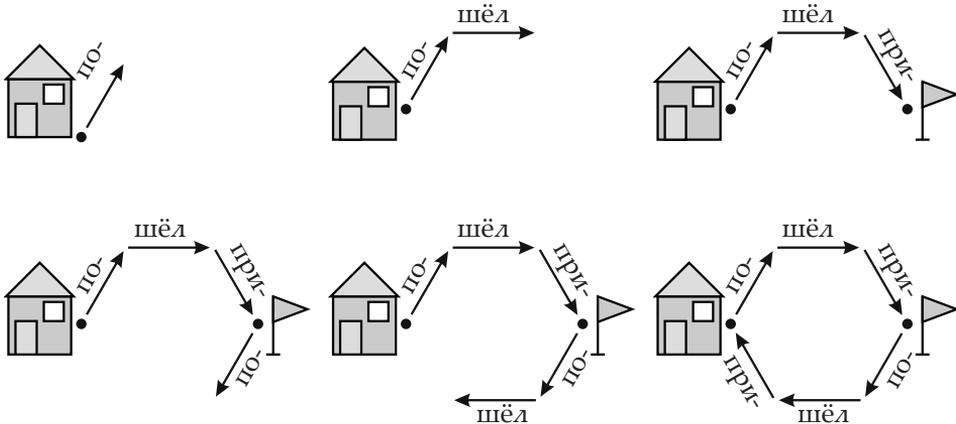
Как вы думаете, почему Винни-Пух ходил в гости? Он ходил к Кролику, чтобы пообедать!

Figure 2.



Key to Exercise 2:

Figure 3.



Exercise 3. (A) Learn strategies that will help you translate the verb WENT (BY ITSELF): in the picture, assign letter A to the verb пошёл; B to шёл; C to пришёл, indicating the legs of the route. Assign letter D to the verb ходил, indicating a round trip.

Key to exercise 3(A): 🔍 refer to Figure 1.

(B) Analyze with English-Russian substitutions in the ABC of Going Formula:

The ABC of GOING (by itself)

In the pictogram, the simple formula of the single round trip is:

$$(A + B + C) \times 2 = D$$

In Russian, the letters stand for the following verbs:

$$(\text{ПОШЁЛ} + \text{ШЁЛ} + \text{ПРИШЁЛ}) \times 2 = \text{ХОДИЛ}$$

The A, B and C verbs contain the same directional stem that implies a vector. The D verb indicates a completed round trip, an “event,” but not a direction, and possesses a different non-directional stem.

In English, the ABC formula is (roughly) equivalent to

Went + went + arrived = went

In English, WENT is used in three cases: for the first two legs of the trip (“started the trip” and “was on the way”) and for the completed trip. As you can see, there is no one single translation to the verb go in the past tense.

(C) Learn to visualize with the NO GO rule:

#### NO GO rule

When translating an expression with go from English into Russian IN THE PAST TENSE, FREEZE, and do not go too fast. There is NO one GO in Russian. For a correct translation, VISUALIZE “the ABC equals D” picture, pick out the correct letter equivalent, and substitute it with the relevant verb in Russian.

(D) Analyze the chart (note that number 1 after the letter indicates “by itself”):

English	Visualize it!	Index	In Russian
Winnie WENT to his friend Rabbit.	Went (= Started a trip)	A1	пошёл
Winnie WENT (~WAS WALKING) for 20 minutes	Went (= Was on the way)	B1	шёл
On Monday, Winnie WENT to visit his friend Rabbit	Went (= Made a round trip)	D1	ходил

*Exercise 4. Match the bolded Russian verbs in the left column to their letter counterparts in the right column.*

(1) Винни-Пух <b>ХОДИЛ</b> в гости.	A verb (went = started a trip)
(2) Винни <b>ПОШЁЛ</b> к Кролику.	B verb (went = was on the way, was walking)
(3) Он <b>ШЁЛ</b> и пел песню.	D verb (went = made a round trip)
(4) Он <b>ПОШЁЛ</b> домой.	
(5) Он <b>ШЁЛ</b> и думал о Кролике.	

*Key to Exercise 4:* (1) D verb; (2) A verb; (3) B verb; (4) A verb; (5) B verb

*Exercise 5. Read the sentences below and fill in the blank with A1, B1 or D1.*

- (1) Вчера я ходил к зубному врачу. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (2) Он пошёл на работу. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (3) Когда я шёл в магазин, я встретил друга. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (4) Мы не ходили в гости вчера. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (5) Утром у него была температура, и он не пошёл в университет. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (6) Мы шли и разговаривали. (\_\_\_\_\_)

*Key to Exercise 5:* (1) D1; (2) A1; (3) B1; (4) D1; (5) A1; (6) B1.

*Exercise 6. Create a story about trips using the words provided: ходил (когда, куда) – пошёл (куда, когда) – пришёл (куда, когда).*

- (1) (в субботу, в гости к другу) – (к нему, в 5 часов дня) – (домой, в час ночи)
- (2) (в воскресенье, в спортзал) – (в зал, в 12 часов) – (домой, в 2 часа)

*Key to Exercise 6:* A sample story: В субботу я ходил в гости к другу. Я пошёл к нему в 5 часов дня. Я пришёл домой в час ночи! Поздно!

*Exercise 7. Read the story about the good friends and the train ride. Assign the highlighted verbs of motion to every next leg of the route at the pictures presented below. Identify the verb that signifies the completed round trip.*

Весёлые соседи – хорошие друзья

Это соседи и хорошие друзья. Один раз они поехали на поезде в далёкие края. Они ехали и пели песни. Они приехали в далёкие края (мы не знаем, что они там делали – отдыхали, наверное). Потом они поехали домой. Когда они ехали домой, они опять пели. С весёлой песенкой они приехали домой.

