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Olga Kagan

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

*Olga Kagan*

### *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 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),

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

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

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 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 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

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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 would recognize that the patterns of his speech easily compare to those of their own students.

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.

Instructor: 2-я глава называется «Вожатый» и что в ней было?

The second chapter is called "The Guide" and what happened/happens in it?

- Igor. Там идёт интересная история как они попадают в / бурю и \ они случайно увидели человека, вожатый, кто их принёс в / постоянное / ( забыл как называется ) чтобы переночевать до тех пор как погода улучшится (Преподаватель:- постоялый 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

- 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.

- Instructor: зовут по чему?
- call him by what?
- Igor. по отчестве... по отчеству
- with the patronymic... by the patronymic
- Using only the patronymic.

Igor's narrative demonstrates the following:

- Good aural comprehension.
- Fairly good pronunciation with some inadequacies.
- 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.
- Good and serviceable strategic competence (забыл, как ... / I forgot how to say...).
- Ability to self-correct (по отчестве/y / using his patronymic)
- Some evidence of complex syntax (до тех пор, как / until [the time when])
- Abundance of lexical and grammatical mistakes.
- 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.<sup>4</sup> 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), "Ruslish" (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>5</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: "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

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<sup>5</sup> These are not ACTFL scale assessments. The scale in the survey is a common sense range, Novice to Native-like.

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, therefore 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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