Full Issue
Special Issue

Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion: Lessons for the Russian Language Classroom

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Address all correspondence to:
Russian Language Journal
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1828 L Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 833-7522
Email: rlj@americanCouncils.org Web: https://www.actr.org/rlj.html

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Introduction to the Special Issue

Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion: Lessons for the Russian Language Classroom  
Colleen Lucey  

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Contributors

Rebecca Berman: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: rberman@americancouncils.org

Jennifer Bown: Brigham Young University
Provo, UT
e-mail: jennifer_bown@byu.edu

Veta Chitnev: University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC, CANADA
e-mail: vchitnev@mail.ubc.ca

Ashlynn Cobb: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: ashlynncobb@gmail.com

Stephen M. Dickey: University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS
e-mail: smd@ku.edu

Tetyana Dzyadevych: New College of Florida
Sarasota, FL
e-mail: tdzyadevych@ncf.edu

Mark J. Elson: University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA
e-mail: mje@virginia.edu

Thomas Jesús Garza: The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX
e-mail: tjgarza@austin.utexas.edu
Hadis Ghaedi: University of Wisconsin–Madison
Madison, WI
e-mail: ghaedi@wisc.edu

Anna Gomboeva: University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA
e-mail: ag3mp@virginia.edu

Lenore A. Grenoble: University of Chicago
Chicago, IL
The Arctic Linguistic Ecology Lab
North-Eastern Federal University
Yakutsk, RF
e-mail: grenoble@uchicago.edu

Emily Matts Henry: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: ematts@american councils.org

Erik Houle: The University of Chicago
Chicago, IL
e-mail: erhoule@uchicago.edu

Jessica Kantarovich: University of Chicago
Chicago, IL
The Arctic Linguistic Ecology Lab, North-Eastern Federal University
Yakutsk, RF
e-mail: jkantarovich@uchicago.edu

Hilah Kohen: University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA
e-mail: kohen@sas.upenn.edu
Nicole-Marie Konopelko: University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS
e-mail: nicolekonopelko7@gmail.com

Irina Kor Chahine: University Cote d’Azur – CNRS
Nice, FRANCE
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ
e-mail: irina.kor-chahine@univ-cotedazur.fr

Colleen Lucey: University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ
e-mail: luceyc@email.arizona.edu

Nellie Manis: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: nmanis@americanCouncils.org

Svitlana Melnyk: Indiana University
Bloomington, IN
e-mail: smelnyk@indiana.edu

Olga Mukhortova: Defense Language Institute
Monterey, CA
e-mail: olga.mukhortova@dliflc.edu

Dianna Murphy: University of Wisconsin–Madison
Madison, WI
e-mail: diannamurphy@wisc.edu

Emily Olmstead: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: eolmstead@americanCouncils.org
Jeanette Owen: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: jowen@americancouncils.org

Sara Jo Powell: Harvard University
Cambridge, MA
e-mail: sarajopowell@g.harvard.edu

Irina Sadovina: University of Sheffield
Sheffield, UK
e-mail: i.sadovina@sheffield.ac.uk

Alexei D. Shmelev: Vinogradov Russian Language Institute
Moscow, RF
e-mail: shmelev.alexei@gmail.com

Rossina Soyan: Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA
e-mail: rsoyan@andrew.cmu.edu

Anna Stewart: American Councils for International Education
Washington, D.C.
e-mail: astewart@americancouncils.org

Veronika Trotter: Indiana University
Bloomington, IN
e-mail: veboikov@indiana.edu

Ekaterina Uetova: University Cote d’Azur - CNRS
Nice, FRANCE
National Research University Higher School of Economics
Moscow, RF
e-mail: euetova@gmail.com
Introduction

Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion: Lessons for the Russian Language Classroom

The current special issue tackles some of the most difficult pedagogical questions facing Russian language instructors today. As the articles illustrate, there is a growing awareness of the possibilities of critical pedagogy to dismantle existing hierarchies and to create inclusive spaces for learners. The authors included in this special issue provide us with what the field has long needed yet direly lacked: scholarship that offers both theoretical and practical guidance to integrate diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) in curricula and study abroad programming. A number of the authors turn, rightfully so, to existing research by foreign-language specialists who have published on the barriers facing students from underprivileged and underserved communities (Reagan and Osborn 2021; Osborn 2006; Tochon 2019). While the field of Russian language studies is relatively new to this discussion, the current issue demonstrates an eager desire to change longstanding practices that have disadvantaged students from diverse backgrounds. The relative lack of Russian language materials centering social and racial justice reminds us of the lasting, troubling legacy of structural racism that informs the missions of educational institutions and that has driven knowledge production in the academy, including in Russian language pedagogy. Confronting these biases requires acknowledging and rectifying what is, in the assessment of Sunnie Rucker-Chang and Chelsi West Ohueri, “the epistemology of ignorance and white innocence” that has allowed scholars in Slavic Studies to locate “race and racism outside our region” (Rucker-Chang and West Ohueri 2021, 218–19).

Thankfully, those in the field have begun to see what must change for our classrooms, our programs, our study abroad offerings, and our teaching materials to be antiracist and truly inclusive. The articles in this special issue bring forth thought-provoking research for educators both in the US and abroad who hope to transform teaching and learning practices. The pieces were conceptualized, drafted,
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written, and edited in the wake of the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, by law enforcement. Floyd’s murder, along with the murders of Breonna Taylor and other unarmed people of color, struck home the racial inequalities and ongoing violence experienced by BIPOC communities. ACTR joined with our sister organizations—ASEEES, AATSEEL, and ACTFL—in condemning systemic racism and pledged to make ACTR programs, particularly those abroad, spaces that are safe, inclusive, and equitable (ACTR 2020). A true commitment to these goals requires thorough assessment of past and current practices that, rather than embracing diversity, have prevented BIPOC students from feeling welcomed in the Russian language classroom. As Rachel Stauffer passionately outlines in her recent piece for the ACTR Newsletter, this work will not necessarily be comfortable: “Transforming a field from one that is and has historically been predominantly white will certainly not be easy, fast, or perfect.” All the more reason, Stauffer argues, for us as educators to commit to antiracism and to dismantle white supremacy culture (Stauffer 2021, 7). Considering structural barriers is a key component to this work; as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva reminds us, “Whereas for most whites racism is prejudice, for most people of color racism is systemic or institutionalized” (Bonilla-Silva 2017, 8). Nowhere does the institutionalization of racism come across most apparently as in the striking statistics offered by Dianna Murphy and Hadis Ghaedi in their article for this special issue. As Murphy and Ghaedi point out, even as the undergraduate population across the US has grown in racial diversity, the number of students of color graduating with a BA in Russian Language and Literature has remained consistently miniscule.

This special issue begins with Murphy and Ghaedi’s findings to demonstrate the current disparities between undergraduate populations across the US and the gender and ethnoracial distribution of students earning degrees in Russian. Most startling are the statistics showing that for the twenty years of the study, minority students, particularly African Americans, have been direly underrepresented among Russian majors. What are we to do as language instructors and program administrators? How can we begin to address the structural racism within our classrooms, institutions, and programs? How can we create inclusive K–16 settings that honor the linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the Russian Federation (RF)? What measures can be taken to center diversity and inclusion in
the study abroad context? The articles shared in this special issue offer persuasive answers to these questions.

Thomas Jesus Garza argues that placing social justice at the center of one’s curriculum allows an instructor to create an intersectional “third space” in the classroom. As Garza’s article eloquently shows, the process of decolonizing syllabi requires a shift in positionality and perspective; moving from the theoretical to the practical implementation of ideas, Garza illustrates how to reexamine what we teach and how we teach it. Working in a similar vein, Veronika Trotter and Svitlana Melnyk offer an exciting example of how to integrate critical pedagogies into the upper-division Russian language classroom. Trotter and Melnyk describe a project-based learning activity in which students research and compose Russian articles on prominent African Americans who traveled to Russia and the former Soviet Union. The project, which has helped create nineteen new Wikipedia articles, provides instructors with an inspiring model for the Russian language classroom.

Transforming postsecondary language instruction not only requires reassessment of how we teach Russian; it also demands we consider the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Russian Federation. An eye-opening forum on the teaching of Indigenous languages of the RF addresses this topic, with authors sharing their teaching and learning experiences in Chukchi, Even, Evenki, Juhuri, Mari, Nivkh, Tuvan, and Yakut (Sakha). As the first published forum in English to examine teaching Indigenous languages of the RF, the pieces make a remarkable contribution to the growing interest in Indigeneity Studies among students and instructors. Moreover, as the authors point out, offering the opportunity to learn the Indigenous languages of the RF—whether independently or as a module in a language class—promotes plurilingual and intercultural competence among students.

The last two articles in this special issue address DEAI initiatives in study abroad and virtual exchanges. In “Implementing Inclusive Secondary Russian Language Programs,” the authors provide concrete examples of how the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) develops partnerships with local organizations in countries of study to accommodate students, including those from BIPOC communities and those with disabilities. An integrative approach that combines asynchronous readings and resources, assistive technologies,
student orientations, and staff trainings helps make the NSLI-Y programming equitable and accessible. The final article, written by Jeanette Owen and Nellie Manis, focuses on how to both recruit students from underrepresented populations and strengthen the capacity of host institutions to meet the needs of diverse learners. Owen and Manis show that thanks to sustained engagement and outreach initiatives, the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program has managed to increase diversity among its study abroad participants overall. However, in the case of Russian, the gains in diversity remain lower than in other languages. The CLS Program, as Owen and Manis emphasize, remains dedicated to recruiting applicants from underrepresented institutions like HBCUs and HSIs.

Taken in their entirety, the articles included in this special issue provide a sobering assessment of where we are as a field; by the same measure, the research presented offers hope for instructors, students, and program administrators that equity-minded practices and ongoing efforts to address structural racism are having an impact on how we think about the traditional Russian language curriculum. These efforts are guided by a sincere dedication to social justice and to antiracist teaching practices. Centering students is at the core of this movement. Thus, the articles remind us of the powerful role instructors have in shifting the discourse about language and identity. Joining recent forums in SEEJ and Slavic Review dedicated to equity in Slavic Studies, this special issue continues an ongoing conversation about the legacy of racism in our field and the means to combat it.

In addition to the articles focusing on DEAI, this issue of Russian Language Journal includes two additional articles and an essay translation submitted through our regular review process. In the first of these articles, Mark Elson tackles the topic of the Russian coordinating conjunctions и and а. He examines both “formal” and “informal” approaches to this topic, with formal treatments invoking the principles and structures of theoretical linguistics and informal treatments relying primarily on translation, which is sometimes accompanied by limited commentary referring to function. In the end, he rejects both treatments in favor of a meaning-based treatment, invoking Jakobson’s notion of taxis to explain usage of these conjunctions.

In the second article, Kor Chahine and Uetova examine the French
L1 subset of the Russian Learner Corpus, comparing the errors of L2 and heritage learners of Russian across all CEFR levels. The authors describe linguistic phenomena found in five linguistic categories (spelling, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and discourse) and conclude that, with the exception of spelling for heritage learners, syntax proves most troublesome for both groups. Of particular interest to those involved in learner corpora is the discussion of automatic error annotation.

In this issue of RLJ, we also include a translation of the essay “Широта русской души” by Aleksei D. Shmelev, which was originally published in the volume Ключевые идеи русской языковой картины мира. The translation is included as a way of introducing more broadly a vein of Russian scholarship that examines culture through key lexical items. In “Широта русской души,” Shmelev treats issues that are key to Russian self-identity and attempts to define many central cultural terms that are particularly difficult to render in other languages.

The publication of these articles would not have been possible without the careful consideration of our peer reviewers, and we thank them for their dedicated efforts. In keeping with the journal’s editorial standards, all articles completed a double-blind review before publication. With thanks to the time and energy of our authors and reviewers for their work, we happily share with you this issue of Russian Language Journal.

Colleen Lucey
Guest Editor

References


Who Are(n’t) Our Students?
The Gender and Ethnoracial Distribution of U.S. Bachelor’s Degrees in Russian Language and Literature over Twenty Years, from 1999–2000 to 2018–2019

DIANNA MURPHY, HADIS GHAEDI

1. Introduction
This article is a report on the gender and race or ethnicity of students who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian language and literature in the United States over a twenty-year period, from 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, as either a first or second major (N = 9,161). This study complements national data available through organizations such as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which, through the Humanities Indicators project (http://www.humanitiesindicators.org), publishes information on the gender and ethnoracial distribution of bachelor’s degrees in languages other than English (LOTEs) together but not for individual languages (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, n.d.). This study also complements reports from the Modern Language Association (MLA), which surveys U.S. postsecondary institutions to obtain data on enrollments in courses in LOTEs but does not collect information on the demographic profiles of the students enrolled in those courses (Looney and Lusin 2019). This article also extends the work of Murphy and Lee (2019), who reported on the gender and race or ethnicity of U.S. bachelor’s degree recipients in fifty individual programs in LOTEs—including Russian—over a four-year period, from 2009–2010 to 2013–2014. Murphy and Lee (2019, 56) found that of the top ten language programs in the United States in terms of the number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in 2010–2014, Russian had the smallest proportion—an average of just 0.9 percent per year—of Black or African American graduates. That percentage represents a shockingly small number of students: only seventeen Black or African American women and just three Black or African American men earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian in the United States in the four-year period from 2009–2010 to 2013–2014 (Murphy and Lee 2019, 91).
This article offers a longitudinal perspective to investigate whether these and other findings on the demographic profiles of Russian bachelor’s degree recipients were anomalies or representative of longer-term trends. This article’s primary research question is: What was the gender and ethnoracial distribution of students who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian in the United States in the twenty-year period from 1999–2000 to 2018–2019? In answering this question, this article also reports on the number of students who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian in this time period as either a first or second major. In providing these descriptive national data, this article aims to inform efforts to increase and expand access to participation in Russian language education in the United States. This article also provides a baseline against which the field can assess current and future efforts to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in U.S. Russian language education at the postsecondary level.

2. Data source: Integrated postsecondary education database

Data for this article are from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2019a). Information about the gender and race or ethnicity of degree recipients, among many other forms of institutional data, is submitted to IPEDS as part of mandatory reporting for all U.S. postsecondary institutions that receive any form of federal financial aid under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. For student demographic information submitted to IPEDS through the IPEDS Completion Survey, U.S. colleges and universities first collect information directly from students, then report it to IPEDS using categories required for federal reporting. For gender, those categories are Man and Woman. For race or ethnicity, the current categories\(^1\) are American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White.\(^2\) Other categories for race or ethnicity are Non-Resident Alien, Race or Ethnicity Unknown, and Two

\(^1\) The IPEDS reporting categories for race and ethnicity changed beginning in the 2008–2009 IPEDS data collection year. See Sykes (2012). A crosswalk that shows how the categories prior to 2008–2009 map onto the categories from 2008–2009 onward is provided in table 5 in the appendix.

\(^2\) Definitions for the IPEDS categories for race or ethnicity can be accessed at https://www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/report-your-data/race-ethnicity-definitions.
or More Races. This demographic information is linked in IPEDS to degree completions and to the students’ programs of study. This article, which reports on the gender and ethnoracial distribution of bachelor’s degrees in Russian in the United States, does not offer a critique of these categories for gender and race or ethnicity, although such a critique is very much warranted. (Regarding race or ethnicity alone, see, for example, Ladson-Billings [2012, 118], who challenges the use of “crude measures to sort and slot people into categories” in social science and education research, and Hudley, Mallinson, and Bucholtz [2020], who argue for the critical need to more adequately theorize race in the field of linguistics.)

To obtain the data for this report, the authors conducted IPEDS queries for each academic year, 1999–2000 through 2018–2019, using the six-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code 16.0402 for Russian Language and Literature for bachelor’s degree completions. All U.S. postsecondary institutions that conferred bachelor’s degrees in Russian Language and Literature in a given year were included in each query. To account for as many degree recipients as possible, and recognizing the large number of students who earn a degree in a language as a second major,4 the queries included U.S. undergraduate students who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian as either a first or second major.5

3. Bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian Language and Literature
A total of 9,161 bachelor’s degrees in Russian (CIP code 16.0402: Russian Language and Literature) were conferred in the twenty-year period from 1999–

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3 Some institutions may use a CIP code other than 16.0402: Russian Language and Literature to report bachelor’s degrees that include advanced study of Russian. If the undergraduate Russian major is a track in a major for foreign or world languages, for example, the institution may use a CIP code such as 16.0101: Foreign Languages and Literatures, General. Or institutions that offer an undergraduate major in Slavic languages and literatures may report those degrees under 16.0400: Slavic Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics, General. To facilitate comparisons with other national reports, such as the MLA report on postsecondary enrollments (which includes some descriptive data on bachelor’s degrees conferred in different languages and uses only 16.0402: Russian Language Literature for Russian), data from those programs are not included in this longitudinal report.

4 Among all subject areas, languages other than English are the most common second major among U.S. undergraduates (Pitt and Tepper 2012; see also Modern Language Association 2015).

5 Given the differences among institutions in how (or even whether) second majors are reported, however, the IPEDS data on second majors are subject to nonsampling errors related to classification differences among institutions (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2019b, 13).
2000 to 2018–2019 when both first \((n = 6,373)\) and second \((n = 2,788)\) majors were taken into account.\(^6\) Table 1 shows the breakdown by year. (IPEDS did not begin collecting data on second majors until 2000–2001, so there are no second majors for 1999–2000.) Overall, the trend in the number of bachelor’s degrees in Russian was of gradual growth beginning in 2004–2005 and continuing through 2011–2012, after which the trend is of gradual decline (with the exception of 2017–2018, in which there was a spike, followed by a sharp decline between 2017–2018 \([n = 472]\) and 2018–2019 \([n = 395]\)).

As table 1 shows, second majors comprised a substantial proportion of bachelor’s degrees in Russian throughout the twenty years of this report. Considering second majors as a percentage of first majors, the range is from a low of 31.6 percent, in both 2000–2001 and 2003–2004, to a high of 59.5 percent, in 2017–2018. The proportion of second majors relative to first majors for Russian is quite high compared to nonlanguage disciplines and is higher than for some other languages: the MLA (2015) reported that from 2001 to 2013, second majors as a percentage of first majors was 37.5 in “foreign languages” (Modern Language Association 2015, 7). For Russian, second majors as a percentage of first was 45.2 in that same thirteen-year period.

In this twenty-year period, the number of students earning bachelor’s degrees in the United States in any discipline increased steadily each year, with 1,237,875 bachelor’s degrees conferred in the United States in 1999–2000 and 2,012,854 in 2018–2019,\(^7\) an increase of 62.6 percent. Russian majors accounted for a very small percentage of those degrees. Given the increase in the overall number of students earning bachelor’s degrees in the United States and the relatively flat number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, the share of bachelor’s degrees in Russian—calculated as a percentage of all degrees conferred—decreased over the course of the twenty-year period of this report: in 1999–2000, .03 percent \((n = 340)\) of all bachelor’s degrees conferred in the United States were in Russian; in 2018–2019, the percentage of Russian bachelor’s degrees was .02 percent \((n = 395)\).

\(^6\) Some of these data on the number of bachelor’s degree completions by first and second majors in Russian, through 2013, are also included in the 2015 MLA article Data on Second Majors in Language and Literature, 2001–13. They are reported here as well to show the twenty-year trend.

\(^7\) All data on the total number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in the United States, and on the gender and ethnoracial distribution of those degrees, are from table 322.20 in the Digest of Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2020).
Table 1. U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, by first and second major

<table>
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<th>Second majors</th>
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<td>2012–2013</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013–2014</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–2015</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015–2016</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016–2017</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017–2018</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018–2019</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-YEAR TOTAL</td>
<td>9,161</td>
<td>6,373</td>
<td>2,788</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Gender
For the twenty years of this study, women accounted for an average of 52.2 percent ($n = 4,777$) of bachelor’s degrees in Russian; men accounted for an average of 47.8 percent ($n = 4,384$). (See figure 1 and table 2 for the breakdown by year.) The gender distribution of bachelor’s degrees in Russian is thus very different than for LOTEs altogether: the Humanities Indicators project reports that among humanities disciplines, “languages and literatures other than English had one of the largest share of female degree completers in almost every year for which data exist (70% in 2015).” By examining the gender distribution of all fifty individual programs in LOTEs from 2010 to 2014, Murphy and Lee (2019) found that this high proportion of women earning bachelor’s degrees in languages was largely due to the large numbers of women in French (78.1 percent) and Spanish (75.3 percent) programs, which accounted by far for the largest number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in LOTEs (Murphy and Lee 2019, 54). As figure 1 shows, for bachelor’s degrees in Russian, the gender distribution is much more even between men and women, with the difference between the two decreasing over time and with men outnumbering women in four of the most recent six years of this report, albeit by a small margin.