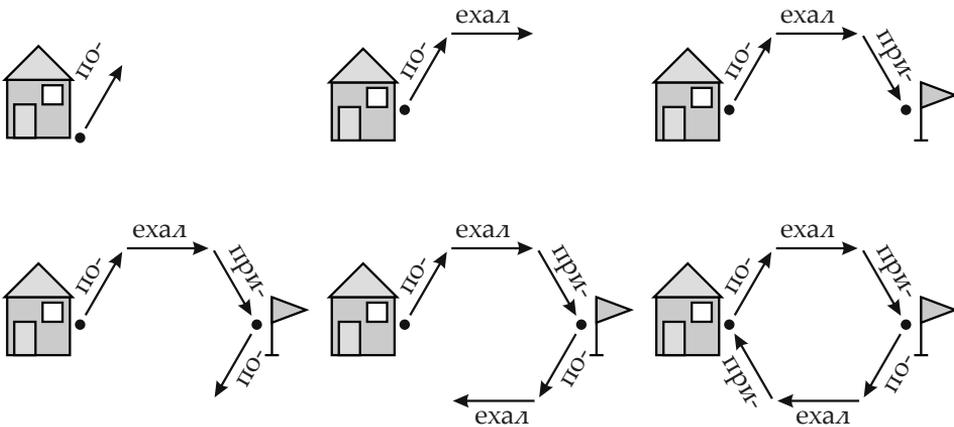
Куда они ездили? – Они ездили в далёкие края.

Зачем? – Наверное, они ездили отдыхать.

 refer to Figure 2

Key to Exercise 7:

Figure 4.

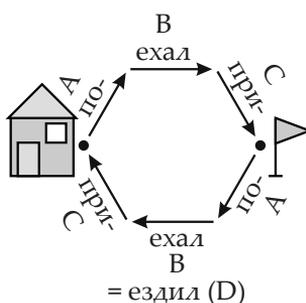


*Exercise 8. Learn the strategies that will help you to translate the verb WENT (BY VEHICLE):*

*(A) In the picture, assign letter A to the verb поехал; B to ехал; C to приехал, indicating the legs of the route. Assign letter D to the verb ездил indicating a completed round trip.*

*Key to Exercise 8(A):*

*Figure 5.*



*(B) Analyze with English–Russian substitutions in the ABC of Going Formula:*

The ABC of GOING (utilizing a vehicle)  
With every letter representing a different leg of the trip, the formula of the trip is the following:

$$(A + B + C) \times 2 = D$$

In Russian, it is equivalent to

$$\text{ПОЕХАЛ} + \text{ЕХАЛ} + \text{ПРИЕХАЛ} (\times 2) = \text{ЕЗДИЛ}$$

The A, B and C VERBS contain directional stem that implies a vector. The D-VERB indicates a round trip and has a non-directional stem..  
In English it is (roughly) equivalent to

$$\text{Went} + \text{went} + \text{arrived} = \text{went}$$

To translate WENT (UTILIZING A VEHICLE) into Russian correctly, apply the NO GO rule and visualize the trip details.

(C) Review Exercise 3 (C) and apply the NO GO rule to the ABC of going by vehicle.

(D) Analyze the chart (note that number 2 after the letter indicates “by vehicle”):

English	Visualize it!	Index	In Russian
One fine day, my friend <b>went</b> by train to distant lands.	Went by vehicle (= Started a trip)	A2	поехал
He rode a train ( <b>went</b> ) for two days!	Went by vehicle (= Was on the way)	B2	ехал
My friend <b>went</b> to distant lands for the summer (and returned).	Went by vehicle (= Made a round trip)	D2	ездил

Exercise 9. Match the VoM from the Russian sentences with the correct letter.

1) Друзья <b>ехали</b> и пели песни.	A2 verb (started a trip by vehicle)
2) Они <b>поехали</b> домой.	B2 verb (was on the way by vehicle)
3) Друзья <b>ездили</b> в далёкие края.	D2 verb (made a round trip by vehicle)

Key to Exercise 9: (1) B verb; (2) A verb; (3) D verb

Exercise 10. Read, analyze, and fill in the blanks with A2, B2 or D2.

- (1) Вчера он ездил к родителям. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (2) Он ехал в метро и читал. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (3) Мой муж поехал на вокзал встречать (meet) друга. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (4) Они ехали на поезде два дня! (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (5) Летом она ездила в Россию. (\_\_\_\_\_)

Key to Exercise 10: (1) D2; (2) B2; (3) A2; (4) B2; (5) D2.

Exercise 11. Create a story about travelling using the words provided: *ездил (когда, куда) – поехал (куда, когда) – приехал (куда, когда)*.

- (1) (вчера, на работу) – (туда, в 7 часов утра) – (домой, в 6 часов вечера)
- (2) (осенью, в Казань) – (в Казань, в сентябре) – (в Москву, в ноябре)
- (3) (на выходные, на дачу) – (туда, в субботу утром) – (домой, в воскресенье вечером)

Key to Exercise 11: A sample story for prompt 2 might read as follows: Осенью мой друг ездил в Казань. Он поехал туда в сентябре, а приехал назад в Москву в ноябре.

Exercise 12. Analyze the summary chart presenting six possibilities for translating the verb *GO* as exemplified by the two stories. Memorize the forms:

The Six Ways to Go<sup>71</sup>

Subject displacement	A Started the trip	B Was on the way	D Made a round trip
By itself, no help (1)	Пошёл	шёл	ходил
Utilizing a vehicle (2)	поехал	ехал	ездил

Exercise 13: В каком контексте? Read the following English sentences and visualize the motion event through Russian eyes. Supply the numbers of the Context Situation (1, 2, 3). For Context 1, supply the A, B, C, or D index. Add (1) if the subject moves with no external help and (2) if the subject moves by vehicle. Write all possible translations of these sentences:

- (1) We are going to the concert tonight. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (2) The children did not go for a walk because of the rain. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (3) Katya is on her way to the Library. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (4) I go to my history class once a week. (\_\_\_\_\_)

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<sup>71</sup> C verbs are not shown in the table because they are not translated as “go.”

- (5) Our friends went to France. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (6) After class I went to my professor. (\_\_\_\_\_)
- (7) He came home late. (\_\_\_\_\_)

*Key to Exercise 13:*

- (1) (2) Мы идем на концерт сегодня вечером. Мы едем на концерт сегодня вечером
- (2) (1: D 1, A1). Дети не ходили гулять из-за дождя. Дети не пошли гулять из-за дождя.
- (3) (2) Катя идёт в библиотеку. Катя едет в библиотеку
- (4) (3) Я хожу на лекцию по истории раз в неделю. Я езжу на лекцию по истории раз в неделю
- (5) (1: A2, D2) Наши друзья поехали во Францию. Наши друзья ездили во Францию
- (6) (1: A1, D1, A2, D2) После урока я пошёл к профессору. После урока я ходил к профессору. После урока я поехал к профессору. После урока я ездил к профессору.
- (7) (1: C1, C2) Он пришел домой поздно. Он приехал домой поздно.

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to outline the following steps of the context-based approach to teaching VoM at the novice level:

- (1) To introduce three Context Situations based on the oppositions PAST TENSE VERSUS PRESENT TENSE and ONGOING MOTION IN SINGLE DIRECTION VERSUS ALL OTHER CASES;
- (2) To begin input with storytelling in the PAST tense (Context Situation 1);
- (3) To visualize with pictograms and supply A, B, and C letters to the legs of the round trip (VoM with directional stem)
- (4) To envision as a summary event and apply D letter to the verb signifying a round trip (VoM with non-directional stem);
- (5) To use the formula "ABC equals D" and the NO GO rule to aid in the correct translation of the verbs GO and COME in the PAST tense; and
- (6) To differentiate between ongoing single directed motion (Context Situation 2) and all other motions (Context Situation 3) to aid in the correct translation of verbs GO and COME in the present tense.

The visualization method used in the presentation of the PAST tense forms (Context Situation 1) is different from the illustrations of unidirectional and multidirectional motions in most RL2 textbooks. Among all meanings of VoM in the present tense, the context-based approach suggests covering with novice level students the meanings of ongoing motion in a single direction (Context Situation 2) and only the meaning of trips repetition for all other cases of motions with non-directional stems (Context Situation 3).

The context-based approach described above answers the following observed teaching needs: (1) the need for a conceptualized presentation of VoM in “Russian motion talk” instead of separating unprefixes and prefixed VoM in different chapters (Hasko 2009, 381–82); (2) the need for developing an automatic habit of encoding information and shifting the instruction to conceptual distinctions (Pavlenko and Volynsky 2015, 46); and (3) the need to make conceptual schemata visible to L2 learners and to create tasks related to various scenarios (Hasko 2009, 382). Teaching VoM with the context-based approach in some way supports the idea that the notorious struggle with aspectual pairs is unnecessary in RL2 teaching (Soboleva 2014, 168–69), at least at the novice level.

The further extension of the context-based approach to VoM at the intermediate level is beyond the scope of this article. However, it may include the following:

- (1) Extending a similar principle of explanation with “ABC equals D” formula to other VoM — for example: (*полетел + летел + прилетел*) X 2 = *летал*.
- (2) Introducing the contextual specifics of VoM with directional (qualifying, spatial) prefixes and directional stems, for example: *вышел, отошёл, прошёл, перешёл, вошёл, дошёл*.
- (3) Introducing the contextual specifics of VoM with directional prefixed and non-directional stems, in the meaning of general validity (*Он выходил на 5 минут. 'He stepped out for five minutes (but he is back now)'. Сантехник приходил? 'Did the plumber come [he is not here now]?' Мама приезжала? Did mom come [but she is no longer here]?'*)

The suggested approach to teaching VoM grounded on the usage of context in RL2 explanations (Wertz 1984; Kagan, Miller, and Kudyma 2006; Soboleva 2014) has yet to find followers and supporters; however,

anecdotal evidence based on observations of students' performance suggests significant progress in VoM retention and production. The context-based approach could offer an illustrative answer to the question outlined in the introduction: "В каком контексте? Think of a situation when you could say: Они не приходили – Они не пришли. 'They did not come [imperfective]. – They did not come [perfective].' Both phrases render the contextual nuances of the PAST tense (Context Situation 1); however, *не приходили* contains a non-directional stem that denotes a general validity, an event that has never taken place, while *не пришли* is a VoM with directional stem meaning that the arrival to the point of reference (C verb action in the ABC story) has never taken place.

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**Levine, James S., ed. 2017. *Paper Victory. Three Stories by Ludmila Ulitskaya. An Annotated Russian Reader.* iLearn Russian Publishers. 92 pages.**

**Levine, James S., ed. 2018. *The Old Woman. A Story by Daniil Kharms. An Annotated Russian Reader with Exercises on Verbs of Motion.* iLearn Russian Publishers. 114 pages.**

These two Readers are a welcome addition to the available authentic texts for learners of Russian at the intermediate level of proficiency (CEFR, 2011). Both of these James S. Levine-edited Readers have much to offer, not only in terms of their linguistic accessibility, but also through the way they might improve students' cultural literacy and analytical skills when it comes to Russian literature. One's reading skills, review of Russian grammar and vocabulary also stand to benefit from these two valuable volumes.

*Paper Victory* is a collection of three stories by Ludmila Ulitskaya: "Paper Victory," "Cabbage Miracle," and "Nails," from her book «Детство сорок девять» (2004). Levine provides glossed, unabridged versions of these three stories, along with accent marks, line numbers, and explanations of potentially difficult words and grammatical structures. Asterisks indicate all participles and verbal adverbs that also appear in alphabetical order at the end of each story, along with translations and grammatical information. Following this list are vocabulary exercises and activities aimed at checking text comprehension. Levine provides topics for compositions that conclude exercises for each story. Meanwhile, a Russian-English glossary, in which each vocabulary item is translated and accompanied by grammatical information, can be found at the very end of the volume.

Ulitskaya's stories at the center of Levine's volume feature illuminating interactions between children and adults in post-WWII Soviet Union. These stories are, as Levine states in his introduction, "engaging literary texts suitable for readers of all ages." He praises the texts' "universal themes, abundance of colloquial dialogues, and largely straightforward prose style" (p.6), which make them accessible to Intermediate level (B1-B2) readers (CEFR, 2011). Following Iatsenko's

criteria for conceptual difficulty of literary texts used in a foreign language (FL) classroom (Iatsenko 2006, p.5, cited in Yunusova 2018, p.9), the stories in this Reader should not present too great a challenge for students. Since the plotlines focus on plausible incidents in the young characters' lives, the stories prove straightforward, with time and space presented objectively and the author's point of view remaining neutral. Despite stylistically marked vocabulary («всегда носила в кармане *гребёнку*» [p.17], «цыгане *свели* или кто» [p.34], «кусоч *давешнего* большого хлеба» [p.52], emphasis added), comprehension is manageable thanks to the abundant annotations and commentary.

By introducing the historic background, i.e., the Soviet Union's recovery after WWII (p.5), Levine sets the stage for Ulitskaya's stories. Through this brief introduction, Levine enhances students' understanding of each plotline and each story's broader significance. Students' grasp of the literary text, would have been even more immediate had Levine pointed out, if not explained, the significance of various culture-specific practices, such as spending hours in line outside on a cold winter evening to buy cabbage ("Cabbage miracle") or involving grand- and great-grandparents in the upbringing of their grand- and great-grandchildren ("Nails"). Of course, if Levine's Reader is used in class this hardly poses a problem, for course instructors can address such concepts on their own.