Considering all bachelor’s degrees conferred in the United States between 1999–2000 and 2018–2019, the proportion of women earning bachelor’s degrees increased at a greater rate than it did for men. Given this fact, as well as the increasing number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in the United States overall, the share of bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian decreased for both men and women in this time period, with a larger decrease in the share of bachelor’s degrees earned by women majoring in Russian. In 2000–2001, 531,840 men earned a bachelor’s degree in the United States; first and second majors in Russian accounted for .036 percent ($n = 191$) of bachelor’s degrees earned by men that year. In 2018–2019, 857,545 men earned a bachelor’s degree, with Russian accounting for .023 percent ($n = 195$) of the total. In 2000–2001, 712,331 women earned a bachelor’s degree in the United States; Russian accounted

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8 See https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/higher-education/gender-distribution-bachelors-degrees-humanities#32166.
9 The authors chose 2000–2001 instead of 1999–2000 here given that second majors were not reported in 1999–2000.
for .035 percent \((n = 250)\) of those degrees. In 2018–2019, 1,155,309 women earned a bachelor’s degree in the United States, and Russian accounted for just .017 percent \((n = 200)\) of those degrees.

*IPEDS did not begin collecting data on second majors until 2000–2001, so the data for 1999–2000 in figure 1, and in all subsequent figures and tables in this article, are for first majors only.

Figure 1. Gender distribution of U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019. See also the online appendix\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) For high-resolution color images of all the figures and tables in this article see the online appendix at https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/data/36/ or by scanning this QR code:
Table 2. Number of U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, by gender of degree recipients. See also the online appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000–2001</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–2002</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002–2003</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–2004</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004–2005</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2006</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–2008</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008–2009</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2010</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010–2011</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011–2012</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–2013</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013–2014</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–2015</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015–2016</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016–2017</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017–2018</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018–2019</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>4,777</td>
<td>4,384</td>
<td>9,161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Race or ethnicity
The overwhelming majority of recipients of bachelor’s degrees in Russian in the twenty years of this report were White, with very few graduates from other ethnoracial groups (see figure 2 and table 3). This finding is true without exception for each of the twenty years of the study, with the proportion of White degree recipients ranging from a high of 93.5 percent \((n = 405)\) in 2006–2007 to a low of 85.8 percent \((n = 303)\) in 2018–2019. (See the note with table 3 for an explanation of how percentages for race or ethnicity were calculated.) In fact, the percentage of bachelor’s degrees in Russian awarded to White students remained over 90 percent for thirteen years straight, from 1999–2000 until 2012–2013, when this percentage decreased slightly to 89.1%; then, beginning in 2015–2016, the percentage of White students began to decrease slightly in each of the remaining four years of the study.

Among non-White students, the picture is somewhat different for Hispanic or Latino students than for other non-White ethnoracial groups, although the numbers for all non-White groups were very small. Figure 3, which displays bachelor’s degrees earned in Russian by non-White students only, shows that the greatest growth was among Hispanic or Latino students. As figure 3 shows, the percentage of U.S. bachelor’s degrees in Russian earned by Hispanic or Latino students was fairly flat until 2010–2011, when it began to increase—albeit unevenly—through 2018–2019, when Hispanic or Latino students accounted for 7.9 percent \((n = 28; \text{table 3})\) of bachelor’s degrees in Russian in the United States. This trend tracks with the overall increase in participation by Hispanic and Latino students in U.S. higher education, although not to the same degree. The absolute number and relative proportion of bachelor’s degree recipients in other ethnoracial groups are shockingly small, and consistently so, over the twenty years of this study. After Hispanic or Latino students, the next largest group of bachelor’s degree recipients in Russian in 2018–2019 were Asian students, at just 3.7 percent \((n = 13)\) of the total. American Indian or Alaska Native students, who accounted for just 0.5 percent to 0.8 percent of bachelor’s degrees conferred in the United States between 1999–2000 and 2018–2019, likewise accounted for a very small percentage of bachelor’s degrees in Russian.

Black or African American students, however, earned approximately 9 percent to 10 percent of all bachelor’s degrees in the
Who Are(n’t) Our Students?
Murphy, Ghaedi

United States in each of the twenty years of this study. As figures 2 and 3 show, however, the percentage of bachelor’s degrees in Russian earned by Black or African American students was consistently low, not rising above 2.3 percent \((n = 11)\), in 2009–2010, and with a low, in the very next year (2010–2011), of just 0.2 percent \((n = 1)\). The percentage of Black or African American students who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian in each of the twenty years of this study represents a very, very small number of individuals (table 3). The underrepresentation of non-White students earning bachelor’s degrees in Russian reported by Murphy and Lee (2019) for 2010–2014 was thus not characteristic of just those four years; this underrepresentation is a long-term trend.

*See Figure 2 on the next page*
Figure 2. Ethnoracial distribution of U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019. See also the online appendix\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12} Because there were only three Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander graduates in the entire twenty-year period, that category was collapsed with Asian, aligning with the reporting categories for race and ethnicity prior to 2008–2009. In calculating percentages based on ethnoracial group, the following groups were excluded: Race or Ethnicity Unknown, Non-Resident Alien, and Two or More Races. (The category for Two or More Races, which was a new reporting category after 2007–2008, was excluded to enable comparisons across the twenty years.) See the note with table 3.
Figure 3. Percentage of U.S. bachelor’s degrees in Russian earned by non-White students, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019. See also the online appendix\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} excluded: Race or Ethnicity Unknown, Non-Resident Alien, and Two or More Races. (The category for Two or More Races, which was a new reporting category after 2007–2008, was excluded to enable comparisons across the twenty years.) See the note with table 3.
Table 3. Number of U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, by race or ethnicity of degree recipients. See also the online appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>American Indian or Alaska Native</th>
<th>SUBTOTAL</th>
<th>Race and Ethnicity unknown</th>
<th>Non-Resident Alien</th>
<th>Two or more races</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999–2000</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–2001</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–2002</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002–2003</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–2004</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–2006</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–2008</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008–2009</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–2010</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010–2011</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011–2012</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–2013</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013–2014</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–2015</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015–2016</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016–2017</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017–2018</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018–2019</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7,559</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8,326</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>9,161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: Table 3 shows the actual number of recipients of bachelor’s degrees in Russian for each year of the report. The subtotal of White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, and American Indian or Alaska Native graduates is provided to show how the percentages in figures 2 and 3 were calculated. (Those percentages were calculated by excluding the categories of Race and Ethnicity Unknown, Non-Resident Alien, and Two or More Races.) Also recall that because there were only three Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander graduates in the entire twenty-year period, that category was collapsed with Asian, aligning with the reporting categories for race and ethnicity prior to 2008–2009. See table 6 in the appendix for the disaggregated totals for all nine 2008–2009+ IPEDS categories for race and ethnicity.

Table 4. U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, by the gender and race or ethnicity of degree recipients (summary, in descending order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender and race or ethnicity</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Women</td>
<td>3,786</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Men</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino Women</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino Men</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Women</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American Women</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Men</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American Men</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native Women</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native Men</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,326</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 Total of bachelor’s degree recipients in Russian, excluding the following ethnoracial categories: Non-Resident Alien, Race or Ethnicity Unknown, and Two or More Races.
Figure 4. Gender and ethnoracial distribution of U.S. bachelor's degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019. See also the online appendix.
6. Race or ethnicity and gender
This section presents data on race or ethnicity and gender together. See table 4 for a summary of the twenty years of the study, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, and figure 4 for the breakdown by year. (See table 6 in the appendix for the full dataset for all gender and ethnoracial categories.) Table 4 shows that for White students, the difference between the number of men and women who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian was very small, with 45.5 percent (n = 3,786) of bachelor’s degrees in Russian over the twenty years of the study earned by White women and 45.3 percent (n = 3,773) earned by White men. Although the absolute numbers are much, much smaller, the gender distribution was similar among Hispanic and Latino students, with 2.4 percent (n = 200) of bachelor’s degrees in Russian earned by Hispanic or Latino women and 2.1 percent (n = 177) earned by Hispanic or Latino men. For other ethnoracial groups, however, women far outnumbered men. The number of Asian women who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian (n = 153) was more than double that of Asian men (n = 65). The number of Black or African American women who earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian (n = 93) was more than triple the number of Black or African American men (n = 29).

7. Conclusion
The data in this report show that over the twenty-year period from 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, the ethnoracial profile of bachelor’s degree recipients in Russian can be characterized as overwhelmingly and persistently White, despite the increase in this same time period in the participation in U.S. higher education of students from other ethnoracial groups (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2020). The gender distribution of bachelor’s degrees in Russian was fairly even between men and women but only for White, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native students: for Asian and Black or African American students, far more women earned bachelor’s degrees in Russian than did men. For students identifying with non-White ethnoracial groups, the total number earning bachelor’s degrees in Russian in the United States over twenty years, as well as in each individual year, was very, very small.

The purpose of this article is to present these descriptive data; this article does not attempt to explain them. However, the applied
linguist Uju Anya, in her 2020 review article on the experiences of Black or African American students in world language study more broadly, summarizes scholarship that describes widespread systemic issues in U.S. society and in U.S. educational institutions that result in lack of access to or unsuccessful world language learning experiences among Black or African America students. Anya argues that “black students ... are more likely to attend schools or be tracked into programs where world languages are not available. ... In schools that do offer languages, Black students are frequently placed into academic tracks without them, and institutional gatekeepers (e.g., teachers, counselors, administrators) with deficit notions of their supposed linguistic and cultural disadvantages and their families’ purported lack of value for education encourage black students to pursue ‘less intellectual’ or ‘more practical’ subjects” (98). Anya also reviews research that describes the generally positive attitudes about world language study that many Black or African American students hold but also relates their negative experiences in the world language courses in which they enroll. Anya concludes her review article with the call “Let us do better” (Anya 2020, 110). As Russian language educators, if we believe that the study of Russian language and literature is beneficial for our students (which surely we must), it is incumbent on us to ensure that those benefits extend to all students, not just to those who have traditionally earned degrees in our programs in the past. Let us do better.

Appendix

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) changed the reporting categories for race and ethnicity beginning in 2008–2009 to comply with federal standards issued by the Office of Management and Budget (Sykes 2012, 2).

Table 5 is a crosswalk of those reporting categories, modified slightly from Sykes (2012).
Table 5. Crosswalk of IPEDS race and ethnicity reporting categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to 2008–2009 (7 categories)</th>
<th>2008–2009+ (9 categories)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Two or More Races**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Resident Alien</td>
<td>Non-Resident Alien**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Ethnicity Unknown</td>
<td>Race and Ethnicity Unknown**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only three students who identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander earned a bachelor’s degree in Russian in the twelve years of this report for which this category was an option for IPEDS reporting. Given that number, this category was merged with Asian for those twelve years. It is reported separately only in table 6, which shows the total number of bachelor’s degree recipients by gender and race or ethnicity for all possible reporting categories.

** These categories were excluded in calculating percentages of bachelor’s degrees earned by students of different ethnoracial groups. For Non-Resident Alien and Race and Ethnicity Unknown, the groups were excluded because the reporting categories do not actually refer to an individual’s race or ethnicity. For Two or More Races, the category was excluded so that the percentages of bachelor’s degrees earned by students of different ethnoracial groups would be consistent across the twenty years of the study. The categories are included in table 6, which shows the total number of bachelor’s degree recipients by gender and race or ethnicity for all possible reporting categories.
See Table 6 on the next page
See Table 6 in the online appendix for the Number of U.S. bachelor’s degrees conferred in Russian, 1999–2000 to 2018–2019, by the gender and race or ethnicity of degree recipients (all categories)

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TOTAL: 340, 441, 400, 386, 396, 437, 434, 470
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References


Here, There, and Elsewhere: Reimagining Russian Language and Culture Course Syllabi for Social Justice

THOMAS JESÚS GARZA

1. Introduction: Uncomfortable truths
The past two decades have witnessed enrollments in American colleges and universities for U.S. residents aged 18 to 24 increase from 35 percent in 2000 to 41 percent in 2018. Within this demographic, those identifying in census data as Hispanic/Latinx increased during the same period from 22 to 36 percent, as Black 31 to 37 percent, as Asian 56 to 59 percent, as Indigenous/Native American 16 to 24 percent, and as bi- or multiracial 38 to 44 percent (Hussar et al. 2020, 125). As the student population of higher education in the United States begins to reflect the national demographic portrait in racial and ethnic terms, the need for more learner-centered, inclusive, and equitable learning opportunities is more significant than ever.

The pernicious ubiquity of systemic institutional racism, including within higher education, is at the core of the current national reckoning on race, equity, and justice. As Ash, et al. (2020) tersely put it, “Racism is ordinary, deeply ingrained, and a permanent part of Western society” (5). The “ordinary” quality of racism in the United States is perhaps the country’s most troubling characteristic within the social fabric. The persistent sociohistorical discrimination against Black and Latinx populations in U.S. education has resulted in the unjust exclusion of members of these groups from educational opportunities (Ledesma and Fránquiz, 2015). In spite of the increasing enrollments of BIPOC students in U.S. universities and colleges, the lack of engagement with the realities of racism, the white racial hegemony within leadership positions—including faculty—and especially the lack of relevant, inclusive, and diversity-focused courses, continue to perpetuate inequity and exclusion in the academy. To address these persistent inequities, Ash, et al. (2020) contend, “Institutions must find new ways to achieve their stated goals and strategies” (18).
The social injustices confronting race and ethnicity are no less evident or consequential in terms of gender, sexual identity, (dis)abilities, socioeconomic class, and other intersectional identities. Intersectionality disrupts established notions “of arbitrary binaries placed on race and gender by exploring the complexity of race and gender identities and how such complexities shape people” (Crenshaw 1989, 140). Crucially, language education plays a particularly important role in rupturing monolithic linguistic and cultural dominance by using languages and cultures to empower learners to challenge and disrupt the notions of “status, hegemony, homogeneity, lingua franca, and language war” (Tochon 2019, 264). Multilingual ability facilitates access to original texts and materials and enables direct interaction with local speakers of the language studied, permitting non-translated, unmediated critical engagement in the language with facts, ideas, and problems. By employing syllabi, methods, and materials informed by critical pedagogy, language and culture courses can become inclusive environments for cross-cultural communication, critical engagement of ideas, and expression of diverse and varied perspectives, characteristics that also support proficiency-oriented and standards-based language instruction. Instructors of Russian language and culture can contribute to the process of empowering learners who have been excluded from or denied full access to educational opportunities by making their classrooms, materials, and methods inclusive, equitable, and welcoming to all learners.

2. Decolonizing the syllabus, or finding elsewhere
Since 2019 the phrase decolonize the syllabus has been embraced as a first step in addressing diversity and inclusivity in our courses. Of course, decolonization goes beyond changing content or adding diverse voices to a course (Appleton 2019). An online resource for revising course syllabi in the program in Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Portland provides a necessary caveat: “Decolonizing syllabi must not take the form of tokenism or fetishization. . . . It is not enough to merely assign indigenous and/or minority writings, for example; rather a syllabus that includes these voices and shows how your discipline benefits from and perpetuates colonialism is a much more apt route” (University of Portland n.d.). Well-intentioned approaches to curricular decolonization, such as adding a minority figure(s) to the syllabus, while representing
a positive first step, are insufficient on their own to engage the primary
sciences would not survive and evolve without a robust dose of built-
in self-criticism, skepticism, and contestation. Thus criticality should
inform all fields of study” (5). Macedo goes on to focus specifically on
language instruction, because of its colonial history, as long overdue
for critical revision. Decolonizing the world language syllabus must be
transformative both in content and manner of instruction. That is, the
syllabus should change the breadth of the material we present, as well as simultaneously create new means and opportunities for all learners to
interrogate and engage critically with this content.

Courses in world languages and cultures, including Russian,
can engage in the process of decolonization, despite several common
assumptions against its implementation. The first of these assumptions
suggests that courses in world languages in general and Russian (among
others) in particular are “excluded” from postcolonial, postimperial
histories. Any of us who has taught “Tolstoyevsky,” that is, literature
and culture courses that focus entirely on the works of the so-called
Golden Age writers, has—albeit unintentionally—conveyed a view
on Russian culture through a monolithic, privileged, predominantly
heteronormative, historically white male lens. Indeed, even current
Russian language textbooks and teaching materials that center on the
“Russian masterworks” as the principal texts of instruction are complicit
in perpetuating this one-sided, exclusive, and hegemonic presentation of
the Russian language, people, and culture.

A related assumption suggests that only European states acquired colonial empires. Macedo (2019) dismisses this claim as
“arrogant elitism” (5) that simultaneously acquiesces to the existence of
imperial power and exculpates itself by proximal distance. The empires of

1 The term WORLD LANGUAGES is used here for three reasons: (1) FOREIGN
LANGUAGES suggests the positionality of one language as the source or dominant
tongue, while WORLD LANGUAGES is more equitable, and MODERN LANGUAGES
excludes ancient and classical languages; (2) the National Standards Collaborative
Board’s (2015) World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages uses the term WORLD
LANGUAGES as do many state language standards commissions; (3) unlike the term
WORLD LITERATURE (in the singular), which sparked a polemic between Damrosch
and Spivak (2011), WORLD LANGUAGES entails no expectation of working with original
materials in translation; on the contrary, it reinforces the autonomy of each language
system. Any “world” or “global” perspective inherently entails an imperial and colonial
legacy.
Here, There, and Elsewhere
Thomas Jesús Garza

China, the Soviet Union / Russia, and the United States were certainly no less pernicious or dehumanizing than those of the United Kingdom, France, and Spain, among others. Syllabi of Russian language and cultural studies, therefore, are appropriate for decolonization and can be reimagined to reflect more fully the breadth of diversity and intersectional identities in Russia. Deconstructing the colonial history of Russian language, culture, and literature courses allows multiple and diverse voices to be both the subject and the object of instruction in order to promote equity and social justice.

The assumption that only capitalist states can be colonial empires is similarly rebutted in the critical literature. As Grande (2004) asserts: “Both Marxists and capitalists view land and natural resources as commodities to be exploited, in the first instance, by capitalists for personal gain, and in the second by Marxists for the good of all” (27). Da Silva (2007) goes on to posit: “[Both] capitalism and the state are technologies of colonialism, developed over time to further colonial projects. Racism is an invention of colonialism” (153–4). Indeed, contemporary Russia’s colonial Soviet experience is inextricably intertwined with numerous social and political issues the Putin regime faces in the 2020s, including migration, housing shortages, (un)employment, and ethnic tensions all primarily associated with other former Soviet states. These same issues may reflect the experiences of U.S. learners of Russian and serve to inform new activities in a revised syllabus.

A final proposition against decolonizing U.S. courses on Russia suggests that in order to justify the process, there would need first to exist a legacy of colonial domination between the two nations. Both of these nations fall into the category of “settler colonial nation-states,” described best in Tuck and Yang (2012) as nations that simultaneously exploit indigenous peoples in the process of settlement (7). Like the United States during its westward expansion, Russia experienced its own iteration of national “manifest destiny” in the acquisition of Siberian lands and the Far East, among other territories (Bassin 2004). Thus, both countries have colonial histories and experiences that have created racial, ethnic, social, and economic disparities in the postcolonial era. More importantly, both countries continue to perpetuate practices and institutions that widen the equity gap between white and underrepresented populations in their respective homeland. Recognizing and addressing these colonial legacies
in U.S. courses on Russia can prompt the creation of more fulsome historical and cultural narratives that better address a diverse student population.

The decolonization of syllabi whose course content reinforces and perpetuates narratives of white imperial dominance and the acceptance of these structures is an important mechanism in current efforts in US higher education to promote social justice. The carefully reimagined and critically informed Russian language and culture syllabus creates the framework for a course that offers all learners a wider range and variety of perspectives, including those of individuals and groups who have been historically marginalized. Such a syllabus also outlines the kinds of engagement and activities that stimulate critical inquiry and interpersonal communication. Tuck and Yang (2012) describe this process: “Decolonization offers a different perspective to human and civil rights-based approaches to justice, an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an ‘and.’ IT IS AN ELSEWHERE (36; emphasis mine). Rather than presenting only the hegemonic narrative of power and domination or offering an “alternative” narrative that acknowledges minority and/or disenfranchised perspectives as an “and” to the majority position, decolonization insists on the creation of an elsewhere, a third place in which critical discourse and reconciliation of past and present grievances can occur. The decolonized syllabus, properly conceived and executed in class, can provide both the learners and the instructor with a road map to that elsewhere.

3. It’s on the syllabus
The course syllabus has long been regarded as an outline of expectations, objectives, and requirements that students use to manage and prepare for each class meeting. As such, it has also served as a contract between learners and instructors, setting requirements and offering means of engagement to help learners succeed in the course (Harnish and Bridges 2011). In the process of decolonizing the syllabus, however, instructors must also consider how the syllabus can function in the aid of educating the white community about issues of race and justice, while offering opportunities for them to begin to share power in the classroom and, by extension, in society. This process of deconstructing colonial privilege involves engaging what Freire (1998) calls Conscientização, or
conscientization, which Biermann (2011) describes as the interrogation of “the role of both structures and discourses in creating and maintaining systems of colonial domination within which we operate and by which we are located” (394). The goal here is to develop syllabi that encourage learners to engage with course content through difficult dialogues and conversations that require them to negotiate diverse perspectives and experiences (Dowd and Bensimon 2015).

The rationale for developing robust curricular activities and procedures in the syllabus for critical engagement with issues of intersectionality and identity is to supplement the more general statements on diversity in class. Though well intentioned, such attempts to address systemic racism will, according to Ash, et al. (2020), “never challenge the permanence of racism. Instead, such public responses lull the dominant White culture into thinking they are addressing the problem, thus, allowing the deeply rooted systemic racism to invisibly persist” (5). Of course decolonizing course syllabi will not, on its own, undo centuries of institutional racism; however, through thoughtful application of critical pedagogy in syllabus and curricular reform, individual instructors can become the vanguard of a larger movement toward increased diversity, equity, and intersectional inclusivity in higher education.

For BIPOC and other underrepresented intersectional identities, the content and style of syllabi are exceptionally important, given the lack of representation of minority voices and perspectives in academia. Ledesma and Fránquiz (2015), in their overview of critical race theory and K–20 education remark that such interventions can “expose how majoritarian structures have historically shaped and framed educational access and opportunity for historically underrepresented populations” (214). For BIPOC and intersectional learners, reading a syllabus that reflects texts, identities, and perspectives that align with their own is affirming and welcoming; to be not only permitted, but encouraged, to participate in critical inquiry of representative, inclusive texts and materials is empowering and transformative.

The reimagining of Russian course syllabi begins with this question: Does this syllabus encourage, if not require, critical engagement with the material? A revised iteration of the critical inquiry cycle (CIC; see figure 1), a graphic representation of a form of qualitative research that places a premium on an interdisciplinary approach to the ever-evolving process of
inquiry, offers a framework for addressing this question. This decades-old process for critical inquiry serves well the social justice goal of requiring all learners to question, dispute, and refute material presented in our literary and cultural studies courses. Engaging all learners in this process fosters the “difficult conversations” that are the hallmark of criticality. Moreover, the same framework can be employed to devise activities and materials that require learners of Russian to attend both to critical engagement with the material and to the attainment of increased proficiency in the language. As Osborn remarks: “As language skills continue to develop, the CIC [critical inquiry cycle] becomes a symbiotic vehicle through which language becomes the landscape and the medium of inquiry: Language proficiency is strengthened through the CIC and activities supporting it as inquiry is strengthened through language proficiency because the insights of speakers of the target language can be accessed through the medium of the language” (117-18).

Thus, the CIC can be an effective device not only for organizing the thematic flow of the course syllabus but also for devising activities in and out of class for examining, discussing, and disrupting assumptions and conclusions about the material on the syllabus, thus attaining critical reflection while also attending to intersectional diversity in the class.
Reimagining language and culture syllabi for social justice is not without its particular challenges. To create syllabi that require learners to engage critically and negotiate meaning with each other to achieve what Freire (1998) called cultural synthesis—the opposite of cultural invasion—requires instructors to craft ecologies of critical discourse that avoid two equally insidious learner reflexes: (1) either to continue to view the culture being studied as “foreign” or “other,” or (2) to “go native,” what Ahmed (2000) describes as “to become without becoming” (32), and attempt to take on an vestigial understanding of the culture and assume comprehension. In the first instance, the difficulty lies in ensuring that the syllabus provides the range of appropriate “texts” that engenders divergent positional perspectives without creating an “us/them” or “familiar/other” binary divide. In the second case, the materials and activities in the syllabus should provide enough depth of inquiry to offset the “novice expert” phenomenon and allow instead for the development of learner empathy and synthesis.

For both of these cases, I return to the fundamental premise of the syllabus as a contract between learners and instructor. Here, the instructor emerges in the constructed ecology of the language and culture course in the role of contributing mediator, that is, an active participant in the discourse who asks learners to consider the source of information in question, engage with its linguistic and contextual significance, consider alternative diverse perspectives on it (perhaps in conversation with other learners in class who are different from the instructor), and only then assign meaning to it. Learners thus begin to understand that even the most compelling text, taken in context of the interlocutor’s perspective, may represent not a fact, but rather a consensus or opinion (Osborn 2006, 119). This kind of engagement is at the heart of critical pedagogy and the decolonized syllabus: the creation of an environment that provides equitable opportunities and means for learners to interrogate given materials and/or assumptions through the process of critical inquiry and the contextualization of diverse

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2 The term TEXT is used in a language/cultural studies context to indicate any materials that convey meaning: print texts (including literary works, critical essays, journalistic items, etc.), still visual images (including works of art, photographs, illustrations, poster art, etc.), audio recordings (including music, podcasts, audiobooks, etc.), video recordings (including films, documentaries, television broadcasts, YouTube videos, etc.), artifacts (physical objects including ephemera and realia), and so on.
perspectives. In this way, Russian language and Russian cultural studies classrooms become beneficial ecologies for “challenging hegemonic ideologies, of liberating students from oppressive cognitive, intellectual, and sociological constructs that have thus far been created or reinforced in our context” (Reagan and Osborn 2021, 90). It is within such learning environments that issues of diversity and inclusivity can be addressed within the framework of critical inquiry as part of the newly deconstructed Russian language and culture syllabus, an inclusive plan for learner engagement that brings an array of diverse texts, activities, and perspectives to the classroom.

Another project very much in the service of creating syllabi and curricula for social justice in world language and culture education is that of the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning (National Standards Collaborative Board 2015). For more than a quarter century, this collaborative has maintained and articulated goals that fully integrate proficiency-oriented pedagogy and instructional content into an array of contexts to move language and culture instruction beyond the traditional classroom in order to “open doors to information and experiences which enrich the entire school and life experience” (National Standards 1996, 49). The Standards’ “Five Cs” underscore the focus of their stated goals; in particular, Connections, Comparisons and Communities foster interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural competencies, and translingual community interaction, respectively, while Communication and Cultures inform interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication with appropriate references of cultural products and practices.

The recently published Russian-specific standards (Garza, Merrill, and Shuffelton 2020) reinforce the imperative to have learners in language and culture courses “interact and negotiate meaning in spoken or written conversations in Russian to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions” (18). This standard for interpersonal communication reinforces the use of meaningful intercourse as a communicative device that requires participants to negotiate meaning while sharing opinions and information—precisely the context in which critical discourse takes place in a world language classroom. Used in tandem with materials and activities of a decolonized syllabus, the interpersonal communication standard supports the exchange of diverse positions and perspectives among learners in the class.
A final useful framework for reviewing and revising syllabi to reflect the goals and objectives of critical pedagogy can be seen in figure 2: equity-minded syllabus review (Dowd and Bensimon 2015, 68). Beyond the usual features of syllabi (including course content), assessment, grading, and expectations, the model shows how focusing on the critical pedagogical practices of the syllabus, the academic and educational community at a given institution, and the interrelationship between learners and instructor can inform instruction and ultimately lead to the (aspirational) outcome of equity and social justice in the classroom. This model has particular utility for already established language and culture course syllabi that are undergoing review and revision for addressing equity and diversity. Of particular relevance is the “community” engagement in the revision process, encouraging departments and programs to collaborate on the endeavor, a process that models the interactive process of the inclusive classroom.

4. Language matters
As philologists and educators, we understand the importance and impact that the words and language we use with our learners have in connection

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with our courses, learning objectives, and desired outcomes. Our course syllabi offer the very first lines of communication between instructors and learners. As such, they function as road maps that can encourage and promote—or exclude and impede—academic progress and success (Roberts 2016, 50). Thus, the language and tone of our course syllabi can shape learners’ first impressions of instructors and help learners understand the instructor’s attitudes and approaches toward teaching and learning. The syllabi can also establish the interactional tone and communicative affect of the learning environment.

Harnish and Bridges (2011) found that “presenting students with an effective syllabus written in a friendly, approachable tone can influence perceptions of the instructor and the course” (328). Indeed, the tone and language of course syllabi can create first impressions “that may facilitate faculty engagement with students. Such impressions may, in turn, set the stage for a more rewarding educational experience for those on both sides of the lectern” (328). Revisiting and revising existing syllabi may include altering, together with the course content and procedures, the language used in the document to establish an inclusive and positive environment in the course. Figure 3 illustrates how language use can be altered to create an ecology of equity, access, and intersectional inclusion for all participants in the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusive/ Unwelcoming</th>
<th>Inclusive/ Welcoming</th>
</tr>
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| Office Hours: 458 Burdine Hall  
M: 9-10:30am; Th: 3-4:30pm  
Or by appt. tjgarza@austin.utexas.edu | Office Hours: 458 Burdine Hall  
Face-to-Face: M: 9-10:30am  
Virtual: Th: 3-4:30pm on Zoom  
[Meeting ID: 555 273 7970]  
I welcome you to contact me outside of class and office hours. You may e-mail me, call my office, or message me through Canvas if you need to set a time to meet. Feel free to attend either F2F or virtual hours. tjgarza@austin.utexas.edu |
## Course Goals

This course is the second semester of Intensive Russian designed to bring you to basic functional proficiency in all skills. You should be prepared to spend 6 hours a week in class and twice that much time doing homework. Students who successfully complete this course may continue to RUS 324 (Third-year Russian) and/or participate in a study abroad program in Russia.

Welcome to the second semester of Intensive Russian! This course will help you develop your ability to read, write, listen, and speak in Russian in a variety of situations and contexts. You will learn to perform many useful tasks in Russian, from making plans to go out with your friends, to buying groceries for dinner, or just being able to talk about your favorite book. Once you complete this course, you’ll be ready to start Third-year Russian (RUS 324), and you will have enough proficiency in Russian to join one of our programs abroad this summer.

## Attendance

Your attendance to all class and review sessions is mandatory. If you must miss a class, let me or your TA know in advance. Missing more than three (3) classes will result in you being dropped from the course in accordance with the college’s attendance policy.

As you know from last semester, learning a language takes time and practice. Our time in class together will be spent almost entirely on giving you opportunities to use and practice the language. Therefore, you should plan to attend every class. Extenuating circumstances can arise that make your attendance difficult. Please let me know if you cannot attend class. If circumstances cause you to miss more than three classes, come see me to discuss your options.

## Participation

Your active participation in the course is crucial to your progress and success in this course. Your engagement in pair work, group work, and individual projects will be used to assess your participation in the course.

All of us in this class—you, me, your peers—share the responsibility to create an environment in which we can all learn from each other. I expect everyone to participate actively in class so that we can all benefit from the insights and experiences that each of us brings to it. You will have various opportunities to work individually, in pairs, and in small groups to demonstrate your abilities to use Russian in a variety of situations and receive feedback on your performance.

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*Figure 3: Examples of syllabus language [Adapted from Hamish, et al. (2011)]*
An inclusive and welcoming syllabus might also include a diversity statement and a land acknowledgment statement to further establish your course as a safe and respectful space for collaboration and interaction. A course diversity statement can further set the welcoming tone and inclusive atmosphere in your class. It demonstrates your commitment to create an ecology of mutual respect, to encourage the intellectual exchange of diverse perspectives and experiences, and to value difference in your classroom. Following is an example of a diversity statement from a Boston University website on teaching writing:

In this class, we are seriously committed to supporting diversity and inclusion among all classroom community members. We proactively strive to construct a safe and inclusive environment by respecting each other’s dignity and privacy. We treat one another fairly and honor each member’s experiences, beliefs, perspectives, abilities, and backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identification, ability status, socio-economic status, national identity, or any other identity markers. Bullying, hateful ideas, violent language, belittling, racial slurs, and other disrespectful or “othering” language or behavior will not be tolerated. Our class provides a safe space for free inquiry and open exchange of ideas. Difficult social issues will be confronted, and controversial ideas will be exchanged. We recognize the power and promise of language and yet are cognizant that language might be used to exclude or hurt rather than express or inform. Therefore, though we might feel strongly about a topic, we maintain respect for each other’s diversity. We act and communicate respectfully toward one another, both directly and indirectly, both inside and outside the classroom (Boston University n.d.).

Land acknowledgment statements “recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live” (“Native Knowledge 360º” 2021). They add substantially to the creation of a collaborative, accountable, and respectful environment for both Native Peoples and non-Native people in the class. Following is a sample land acknowledgment statement from the University of Texas at Austin:

We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for
what now is called North America. Moreover, (I) We would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comemcrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas. (University of Texas n.d.)

Taken together with the careful and thoughtful use of language in the syllabus, diversity statements and land acknowledgment statements work in concert to create the inclusive environment required for executing the kinds of activities that lead to critical inquiry and respectful discussion in a course designed to promote social justice.

5. Finding elsewhere

After considering ways to make the course more diverse and inclusive, and then revising the language and messaging in our syllabi, the next step in crafting a decolonized course syllabus is to revise the content to reflect the principles of critical pedagogy. As with other steps in this process, reimagining and revising course content requires thoughtful examination of the current content and/or our assumptions about what should be conveyed in the course. In discussing this introspective process of curricular decolonization and teaching for social justice, Biermann (2011) comments in regard to Indigenous perspectives, “For non-Indigenous educators, this requires a process of learning one’s own assumptions, valuing the complexity of considering a variety of knowledges, and engaging with the trail-blazing theoretical work of Indigenous scholars and thinkers as well as the complex lived realities of local Indigenous communities” (398). Reagan and Osborn (2021) call this stage “critical reflection,” remarking that it “entails the questioning of moral, ethical, and other types of normative criteria related directly and indirectly to the classroom” (200).

Because we are instructors of Russian language and cultural studies, this critical introspection is especially important to our teaching, as a significant number of instructors in our field—as for all world languages taught in the United States—are themselves native or heritage speakers of the language of instruction and may find the challenges of creating an ecology of inclusivity and equity in a US classroom to be different from
accommodations made for diverse identities in their home countries. Besides differing/conflicting language usage, cultural and attitudinal differences regarding race, ethnicity, and intersectionality complicate the teaching and learning environment. “Critical reflection is, in some way, especially important for [heritage] teachers, both with respect to cultural and linguistic knowledge” (Reagan and Osborn 2021, 205).

As social justice education “focuses on ways in which social group differences of race and ethnicity, national origins, language, religion, gender, sexuality, class, disability and age interact with systems of domination and subordination to privilege or disadvantage different social group members relative to each other” (Adams and Zúñiga 2016, 96), so should our course content, methods, and material reflect equity, inclusivity, and intersectionality for all learners. The case for revising Russian language textbooks to make them more inclusive and intersectional for both the diverse demographics of their subject population (residents of the Russophone world), and for the learners using them, has already been made (Stauffer 2020; Garza 2021a). Both of these essays suggest substantively revising existing textbooks, creating new ones, or supplementing existing textbooks with materials that foster an inclusive classroom environment of engagement and shared experience for learners and instructors.

Russian language syllabi can, even in the absence of inclusive textbooks, represent courses designed with critical pedagogy and social justice in mind. Indeed, a critically informed inclusive syllabus is essential for language courses that promote social justice while addressing proficiency and intercultural competence. The reimagined course syllabus, in addition to using inclusive and welcoming language, should engage learners with materials that demonstrate the ethnic, economic, and intersectional diversity of the Russian-speaking world.

The gender-driven structure of Russian provides innumerable opportunities to engage with nonbinary identities, gender fluidity, and queerness, from grammatical endings to gendered terms for marriage and gendered terminology for many professions. Most Russian words for nonheteronormative identities are cognate and can be easily assimilated into discussions of family, self, and/or relationships. In a similar vein, common activities using the language at the Novice to Intermediate levels, such as “talking about one’s family” are easily
broadened to include additional vocabulary to include blended families, divorced parents, same-sex parents, step-relatives, single parent homes, and so on. Conversations on the topic of nationalities can include, in addition to the identities of American or Russian, simple lexical ways of expressing hyphenated identities, such as Mexican-American, Russian-Dagestani, and so on. In the learner-centered proficiency-oriented classroom, it is not necessary for all students to master the same lexicon at the same time; in the inclusive classroom, all learners’ identities and perspectives are respected. Both of these conditions can coexist in a single learning environment.

Beyond diversified and inclusive content, the Russian language syllabus can provide opportunities for engagement with the language and culture via activities that allow learners to use the language to express their identity and their positionality. Therefore, activities in the syllabus should include open-ended interactions that have no single “correct” outcome, but that instead encourage learners to use Russian to negotiate meaning and context to arrive at an outcome that is appropriate to their particular interaction. For example, Intermediate-level learners working in pairs might be asked to interview each other about themselves. But rather than the usual Расскажите немного о себе ‘Tell us a little about yourself’ prompt, each learner is asked to find out something about the other that surprised them. This simple addition to the task provides a catalyst for empathy, understanding, and perhaps even humor. While the proficiency orientation of the task remains essentially the same, the revised prompt asks each learner to engage with the other, even briefly, more personally. At higher levels of proficiency, these interventions can become more robust and engaged directly with issues of race and equity. An Advanced-level course on debate in Russian, for example, can focus on a proposition such as Принято решение: Россия должна сократить въезд в страну мигрантам, у которых нет места жительства, работы, или денежных средств. ‘Resolved: Russia should restrict entry into the country for migrants who have no place of residence, work, or financial resources.’ Such an activity would necessarily raise issues of equity, discrimination, and race among the participants. Similarly, project-based activities are useful for encouraging learners to collaborate and find mutually acceptable solutions to conflicts or impediments. These and other
process-oriented activities also work well within critical pedagogy and compliment positive proficiency outcomes.

Like those for language courses, syllabi for literary or cultural studies courses can also be recrafted to reflect equity and social justice goals. For example, an interdisciplinary course that I have taught at the University of Texas at Austin since 2004, “Chechnya 360: People, Power, and Politics,” was conceived and designed to bring learners from both humanistic and social science disciplines together to examine texts and films from the 19th century to the present, and to consider how these works reflect the region both in literary/cultural and historical/political contexts. The original syllabus included English translations of the literary works by Pushkin (“The Gypsies,” “Prisoner of the Caucasus”), Lermontov (Hero of Our Times, Ashik Kerib, “Ismail Bey,” “Demon”), and Tolstoy (Hadji Murad, The Cossacks, “Prisoner of the Caucasus”); by 2010, the syllabus also included contemporary writers, such as Zakhar Prilepin (The Pathologies) and Andrei Gelasimov (Thirst). Films, including adaptations of the literary texts, such as Pronin’s 1961 The Cossacks, Bodrov’s Prisoner of the Mountains (1996), and Freda’s 1961 The White Warrior, and depictions of the Chechen wars and their aftermath, such as Konchalovsky’s House of Fools from 2002, Balabanov’s 2002 film War, Mikhalkov’s 12 (2007), and Tiurin’s Thirst from 2013, were also included on the syllabus. The course title belied its Russocentric content and literary studies approach; indeed, the “Power” referred to in the title is a tacit acknowledgement of the Russian attempts to colonize the Northern Caucasus.

In 2019, in response to comments from learners who commented on the lack of non-Russian perspectives in a course on Chechnya, the syllabus was substantively redesigned. Texts from Chechen authors, including German Sadulaev (I am a Chechen!, “Why the Sky Doesn’t Fall”), Ahti Bisultanov (“Childhoods,” “Khaibakh!”), and, for students who read French, Milana Bakheeva Terloeva (Danser sur les ruines: Une jeunesse tchétchène) were added. Documentary films were included to add to the diversity of perspectives on the wars in Chechnya, including The 3 Rooms of Melancholia (2004) by Finnish director Pirjo Honkasalo, HBO’s Welcome to Chechnya (2020) by U.S. director David France, and, for students who understand Russian, Vojna i mirnye (2019) by Russian director Anna Nemzer. All three films offer intersectional perspectives on the traumatic effects of war and the persecution of minorities in the region.
After the syllabus was refashioned in 2019 to include more Chechen writers and diverse filmmakers, as well as new assignments asking learners to consider the positionality of artists who work in an active warzone, the course “moved significantly away from being a ‘Chechnya through Russian Eyes’ course to a project-based, learner-centered course on ‘Understanding Trauma and Occupation in Chechnya’” (Garza 2021b, 579). This most recent iteration of the course strives to move the course from “and” to “elsewhere”: not simply a consideration of Russian and Chechen perspectives, but rather an engagement of the learner’s critical perspectives on how narratives of war are created and depicted depending on the storyteller’s position relative to the conflict. In the end, learners in the course produced final group projects that focused on Chechens’ personal stories of war and trauma based on one of the texts—literary or filmic—from the syllabus. Each group created a media project, using contemporary images, sound, and/or film, that they felt best told the story of the character(s) they had chosen. These final projects, each successfully depicting the group’s understanding of “elsewhere,” were posted on the course Canvas site and opened for viewing and comments on the blog feature of the site.

The previous examples take advantage of the extensive use of audio and video media often employed in both Russian language and Russian literary/cultural studies courses. Because syllabi for such courses often contain information about and activities based on films and other recorded media, instructors should consider these resources as part of the overall course ecology of equity they seek to create. As with literary or journalistic texts, media and media messages are “constructed” representations of reality that include social, political, and aesthetic contexts often financed by corporations or other sources that control content (Osborn 2006, 92). Learners engaging with audiovisual media must, with mediation from the instructor, develop skills to deconstruct textual, as well as visual, features of these materials. For language and cultural studies courses, these analytic skills address the goals of both critical pedagogy and language proficiency. Learners responding to questions designed to elicit their critical perspectives on a given visual text are simultaneously performing proficiency-oriented and standards-based tasks.
Consider the following sample questions adapted from Osborn (2006, 93):

(1) What situation model(s) do viewers bring to the video’s images/text?

(2) What is the world-in-the-video? Who are the people-in-the-video?