Levine offers a number of exercises, aimed at expanding students' vocabulary and checking comprehension of the stories. Vocabulary work centers around word-formation and synonyms, while text comprehension is checked through true-false statements and close-ended comprehension questions. Although such comprehension activities generally require only short, sentence-long responses, they can be used to guide extended classroom discussions of each text. Further extended discourse comes when students write a concluding composition for each story. Grappling with Ulitskaya's work, students will not only improve their close reading skills, but also become better acquainted with contemporary Russian literature, Soviet history, and Russian culture broadly conceived.

Unlike the Ulitskaya Reader, Levine's second Reader centers around one relatively long novella, Daniil Kharms' *The Old Woman*. Although the structure of this Reader generally repeats the structure of the Ulitskaya Reader, the emphasis shifts from checking text comprehension to exercises targeting the review of grammatical material.

In comparison to Ulitskaya's stories, comprehension of Kharms' *Old Woman* plot proves somewhat problematic. Even though the novella depicts an incident occupying only one day in the protagonist's life, it is full of his inner monologues, his dreams, shifting time frames, and sudden changes of subject. In the Introduction to this Reader, Levine does not shy away from the novella's complexity. Here he presents various facets of Kharms' piece as "political allegory" consisting of "illogical, nonsensical and fantastical situations" with a "concern for faith and religion" (p. 7). The novella, Levine emphasizes, is an "innovative imaginative work that is at once disturbing, darkly funny, and thought provoking" (p. 7). As an absurdist piece of Soviet fiction written in the tumultuous 1930s, *The Old Woman* will require more linguistic and cultural support than Ulitskaya's stories.

Following the glossed text of the novella and the list of participles and verbal adverbs, Levine presents various grammatical topics which naturally arise from the novella. Aside from the beauty of Kharms' text, Levine's work on verbs and syntax emerges as this Reader's major strength. Levine offers a review of verbs of motion, including prefixed and transitive ones, and translation and fill-in-the-blank activities, whereupon such verbs are highlighted in colloquial and idiomatic expressions. Levine presents verbs of position, many of which Kharms uses in his story almost as extensively as he uses verbs of motion. These verbs of position are activated and drilled through fill-in-the-blank activities. The Exercises section concludes with the review of the subjunctive mood and impersonal sentences. All themes of the Exercises section prove necessary and useful for learners of Russian.

Thanks to careful annotations and commentary throughout these texts and ample post-reading activities, both of Levine's Readers can serve as effective supplementary texts for independent learning and for classroom use alike. When read in class, these stories can be part of a language course or a content-based course on Soviet and Russian literature. The applicability of these two Readers is undeniably ample.

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**Kudyma, Anna S., and Olga E. Kagan. 2019. *Russian Through Art: For Intermediate to Advanced Students*. London and New York: Routledge. 250 pages.**

Both teachers of language and language learners are always on the lookout for a good textbook. The textbook *Russian Through Art: For Intermediate to Advanced Students* is a welcome addition to the textbook pantheon in the field of teaching and learning Russian, and is another major contribution to a very limited number of textbooks for this level of language. According to the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century: "Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs" ("Standards for Foreign Language Learning" 1996). Language teachers introduce students to and lead them through the realms of tenses, cases, vocabulary, and so on, but the real world opens up to students when they can understand the culture of the target language, and the environment in which the language is used. That is exactly what the latest textbook by well-known and respected authors Anna Kudyma and Olga Kagan attempts to do.

The shape of the textbook is straightforward: it is arranged according to the following six modules or chapters, to cover a surprising amount of material: *Museums and Collections, Painting of 19<sup>th</sup> – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Sculpture, Architecture and Urban Space, and Music and Theatrical Art*. The textbook has an accompanying website with lectures, visual materials, and news clips. Each chapter has a glossary that lists key words and expressions while the textbook itself ends with Russian-English and English-Russian dictionaries.

All chapters are structured similarly: they start with a short summary of what the reader will be introduced to in the coming unit. Then the chapters include some vocabulary exercises, which are followed by pair or group activities, such as surveys and discussions. These exercises help students to activate their previous knowledge about the topic, learn basic terminology needed to engage with the subject matter of the chapter, and serve as a foundation and catalyst for conversation for the rest of the chapter. All this prepares the learner for a perfect pre-listening phase.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the book is the mode in which the authors decided to introduce the content in each chapter: a lecture by an expert from the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg about quintessential examples of Russian art and fundamentals of Russian art history. The lectures are complemented by plentiful images and vary in length from about 4 minutes to 11 minutes. Quite conveniently, all the images mentioned and used in the lectures are also posted in a separate document on the course website. At the end of each lecture, the presenter provides a summary of the main points touched upon during the presentation.

Each module in the printed textbook provides an outline of the online lecture with a short glossary. These abridgements allow the teacher to better cater to students with different levels of the language, as well as to offer students with different learning styles a choice of how to proceed with the material. All this adds to opportunities for more personalized practice and experience.

The authors maintain a fresh approach by supplementing each section with short video excerpts from Russian TV news channels with reports about art events, celebrations, and news. This authenticity of material sparks student interest, provides motivation, and encourages learning.

It is not a secret that developing listening skills does not get enough attention in foreign language classrooms. Therefore, particularly noteworthy (and much appreciated, from the perspective of a teacher) is the quantity and quality of listening activities that follow the lectures, including while-listening and post-listening exercises. The assignments range from listening for the gist (top-down approach) to listening for detailed information (bottom-up approach), as well as in-between tasks that transition between the two. This variety of listening assignments

serves a number of different purposes: to practice communicative skills, to pay attention to the context in which particular words or structures are used, and finally, to stimulate language production. For each assignment, students are asked to listen to the lecture again, which results in multiple listening sessions. Every time students listen to the presentation, they concentrate their attention on different things, but also – and what is ultimately more important – they are exposed to and listen to how native speakers construct their discourse.