(3) What do you perceive to be the purpose in the video?

(4) How is that purpose conveyed in (a) language (spoken and gestural), (b) values and principles, (c) sociopolitical relationships, and (d) cause-and-effect relationships?

Learners, especially in pairs or small group settings, grappling with questions such as these are able to attend to the critical content of the queries and, if the video is part of a language course, to the lingui-cultural material, as well. The second iteration of my course on Chechnya, for example, asked learners in each group, as part of the write-up for their media projects, to address the previously listed questions in relation to the filmic works that they had chosen. Properly employed in the context of critical inquiry, audiovisual media can serve as powerful stimuli for the expression of diverse opinions and perspectives.

6. Conclusion: No justice, no teach

As suggested in the introduction, “decolonizing the Russian syllabus” begins, but does not end, with mentioning Pushkin’s African heritage in a nineteenth-century Russian literature course. Decolonizing the syllabus requires a thorough reexamination of the entire course: content, methods of instruction, and even the language used in it; it involves a serious self-study and assessment of the commitment to reimagine these courses—some of which have been taught for years from the same syllabus—to address equity and social justice; and it demands that we broaden our own perspectives on our region, subject area, and the learners we engage to create environments for critical inquiry and self-expression. Decolonizing the syllabus acknowledges that the current state of racial, ethnic, and intersectional inequalities in educational institutions is unacceptable to us as educators, as global citizens, and as human beings. Ending the systemic racism and prejudice in US higher education is crucial to addressing intersectional equity and diversity. As Ash et al. (2020) remind us, “Only the intentional, albeit painful, steps toward power-sharing at the highest levels of higher education will lead to meaningful change that
values, affirms, and empowers historically marginalized people in higher education” (24). But change must begin somewhere, and where better than with our courses and the humble syllabus. By insisting on equitable, inclusive, and intersectional world language and culture instruction, educators can disrupt the discriminatory and disenfranchising practices that occur, often implicitly, in our classrooms.

New phases of “dog whistle racism” (Hanley-López 2014) evoking cancel culture and instigating Jim Crow 2.0 voter suppression laws offer proof that claims of 21st century colorblindness and a “post-racial America” are overstated. In a cautionary rhetorical question, Ledesma and Calderón (2015) ask, “After all, how do we call out racism when others deny that racism continues to matter” (219)? Let the reimagining of our syllabi and courses be a start to addressing the unjust and discriminatory practices within education. Our Russian language and culture classrooms should and must be safe and welcoming spaces for all learners. Decolonizing our syllabi to make them inclusive and intersectional is an integral part of our commitment and obligation to educate the current and future generations of diverse and resilient learners.

References


Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class. New York: Oxford University Press.


Rectifying Wikipedia Racial Bias in a Russian Language Classroom

VERONIKA TROTTER, SVITLANA MELNYK

1. Introduction
Over the last decade, minority representation has emerged as a subject of critical self-reflection in the field of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (SEEES), prompting discussions that have centered on both the limited participation of minority populations within the community of SEEES scholars and students and the relative lack of attention that minority communities receive in SEEES teaching and research. Efforts to grapple with both issues became more urgent in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder and the massive protests for racial justice throughout the United States and beyond. Major centers for SEEES teaching and research have organized well-attended online panel discussions and lecture series that address minority and especially racial issues in the context of the discipline. The American Association for Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) has issued a statement that underscores “the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our profession” and has formed the Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion (AWGDI) to discuss “transforming our curricula, revisiting our teaching practices, revising our programming, and ...remaking the canon” (Banerjee and Safran, 2020). On its website, the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) has launched a page under the title “Resources for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in the Classroom” with links to ACTR-sponsored panel discussions and webinars that provide suggestions for inclusive instructional practices and incorporating ethnic and racial diversity of content into Russian language programs at the pre-college and post-secondary levels.

In this article, the authors discuss how a project-based learning activity can contribute to diversification of content in Russian language instruction at the advanced level in a large university setting. As Anya and Randolph (2019) have recently observed, a “diverse and meaningfully representative curriculum” can only result from conscious and persistent
efforts on the part of foreign language teachers, who “must be intentional about finding and incorporating authentic resources that represent non-dominant target language and learner communities and cultural narratives (e.g., non-white, non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, non-male, non-middle/upper class, non-Eurocentric, non-English) so that these voices may be amplified in our courses and, more importantly, so that our world and social realities can be more accurately and more completely represented” (2019, p. 26).

In the community of Russian language teachers, attempts to diversify content have chiefly centered on the presentation of minority groups and communities in the Russian Federation or Russophone citizens of other countries, in particular the so-called Near Abroad. This admirable and worthy enterprise parallels more longstanding efforts in the French, Spanish, and English (as a second or world language) teaching professions to familiarize their students with the culture and perspectives of underrepresented groups within their respective larger speech communities. The project discussed in this article, however, foregrounds aspects of African American history, namely its intertwining with Russian and Soviet history—a subject with a relatively modest body of research in English (e.g., Blakely 1986; Baldwin 2002; Matusevich 2007; Carew 2008) and even less representation in Russian language scholarship, academic or public. As part of Russian for the Social Sciences, a content-based advanced Russian language class, students contributed to public Russian language scholarship on African American history by researching, writing, and publishing Russian language Wikipedia articles about African Americans whose lives were distinguished by significant engagement with Russia/USSR.

2. Project-based language learning
The project was designed by language instructor Svitlana Melnyk and university librarian Veronika Trotter (a former language instructor herself) and conducted in 2018 and 2020 at Indiana University. The project drew upon the project-based learning (PBL) approach, which incorporates the educational theory of learning by doing, expounded by American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey. PBL, which has made its way into the practice of a broad spectrum of educators, is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an
extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. The end result of PBL is a socially meaningful and publicly available product.

In the field of language education and acquisition, the PBL approach has been recognized as project-based language learning (PBLL). As can be seen from the titles of recent publications cited in the next paragraph, the terms “project-based learning” and “project-based language learning” can be used interchangeably. However, Beckett, Slater, and Mohan (2019) point out the unique characteristics of this approach, in which language is both a target and a tool, and students are engaged in language learning through content-based activities: “As such, PBL can become project-based language learning with content-based activities composed of a series of tasks for solving problems, thinking critically, making decisions, producing products, and articulating the process and products” (2019, p.6).

The implementation of this approach into foreign language pedagogy is relatively new and needs to be studied more widely (Beckett, Slater, and Mohan 2019). Among the recent publications that address this need are Global Perspectives on Project-Based Language Learning, Teaching, and Assessment: Key Approaches, Technology Tools, and Frameworks edited by Gulbahar H. Beckett and Tammy Slater (2019) and Project-Based Learning in Second Language Acquisition: Building Communities of Practice in Higher Education edited by Adrián Gras-Velázquez (2020). Besides discussing the theoretical framework and philosophical models of PBLL (Beckett and Miller (eds) 2006; Beckett et al. 2019; Skalet 2019), recent publications also address the implementation of the PBL approach in language classrooms, reviews of case studies, immersion and community engagement (Beckett et al. 2019), and professional development in PBLL (Hixon, Ravitz, and Whisman 2012).

One of the most important topics discussed in the literature is the advantages of the PBL approach in a language classroom. Summarizing the benefits of implementing project-based learning, Stoller and Myers (2020) point out its adaptability to bilingual, multilingual, and multicultural classrooms. They emphasize the authenticity of experience and linguistic environment and the positive impact of PBLL on language skills. In addition, the authors underscore enhanced student confidence

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1 See PBL works https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl
and self-esteem, as well as an improved attitude toward learning and using the target language. Stoller and Myers also point out repeated opportunities for interaction (output), modified input, and negotiated meaning, as well as for purposeful attention to form and other aspects of language. Furthermore, Stoller and Myers underline improved abilities in critical thinking and collaborative work. They also state that participation in project-based learning increases motivation, engagement, and creativity.

In addition to publications about this approach, a number of institutions, among them the Buck Institute for Education\(^2\) and the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa,\(^3\) have developed instructional materials and criteria for PBLL. The attractiveness of the approach has increased recently due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the prevalence of online teaching. For example, the website PBLMatters\(^4\) offers a series of synchronous and asynchronous workshops for educators.

The Buck Institute has created a comprehensive model for project-based learning—a gold standard. The Gold Standard Project is focused on student learning outcomes and includes the following essential project design elements: a challenging problem or question, sustained inquiry, authenticity, the students’ voice and choice, reflection, critique and revision, and a public product. This universal framework can be implemented in a language classroom.

Our project was designed with all of these elements and meets the gold standard. (1) Both the topic and the task were challenging. Writing a Wikipedia article requires that students increase their reading proficiency in Russian and improve their research and writing skills. (2) While working on a Wikipedia page, students undertook a sustained inquiry using the target language as they conducted their own research, regularly consulted with the instructors and their peers and used research skills from the very beginning (information search) to the end (formatting sources in Russian)—all in the target language. (3) The students were required to work with authentic texts for the project. (4) Students chose a person for whom they would create a Wikipedia page biography and were

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\(^2\) See the materials developed by the Buck Institute for Education: https://www.pblworks.org/

\(^3\) See more PBLL resources and projects: http://www.nflrc.hawaii.edu/

\(^4\) A series of synchronous and asynchronous workshops for educators: https://www.pblmatters.org/upcoming-pbl-events.html
able to make decisions about which sources of information to include in the page. (5) Students had the opportunity to provide their reflections regarding the specific knowledge they acquired about the topic and the target language skills they gained in a questionnaire and during the final mini-conference. (6) The students’ work was critiqued and evaluated by the instructor and the librarian, by the students’ peers, and through self-assessment. Such revision was an ongoing process. Students were able to edit their articles after the end of the class and the project. (7) Students created Wikipedia pages, which are public products.

3. Wikipedia and its educational value
The idea for this project occurred to Trotter after she attended a roundtable entitled “School-University Partnerships in Russian Language: How Collaborations Can Serve Students, Communities, Programs, and the Field” at the ASEEES convention in 2017. One of the participants mentioned that minority high school students do not engage with Russia or other parts of Eastern Europe because of the lack of diversity in Slavic studies. It is not a secret that Slavic studies in the United States is a rather White profession and a field that is not always welcoming to minority populations.\(^5\) The roundtable conversation on these issues inspired the librarian to look for ways to contribute to the diversification of Slavic studies. To start, she compiled a LibGuide\(^6\) on African Americans in Russia.\(^7\) The LibGuide is organized chronologically and presents resources about African Americans whose lives were distinguished by significant engagement with Russia and the Soviet Union. By no means exhaustive, the LibGuide serves as a good starting point for anyone who wants to explore the topic. Work on the LibGuide led the librarian to the discovery that Russian

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\(^5\) This can be observed in heated public disputes on SEELANGS (an email-based forum for scholars of Slavic and Eastern European languages and literatures), such as one described by Jennifer Wilson (https://jordanrussiacenter.org/news/slavic-studies-racially-tone-deal/#YLeN6PkJlW) and Philip Gleissner (http://philipgleissner.com/quitseelangs/). This issue was also discussed in a recent “AATSEEL statement concerning inclusive language in the Slavic language classroom and a monitored professional announcement list”: https://www.aatseel.org/about/presidents-message/messages/

\(^6\) From “Library Guide,” a popular Web publishing and content curation platform designed for libraries and used among others for organizing class- and subject-specific resources.

language Wikipedia contains some articles about African Americans who are especially well-known in Russia, such as Angela Davis, Paul Robeson, and Yelena Khanga, but many other African Americans whose biographies were distinguished by significant professional, political, or personal engagement with Russia or the Soviet Union have no entries. Rather than creating all those articles herself, the librarian approached the instructor of the Russian for Social Sciences course with a proposal to involve advanced Russian students in that effort.

Wikipedia is the world’s largest free source of information. The online encyclopedia is ranked as one of the 10 most used websites in the world, and it is the only nonprofit organization among them. Of course, Wikipedia can be controversial tool and resource, and it is often frowned upon in academia. Most scholars agree that Wikipedia should not be cited or used as a source for academic papers. The sociologist Piotr Konieczny has identified a number of factors at play in the academic resistance to Wikipedia, including “common misconceptions about Wikipedia; doubts about its quality; uneasiness with the challenge that it poses to the traditional peer-review system; and the lack of career-enhancing motivations related to using Wikipedia” (Konieczny 2016). Nonetheless, Wikipedia is widely used as a reference source not only by students but by academics and educators as well. In fact, attitudes toward Wikipedia in academia have slowly shifted from more negative views in the 2000s to more favorable ones in the last few years. More educators use Wikipedia in teaching, and a significant number of academic publications address various pedagogical applications of Wikipedia.

Wikipedia positions itself as a teaching tool and offers a variety of resources for educators. On its Education Portal, Wikimedia Outreach emphasizes its role in education: by contributing to Wikimedia projects, students of all ages acquire significant twenty-first century skills and help to attain the goal of making all knowledge freely accessible to everyone in the world. The benefits of teaching with Wikipedia go beyond improving reading and writing skills: “We can increase students’ motivation (they

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8 See, for example: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201880/most-visited-websites-worldwide/
9 See a review in Konieczny 2016.
10 See resources for instructors here: https://wikiedu.org/for-instructors/
11 See the full mission and additional resources here: https://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Education
appreciate sharing their work with the wider world rather than with a wastebasket); teach them digital literacy, collaboration, and critical thinking skills; and enable them to engage in socially responsible activity (as student contributions enhance what is, in essence, a nonprofit, universally accessible reference work), as conceptualized in the service-learning paradigm” (Konieczny 2016, p. 1524). Bridges and Dowell (2020) enumerate and illustrate with real-life examples several approaches to the use of Wikipedia in education. These include shorter activities, such as one-shot classroom sessions and edit-a-thons, as well as long-term projects, such as running a Wikipedia club or incorporating Wikipedia assignments that require students to create or edit articles into course syllabi.

There is another line of criticism of Wikipedia that is more relevant to our discussion, namely its racial and gender bias. Gender imbalance in Wikipedia has already captured the attention of academic researchers. According to Reagle and Rhue (2011), female subjects account for only 16% of biographies on Wikipedia. Konieczny and Klein (2018), who analyze data from different languages, countries, and cultures, find about 12% to 27% female biography representation over time. One possible source of bias is the lack of diversity in the Wikipedia contributor community: the average Wikipedian is a 30-year-old White male who is computer-savvy and lives in the U.S. or Europe. At the same time, the active editor community is only 8.5% female, which can be partially explained by unwelcoming practices in the editor community (Field et al. 2020). Information sources used for Wikipedia editing also might contribute to its gender and racial bias, since the online encyclopedia must be primarily based on secondary sources. It is also possible that Wikipedia simply reflects the broader gender and racial-ethnic biases in society (Adams et al. 2019; Field et al. 2020). This data is particularly worrisome since after 20 years of existence, Wikipedia has become ubiquitous. It is always readily available and is commonly the first result in online searches, factors that make it a preferred source of information, especially for young people. Gender and racial biases on Wikipedia have the potential to greatly influence public opinion. Writing for the New York Times, Jada F. Smith has remarked that Wikipedia “suffers

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12 Racial bias on Wikipedia is also well known, but it has not been systematically researched yet, likely because of technical challenges of data collection. The only article that researches both gender and racial gaps is focused on sociologists: “Who Counts as a Notable Sociologist on Wikipedia? Gender, Race, and the “Professor Test” Adams et al, 2019.
from a dearth of information about black history.... In the Internet age, this is no trivial matter: To many people, a topic does not exist if it does not have a Wikipedia page” (Smith 2015).

Wikipedia and other organizations make efforts to address the racial and gender imbalance through edit-a-thons, organized at various institutions, especially during Black History Month and Women’s History Month, or through the UNESCO initiative “#WIKI4WOMEN World Contributory Movement” in six official UNESCO languages, including Russian. The Black WikiHistory Month program also coordinates numerous annual events in the U.S. and worldwide. The participants in these events improve previously published articles devoted to minorities by adding information and citations or compose new articles. Another goal of these events is to attract new, potentially more diverse editors. Thus, the authors view the PBLL project in Russian for the Social Sciences as a modest contribution to the rectification of the existing imbalance in Wikipedia.

4. Project
4.1 Participants and format
The project was incorporated into the syllabus of an advanced content-based Russian for the Social Sciences course, conducted entirely in Russian, and it constituted 25% of the final grade. The project was conducted twice, in 2018 in a face-to-face environment (nine students: four undergraduate, four graduate, and one high school; two of the students were heritage speakers) and in 2020 in an online format using the Zoom platform (eleven students: six undergraduate and five graduate, all non-native speakers of Russian).

4.2 Project stages
In designing the project, we followed Stoller and Myers (2020), who have formulated a five-stage framework comprising various cycles of student–instructor engagement in a project: preparation cycle, information gathering cycle, information processing cycle, information display cycle,

13 Details of the #WIKI4WOMEN initiative: https://en.unesco.org/feedback/wiki4women-world-contributory-movement
14 Examples of the events and resources for organizers: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Black_WikiHistory_Month
15 A case study of one such event at Oregon State University is described in Bridges et al. 2019.
and reflections cycle. Students worked on the project throughout the semester, completing a series of assignments: list of sources and outline of the article, first draft, peer review of another student's first draft, final version of the article, publication of the article on Wikipedia, and final oral presentation.

In our preparation cycle, the instructor and the librarian discussed the project’s topic and outcomes with the students. Students received a list of potential subjects for their articles and each student chose one person to write about; students were allowed to suggest their own subject as well. The list was compiled by the librarian based on her research and met Wikipedia’s country-specific notability criteria16 (e.g., a person notable in the United States who has a Wikipedia page in English is not necessarily worthy of notice in Russia and vice versa). English-language Wikipedia articles already existed for most of the subjects, but we emphasized from the very beginning that students are expected to do their own research and write original articles rather than simply translate already published ones. The librarian suggested general sources on the topic (such as books listed in the LibGuide), but students were expected to find additional resources about their chosen subject. The librarian also provided links to various instructional resources (how to create an account, how to format references, etc.) and basic information on Wikipedia editing. Examining model articles, we reviewed the typical structure of a Wikipedia biography, including important elements of the introduction. Reading good-quality Wikipedia biographies in Russian helped students not only to familiarize themselves with the sections traditionally included in such articles, but also to internalize the writing style and some lexical chunks that frequently appear in biographies and could be used in their own articles. Throughout the semester, both the instructor and the librarian were available to the students for consultations on the project. In 2020, we were fortunate to include a Wikipedia editor from Russia as a member of our team: during one class session she discussed rules for Wikipedia editing in Russian, and later she helped to resolve occasional technical issues, such as formatting notes and references.

In the next stage—information gathering—students collected

16 “For people, the person who is the topic of a biographical article should be ‘worthy of notice’ or ‘note’—that is, ‘remarkable’ or ‘significant, interesting, or unusual enough to deserve attention or to be recorded’ within Wikipedia as a written account of that person’s life.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability_(people)
various types of sources in both English and Russian, adhering to Wikipedia guidelines that rank resources according to their reliability and suitability for Wikipedia (books, articles, online resources). The librarian helped students evaluate the quality of their sources to make sure that they met the reliability criteria and expressed a neutral point of view. Each student then submitted a list of sources and an outline of the future article. In this and subsequent stages, most of the work happened outside of the classroom since each student worked on an individual topic.

The third stage—the processing of information—took up the greater part of the semester and was probably the most laborious. The participants were expected to write a first draft of their article; complete a peer review assignment (each student read and provided written comments on the article of one other student); make corrections to their drafts as suggested by the instructor, the librarian, and a fellow student; and polish the final version of the article. The instructor and the librarian monitored the students’ progress, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the students’ drafts and suggesting improvements with respect to Wikipedia criteria and proper use of Russian language.

The information display cycle was a twofold stage. First, all but one of the students uploaded the finished articles on Russian Wikipedia and thus made them available to anyone with internet access. Second, at the end of the semester, students presented their projects in class. They discussed the life of their chosen person and their connections to Russia. In addition, students reflected on their work with Wikipedia.

The self-reflections that concluded the presentations are part of the final stage, the reflection cycle, in which students evaluate their own work, the progress they have made, and the skills and knowledge they have gained. In addition to these brief oral comments, the instructor and the librarian solicited informal anonymous written feedback to gather students’ impressions of the project in more detail. The combined quantitative and qualitative results from 2018 (nine responses) and 2020 (eight responses, three students did not respond) are presented in the Appendix B.

The overall feedback was favorable: most students found the project useful and engaging and recommended implementing similar projects in other classes. Students felt that their language skills had improved, especially in writing and translating. Somewhat lower improvement in reading can be
explained by the fact that a few students could not find reliable sources in Russian and based their articles mostly on sources in English. While working on their projects, students gained a better understanding of how Wikipedia works and acquired Wikipedia editing skills; as a result, most participants are now open to contributing to Wikipedia in the future, even though this was not the primary goal of the project.

5. Challenges and possible solutions

It is expected that such a complex project would involve some challenges. Difficulties might arise at various stages, but most of them can be successfully resolved.

The selection of subjects requires some preliminary research. As previously mentioned, potential subjects need to meet Wikipedia’s notability criteria, and of course, the list of notable African Americans whose lives were connected to Russia and the Soviet Union is somewhat limited. However, other underrepresented groups can serve as a basis for similar projects (women, other minority groups).

Some students found it difficult to identify sources and properly evaluate them. The quantity and quality of available sources differed significantly from subject to subject (naturally, more information is available about better-known people). One of the tasks of the librarian was to help students locate sources in English and Russian and to teach students how to assess those sources in terms of their quality and suitability for Wikipedia. We would recommend approaching an information literacy specialist at your institution’s library (start with your Slavic librarian, if there is one). Even if the specialist lacks Russian language skills, she/he/they can instruct students on general source evaluation—an indispensable skill. Also, the staffs of both academic and public libraries almost always include a person experienced in Wikipedia editing who can assist students with technical challenges, such as formatting the article. However, providing instruction in English might not be ideal if the class is taught entirely in the target language. In that case the instructor can provide published instructional materials that are easily available online in multiple languages.17

17 For Russian, one can start with the following article from Russian Wikibooks: [https://ru.wikibooks.org/wiki/Как_написать_статью_в_Википедии](https://ru.wikibooks.org/wiki/Как_написать_статью_в_Википедии)
Needless to say, writing a Wikipedia article in the target language is a time-consuming project that creates a significant workload for both students and instructors. It is therefore crucial to divide the project into various stages and carefully plan out not just the project but the rest of the course work. Despite the workload, however, our students truly embraced the project, preferring to invest their time and effort into something memorable and socially meaningful rather than just writing another paper.

6. Conclusions
To date, this project has resulted in the publication of 19 new Wikipedia articles in Russian (see the list in Appendix A). Several are longer and of better quality than English articles on the same subject, and in some cases, articles authored by our students do not even have an English-language counterpart. Thanks to this project, the presence of African Americans in Russian cultural history is more visible, not only to our students but, as a result of their efforts, to any user of Russian language Wikipedia.

The cycles of PBLL-based activities that comprised the use of Wikipedia in the Russian language course, as described above, yielded highly desirable educational benefits. Students improved their proficiency in Russian and acquired new and specific knowledge through the medium of the target language. They also developed their information literacy and enhanced their research skills. Moreover, the topic and the opportunity to create a public product proved highly motivating to our students. We invite teachers of Russian and of other languages to adapt the design of our project for other topics that will advance the mission of curricular diversification.

Appendix A. List of Russian language Wikipedia articles created by students
2018:
Ричард Теодор Гринер (Richard Theodore Greener)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Гринер,_Ричард_Теодор

Фредерик Брюс Томас (Frederick Bruce Thomas)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Томас,_Фредерик_Брюс
Джеймс «Джимми» Винкфилд (James “Jimmy” Winkfield)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Винкфилд,_Джеймс

Гомер Смит-младший (Homer Smith Jr.)

Ллойд Уолтон Паттерсон (Lloyd Walton Patterson)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Паттерсон,_Ллойд

Оливер Джон Голден (Oliver John Golden)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Голден,_Оливер

Луиза Томпсон Паттерсон (Louise Thompson Patterson)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Томпсон_Паттерсон,_Луиза

Андреа Ли (Andrea Lee)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ли,_Андреа

2020:

Нэнси Гарднер Принс (Nancy Gardner Prince)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Принс,_Нэнси_Гарднер

Эмма Харрис (Emma Harris)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Харрис,_Эмма

Виллиана Берроуз (Williana Burroughs)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Берроуз,_Виллиана

Айда Форсайн (Ida Forsyne)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Форсайн,_Айда

Ловетт Форт-Уайтмен (Lovett Fort-Whiteman)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Форт-Уайтмен,_Ловетт

Ширли Грэм Дюбуа (Shirley Graham Du Bois)
https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Грэм_Дюбуа,_Ширли
Appendix B. Students’ project evaluations results (2018 and 2020 combined)
Quantitative questions:
1. Overall, working on this project was useful for me.
2. I learned a lot about an important and/or interesting topic.
3. I feel that I made a valuable contribution to the Russian language Wikipedia and hence the community in general.
4. Thanks to the project my Russian language skills in reading improved.
5. Thanks to the project my Russian language skills in writing improved.
6. Thanks to the project my Russian language skills in translating improved.
7. Work on the project was too time-consuming.
8. It was easy to find resources for the project.
9. I enjoyed uploading and formatting my article in Wikipedia.
10. I plan to contribute to Wikipedia in future.
11. I received valuable feedback on this project from instructors.
12. I would recommend implementing similar projects based on Wikipedia in other language classes.
1. Overall, working on this project was useful for me

2. I learned a lot about an important and/or interesting topic
3. I feel that I made a valuable contribution to the Russian language Wikipedia and hence the community in general

4. Thanks to the project my Russian language skills improved in **reading**
5. Thanks to the project my Russian language skills improved in **writing**

6. Thanks to the project my Russian language skills improved in **translating**
7. Work on the project was too time-consuming

8. It was easy to find resources for the project
9. I enjoyed uploading and formatting my article in Wikipedia

10. I plan to contribute to Wikipedia in future
11. I received valuable feedback on this project from instructors

12. I would recommend implementing similar projects based on Wikipedia in other language classes
Qualitative feedback:
The survey included two open-ended questions:
1. “What I like the most about the project.” Many students named conducting the research about an interesting figure, learning how Wikipedia works, and being satisfied with their contribution to the online encyclopedia. Here are some comments:

“I think it was very useful in synthesizing all the aspects of language learning (presenting, writing, translating, finding sources, adjusting to a new style, etc.).”

“The collaborative aspect, it very much helped me to identify areas for improvement in my Russian language writing and composition. It had the flexibility for me to incorporate and leverage my academic interests and experiences while improving my language skills and it gave me the push into the world of wiki editing.”

“I think this was a fantastic project, I think it developed not only my language skills but good concepts for 21st century collaborative scholarship.”

2. “What was the most difficult for me in the project.” Predictably, many students identified finding reliable sources, especially in Russian language, and editing Wikipedia among the most challenging tasks. When the project ran for the second time, some students complained that the project was excessively time-consuming:

“Was simply too much work in combination with other work. More class time, and nights free of other homework would have led to a better product- which is getting published and therefore pressure is high. Very clear step by step instructions for technical procedures in English would save students a lot of time.”

References


Teaching and Learning Indigenous Languages of the Russian Federation

Hilah Kohen, Irina Sadovina, Tetyana Dzyadevych
Dylan Charter, Anna Gomboeva, Lenore A. Grenoble
Jessica Kantarovich, Rossina Soyan

1. Preface (Tetyana Dzyadevych)
On March 20, 2021, one of my students sent a message through his college network: “Happy New Year! Happy Наýryz! Наурыз күттү болсың! Naýryz qutty bolsyn! S Vesennim prazdnikom Nauryz! ... Remember to celebrate with friends and family (family meaning chosen, adoptive, or biological, etc.)!” This student grew up in a Spanish-speaking foster family and recently, after a DNA test, discovered his ancestral roots in Bashkoria, Tatarstan, and Kazakhstan. He now wants to learn more about his origins, and he is looking for sources to learn about non-Russian languages and cultures in the Russian Federation (RF) and former USSR. To do so, he enrolled in our university’s Russian program. In his situation, and the situation of many other North Americans who may be interested in learning Indigenous languages of the RF for personal or professional purposes, Russian is the only available gateway language. In turn, one responsibility of Russian language instructors is to empower students to use that language as a gateway toward Indigenous languages.

Unfortunately, many still hear “Russia” and assume that such a huge territory can be ethnically and culturally homogeneous. Russia is home to over one hundred languages, thirty of which have official status in different regions (Alekseev 2004).¹ These vary in both status and number of speakers. From languages like Tatar, which is spoken in national republics and supported by local infrastructures, to critically endangered languages that are nearing extinction, such as Yukaghir, there is a deep but vulnerable diversity of languages. March 7, 2021, for instance, was a tragic day for a Bering dialect of the Aleut language. The last native speaker of

¹ We use the term Indigenous provisionally to refer to languages autochthonous to the territory of the Russian state, regardless of the number of speakers. The term Indigenous and its parallel коренной have specific connotations in Russian law and everyday use. See Lenore Grenoble’s contribution to this forum for a discussion of these nuances.
this dialect, Vera Timoshenko, passed away in Russia’s Far East region of Kamchatka (RFE/RL 2021). According to data from the Alaska Native Language Center, only two hundred members of the Aleut group remain in Russia, and there are only five living speakers of the language (Krauss 2007, 408). Following the Russian State Duma’s July 2018 decision to make all Indigenous language study strictly voluntary nationwide, language activists have lost an important tool for addressing this vulnerability (“Priniat zakon ob izuchenii rodnykh iazykov” 2018).

Our forum does not aim to explain the causes of the difficult situation facing Indigenous languages in the Russian Federation (RF). It does not aim to interfere in or displace current revitalization efforts in these language communities. The aim of our work is to highlight opportunities for teaching and learning Indigenous languages of the RF in the context of US and Canadian academia, raising awareness of the importance of these languages by increasing student engagement with them. Our target audiences include Russian language educators and their students, scholars working in the field, and heritage speakers whose academic connections with their home languages must often emerge through Russocentric institutions. We believe many students would be interested in learning languages other than Russian, particularly students whose own language practices face marginalization in universities. Likewise, we believe it is imperative for all Russian learners to be aware of the huge linguistic diversity of the RF. Finally, we see our work as a first step toward increased overseas contributions to Indigenous-language efforts.

Promoting the visibility of the RF’s Indigenous languages outside Russia in the short term can lay a foundation for more ethical long-term resource distribution in the Russian Studies field. As instructors use the ideas presented below in their classrooms and share this forum with interested students, centering language diversity in our field, it will become increasingly feasible for scholars in the US and Canada to place the time and power of their academic institutions at the disposal of revitalization movements in Russia. To all of these ends, this forum offers examples of how to include introductory Indigenous language materials in Russian language lessons to increase the interest of our learners in the cultural and linguistic diversity of Russia. We also provide examples of how individuals can start learning languages independently using...
available online sources through the mediation of Russian and, where possible, English.

Our thinking draws on models from many contexts, all of which can transform Russian Studies pedagogy. These include the US-based abolitionist model of channeling resources away from exclusive institutions to movements outside them,\(^2\) international efforts in information sciences to respect existing community education infrastructures rather than prioritizing direct university branding and involvement (Sangwand 2018), writings like Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze’s that recenter academic disciplines around Indigenous languages (Eze 2013), and translation projects like Joshua Freeman’s work connecting Uighur writers with Anglophone platforms (Freeman 2020). The application of the resources we provide below requires a grounding in academic solidarity projects such as these; without such ethical contexts, readers who do not come from Indigenous-language communities themselves risk infringing on the wishes and resources of community members. For students and scholars who wish to use their training in specific disciplines to support broader language revitalization efforts directly, contributions to *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization* may be useful starting points, particularly those on “new speakers” of minority languages (by Bernadette O’Rourke) and on the complex relationship between language revitalization and formal education (by Nancy Hornberger and Haley De Korne) (Hinton, Huss, and Roche 2018).

With these broader approaches in mind, this forum’s contributors address Russia’s key multiethnic regions: the Caucasus (Hilah Kohen), the Volga region (Irina Sadovina), Siberia (Rossina Soyan, Anna Gomboeva, Lenore Grenoble), and the Far East (Jessica Kantarovich, Dylan Charter). The pieces by Soyan, Sadovina, and Gomboeva focus on official languages of national republics, while Grenoble, Kantarovich, Kohen, and Charter write about languages that are spoken in smaller communities. Finally, the contributors engage with different motivations, and accompanying challenges, for studying these languages in their US and Canadian contexts: Soyan and Sadovina share teaching strategies; Gomboeva, Kohen, and Charter describe the resources available to learners; and Grenoble and Kantarovich offer broader reflections on the situation of

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\(^2\) Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Elizabeth Hinton, and Garrett Felber have exemplified this approach in their activism.
the languages they work with, pointing to both challenges and signs of revitalization.

Despite the variety of languages we work with and the multiplicity of our reasons for studying them, we have many common questions and points for discussion. A shared feature of these languages is the dearth of both English-language materials and digital resources (such as smartphone apps); the latter would be of tremendous value not only for foreign-language learners but also for younger community members to engage with their heritage in a familiar way. On the eve of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–32), it is our hope that this forum will initiate a conversation and create a network of people who are interested in learning and teaching Indigenous languages in our field and in creating the resources necessary to do so (UNESCO 2020).

References


2. Teaching Mari in a Russian language classroom (Irina Sadovina)

The average North American student of Russian may not seek proficiency in Mari or Buryat, but all Russian Studies students can nevertheless benefit from learning about non-Russian language communities in Russia. Activities designed for this purpose offer many advantages, including helping students gain greater proficiency in Russian as well as plurilingual and intercultural competence. In this section, I argue for the benefits of these activities and share my own experience developing them.

In my hometown of Yoshkar-Ola, you can hear Mari at scholarly lectures, at poetry readings, and on the radio. But if you walk down the main boulevard, you are less likely to hear the language spoken than you are to see awkwardly Google-translated Mari phrases on storefronts, halfhearted attempts at government-promoted bilingualism. When it comes to language preservation, Mari shares its ambivalent position with other official languages of Russia’s national republics. The language is still used in contexts both informal and institutional, and it has many loving caretakers: activists, scholars, and journalists. But the statistics are dire: the 2010 Russian census records the number of speakers at around 380,000 (Federal’naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki 2010), and UNESCO lists the two main variants of Mari as “definitely endangered” (Meadow Mari) and “severely endangered” (Hill Mari) (Moseley 2010). To supplement the statistics, I can offer anecdotal evidence of the vulnerability of Mari. Growing up in an urban household, I learned it as a child but lost fluency in elementary school, where Mari had little prestige. I have since worked on my Mari intermittently, through independent study and language classes. For now, I have made my peace with partial competence, encouraged by
Sergei Svechnikov’s recent argument that language revitalization depends on native speakers welcoming partial and potential speakers into the Mari language community (Svechnikov 2019, 5).

For Svechnikov and other Mari speakers, partial competence matters because it contributes to language revitalization in a specific community. However, partial competence also has value in broader educational contexts. The Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) identifies it as a key category for building plurilingual and intercultural competence (Council of Europe 2001), which is defined as “the ability to use a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs or interact with other people, and enrich that repertoire while doing so” (Beacco et al. 2016, 10).

This framework of plurilingual and intercultural competence is also relevant in Canadian and US Russian language classrooms. First, studying Russian calls for a plurilingual and intercultural approach which reflects the real-life context of language use (Byford, Doak, and Hutchings 2019). Second, an emphasis on plurilingual and intercultural competence allows students to pursue World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, especially Connections and Comparisons (ACTFL 2014). Third, normalizing partial competence frames language learning as a “lifelong task” (Council of Europe 2001, 5) and may help students develop a growth mindset, which supports language learning (Lou and Noels 2019). Finally, emphasizing plurilingual and intercultural competence is especially important given the increasing diversity of North American student populations.

Even limited amounts of Indigenous language instruction can help teachers of Russian promote such plurilingual and intercultural competence. At the University of Toronto and at the University of Missouri, I taught short lessons on Indigenous languages and cultures within courses on Russian language and culture. I have also taught stand-alone thirty- to fifty-minute lessons on Mari language and culture as a guest instructor in courses taught by colleagues.

A Novice language classroom offers many opportunities to introduce students to Russia’s linguistic diversity through assignments that allow them to use simple structures in a meaningful way. For example, when teaching the prepositional case, I invite every student to research different ethnic communities and give one-slide presentations
with images and maps, sharing some basic information with their peers (e.g., “Here are the Bashkirs. They live in Bashkiria. They speak Bashkir.”).

In second- and third-year classrooms, students can expand the range of topics they can discuss and practice engaging in more extended and flexible discourse through activities built around authentic materials from plurilingual contexts within Russia. For example, my second-year students studied the website of a Tatar theatre, noting that the names of the cast and crew did not sound stereotypically Russian. This led to a discussion of Russia’s Muslim cultures and prepared the students for a listening task about the city of Kazan on their exam.

My final example is a stand-alone lesson on Mari culture and language for Russian learners, taught in Russian and easily adaptable to different levels of proficiency. I begin by asking students to compare two Cyrillic alphabets: Russian and Mari, pointing out “false friend” letters and introducing new ones. I then teach students selected Mari phrases, using each one to discuss an aspect of Mari or Eurasian culture: for example, the Turkic influence revealed in the Mari greeting салам (salam). This lesson develops into a discussion (in Russian) of issues of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Instructors interested in including some Mari in their Russian language classrooms have many resources at their disposal, including online courses (Riese et al. 2017; Chemyshev et al. 2019), the Mari Wikipedia (“Tüng Lashtyk” 2021), the Mari electronic library (Mari-Lab 2021) and news videos from local TV channels (GTRK Marii El 2021; TV METR 2021).

The activities I designed have been met with student interest and have resulted in high levels of classroom engagement. While most students will not seek out further instruction in Mari or other Indigenous languages of Russia, all students will benefit from diverse authentic materials and complex discussions offered by modules focused on Indigenous languages.

References


3. Materials development for Tuvan as a foreign language (Rossina Soyin)

This piece shares my experience creating online language-learning materials for Tuvan as a foreign language with English as a medium of explanation. Tuvan is a Turkic language spoken primarily in Tuva, Russia. It is classified as a vulnerable language, which means that Tuvan is learned in childhood in Tuva, but its usage in various domains is decreasing (Chevalier 2010; Sereedar 2018). For example, in the early 2000s, I took Tuvan language and literature classes until the end of high school. Twenty years later, however, my nieces have decided to stop taking Tuvan language classes after grade 5; that is, they have developed conversational skills but not academic language proficiency in Tuvan. At the same time, my preschool nephews speak only in Russian, even when addressed in Tuvan, and it is possible that they will not even develop conversational skills in Tuvan.

Tuvan society is going through the same language shift processes that happen all over the world when local languages come into contact with more prestigious languages (Thomason 2015). Nevertheless, offering a comprehensive set of measures for reversing language shift in Tuva is beyond the goals of this piece. As a Tuvan speaker, a linguist, and a language instructor, I decided to contribute my expertise to language maintenance by developing learning materials for Tuvan as a foreign language. The audience I had in mind while creating the materials was composed of adults who already know English and are interested in learning Tuvan. This is my effort to increase the prestige and visibility of Tuvan beyond Tuva, since I firmly believe that Tuvan is worth learning not only for Tuvans themselves, but also for anybody who wants to interact with Tuvan people, Tuvan history, or Tuvan culture.

As a first step, I explored existing resources, including Учебник тувинского языка ‘Textbook of the Tuvan Language’ by Salzynmaa (1980) for Russian speakers and several textbooks for Japanese speakers, such as トゥヴァ語会話集 (tuva go kaiwa shū) ‘Tuvan Conversation’ by Dambaa and Takashima (2008). These findings show that if one wants to learn Tuvan, they need to know Russian or Japanese first. The only up-to-date resource for English speakers learning Tuvan is one dialogue available through the Mango Languages website (https://mangolanguages.com/available-languages/learn-tuvan/).
Next, I conducted a learner needs analysis by identifying and surveying a community of possible learners of Tuvan, reaching out through personal contacts and Facebook (Soyan 2020). The study participants were mostly interested in the Tuvan language and culture due to throat singing, a special technique of sound-making. Therefore, I chose throat-singing songs as the foundation on which to develop learning materials. Since the respondents identified themselves either as beginners or as people who have never tried learning Tuvan, I decided to create materials for absolute beginners.

Having gauged current resources and needs, I selected a pedagogical framework—content-based instruction (CBI)—to guide the development of new materials. CBI is an instructional approach that integrates “language teaching aims with content instruction” (Snow 2014, 439). Within CBI, I chose Lyster’s proactive, counterbalanced approach (2017), since it is supported by empirical studies and is also suitable for beginner-level materials development. Lyster’s approach has four phases which bring together a focus on two goals: language (grammar and vocabulary) and content (meaning).

Finally, I applied Lyster’s approach when creating the Tuvan through Songs website (https://sites.google.com/view/tuvan-through-songs/home). Currently, the website contains four sets. Each set has its own distinct learning objectives. The first set teaches the Tuvan alphabet, since mastering the alphabet promotes learner autonomy. The other three sets analyze three songs which were chosen based on two factors: whether there were repeating sentences and structures, and whether key vocabulary and sentences were suitable for beginners. Song one is used to teach how to count in Tuvan from one to one hundred; song two, how to ask simple “where” questions; and song three, how to name family members and occupations. Each set can be divided into four parts following Lyster’s (2017) approach: the noticing phase—analysis of the translated lyrics, the awareness phase—grammar and/or vocabulary introduction, the guided practice phase—eight to ten practice exercises, and the autonomous phase—interpretation of the meaning of the song and usage of sentences from the song in a new context.

The materials are aimed at producing Novice-level speakers. According to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), Novice-level speakers can use “isolated words and phrases that have been encountered,
memorized, and recalled” (9). Learners will not be able to speak Tuvan after the completion of the four sets, but they will be able to decode the Tuvan alphabet, produce their own simple sentences in Tuvan, and even transfer their knowledge to analyzing other songs in Tuvan.