Many activities are task-based, as students always learn by acting on their knowledge. For example, students are asked to create multimedia materials to accompany a presentation about an artist. Such tasks involve all four major skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students must engage with a wide variety of different information sources in Russian, such as official websites, dictionaries, podcast, forums and so on. This task also involves processing information and sharing it with others during the interaction. Moreover, much attention is paid to teaching students how to summarize the content, develop and support their argument, clarify ideas, and synthesize and connect them at the paragraph level. Therefore, each module consistently offers exercises that explicitly tell students to use a variety of cohesive discourse devices, such as *besides*, *moreover*, *at the same time*, *in a word*, *up to now*, etc. In general, the plentiful exercises in each module vary from fill-in activities to self-recordings, discussions, and those that focus on the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication.

Each chapter follows a clear structure in terms of presentation of material and the content in each module connects the past with the present. The opening lectures of each unit are about museums, events, and works of art dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century; they let the voices from the past be heard today. The subsequent texts and listening excerpts focus on present times by showing either attitudes of a modern generation to works of the past, or by introducing the learner to contemporary art, exhibits, and discussions. Through these conversations, students are able to learn contemporary perspectives on art and its broad influence on Russian culture across time. Since each chapter is filled with authentic reading selections like survey excerpts, magazine articles, summaries of opinion polls, blogs, and so forth, these firsthand segments provide a deeper insight into the world of Russian art created through well-

known cultural artifacts and reflections of native speakers. This makes the material relatable to students and gives them a richer understanding of Russian culture in general.

Although this textbook does not include many explanations of syntactic constructions practiced in exercises, students at this level likely already have other reference materials. Instructors may want to supplement a course with some review, depending on the overall level of the students. The book is of great interest to a targeted audience of readers – those who want to develop their Russian language skills beyond the Intermediate level and to enhance their understanding of Russian culture, particularly the arts. Being strongly communicative in nature, this textbook will be of great help to any instructor of the Russian language.

This final work is a testament to Dr. Olga Kagan's scholarship, expertise and compassion for Russian as a foreign language. Teachers of Russian as a foreign language will miss her guidance and wisdom, yet they will greatly benefit from her work and the legacy that she has left behind.

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**Bowers, Katherine, Connor Doak, and Kate Holland, eds. 2018. *A Dostoevskii Companion: Texts and Contexts*. Boston: Academic Studies Press. 535 pages.**

Are you a professor of Russian literature, tired of assigning companions organized novel-by-novel? Are you a reader of Dostoevskii who has forsaken *A Writer's Diary* or "Poor Folk," unconvinced that they were produced by the same author who penned *Crime and Punishment*? Are you an undergraduate, hoping your next course will include less commonly

taught Dostoevskii texts and fewer discussions about *The Extraordinary Man*? If so, see *A Dostoevskii Companion: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Katherine Bowers, Connor Doak, and Kate Holland, for an innovative guide to Dostoevskii, designed especially for undergraduate students. Logically organized into three major parts—Biography and Context, Poetics, and Themes—this companion combines primary sources with reviews, excerpts from biographies, and a range of critical approaches in voices classic (Mikhail Bakhtin, Nikolai Berdiaev), contemporary (Katherine Bowers, Kate Holland, Sarah J. Young), and inevitable (Robert Louis Jackson, Gary Saul Morson, Vladimir Zakharov). Authors' names are not, however, included in the table of contents, which makes perusing by author—something more advanced scholars might wish to do—onerous.

Because the Companion's many sections and chapters overlap, even as they prioritize different agendas, the volume is admirably comprehensive. By foregoing a chronological or novel-by-novel approach to its subject, the book gives its readers the chance to follow ideological trends that weave their way through Dostoevskii's fiction, drafts, journalism, and correspondence. The result—often buoyed by insightful commentaries—yields a vision of the author as sociologist, politician, and psychologist. One dimension of Dostoevskii's agenda that is particularly pronounced is his paradoxical, at times religious, nationalism. Ostensibly the topic of Chapter 9 ("Russia"), the author's prophetic nationalism is anticipated as early as Chapter 6, where the inclusion of the 1877 *Writer's Diary* documents Dostoevskii's paradoxical support of the war with the Ottoman Empire. Other dimensions of his nationalism emerge in Chapter 8 ("Dostoevskii's Others"), as manifested in his writings on the Jewish Question. By the time readers encounter the text of Dostoevskii's Pushkin Speech, which closes Chapter 9, they have been primed to question the ideal of universal brotherhood and the "spirit of Russianness" that arise there. By including Lev Shestov's "Dostoevskii's Religious Thought" in the final section of the Companion ("God"), the editors ingeniously round out the discussion, using the essay to arouse a fertile skepticism of Dostoevskii's ideals. Other topics that benefit from such deft editorial maneuvering include the genre of the novel, the construction of utopias, and the advent of extraordinary women in the author's oeuvre.

The organizational brilliance of the Companion goes a long way towards elevating the individual essays within it, many of which have been

published elsewhere but lend themselves effortlessly to a more general recontextualization of the author. Some, perhaps, repeat too insistently claims that have already been made by the editors or obscure rather than clarify the discussion at hand (Robert Louis Jackson's "Philosophical Pro et Contra in Part I of *Crime and Punishment*" is an example of the former issue; Igor Volgin's "*A Writer's Diary* as a Historical Phenomenon" an example of the latter). Others—contributions from the editors as well as Carol Apollonio, Sarah J. Young, Nina Pelikan Straus, and Konstantine Klioutchkine—offer inventive demonstrations of what scholars can do with the primary materials that accompany each section. Insights into Dostoevsky's relationship to the genre of the novel are particularly collectible: a fertile section from Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* evokes the unfinalizability of Dostoevskii's worlds; Dmitrii Likhachev casts Dostoevskii's novels as "quick chronicles" penned by clumsy annalists; Harriet Murav traces how Dostoevsky's novels teach us how they'd like to be read; Holland pairs Dostoevskii's 1876 articles about suicide with the fictional work "The Meek One," suggesting that *A Writer's Diary* was born out of Dostoevskii's struggle with narrative form. Rarely do pieces in edited volumes—and from different periods—complement each other so consistently.

The occasional quibble might arise in response to the scope of the volume. The excerpts from Dostoevsky's predecessors included in Part I—the briefest of selections from Rousseau, Schiller, Radcliffe, Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol designed to "give a taste of the kind of literature that inspired young Dostoevskii" (2)—come without commentary and therefore only partially serve to anchor his early writings. Alternatively, one might have preferred a unit on psychological disorders and illness (beyond the epilepsy questions treated in passing) or a unit addressing issues of translation and reception in the Anglophone world—issues that would call attention to the history and characteristics of the texts that students are actually reading in university courses. But one wouldn't want a Companion so thick it threatened to turn into a Dostoevskii novel, nor would one want to add another item to Ivan Karamazov's list of things that make children—or undergraduates—suffer. As it stands, readers of *A Dostoevskii Companion* won't want to return their tickets.