I have shared the website with the original study participants, my L2 Russian students, and now with RLJ’s readers. However, I have not piloted the website and thus cannot provide data as to the effectiveness of the materials. Nevertheless, I believe the steps described above—analyzing existing resources, conducting a learner needs analysis, choosing a pedagogical framework for materials design, and creating the materials—can be taken by teachers of any Indigenous language to overcome resource scarcity.

I would like to encourage even early language learners who are not fully fluent in an Indigenous language to get involved in materials development. As Dr. Onowa McIvor (2021) emphasizes, Indigenous language maintenance is the responsibility not only of Indigenous communities, but of humanity in general. Most likely, readers of this article are occupying the territories of Indigenous people, be it in Canada, the US, or Russia, and we can give back by investing our time and energy into learning Indigenous languages. Knowing a few phrases and facts may be not enough in the long term, but it is still better than ignoring the Indigenous communities altogether and erasing them from the past, present, and future.

References
4. Learning Even and Evenki in the Northern linguistic landscape
(Lenore A. Grenoble)

Indigenous peoples of Russia’s Far North are of particular interest to researchers and external scholars, including linguists, anthropologists, and climate scientists, who have interests in the languages and cultures of Northern and Arctic Indigenous peoples that are now threatened by rapid climate change and massive cultural upheaval. Two such representative groups are the Even and Evenki, both traditionally reindeer herders and hunters, who form part of a pan-Arctic consortium of Indigenous peoples. Both groups face assimilatory pressures, and there is a massive shift to monolingual Russian usage; each language has fewer than five thousand speakers. The lives and stories of Even and Evenki community members capture the imagination of outsiders. A concrete example is Sacha, a visual documentation of the story of an Even reindeer herder who grapples with maintaining a traditional Even lifestyle in a rapidly changing environment (Pazoumian 2020).

The minority Indigenous peoples of the Russian North are officially represented by RAIPON, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (http://raipon.info/). RAIPON is one of six permanent...
participants of the Arctic Council, giving RAIPON official international status. Within and beyond Russian borders, there is a strong sense of pan-Arctic identity, collaboration, and even comradery that brings people together to face the modern challenges of strengthening minority language and cultural vitality in the North. Part of this strengthening involves sharing best practices and discussing strategies that have been less successful. There is an emphasis on language vitality and sustainability, and a movement away from language endangerment and loss (Grenoble 2013; Grenoble and Olsen 2014).

Learning either Even and Evenki as a second language is logistically challenging, both for ethnic Even and Evenki and for external (outsider) linguists and other researchers. By and large, both languages are used today only in a few local communities, in particular by people who are engaged in more traditional activities of hunting and herding, where children acquire the language naturally in the home and in the community at large.

Within Russia, language instruction is generally aimed at the ethnic population for each language. In cities, language classes are nonexistent; in villages where people live in high density, classes in the local public elementary and high schools are limited to a few hours weekly at most, with the language treated as a secondary subject. Adult L2 learners are largely left to learn on their own, unless they are lucky enough to be able to take classes at one of the few institutions of higher education where Even or Evenki are taught (such as the Herzen State Pedagogical Institute in St. Petersburg or local Northern universities like North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk). Some younger Even and Evenki are currently attending such universities and have made an active commitment to learning their ancestral language. Language activists are working hard to promote use of the languages in festivals, in media, and in daily life.

Both insiders and outsiders aiming to learn these languages face considerable challenges in terms of resources. It is virtually impossible to access language materials and learn Even or Evenki without some knowledge of Russian, even though there are some reference materials for both published in English (including a lengthy reference grammar of Evenki [Nedjalkov 1997] and a sketch grammar of Even [Malchukov 1995]). But access to most of the descriptive and pedagogical materials requires knowledge of Russian, which is the primary meta-language
used. For example, *Evenkiteka* (http://www.evenkiteka.ru/), a Russian language digital library, houses digital copies of a range of Evenki materials. Digital and print resources for Even are more limited, but there are some Even and Evenki introductory language lessons available online for both languages. (Such resources are aimed at potential learners living outside of Even- and Evenki-dominant villages, where Internet access is not available.)

There is a clear need for better pedagogical materials aimed at L2 learners whose first language is Russian. Many existing textbooks are aimed at fluent, monolingual speakers of Even or Evenki, and they are increasingly hard to find. Published reference resources are scarce and aimed primarily at linguists, not language learners. The result is that learning either language will be easiest for a well-trained linguist who is highly proficient in Russian. In addition, existing audio and video recordings, with a few notable exceptions, are not primarily aimed at language learners. All this indicates the need for improved, accessible, and available language reference and pedagogical materials. Given community needs for such materials, it is hard to advocate that they also be created in English, as there are few serious language learners of either language who are neither community members nor linguists. But there are ample materials to give North American Russian students a glimpse into the life of Northern Indigenous groups and their languages.

A major challenge for all L2 learners of Even or Evenki is finding opportunities to practice their language skills. Travel to villages is difficult and impossible in certain times of the year, and living in small villages (even finding housing) is challenging for outsiders. We need to find creative ways to think of new domains of language usage, especially in urban settings, where smaller Indigenous populations become integrated into existing neighborhoods, losing opportunities for daily, face-to-face, casual contact. The creation of new digital spaces on social media or YouTube is one solution for those who have Internet access. Thanks to their affiliation with RAIPON and the Arctic Council, Even and Evenki community members can potentially learn best practices from other Arctic and Northern Indigenous groups. In Alaska, for example, a wealth of digital materials have been created for Native languages, including apps, language games, lesson and curricular plans, video and audio materials, posters, and vocabulary cards (Sealaska Heritage 2016). Having such
materials online would be a tremendous benefit to learners and teachers outside of the communities who could access them readily.

To study Even, Evenki, or any minority Indigenous language of the Russian Federation, one really needs high-level proficiency in Russian. This is in and of itself a prime motivation for Russian language classes. Motivation cuts both ways: introducing even small bits of information about minority languages and peoples in Russian language classes and general linguistics classes alike can inspire students to learn more about the languages and to study the regions and their peoples that are less known outside of Russia. My own experience has shown that students are inspired to work with such languages once they learn more about them and are highly motivated to help build capacity in the communities.

References

5. Chukchi: Its history and reasons to learn it (Jessica Kantarovich)
Many Arctic languages find themselves in a particularly precarious position in the modern era. Among these vulnerable languages is Chukchi, the largest member of the Chukotko-Kamchatkan language family, predominantly spoken in the Russian Far (North) East. Until relatively
recently, Chukchi was learned as a first language by the nomadic Chukchi people (autonymically, Легораветлъат, or ‘the true people’). It was once the lingua franca in the Russian Far East: the Chukchi famously refused to learn other groups’ languages in conducting trade, instead preferring to speak a simplified Chukchi jargon with all foreign interlocutors (Vakhtin 1998). There is evidence of these linguistic practices and the local dominance of Chukchi well into the nineteenth century. The Chukchi were also able to resist the effects of Russian contact and colonization for longer than other Indigenous groups due to the harsh tundra climate, which was difficult for tsarist emissaries and settlers to navigate.

Policies and programs implemented throughout the Russian North in the mid-twentieth century disrupted Chukchi language transmission and rapidly accelerated linguistic shift to Russian. The Chukchi were forcibly settled, their children sent to boarding schools where the use of the Chukchi language was strictly prohibited. It is perhaps Chukchi’s one-time regional dominance that has obscured the truly dire present situation of the language. Sources generally underestimate the extent of Chukchi language endangerment, often by pointing to the most recent Russian census data (from 2010, which lists 5,095 speakers). The linguistic encyclopedia Ethnologue lists Chukchi as “Threatened,” meaning “the language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.” Regardless of this perception, there is no doubt that Chukchi is moribund. Linguists who are presently working within Chukchi communities estimate that there are less than one thousand remaining speakers of any proficiency (Pupynina and Koryakov 2019). Chukchi is virtually not spoken by anyone under the age of fifty, and transmission to children has ceased entirely. Even in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, Chukchi is only learned as a second language by dedicated ethnic Chukchi who want to reconnect with their heritage. In public schools, Chukchi is offered as a second language for only a couple of hours a week, with teachers reporting that they are unable to cover more than cultural terminology and basic phrases in this time.

This context is one of many reasons why it is critical for anyone with an interest in language to undertake the study of Chukchi. Languages which are undervalued economically, culturally, or politically are more likely to be lost—Chukchi faces staunch competition from Russian and English in all three domains. As such, any interest in the language, even from those
outside the community, bolsters its value in the eyes of the speakers. While some speakers feel ambivalent about the interest in Chukchi on the part of Russian linguists, given the fraught history between the two groups, the speakers I have met expressed unequivocal enthusiasm at the prospect of Chukchi being studied abroad. An interest in the Chukchi language among speakers of English—who have considerable cultural prestige in Siberia—could go a long way toward promoting the status of Chukchi among younger speakers.

There are other reasons to study Chukchi: for those with an anthropological interest in lifeways of the North, traditional knowledge is most faithfully expressed in a group’s ancestral language. Chukchi has a wealth of terminology about reindeer husbandry and life in the tundra that is more revealing when knowledge of the internal structure of the terms is taken into account: for example, although the most basic term for a reindeer is qoraŋə, there are numerous other specific terms for reindeer that do not directly refer to them at all (e.g., agtatjo ‘reindeer being herded to slaughter or reindeer that is not yet domesticated,’ literally ‘the one who is driven’). Chukchi is also unique in terms of its linguistic structure: it is a polysynthetic language, meaning it often expresses full clauses using a single word, making it very different from both Russian and English but quite similar to Indigenous languages of North America.

It may not be reasonable to expect the average foreigner to become proficient in Chukchi, especially given a dearth of settings in which to practice speaking, but we need not set Chukchi fluency as our goal in promoting language learning and revitalization. For example, the younger members of the community may not use the language among themselves, but they are actively involved in creative domains of language use through translation, poetry, and musical composition.

For an interested learner, some degree of Russian knowledge (and certainly of Cyrillic orthography) is critical for engaging with most published materials (such as textbooks, dictionaries, phrase books, and the comprehensive grammars of Pjotr Skorik). Participation in online language groups would also require some Russian proficiency, since Chukchi conversations or discussion are typically framed in Russian (and there is considerable code-switching with Russian). Thus, Chukchi, along with the other languages discussed in this forum, is a prime example of a
culture that can be spotlighted via the study of the Russian language. An appreciation for the languages, cultures, and traditional knowledges of Russia’s numerous ethnic groups is not typically emphasized by Russian degree programs, but it should be.

Still, for those without any Russian knowledge, more linguistically focused materials do exist, including an early grammar and dictionary written in English by Waldemar Bogoras (1922) and a more terminologically up-to-date grammar by Michael Dunn (1999). While the lack of pedagogical materials and learning opportunities presents challenges for English speakers looking to actually be able to speak Chukchi, the available materials are nevertheless of enormous value to Anglophone individuals looking to engage with Chukchi history and culture or to draw connections between the North American and Russian Arctic Indigenous contexts.

References

6. Self-studying the Sakha (Yakut) language (Anna Gomboeva)
The Russian language is a difficult one to learn, but even a mere familiarity with the Cyrillic alphabet opens opportunities to learn some of the non-Slavic languages that utilize this alphabet. Even without advanced Russian, it is possible to study the Indigenous languages of Siberia. Here I will share resources for the self-study of the Sakha (Yakut) language and discuss problems that a learner of this language might encounter.
Саха Тыла ‘Sakha Tyla’ belongs to the Turkic family of languages and is the language of the Yakut people of Northeastern Siberia. According to the latest Russian census, there are approximately 450,000 speakers of this language, the majority of whom live in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (Federal’naya sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki 2010). Although this number of speakers is quite large in a Siberian context, Sakha is still considered a vulnerable language because the percentage of fluent speakers has declined over the last fifty years (Moseley 2010).

Why learn the Sakha language? Besides the opportunity to watch critically acclaimed contemporary Sakha cinema without subtitles, learners can access the rich and understudied literary history of this nation. Sakha literature includes ancient epic tales such as Олонхо ‘Olonkho,’ as well as contemporary novels, poems, and tales reflecting on Sakha life under Russian or Soviet rule. Many of these literary works have never been translated into Russian or English. Learning more about Sakha culture can help diversify our knowledge of Russia and the Soviet Union.

Sakha language textbooks for self-study are rare, but it is still possible to find them online. Perhaps the most well-known and extensive Sakha language textbook for Russian speakers is Самоучитель якутского языка, ‘A Guide for Self-Study of the Yakut Language’ by L. N. Kharitonov (1987). Because this is a Soviet textbook, it includes terms related to life in a kolkhoz, political concepts, titles of administrative positions, and other period-specific vocabulary. This textbook might not be a good source of contemporary vocabulary, but its exercises are very useful for those who want to learn grammar.

The more recent Sakha textbook Поговорим по-якутски: Самоучитель языка Саха, ‘Let’s Speak Yakut: A Guide for Self-Study of the Sakha Language’ by D’ichkovskii et al. (2018) has been reprinted several times since 2002. More of a learner’s guide than a textbook, it does not include exercises but provides a review of contemporary grammar and phonology as well as a glossary. Even in the latest editions, the book includes some Soviet-era vocabulary such as товарищ ‘comrade’ and эксплуатація ‘exploitation.’ The glossary also includes administrative positions in the regional government and agricultural terms. Both textbooks use phonetic examples from Russian, English, and German to illustrate the pronunciation of seven Sakha-specific letters.
Although having a good command of Russian is very useful when learning Sakha, it is not a prerequisite for self-study. English speakers or linguists interested in the Turkic family of languages can study Sakha using John R. Krueger’s *Yakut Manual* (1997). The manual includes a brief history of the Sakha people and their language, an extensive grammar overview, reading exercises, and a very extensive Sakha-English glossary.

As for dictionaries, SakhaTyla.Ru is an online Sakha-Russian dictionary and a great electronic self-study resource (“Sakha-Russian Online Dictionary” 2021). A SakhaTyla.Ru app is available for Android and Apple phones as well. Besides an online dictionary, it provides full electronic versions of Kharitonov’s (1987) and D’iachkovskii’s (2018) textbooks, as well as several other textbooks. The online dictionary, unlike most Soviet glossaries and textbooks, shows that learners can use loan words or foreign words both in their Russian spelling and in the current Sakha spelling. For example, when translating the word telephone from Russian into Sakha, the dictionary allows users to choose if they want to spell *телефон* in Russian or use the Sakha spelling *түлүпүөн*.

As for complementary learning materials, YouTube provides plenty of resources. A Sakha-speaking YouTuber known as Yakut Voice (2021) translates popular American YouTube videos and scenes from Hollywood movies and makes voiceovers in the Sakha language. Those who are interested in local cinema would enjoy award-winning psychological dramas such as *Костёр на ветру* ‘The Bonfire’ (2016) and *Пу-гало* ‘Scarecrow’ (2020), World War II dramas such as *Снайпер Саха* ‘Sakha Sniper’ (2010), or even the low-budget zombie horror film *Республика Z* ‘Republic Z’ (2018). There are also many Sakha-speaking communities on VK.com and TikTok, as well as popular Sakha-speaking musicians such as Күннэй (‘Kunnei’). Although a Sakha as a Second Language curriculum is hard to come by, this diversity of resources presents opportunities for students to create their own curriculum and perhaps enjoy the freedom of creative self-study of one of the Indigenous languages of Russia.

References


7. Finding connections on the Juhuri Internet (Hilah Kohen)

Poet, pedagogue, and social worker Batsion Abramova describes the Juhuri language (zuhun çuhuri) in ecological terms. In her lyric “Zuhun dədəji,” or ‘Mother Tongue,’ Juhuri is səs zym-zymə biloqhoji ‘the quickening voice of the springs’ in the Caucasus Mountains, or ixtilothoj budoqhoji ‘the conversations of the branches.’ These branches stem from Jewish textual roots: Juhuri is tufon Nyvəħ ‘Noah’s deluge’ or Moses’s gift of az sər an sənq dəh kəlmə ‘ten phrases carved in stone.’ Ultimately, though, the Juhuri community moves beyond its land-based heritage in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Chechnya, and Azerbaijan; it withstands cultural assimilation in Moscow, Brooklyn, and Israel through a new identity based on contemporary language use. In Abramova’s poem, the cultural mothers and foremothers (dədəjho) who imbued Juhuri with their words call on a new generation to learn those words and contribute their own (Qəlbinur 2012, 6–7).³

Across generations, today’s contributions tend to happen online. While Juhuri activists do interface with the Russian Federation’s (RF) programs for Indigenous languages, their communities are spread across a multicontinental diaspora (Gavrilov 1990; Bram 2008; Borjian and Kaufman 2015). For this reason, not every Juhur (Kavkazi Jew) can learn Juhuri from a nearby family member or a community school. Print

³ Bəsti Qəlbinur is the pen name of Batsion Abramova. Juhuri has used orthographic systems based on Ancient Hebrew, Azerbaijani Latinate, Azerbaijani Cyrillic, and Russian Cyrillic scripts. Rather than adapting existing English transliteration systems for these languages, I transcribe all Juhuri text into the Juhuri Latinate alphabet developed by Iakov (Jəⱨəqy) Agarunov.
resources are scarce; in English, they are practically nonexistent. This brief introduction to the range of online resources now available for Juhuri language study can therefore serve as a gateway for English-speaking Juhurho and their present or future allies to begin building fluency—not in isolated self-study but in connection with cultural leaders. Meanwhile, for Russian language instructors, this piece points to engaging authentic materials that may particularly benefit students interested in Jewish identity. The combination of resources available on WhatsApp, Skype, YouTube, and the media portal STMEGI (led by German Zakharyaev and David Mordekhaev) has made it possible within the last five years to learn and teach Juhuri across and outside the diaspora (STMEGI 2021b). Drawing on my studies with Batsion Abramova and theater director Eva (Jorço) Shalver-Abramova (no relation), I will offer information that was previously unavailable in English about these new platforms dedicated to “the quickening voice of the springs.”

In 2014, the STMEGI Foundation established a library in Moscow, at Bol’shoi Spasoglinishchevskii pereulok 8/8. By 2017, civil servant Danil Danilov had led a successful effort to digitize that library, uploading hundreds of PDFs and audiobooks (STMEGI 2021a). At the time of this writing, STMEGI’s interface is available only in Russian, but a basic grasp of Russian is sufficient for Anglophone students to browse book covers, use illustrated dictionaries, and listen to bilingual Russian-Juhuri audiobooks (see Ifraimov 1991; Izgijajəva 1995; and Mikhailova 2021). The STMEGI-sponsored Facebook page Академия языка джуури ‘Juhuri Language Academy’ (https://www.facebook.com/akademija-juhuri) offers yet another resource: there, the young linguist Gennady Bogdanov and his team post vocabulary in English, Hebrew, and Russian. Russian readers can also use STMEGI’s library and Bogdanov’s 2019–20 textbook Учебник языка горских евреев джуури ‘Textbook of the Mountain Jewish Language Juhuri’ to pursue advanced proficiency. This two-volume set is the first resource of its kind for beginning Juhuri learners. Bogdanov has also led the creation of a dictionary app, Джуури Переводчик ‘Juhuri Translator,’ with versions for the web and for mobile devices (STMEGI 2021c).

4 This textbook can be purchased through the messaging function on the Академия языка джуури Facebook page, and a preliminary version is available at https://stmegi.com/library/books/uchebnik-yazyka-gorskikh-evreev-dzhuuri/.
STMEGI’s journalistic and educational platforms are the most well-resourced media available for Juhuri language study, but they cannot be used in isolation from social communities, nor do they represent the entirety of today’s digital revival. The WhatsApp group chat Zuhun dadaji ‘Mother Tongue,’ with eighty members and counting, holds weekly language lessons centered on translation and poetry. Its members frequently publish the results of this work through STMEGI and the Israel-based community center Sholumi. The Facebook group “Kavkazi Jewish History and Culture” (https://www.facebook.com/groups/1906826196269634), administered by Valeriya Nakshun, has become an online hub for English-speaking Juhurho. On TikTok, Narkis Rabaev (@narkis1987) posts comedy sketches, while on Instagram, Abram Yusufov’s (2020) @savejuhuri project creates dubbed parodies of films like Twilight (Edward decides to marry Bella because she cooks her stuffed cabbage in the Shirvani style). Basic language lessons and popular Juhuri songs can be found on YouTube, as can English-subtitled oral histories from the Endangered Language Alliance. It is this incredible range of digital projects that enables present and future Juhuri speakers to locate themselves in contemporary communities, finding like-minded students to teach or teachers to learn from.