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**Mesropova, Olga M. *Faces of Contemporary Russia: Advanced Russian Language and Culture*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. 2019. 256 pages.**

Cultural literacy is of the utmost importance for advanced language students. Olga M. Mesropova's *Faces of Contemporary Russia* is thus a welcome addition to the selection of upper-level textbooks for Russian learners. Unlike existing advanced materials, it offers an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary Russian culture, media studies, history, politics, anthropology, and sociology, making it well-suited for a content-based language course with discussions and independent research as its primary focus. The book successfully presents input at the academic essay level with intricate syntax and target output of paragraph-length oral and written discourse on abstract general topics relevant to both Russia and the learners' own culture.

The book consists of 14 units, 12 of which feature various facets of Russian cultural life with their prominent representatives (e.g., Russian ballet and Diana Vishneva, or Russian television and Vladimir Posner). The modular structure allows instructors to cover materials in any order. The Introduction and Conclusion are intended to open and close the course, as they are interrelated and offer a useful overview of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Russia and a comprehensive test of cultural knowledge at the end. Each chapter prominently features one or more of the following subsections: «Глазами культуролога», «Сквозь призму социологии», and «В контексте истории». Each of these has an authentic text, followed by assignments aimed at practicing language skills while also engaging in scholarly inquiry and "broader humanistic debates" (ix). Another unique feature of this textbook is the excellent compilation of authentic and engaging infographics produced by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center. The color photographs and images serve as lively biographical illustrations and often as discussion catalysts (e.g., pictures of the two ballets (59), Worker and Kolkhoz Woman statue (23), fashion-related photographs (99), and others).

Typically, upper-level textbooks with a thematic approach tend to use topics similar to those used in beginning and intermediate textbooks. The focus on the biographies of selected cultural figures makes *Contemporary Faces of Russia* stand out. To my knowledge, this is the only such textbook among published pedagogical materials in the US. The texts present a wide

variety of topics and vocabulary while remaining similar in their genre and structure, which facilitates comprehension and thus progress in reading, speaking, and writing skills. The author describes it as one semester of readings, although there is enough material for a full academic year in an advanced Russian class that meets for two to three hours weekly.

Other features also distinguish Mesropova's work from the other advanced Russian textbooks. First, the volume intentionally avoids grammar charts and explanations. Instead, the textbook features grammar-targeting review exercises on issues Advanced-level learners often still find challenging, such as verbs of motion, declension of large numbers, participles, and others. For instructor and student reference, the grammar topics are listed in the table of contents for each chapter. Second, the topics are notable for their fresh approach to the traditional topics of education, sport, appearance, crime, and health. Students discuss flash-animation, ironic detective fiction, Russian glamour, talk shows on Russian television, women in Russian politics, and Russian vloggers, to name a few. The book does not simply present a glossy picture of contemporary Russian phenomena and achievements, but invites discussion of controversial topics such as doping in sports and political protests.

Despite the textbook's undisputed strengths, several significant elements are missing. The book lacks its own listening comprehension exercises or an accompanying website, although it provides links to various open online sources for further inquiry. Instructors who adopt this textbook will likely need to supplement their courses with a listening component. The absence of a student workbook or instructor's manual with assessment tasks, such as grammar/vocabulary tests and sample syllabi, might be a significant obstacle for beginning instructors. Finally, writing assignments are scarce and lack sub-tasks for preliminary work to facilitate successful output.

In conclusion, *Faces of Contemporary Russia* provides an excellent compilation of engaging texts and practical exercises for the further development of advanced learners' reading and speaking proficiency, albeit less so writing and listening. The flexible modular structure of the textbook allows for creative implementation of the material in a wide range of language courses, including intensive, content-based, and more traditional classroom-oriented.

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**Dubinina, Irina, and Olesya Kisselev. 2019. *Rodnaya rech': An Introductory Course for Heritage Learners of Russian*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. 304 pages.**

*Rodnaya rech'* is a welcome newcomer to a rather empty field of modern Russian heritage language textbooks, previously represented on the US market only by the 2002 *Russian for Russians* textbook by Olga Kagan, Tatiana Akishina and Richard Robin. As a long-time instructor of heritage speaker courses, I have been using a combination of some parts of Olga Kagan's book and dozens of pages of my own materials, which came together in an overcrowded course pack in need of a major makeover. Therefore, I am very excited to see a new textbook finally hit the market.

*Rodnaya rech'* is designed to reflect the needs of heritage speakers, namely those who have a range of listening and speaking skills, but low to no reading and writing skills. The goals of the textbook, according to its authors, are as follows: 1) "to address the reduced morphological repertoire of heritage learners, especially in the nominal and pronominal declension systems," 2) "to expand learner's vocabulary knowledge," 3) "to provide heritage learners with opportunities to explore their bilingual and bicultural world and to express their bilingual and bicultural selves" (pp. xv-xvi). In my experience, these seem to be the basic goals that heritage language instructors hope to achieve. An ideal beginner heritage language course, in my opinion, should teach the Russian morphology (primarily case and verb endings) while expanding the vocabulary base in the modern cultural context. I find that *Rodnaya rech'* fully serves this purpose.

The book includes 12 chapters, an electronic workbook with corresponding icons in the textbook for suggested places to assign the activities (free for instructors, available for purchase for students), and Instructor's Manual and a Student Self-Study Guide (both are free on the website). Each chapter, except the introductory chapter and Chapter 11, is organized around a lexical/cultural topic, and each chapter title begins with "Как говорить...": e.g., "Как говорить о семье и друзьях," "Как говорить об учёбе," etc. Each chapter consists of three main sections: 1) В центре внимания: значение слова, 2) В центре внимания: форма слова, and 3) Подводим итоги. The first

part focuses on the vocabulary in a way that addresses the potential problems heritage students might encounter. It also includes some short texts for reading. The level of conscious analysis expected of students in this part is impressive: the beginning of each chapter offers the students to recognize in what way they are familiar with a list of words (i.e., “Never heard of it,” “Heard of it and can guess the meaning,” “Can explain the meaning and think of synonyms,” etc.). This encourages the students to access the depths of their intuitive or background knowledge, something that is uniquely beneficial for heritage learners. (The last part of each chapter offers a chance to revisit the same vocabulary after having worked on it and determine whether the student’s responses to the same questions will now be different.) The vocabulary section also provides opportunities for discussions based on the topic of the chapter, using the new words. Additionally, I find it useful that instructions for each exercise are given in both Russian and English.

The second part focuses on grammar and syntax. These parts introduce students to case, verbal tense and aspect, and other morphological and structural material in a heritage speaker appropriate way. The explanations offer the two-step approach: first, the students are introduced to the basic “simplified” idea of the grammar topic, like basic adjective endings “-ый, -ая, -ое, -ые,” and the fact that they have to correspond to the gender of the noun. After that, some chapters have a section called “Nuances/Нюансы” or “Tricky aspectual pairs/Сложные видовые формы)” which develop this introductory idea into a proper rule (in this case, the 7-letter rule) and a full chart, or otherwise expand on the introductory knowledge. This is an excellent feature as it eases the students into the full grammar, again building on their native intuition.

Another strong feature of this book—something I myself always do in class—is giving the students a chance to predict the “behavior” of certain grammatical elements. The book asks the students to anticipate the rules by posing questions, such as, “What do you think the following nouns should do in this environment?” or “What conclusions can you draw about the soft sign noun endings?” In my heritage classes, I find it extremely important to work with the learners’ intuition and to teach them to recognize the situations when they can trust it (as opposed to

situations when they should obey the rules and not what they “hear”). I find that *Rodnaya Rech'* does an excellent job of taking this approach into consideration.

The electronic workbook is a needed addition to the textbook, because it is a good idea to have a separate set of homework exercises on top of the printed textbook. All chapters have exercises for practice in class, and sections for each part called “Рабочая тетрадь” with a computer icon indicating that this can be found in the electronic workbook (with exercise numbers pertaining to the previous topic). Unfortunately, the workbook was not available to me at this time, so I cannot evaluate it. The same is true for the Instructor’s Manual and Student Self-Study Guide.

One unexpected feature of this book is that it does not include an introduction to Russian cursive or handwriting. I believe that it is important for heritage students to learn to read and write Russian longhand. It teaches them to read handwritten notes, which may soon be destined to become a thing of the past but are still used by the majority of the Russian native speakers, such as notes from their grandparents, or an instructor’s comments on the margins of their assignments. Additionally, the visual-motoric component of handwriting arguably provides a faster and more solid learning curve.

I also found the order of presenting grammatical material to be unusual. The first half of the book heavily focuses on verbs, including verbal aspect in Chapter 3. In my experience, verbal aspect is not a beginner topic for heritage speakers, nor are motion verbs (discussed in Chapter 7). Such students usually have serious lacunae in case endings, so I find it more important to focus on cases early on, with verb conjugations mixed in, and move on to the full verbal system only later. However, in *Rodnaya Rech'*, the first case to be presented in detail after the introduction to the concept of case, is Genitive, arguably the most difficult and nuanced one in terms of usage and endings. Prepositional case (which is the easiest) is presented in Chapter 9. Instructors may consider switching the order of the chapters, which should affect the overall efficacy of the book. On the whole, however, *Rodnaya Rech'* seems to be a solid and well-conceived textbook. I am looking forward to trying it in my classroom in the future.

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**Shvabrin, Stanislav. 2019. *Between Rhyme and Reason: Vladimir Nabokov, Translation, and Dialogue*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 419 pages.**

An ambitious study, *Between Rhyme and Reason* endeavors to synthesize two lines of inquiry concerning Nabokov's long and prodigious career as translator. First, how can we best characterize Nabokov's method of translation, especially since most of his translations do not follow the same "literalist" approach with which the author and his notorious *Eugene Onegin* (1964) are so closely associated? Second, how did the act of translating other writers contribute to Nabokov's own creative work? Stanislav Shvabrin locates the nexus of these concerns in Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. Against the performative author's posturing as an absolutely independent creative consciousness free of all influence, Shvabrin contends that Nabokov knowingly practiced a "collaborative, participatory, [and] mutually beneficial exchange" of utterances and ideas with other literary artists (17-18). It was this productive exchange that helped shape the writer's creative voice, provided him with the material for his profoundly allusive style, and informed his technique of translation—a technique, Shvabrin maintains, always and essentially was grounded in the Bakhtinian ideal of fully "empathizing into" the inner life of one's interlocutor.

Nabokov's first foray into literary production began at age eleven with his translation of Mayne Reid's *The Headless Horseman* into French, so Shvabrin starts there and proceeds with a chronological survey of the maturing artist's ongoing translation efforts. The approach is natural and effective. Mandelstam says that a Russian writer's biography consists alone of the books he has read. Especially as he attends to youthful translations and unpublished experiments, Shvabrin enriched this reader's sense of Nabokov's literary heritage. Through sensitive and meticulous readings of a great variety of his translations, Shvabrin further demonstrates that, as translator, Nabokov was keenly attuned to all the dimensions of diverse poets' expression—structural and sonic, as well as imagistic and semantic—and was careful to retain them all in his translations.

With the specter of *Eugene Onegin* always in the wings, the foundation Shvabrin ably establishes is especially important because it enables the scholar to argue that Nabokov's "Englishing" of Pushkin's

masterpiece was simultaneously anomalous from and consistent with his robust body of translation. Anomalous because almost nowhere else was Nabokov so militant in a “literalism” that sacrificed all poetic sensibility to the altar of meaning. Consistent because even that literalism was, in the end, merely an amplified iteration of the translator’s fundamental principal, namely, to respect and preserve the individuality of the original poet’s creative vision in the translated text.

This last point, the study’s ultimate contention, does promise to dovetail nicely with Shvabrin’s parallel investigation into the impacts of Bakhtinian dialogue on Nabokov’s work. And there are some very strong moments in this vein. Particularly illuminating are, for instance, the productive dialogues Shvabrin articulates between Nabokov and Vladislav Khodasevich and Fyodor Tyutchev. And I would have enjoyed even more about Nabokov’s interactions with and translations of Jules Supervielle, in whose *Le Voleur d’enfants* Shvabrin locates a potentially provocative foretaste of motifs important to *Lolita*.