For me, a non-Juhuri graduate student in the US, the Juhuri Internet is where translation skills and literary scholarship take on a broad community impact. Online, I can reach out to teachers and writers, facilitating ties across the many languages used in the Juhuri diaspora. Meanwhile, Batsion Abramova has said that online classes and publishing forums can be a way to “plant a seed” both among today’s Juhuri experts and among those who will carry the language forward (Abramova 2020). Her lessons on Skype, Zuhun dadaji’s ‘Mother Tongue’s’ lessons on WhatsApp, and Gennady Bogdanov’s transition from recent Juhuri learner to Juhuri educator all demonstrate that concerted engagement with online resources can facilitate advanced language education.5 Much as the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research has allowed online and in-person Yiddish revitalization efforts to supplement one another, and

5 Likewise, linguist Evgenia Nazarova has built on her remote collaborations to introduce in-person Juhuri courses at Kosygin State University, and Simon Mardakhaev’s community language classes at Brooklyn’s Beit Juhuro have reached broader audiences through YouTube. Recordings of these lessons are available on Beit Juhuro’s YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2rzNldo1Ml7muPoqc_E4k9j7OOkvZA.
much as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) has combined online language materials with university partnerships, anyone who uses the resources described here to improve their own language skills can use that engagement to take part in long-term, communal efforts. For many English-speaking Juhurho, the JuNet promises connections with large communities overseas, including intellectual and creative circles that are constantly expanding the Juhuri language. For Russian language instructors and their students, Juhuri resources demonstrate how varied Jewish culture can be in the former Soviet space while contributing to the broader view of non-Russian cultures that this forum conveys.

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8. Learning Nivkh as an undergraduate (Dylan Charter)

While learning or studying an Indigenous language of the Russian Federation (RF) as an undergraduate in the United States seems daunting, it is eminently possible. To gain access to language-learning resources and opportunities, students must set specific goals early on and work actively to create connections with the languages they want to study, as well as with knowledgeable academics and study-abroad or other programs. Professors also have a responsibility to support students’ interests however they can.

Going into college, I knew I was interested in the languages of Siberia and the Far East. I also knew that English-language resources for learning these languages are unfortunately very limited, meaning that I would first have to learn Russian. One thing I knew little about was financial aid and study abroad opportunities at the schools I was applying to. However, I had the privilege and good fortune of ending up at a school with access to some of the best Russian instruction in the country, as well as generous funding for study on campus and abroad. Starting my study of Russian straightaway provided me with the best possible foundation for my eventual study of Nivkh, a severely endangered language isolate spoken on Sakhalin and in Khabarovsk Krai. Similar opportunities for accelerated language study and research are available across the US, from Wisconsin’s Pushkin Summer Institute for high schoolers to the nationwide Undergraduate REEES Think Tank, which is based at Howard University.

I committed during my first year in college to the Russian Flagship program, which provides funding for accelerated and long-term Russian study, from an immersive domestic summer program to a semester abroad in St. Petersburg and finally a capstone year in Almaty. These opportunities to rapidly improve my Russian further enabled my engagement with Nivkh, opening opportunities for immersive study in both languages.
Most schools don’t have programs like Flagship, so it’s important for any interested undergraduate to be aware of study opportunities both internal and external to their program. Such opportunities can include intensive summer programs like Arizona’s Critical Languages Institute and Indiana’s Language Workshop.

Cultivating relationships with professors and students with similar interests is also crucial. Most (liberal arts) institutions have professors of Russian, linguistics, anthropology, and other fields who can nurture a student’s interests in the less commonly studied languages of Russia and help the student connect with online resources, additional study opportunities, and helpful colleagues. Just at my small college, I have been able to make invaluable connections with a Russian folklorist and translator; a Turkologist, phonetician, and computational linguist; a phonologist who works in West Papua; and a specialist in Tuvin who does language advocacy the world over. They have supported my academic ambitions; introduced me to conferences and other opportunities; taught me about linguistics and Russian; and spoken with me about language revitalization, the politics of language in Russia, how to teach linguistics, what work needs to be done to support endangered languages, and much else.

Linguistics courses are among the best ways to start working closely with undertaught languages. I first studied Nivkh in a computational linguistics course, in which I helped create a machine translator and morphological transducer for the language. This got me acquainted with the language itself—the structure, vocabulary, orthography, dialects, sociolinguistic situation—and with the scholars who have worked with Nivkh in the past. This was a very rewarding experience in itself, but it also set me up to take a Nivkh class at the Institute of the Peoples of the North when I was studying abroad in St. Petersburg.

In order to learn Nivkh during my time abroad, I had to start planning very early by determining at least a year in advance if the study abroad program would even allow it and then by reminding the coordinators several times throughout the application process and beyond that I wanted to take a class at the Institute (which is affiliated with but separate from the school where the program took place). When I got to St. Petersburg, a meeting was eventually set up with the Institute’s Nivkh professor, and thanks to my genuine interest in and past experience
with the language, she agreed that I could take weekly classes with her through the end of the semester. These classes, the books she gave me, and the professional relationship we developed have been priceless in my continued studies of Nivkh.

Undergraduates in the United States have opportunities to learn Indigenous languages of the Russian Federation, and educators have a responsibility to support them. Students—especially non-Indigenous students—in turn have a responsibility to work with and for the Indigenous communities whose knowledge they have been given access to. Being persistent with professors and programs can pay off for interested students as well as for Indigenous communities.

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Implementing Inclusive Secondary Russian Language Exchange Programs

Anna Stewart, Rebecca Berman, Emily Olmstead
Ashlynn Cobb, Emily Matts Henry

1. Introduction
This discussion is a case study of the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) program’s overseas and virtual Russian language offerings. The study also provides considerations and examples for embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion into the program design. Special attention is given to identifying Russian language opportunities for American high school students, expanding accessibility, centering program materials on inclusion, and embedding perspectives of the robust regional diversity within the Russian-speaking world into the NSLI-Y program. While the NSLI-Y program partners with many organizations in various locations, examples provided here focus on NSLI-Y programs implemented by American Councils for International Education, with a special focus on the summer and academic year programs located in Chisinau, Moldova, and on virtual programs.

2. Background
2.1 Overview of NSLI-Y and Russian programs
National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) is a program offered by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to promote critical language learning among American youth. NSLI-Y provides merit-based scholarships to high school students to participate in summer and academic year immersion programs. NSLI-Y immerses participants in the cultural life of the host community and provides intensive language instruction for eight different languages.

The goals of NSLI-Y are (1) to improve Americans’ ability to engage with people through shared languages, (2) to develop a cadre of Americans with advanced linguistic skills and related cultural understanding who can use their skills to further international dialogue.
and compete effectively in the global economy, (3) to provide a tangible incentive for learning and using foreign language by creating overseas language study opportunities for U.S. high school students, and (4) to spark a lifetime interest in foreign languages and cultures among American youth.

American Councils for International Education\(^1\) is the lead organization in the administration and implementation of NSLI-Y, working in close collaboration with the U.S. Department of State and other partner organizations.\(^2\) NSLI-Y strives to continually improve its program and better support a diverse student body ("Diversity and Inclusion," n.d.).

### 2.2 Russian program locations and delivery

NSLI-Y overseas immersion programs were implemented for Russian language learning in 2009. Summer and academic year immersion programs were based exclusively in the Russian Federation until 2014. Additional program sites in Estonia, Moldova, and Latvia were added in 2014 and 2015. NSLI-Y staff have deliberately designed the program to allow for the highest degree of Russian language immersion possible and, in the locations outside of the Russian Federation, to acknowledge other languages regularly spoken in those countries. In 2021 or 2022, Russian overseas language programs are expected to be offered in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. NSLI-Y supports students with various Russian language proficiency levels; some sites are dedicated to students with higher proficiency, and some are intended for novice speakers. Since 2009, approximately ninety participants have studied annually in Russian summer programs and fifteen in academic year programs. While overseas programs were suspended in 2020 due to COVID-19, the same number of participants were supported virtually.

In 2019, NSLI-Y launched Virtual NSLI-Y to provide introductory language and cultural learning experiences through virtual exchange. Virtual NSLI-Y programs are led by qualified language teachers in class sections of approximately ten students who are located throughout the U.S. Russian was one of four languages offered in the pilot effort in 2019–20 and was provided again in the second program cycle, in fall 2020. Over

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\(^1\) Organization information can be found at [https://www.americancouncils.org/](https://www.americancouncils.org/).

\(^2\) Program information can be found at [https://www.nsliforyouth.org/](https://www.nsliforyouth.org/).
forty students have studied introductory Russian since the program’s inception in fall 2019.

3. Program evaluation methods
NSLI-Y administrators at American Councils for International Education coordinate closely with the U.S. Department of State and partner organizations on the program’s evaluation activities. Evaluation activities are as follows:

(1) NSLI-Y participants complete pre- and post-program surveys.
(2) Teachers facilitate independent assessments.
(3) NSLI-Y participants complete post-program Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs).
(4) Providers, participants, and alumni supply written reports.
(5) NSLI-Y alumni complete biannual surveys to assess impacts and outcomes.

Participant surveys are one of the primary tools used to gather data on program effectiveness, including cultural learning and impact on motivation to study languages. Surveys also measure participant satisfaction, attitudinal and behavioral changes (participant and host), institutional adjustments, and materials development and related issues.

Language proficiency gains are also measured through assessments at the host institutions by language teachers and relevant exams in the host countries (i.e., TORFL, if applicable, particularly during academic year programs). All participants, excluding Virtual NSLI-Y participants, are required to complete an OPI post-program; participants with experience in the target language are required to complete a diagnostic OPI pre-program.

American Councils conducts a survey of all alumni every two to three years to assess the program’s long-term impacts, outcomes related to program goals, and changes in attitudes and behaviors.

4. Inclusive approaches: Accessibility considerations
In NSLI-Y’s overseas locations, including Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, infrastructure and resources may not be readily available for students with disabilities. Possible challenges in Russian-speaking environments include environmental and attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities as well as concepts of classroom accommodations that may be different from accommodations in U.S. classrooms.
It is important for program administrators to consider potential barriers and accommodations for students with disabilities or health conditions. Adequate planning supports a proactive approach to accessibility rather than a reactive approach. Administrators should begin planning early to allow time to brainstorm possible accommodation needs and solutions. Administrators should also network with local community members and organizations that may be familiar with effective, inclusive, and local resources and solutions.

Budgeting financial resources for accommodations is another critical practice, as this encourages program administrators to be prepared to accommodate participants with disabilities. According to Mobility International USA, 3–5 percent of the total program budget should be allocated for accommodations (“Reasonable Accommodations and Budgeting for Inclusion,” n.d.). Budgeting for accessible design and accommodations is necessary in both recruitment efforts and program implementation. Budgeting for accommodations is a tangible way to foster inclusivity. Students, families, and teachers who have access to accessible recruitment materials (such as screen-reader enabled websites and captioned videos) may be more apt to apply to or participate in the program. Careful budgeting may also be cost-saving. For instance, one way to save on costs is to source locally rather than pay to ship them overseas.

In recent years, NSLI-Y administrators at American Councils for International Education have sent an “Accessibility and Medical Care for NSLI-Y Sites” survey to partners in host cities six months before the start of the program. Partners responded to questions related to accommodations, accessibility, and medical resources, including issues such as food allergies, school/city infrastructure, and local perceptions about people with disabilities. Partners were also encouraged to reach out to local Disabled People’s Organizations and schools to inquire about available assistive devices or accommodations for students with disabilities. In the future, NSLI-Y aims to repeat this exercise every three years.

With the survey information, partners can gather and utilize necessary local resources for students with disabilities. If local resources are not available, partners can either source the materials from elsewhere or find alternative solutions that will enable all students to participate.
in the program. Prior to the program, partners can also use information from the survey to help students have realistic expectations about accommodations in the host country and understand safety precautions (such as in the event of food allergies).

Students admitted to the NSLI-Y program must make written requests for accommodations within seven days of admission. Prompt submission of written requests increases the time to plan and secure accommodations or resources for students with disabilities. As students with the same disability may have different accommodation needs or preferences, written requests allow administrators to take a case-by-case approach to accommodations. For instance, some students who are blind or have low vision may prefer using a white cane, while others may prefer holding on to the arm of a guide. One student with a learning disability may require extended time on exams and need a staff member to facilitate this request with the language instructor, while another may prefer preferential seating in the classroom but not require staff support. Because preferences, needs, and circumstances vary, there is no one right method for inclusive accommodations. By encouraging open and proactive communication with the students, all parties can work together to accommodate needs based on circumstances.

Programmers may also wish to reach out in advance to local organizations led by people with disabilities (in the U.S. and overseas), or to university disability resource centers. Having connections with organizations will help programmers gain familiarity with resources, trends, and options for accessibility within various disability communities.

4.1 Accessibility considerations for virtual programming

As with overseas programming, it is important to start planning early for accessible virtual programs. This includes considering both students’ abilities to physically and financially access technology as well as ensuring that the technology has the appropriate accessibility features enabled. Prior to the start of NSLI-Y’s virtual programs, students are notified of the technological requirements for participation well in advance. Students can make needs-based requests for technology and can also receive stipends for internet connection. In this case, budgeting allows for resources to be allocated to students so they can participate without financial barriers.
For both virtual and overseas accommodations, it is important to discuss with students what tools they may need for instruction. Some students who are deaf or hard of hearing may prefer CART (communication access real-time translation, also known as real-time captioning), while others may prefer ASL interpreters, or both. In a Russian language classroom, students and staff may consider utilizing CART in both English and Russian. Students and staff may also consider offering the aid of an ASL interpreter who is fluent in both ASL and the local sign language (such as Russian Sign Language). If sign language interpretation is used, it is important to consider the student’s existing knowledge and language goals related to Russian or local sign languages. If CART is available only in English, or if an interpreter signs only in ASL, they may still be useful in a Russian language classroom. For instance, CART or the ASL interpreter could convey to a student how a word is phonetically pronounced with English characters/signs. CART may also be used to support the literacy development of all students in the class.

To ensure that virtual classes are streamlined for all users, NSLI-Y staff completed trial sessions before the start of the program. These practice sessions incorporated relevant assistive devices, such as CART, with the platform for the virtual program. Practice sessions are recommended to troubleshoot and identify solutions for technology issues that may affect users. Screen sharing on certain platforms, for instance, may hide the closed captions. For virtual programs, it is best practice to reach out to organizations that specialize in assistive technology for educational settings.

Before and during the virtual program, it is important to communicate with vendors, students, and educators to improve the student experience and to support teachers in working with assistive technology in a virtual learning environment. Completing pre-training with teachers and students may be useful, especially if they have never worked with assistive devices or ASL interpreters in a virtual setting.

Because assistive devices and platforms are continuously changing, administrators should test the technology prior to each program cycle so that staff can confirm that the platform and devices are still functional for the students and support learning purposes. Staff members may
also consider connecting with organizations that specialize in inclusive technology. These organizations can provide resources and suggestions to increase accessibility for all students in virtual learning environments.

5. Inclusive approaches: Integrating diversity and inclusion into the student preprogram preparation phase
Program implementers aim to develop and integrate inclusive practices throughout the pre-program phase of overseas and virtual programming, including student-facing resources, virtual assignments, and orientation activities. Finalists who are placed with American Councils as their implementing organization receive a variety of preparatory resources upon acceptance, as well as instructions and a timeline to request disability accommodations. Program materials and preparation activities are intended to prepare students for their experiences abroad and explain the program’s expectations for the students, promoting an inclusive learning environment.

Upon acceptance into the program and notification of their scholarship award, students are asked to complete a Finalist Update form, which gives them an additional opportunity to provide updated logistical information, clarify their names and pronouns, and request disability accommodations. Students have multiple opportunities to ask for support, and collecting this information enables staff to better provide individualized support and identify updates in information, such as changes in address due to unstable housing. The form closes with the following text, giving students the option to request a one-on-one call with program implementers:

American Councils’ staff members have a broad range of diverse experiences and backgrounds. Our colleagues speak many foreign languages, come from different countries and states, and represent many different identities. Some belong to the LGBTQI+ community, others have experience accommodating students with disabilities, and many have experience implementing programs in different countries and cultural environments. We are here to listen and provide support and resources to ensure that you have a positive NSLI-Y program experience.

Please use the section below to share any additional information that you feel may affect your time overseas, keeping
in mind that the NSLI-Y program is an intensive and demanding program, which may at times be stressful. It is important that you are as open with us as possible, as this will only help us to ensure a safe and rewarding experience for you while abroad. If you feel more comfortable speaking directly to NSLI-Y program staff, please select the option in the next question.

In preparation for overseas programming, students are provided with a participant guide specific to their host site, which covers the basics of the NSLI-Y program, including an introduction to the host country and site, information about adjusting to the culture, suggestions for packing, and an overview of policies and expectations. This is required reading for all participants and serves as a primer for students who have not traveled abroad. Each guide includes a chapter called “Participant Diversity,” in which students are asked to reflect on their identities and consider how they see themselves, how they are seen by others in their student cohorts and host communities, and how their identities may affect their experiences in their host countries. Students are introduced to concepts of intersectionality and visible and invisible identities. Considering the age of NSLI-Y students, each section of the guide concludes with a brief exercise or reflection assignment in a style similar to that of a high school textbook.

Students are also provided with information about diversity within their host countries regarding major ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. Students learn about common attitudes toward LGBTQI+ individuals and any relevant laws in their host countries. Below is an example from the Participant Guide for students studying in Moldova, updated for 2021:

Every year, students of different races and ethnicities successfully participate in the NSLI-Y program in Moldova. Some have reported that their race or ethnicity has had an impact on their experience there. Although modern Moldova is on the whole a fairly diverse country, this diversity might look different than how you are used to understanding diversity in the U.S. context. According to 2014 census results ("Populație" 2017, 41), about 75 percent of residents are Moldovan, and the remaining non-Moldovan residents are primarily Ukrainian or Russian immigrants or the children of immigrants. Other groups include
Romanian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Roma, and others. Romanian is the official language of Moldova, and Russian is the designated language of intercultural communication. Romanian and Russian are both taught in schools, and Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and Gagauz are also spoken in some areas.

The chapter includes links to stories on the NSLI-Y Interactive website written by alumni who studied the same language as well as to sites unaffiliated with the program so that students can read about the experiences and perspectives of other people with whom they may share aspects of their identities. NSLI-Y Interactive also hosts blog-style posts written by students across program years, implementing organizations, and languages. Former and current students write about their experiences on the program in their own words, and new and prospective participants can explore these posts in preparation for their own travels abroad. Students are also encouraged to reach out directly to program alumni.

In addition to exploring asynchronous readings and resources, students attend mandatory orientation sessions, either in person or virtually. One of these sessions is an alumni panel in which alumni share their backgrounds, experiences from the program, things they wish they had known before traveling, strategies for adjusting to the culture, and methods for coping with challenges abroad. NSLI-Y staff strive to ensure that these panels represent the diversity of NSLI-Y participants, inviting alumni of different socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, and gender identities and sexualities.

For both overseas and virtual programming, interactive sessions are introduced with guidelines for respectful participant engagement. The agenda may include guidelines for creating an inclusive environment, being a part of a brave space (Ali 2017), promoting mutual respect and understanding, and encouraging students to draw from the soft skills they will develop through participation in the program.

After setting expectations and rules for engagement, staff members lead a discussion on diversity, identity, and intersectionality. Students engage in these topics through a variety of activities, including an activity called “Power Flower” (“Power Flower,” n.d.). This activity encourages students to think about what contributes to and constitutes identity, to question what the dominant and nondominant identities are in their host
communities, and to think about how they relate to those identities. The primary objective of the activity is to build students’ capacity to understand how layers of identity and privilege relate to dominant identities in their host countries. This activity should be facilitated in a manner that is respectful of students’ comfort levels with sharing their identities and their reactions to the identities of their peers. This may include hosting smaller group discussions, making sharing opportunities optional, and using staff rather than students as models.

To reinforce the topics discussed in these sessions, students are provided with scenarios to discuss in small groups or in break-out rooms on a video-conferencing platform. Following is an example of a scenario assigned to students in 2020: “Your host father mentions that the Black Lives Matter movement and protests have made the national news in your host country. He asks what you think about this movement. He says such activity would never be permitted in the host country and does not understand what the issue is. How do you respond?”

Developing scenarios specific to the student group and relevant current events allows for greater customization and ensures that all examples are relevant to the student experience. In fall 2020, students discussed the prompts in small groups and strategized ways to handle the hypothetical situation. Students shared their perspectives and considered how their personal identities affected how they understood the situation. After group discussions, students returned to the main session, and the meeting concluded with salient takeaways on identity, diversity, and intersectionality and provided a space for students to ask any remaining questions.

Through these various activities and approaches in the preprogram phase, the program’s goal is to meet the needs of each student and to acknowledge the differences in experiences among students of different ethnicities, gender identities, sexualities, and disabilities. A parallel goal is to introduce students to the diversity within their host countries and to help them understand diversity outside of U.S. contexts.

6. Inclusive approaches: Embedding diverse regional perspectives in program design
In promoting inclusion, the NSLI-Y program embeds diverse perspectives from the Russian-speaking world into its design. While great attention
is rightfully being paid to increasing the diversity of American students in study abroad programs through recruitment, there is inadequate discussion on how to extend diverse perspectives through the experience in the host country and expose young learners of Russian to diversity in the Russian-speaking world. The Russian-speaking world is immensely diverse; over 190 ethnic groups reside in the Russian Federation alone (“Russian Federation” 2020). Through cultural programming and community engagement, NSLI-Y Russian language programs introduce participants to various groups in the host country and provide students with the additional opportunity to learn about ruskskaia kul’tura (Russian culture) that is not necessarily Rossiiskaia (that of the Russian Federation), and vice versa. The NSLI-Y program has routinely connected its Russian language learners with diverse and underrepresented groups through both overseas and virtual programming. The following paragraphs will explore examples of programming from a NSLI-Y academic year program site in Chisinau, Moldova.