However, if Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue suggests that one incorporates as “verbal vestiges” elements of the Other’s speech into one’s own utterances, Shvabrin needed to do more to trace, in concrete ways, those vestiges in Nabokov’s “original” works. Too often he suggests that we can find a certain image, idea, or expression throughout Nabokov’s work, but does not substantiate the claim with hard evidence. What is more, when even the young Nabokov “mistranslated” a given term or image, Shvabrin observes that he most often did so to make a poem reflect his own peculiar sensibilities. For instance, in regards to Nabokov’s 1921 translations of Rupert Brooke, Shvabrin remarks that Nabokov altered the poet’s vision of death and the afterlife in order to “cast Brooke’s metaphysical tentativeness into a mold of [Nabokov’s] own making” (100). Are not such manipulations rather more monologic than dialogic? Do they not reinforce the image of the tyrannical writer? (This point happens to introduce another of the study’s limitations. The imagery and themes that Shvabrin highlights in Nabokov’s creative dialogues overwhelmingly pertain to the writer’s “otherworldly” metaphysics, a foggy realm of his creative vision that is also the subject of hyperabundant scholarly commentary.)

The thorny matter of Nabokov’s approach to *Onegin* proves, as it must, troublesome. While Shvabrin offers a compelling argument for

Nabokov's change in attitude toward Pushkin—a change from passive worshipper of Pushkin to self-assured interlocutor with him—he remains quiet about why Nabokov's theory of translation changed so radically concerning *Onegin*. Shvabrin sets 1955 as the year of Nabokov's "literalist" turn, though he makes little matter of the date itself. I wonder about the potential influence of surrounding events. Before he adopted his literalist rhetoric, which presented the translator as a meticulous scholar, Nabokov claimed that a translator must be a "creative genius" on par with the original poet. In 1955 Nabokov also published the novel that he knew to be proof of his own genius. How might *Lolita*, and the attention it brought, have inflected his always histrionic self-presentation vis-à-vis Pushkin? And what of Nabokov's many recent years of teaching, during which time he also devoted himself with particular zeal to publishing his lepidopterological research? How might these experiences have shaped the ways the translator felt about scholarship's methods and objectives, about the responsibilities of enlightening an unfamiliar audience? Such questions likely do not have fast answers, but they merit consideration.

All told, by focusing on his extra-*Onegin* translations, Shvabrin unfetters Nabokov from the single work that came to define his reputation as translator to thus provide a more nuanced portrait of Nabokov's practice. And while I lament the depth to which Shvabrin traces other writers' "vestiges" in Nabokov's work, I do so appreciating the immensity of such a project. His gestures in this direction undoubtedly indicate many new paths for further inquiry. With these achievements, *Between Rhyme and Reason* will be a valuable resource for Nabokov scholars of all stripes.

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**Rojavin, Marina, and Alexander Rojavin. 2019. *Russian Function Words: Meaning and Use*. London and New York: Routledge. 269 pages.**

Function words, such as particles and interjections, are ubiquitous in authentic speech and texts and are often essential to fully grasping the author's or speaker's attitude, tone, and position. Yet most of the time —

for understandable reasons — they receive little attention from teachers and textbook authors. Sometimes, however, these small words present major difficulties for Russian learners and translators, and it is such problems of meaning and use of conjunctions, interjections, parenthetical words, particles, and prepositions that Marina and Alexander Rojavin aim to address in their new book *Russian Function Words: Meaning and Use*.

This small book is designed to meet the needs of “anyone who is interested in Russian” (vi), including Russian learners of all levels, translators, and instructors, “who can utilize it for methodological materials” (vi). The primary goal of this book, as stated by the authors, is “to illuminate the use of [function words] by focusing on semantics based on a comparative analysis of their meanings in Russian and English” (vi). Thus, the most important feature of this book is the examples from spoken and written contemporary Russian “with translations into English that are not literal, but rather equivalent and appropriate to the given circumstance” (vi).

The book opens with an introduction from the authors that provides an overview of content and structure of the book. It is followed by “Abbreviations,” “Terminology,” and “English-Russian and Russian-English Glossary” sections. Students will appreciate the terminology section with its clear and succinct explanations of referenced grammatical terms, such as adverbial modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.

The main part of the book consists of entries in alphabetical order. Each entry has the following structure: the word itself with a part (or parts) of speech to which it belongs clearly indicated next to the term. For words that function as multiple parts of speech, there is a separate sub-entry for each part (low-frequency and archaic uses are excluded). Every entry or sub-entry includes a standard dictionary translation, followed by an explanation and a brief discussion (in English) of semantic, grammatical, stylistic, and, where applicable, sociocultural contexts in which the word is used. The explanations are clear and concise and are usually presented in simple, accessible terms (as mentioned before, special grammatical or linguistic terminology can be easily looked up in the corresponding section of the book). The explanations address the function(s) of a given word within a sentence and specifics of its use in various contexts. Applicable punctuation

rules are also addressed here. These explanations are followed by parallel authentic Russian-English sentence-length examples that not only illustrate previously discussed meanings and functions, but also encourage comparative analysis of its usage in the two languages. Where appropriate, the authors also list idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and sayings at the end of the entry with English equivalents (but not literal translations, which can be very useful when learning idiomatic expressions). It should also be noted that the authors' suggestion that the book will enable learners to "acquire skills that allow them to *use* [emphasis added] function words in typical life situations" is a slight exaggeration as the book does not (and is seemingly not designed to) allow for practice and application of the learned material, nor is the number of examples – typically 1-3 per usage – always sufficient to provide learners with patterns they can replicate.

Nevertheless, the parallel examples succeed in illustrating the meaning and certain nuances each word brings to the discourse and are the book's main value along with explanations that aim to "deliver a sophisticated level of theoretical knowledge" (vii). I could see it as a useful reference for undergraduate students in communication-centered courses, advanced students and translators working with authentic texts, as well as graduate students and instructors who need to provide their students quick explanations and examples of function word usage. The selection of entries is comprehensive without being overwhelming: it includes most commonly used prepositions, conjunctions, particles, interjections, and parenthetical words across a range of registers and styles, from highly colloquial to academic and literary.

Overall, *Russian Function Words* is a useful reference for learners, teachers, and translators who seek to understand the meaning, function, and use of Russian prepositions, conjunctions, particles, interjections, and parenthetical words across different registers. It may not be the richest source of examples involving these words, but in the age of Google and online language corpora, that is a minor weakness that does not diminish the overall value of the book.

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