### 6.1 Program design: In-country engagement with regional diversity

Weekly cultural excursions are an integral component of the NSLI-Y program. Like in other academic programs abroad, these include excursions to regional sites of interest, visits to local museums and historic sites, and workshops. The program’s cultural component provides a structured opportunity for students to investigate diverse perspectives and identities in their host communities.

Despite its small area, Moldova’s population reflects great ethnic diversity (“Populaţie” 2017, 41, 58–59). The program includes an excursion to Gagauzia—an autonomous republic in Southern Moldova known for its Gagauz population, a Turkic minority. On this excursion, students take a walking tour of the region’s capital, Comrat, which provides the opportunity to see the city and understand the Turkic influence on the region, namely through trilingual writing (Gagauz, Russian, and Romanian) in public spaces. As student groups are relatively uncommon in the city, local people are often eager to interact with the students. The key component of the excursion is a visit to a local horse farm, where students explore an important aspect of regional culture. The farm owner gives a tour and uses his artwork to speak about raising horses and his childhood experiences in Gagauzia. The excursion concludes with regional cuisine
served at a local restaurant, deliberately selected to optimize students’ cultural learning during the meal.

Cultural excursions within the host city also allow students to explore religious diversity. As in much of Eastern Europe, the majority of people in Moldova are Orthodox Christian. However, Moldova is home to many religions. The Kishinev pogrom, for instance, holds great significance in Jewish history (“Populație” 2017, 43; Ireland 2009). The NSLI-Y program seeks to inform students about religious groups in Moldova through an excursion focusing on Jewish culture and history in Chisinau. The group tours the city’s largest synagogue, meets with the rabbi for a discussion and an opportunity to ask questions about Judaism in Moldova, and explores notable sites on a walking tour led by a local guide. Many past participants, including those from Jewish backgrounds, have engaged with the local community through the synagogue’s community center.

Regional diversity can also be effectively incorporated throughout all levels of program design. This is demonstrated by the lunch schedule in the NSLI-Y academic year Russian program in Moldova. Through the program’s group lunch component, students gather three times per week at a restaurant selected by program staff. Exploration of regional cuisines, including Moldovan, Georgian, and Uzbek, has historically been included in some of these lunches. In the 2019–20 program, local staff recognized the opportunity to expand this component and further introduce students to regional ethnic diversity through foodways. The following considerations were incorporated into the program:

1. Administrators purposefully selected venues and ensured that partner restaurants understood the program’s goals for the lunch, offered appropriate dishes, and could accommodate dietary restrictions.
2. Administrators chose dishes that were popular, well-known, or representative of the regional culture.
3. Students learned the Russian names of the dishes and details about them. When relevant, staff members also explained a dish’s cultural or historic context. For example, staff members demonstrated how to properly eat khinkali and shared the legends of khachapuri po-adjarski during a Georgian-themed lunch.

Through this group lunch series, students gained knowledge about
and were motivated to engage with regional diversity, as demonstrated by their familiarity with regional dishes and increased excitement about these lunches compared to previous cohorts.

In all excursions and cultural activities, safety and ethical considerations must be prioritized. Direct student engagement with diverse and marginalized communities is not always possible. For example, students have expressed interest in learning more about the breakaway region of Transnistria or engaging with members of the local LGBTQI+ community. In the case of Transnistria, however, the region’s existence as a de facto separate entity prohibits travel from a logistic and safety standpoint; there are limitations on U.S. government services and access to telecommunication systems and public services because Transnistria operates on independent networks. In the case of LGBTQI+ communities, people with these identities remain marginalized in Moldova, as in many other Russian-speaking countries. Moldova’s annual Pride parade has experienced violence and heavy police presence in recent years, making it unsafe for program participants to attend. Program implementers must assess the risks involved with any activity. Alternative programming may be provided in such cases where implementers determine an activity is unsafe and prohibit student participation, as with Moldova’s annual Pride parade. Program implementors have instead incorporated activities that allow students to explore these topics in a controlled environment, such as by welcoming trusted guest speakers who can reflect on these topics. The program has benefited from American Councils’ robust networks in the local community.

6.2 Program design: Promoting community engagement
In addition to structured cultural programming, program implementers aim to promote community engagement through individual community service and unstructured extracurricular activities. The NSLI-Y program has required community service in overseas academic year programs and in short-term summer programs. For Russian language groups, students fulfill this aspect of the program through required group activities, optional program-arranged activities, and students’ independently arranged activities. This program element is discussed here as, notably, many past projects have centered on inclusion,
skill-building, and promotion of equitable values for marginalized and underserved groups.

The NSLI-Y Russian program in Moldova has developed a robust network of partner organizations for group-based and independent participant volunteer work. Many academic year students are active in community service and continue to serve well beyond the formal program requirement. In 2018–20, each academic year student completed an average of thirty-two hours of community service over the course of the program.4 Students placed in Chisinau, Moldova, have engaged with organizations such as the Jewish Community Center, the U.S. Embassy’s America House Culture Center, local volunteer and youth centers, and English language centers.

During the 2019–20 program cycle, students were involved with two projects in particular: Russian Sign Language initiatives and financially accessible English classes. Students active in the Russian Sign Language project took regular classes and assisted with events with the intention of learning more about Russian Sign Language and promoting awareness of the local Deaf community. These events were held at and hosted by the Jewish Community Center. Several students noted that the project also benefitted their Russian language learning, as they learned vocabulary in both spoken Russian and Russian Sign Language. Students found that associating a sign with a new word allowed them to better commit the vocabulary to memory. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented students from assisting at a large event in May 2020 as originally intended, students nonetheless were able to participate in some smaller events for the Deaf community prior to their evacuation back to the U.S. in March 2020.

Several students also taught no-cost English classes to provide accessible language lessons for those whose financial circumstances may have otherwise been a barrier. Though language centers are commonplace in Moldova, lessons are often expensive. Students developed lesson plans and conducted classes with the help of experienced English teachers, which ensured the quality of these programs. When reflecting on his engagement in this project, one student (academic year 2019–20) noted in a program meeting, “I feel that I’m making a lasting impact on the local community through [the volunteer center’s] English classes. A lot of the students wouldn’t be able to learn the language otherwise, but the free
community classes are financially accessible for them.” Such initiatives empower local language learners by providing equity of opportunity regardless of socioeconomic background.

While arranging community engagement initiatives is more challenging in the virtual space, it is still feasible. For example, several students conducted virtual presentations on American life at cultural centers in their virtual host countries. The program also partnered students with English language learners from marginalized and underserved groups in several Russian-speaking countries. Activities included presentations on U.S. culture to support the goals of the English learners’ program and informal discussions to allow the learners to practice speaking with a native English speaker, an opportunity the English learners may not otherwise have had.

One activity that is particularly successful in the virtual space is connecting program participants with language partners. Students volunteered to meet and speak English with participants in the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program (“Future Leaders Exchange: At-a-Glance,” n.d.). In 2020, FLEX students from Europe and Eurasia who initially planned to study abroad in the United States were unable to do so due to the COVID-19 pandemic. NSLI-Y students who found themselves in similar situations empathized with the FLEX students and were eager to support the FLEX program by practicing English and sharing American culture with the FLEX students. Similarly, many NSLI-Y students also volunteered to partner with participants of the Prep4Success program, which prepares students in Turkmenistan for higher education in the United States (“Prep4Success,” n.d.). Through this initiative, the NSLI-Y and Prep4Success programs mutually supported one another’s goals through cultural and linguistic exchange. Many students have continued to meet with their language partners beyond the project’s formal conclusion. In both cases, NSLI-Y students further engaged with diversity in the Russian-speaking world as they met with language partners from a wide variety of countries and regions, including those that are often underrepresented in the Russian-speaking community or are less well-known in the United States.

As discussed here, intentional integration of cultural programming and community engagement in Russian exchange programs provides language learners a structured environment in which they can explore
diversity within the Russian-speaking world. These initiatives enhance students’ learning experiences and spark their desire to continue to explore these ideas. Program staff members have noted increased student interest in additional Russian language learning programs based in less commonly represented locations, including Central Asia. These cultural program components have a lasting impact, as evidenced by post-program surveys and students’ future plans.

6.3 Program design: Virtual engagement with regional diversity
Like many exchange programs, NSLI-Y pivoted to virtual programming during the COVID-19 pandemic. As previously discussed, NSLI-Y also began a new initiative exclusively focused on virtual language instruction for novice students prior to the pandemic, in 2019 (“Virtual NSLI-Y,” n.d.). While the virtual learning environment poses challenges for immersion learning, one benefit is that students can easily connect with speakers with whom they would not otherwise be acquainted, including speakers representing marginalized ethnic groups and a wide array of Russian-speaking regions. NSLI-Y virtual offerings have included cultural activities aimed at developing students’ understanding of regional diversity and minority ethnic groups in the greater Russian-speaking world.

Virtual cultural programming mirrors the themes and goals of similar in-country programming. For example, the program has successfully implemented cooking lessons on regional cuisines. These lessons focus on dishes from host countries or from the greater Russian-speaking community. Easy-to-prepare recipes with commonplace ingredients are featured for ease of access. As always, students should be reminded to take a “safety-first” approach in their cooking. Implementers should also consider ingredient substitutes for regional specialties to make the workshop more accessible.

The 2020–21 NSLI-Y Russian academic year virtual program has encouraged students to explore themes related to the diversity of the Russian-speaking world through independent research projects. Each week, students are assigned a theme to investigate and then prepare a brief presentation in Russian on their selected topics. Staff members purposefully select themes that encourage students to explore regional diversity. For example, students were prompted to research landmarks
and cuisines representing different Russian-speaking regions. Guided independent research projects allowed students to take ownership of practicing Russian speech and developing public speaking skills. During a final discussion reflecting on their key takeaways from the culture class, students noted that the projects expanded their views of Eastern Europe.

Inviting guest speakers for virtual cultural events also presents a valuable opportunity for students to hear from individuals representing diverse regions and marginalized ethnic groups in the Russian-speaking community. One program participant (virtual summer intensive, 2020) stated the following during a class reflection activity: “Learning and hearing from all the different guest speakers, it really struck me how diverse Eastern Europe is. It was really helpful for me, because I [originally] had this extremely narrow view of all of Eastern European culture, and I feel through the culture classes I learned there are so many types of culture, food, and traditions. That was amazing for me!”

Through virtual programming in 2020–21, NSLI-Y students have connected with guest speakers, students, and language partners from Bălți, Moldova; Yakutsk, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Russia; Ashgabat, Turkmenistan; and Taraz, Kazakhstan. These opportunities allow students to learn about the perspectives and cultures of underrepresented or ethnically diverse groups. Guest speakers and virtual student exchange opportunities are identified through existing networks and other exchange programs implemented by American Councils.

In addition to virtual language exchange opportunities, activities in the 2020–21 program included a Sakha instrument demonstration presented by a woman in the Sakha republic, a Martisor\(^6\) crafting workshop with students in Bălți, Moldova, and a student-led lesson on the Thanksgiving holiday with students in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Such initiatives allow participants to learn about regional cultures and perspectives from peers who are similarly passionate about international exchange and eager to share about their daily lives, interests, and home regions.

The NSLI-Y program will consider incorporating similar virtual events with populations from diverse Russian-speaking regions into in-person programming when the program is reinstated. Such
opportunities could enrich the students’ experiences as part of their predeparture preparation or during the winter months, which have fewer scheduled cultural programming activities and events due to weather conditions.

7. Results and outcomes

7.1 Language gains

Through overseas language immersion and formal language instruction, NSLI-Y participants have made notable gains in language proficiency as measured by the ACTFL proficiency scale (Swender, Conrad, and Vicars 2012). As shown in figure 1, pre-program oral proficiency diagnostic ratings vary, typically from Novice to Intermediate Mid. Annually, approximately 40–45 percent of participants begin the NSLI-Y program as complete novices in their target languages. Key highlights of language gains across the NSLI-Y programs include the following:

(1) In 2012–19, 85 percent of academic year overseas program participants achieved post-program oral proficiency ratings of Intermediate High or above.

(2) In 2012–19, 10 percent of academic year overseas program participants achieved post-program oral proficiency ratings of Advanced High or Superior.

(3) In 2012–19, 85 percent of summer overseas program participants achieved post-program oral proficiency ratings of Novice High to Advanced Mid (“Language Gains,” n.d.).

The Virtual NSLI-Y program, exclusively for beginning language learners, expects participants to reach Novice Low levels by the end of the ten-week program. While virtual participants do not complete a post-program OPI, instructors assessed the participants’ language gains and found that 90 percent had met the language proficiency expectations.

As a result of COVID-19, 2020 NSLI-Y Virtual Summer Intensive proficiency goals were adjusted in relation to goals for in-country immersion programs. Beginning language learners were expected to reach Novice Mid by the end of the fifty-contact-hour program. Students with preprogram proficiency in the target language were generally expected to advance by one OPI sublevel. Despite the virtual delivery, 83 percent of participants met or exceeded post-program OPI expectations.
Figure 1. Oral Proficiency Interview results for students who participated in academic year and summer NSLI-Y programs from 2012 to 2019
7.2 Program impact
NSLI-Y participants and alumni are surveyed by program staff on learning gains, satisfaction with their program experiences, and impact. Additionally, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Evaluation Division has evaluated NSLI-Y through an external provider (Dexis Consulting Group 2020). The evaluation was conducted over a period of multiple years, and the report was completed in 2020; it is worth noting that NSLI-Y’s virtual programs were not included in the time period of the evaluation.

Several key findings were identified from this external evaluation. Alumni were satisfied with their experience with the NSLI-Y program, with over 95 percent noting that the program met or exceeded their expectations. Further, NSLI-Y has proven to be an effective educational experience: 100 percent of alumni improved their competencies in the languages studied and their understanding of the life and culture within their host countries. Notably, 80 percent of alumni continued their foreign language study after returning from their NSLI-Y experiences. Additionally, alumni noted that the program improved their ability to interact with other people; 97 percent of alumni reported that they applied general intercultural competency skills in their interactions. A Russian program alumnus noted the following in an NSLI-Y staff-implemented alumni survey in 2018: “[NSLI-Y] has given me the toolkit to navigate cultural differences and effectively collaborate with people from different backgrounds.”

8. Conclusion
In the implementation of the NSLI-Y Russian language program, several opportunities and trends have been identified: (1) The NSLI-Y program has created access to Russian language study for American high school students. (2) Program implementers must actively and intentionally consider accessibility in program design. (3) Just as the NSLI-Y program aims to represent the diversity of the United States, the program is positioned to introduce American students to the diversity of the Russian-speaking world. (4) Students who participate in the program make significant Russian language gains on the ACTFL oral proficiency scale. (5) The majority of program alumni express interest in continuing their language and regional studies.
This discussion has explored applied examples of program implementation to demonstrate methods of intentionally considering accessibility and incorporating diverse themes into program design. While there is a need for more data on high school study abroad programs and further development of inclusive practices, the examples outlined here provide insights into the effects of such programming. In particular, the qualitative descriptions detailed here model creative solutions for holistically embedding themes of diversity into all phases of students’ experiences.

The NSLI-Y program’s work with diversity, equity, and inclusion is an ongoing and evolving process. This work will continue to require intentional inclusive program design, quality language instruction, regular evaluations, innovation, and commitment to the students and communities served by the program.

References


Diversity and Inclusion in the Study Abroad Context: Recruiting Data and On-Program Support Initiatives for the CLS Russian Institutes

JEANETTE OWEN, NELLIE MANIS

1. Introduction
The authors submit this paper in the interest of sharing the perspectives and experiences of practitioners in the field of study abroad and to contribute to the discussion of best practices related to the recruitment, preparation, and support of underrepresented students with examples related to the study of Russian. The authors recognize that further work on study abroad programming for underrepresented students is necessary, and this contribution is intended to foster further discussion across the field.

The authors will draw on experience administering the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The CLS Program is a fully funded 8-week intensive overseas language and cultural immersion program for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students. In the CLS Program, students can study one of 15 languages, including Russian, with funding provided by the U.S. government and supported in its implementation by American Councils for International Education (https://clscholarship.org/). The CLS Program seeks to increase the number of Americans with the advanced linguistic skills critical to national security. It also strives to promote American competitiveness and economic prosperity; increase engagement and mutual understanding with the people of other countries; and develop overseas capacity for the study of critical languages.

2. Diversity and access
The CLS Program is publicly funded under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act, and is expected to be “balanced and representative of the diversity of
political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad” (Notice of Funding Opportunity SFOP0007818 2021, 4). The diversity statement of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) defines diversity in the United States through a range of identities that have historically been disadvantaged:

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State strives to ensure that its efforts reflect the diversity of U.S. society and societies abroad. The Bureau seeks and encourages the involvement of people from traditionally underrepresented audiences in all its grants, programs and other activities and in its workforce and workplace. Opportunities are open to people regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. The Bureau is committed to fairness, equity and inclusion. (Diversity Statement, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs n.d.)

Many of these classes and identities are considered to be historically underrepresented (referring to African American, American Indian/Alaska Native and Latino students) in education abroad practice or historically underserved (populations of students who have not been recruited to take part in study abroad) as outlined in the Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad (The Forum on Education Abroad 2020) and noted as such generally by education abroad organizations including Diversity Abroad, the Forum on Education Abroad, and NAFSA.

The CLS Program works to achieve diversity among its scholars to create a balanced representation of the United States abroad and to contribute to the diverse experiences that inform cultural exchange and learning. The program seeks to be accessible to all students, including those with disabilities, first-generation students, and Pell grant recipients. The CLS Program also considers the structural and historical contexts that have contributed to disproportionate access to study abroad and works to ensure fair access to the opportunities offered by the program. Finally, the program strives to deliver inclusive programming that prepares all students to benefit from opportunities to learn by establishing an open and welcoming environment and supporting students who may face a range of social, cultural, or economic challenges before or during the program.
3. CLS demographic data

As a large, federally funded program with national recruitment efforts that yield approximately 5,000 applications per year, the CLS Program has collected data that may provide some context on the racial and ethnic diversity of U.S. students pursuing the study of Russian in institutions of higher education across the United States.¹

Application data from the CLS Program are compared against the Open Doors report, prepared by the Institute of International Education (Institute of International Education 2021). The Open Doors report publishes data from an annual survey of higher education institutions regarding the number of U.S. students studying abroad each year. Though the report relies on limited self-reported demographic data provided by institutions, Open Doors serves as the most comprehensive breakdown of U.S. student mobility based on race, ethnicity, gender, degree type, institution type, field of study, and disability status. Options for reporting on race and ethnicity include the categories of White, Hispanic or Latino(a), Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Multiracial, and American Indian or Alaska Native. Demographic data on sexual orientation and non-binary gender identities have not been included, to date. Applicants to the CLS Program provide similar demographic information, with additional questions regarding status as first-generation college students, Pell grant recipients, and veterans.

While differences in demographic questions and the methodology used for data collection limits direct one-to-one comparisons to the Open Doors report, a limited comparison can be made (Figure 1) by sorting the data to determine the broad category of “non-White” and then further comparing categories of identity that overlap. Non-White, in this case, refers to individuals who identify in any category other than White or in addition to White.

According to the Open Doors data from the 2012–2013 academic year, 24% of the total number of U.S. study abroad participants identified as non-White (including identities such as African American, Hispanic/ Latino(a), Asian and Pacific Islander, and Multiracial), increasing to 31% by 2018–2019, the most recent data available (Institute of International

¹ The program currently issues approximately 80–110 scholarships for the study of Arabic and Chinese, 50–80 for Korean and Russian, and 10–30 for the remaining languages. The program typically receives approximately 1,000–1,200 applications for Arabic, 600–700 for Chinese, 500–600 for Russian, and 350–450 for Japanese.
Education 2021). In the same period, by comparison, for the 2013 CLS Program, 31% of participants identified as non-White, increasing to over 40% by 2019 (Critical Language Scholarship Program 2021). This comparison shows both the general upward trend for diversity among study abroad participants and how the CLS Program outpaces the national trends reflected in the *Open Doors* data.

![Graph: Reported Race/Ethnicity of Study Abroad Participants by Academic Year](image)

*Figure 1. Comparison of Open Doors and CLS self-identified Non-White participants, 2012–2019*

While funding is key in making study abroad opportunities more accessible, increasing the diversity of the CLS applicant pool has also taken sustained engagement over time. Budget constraints have led initiatives to focus more on broad outreach goals, such as building relationships with underrepresented institutions, than on recruiting for individual languages. A breakdown of CLS application data by language reveals differences in the relative diversity of the applicant pool: (1) applicants to the Russian programs show fewer diversity markers overall compared to those who choose other languages offered
and (2) increases in the overall diversity of Russian language applicants over time were relatively modest. Because scholarships for Russian were limited to applicants with two or more years of college-level Russian study (until 2019, when it was reduced to one year), the analysis was restricted to those applying to the equivalent of third-year (intermediate) and fourth-year (advanced) levels for the language programs that do not have prerequisites.

**Reported Race/Ethnicity of CLS Program Participants by Year**

![Graph showing the increase in reported non-White participants in Russian language studies from 2013 to 2019.](image)

**Program Year**

*Figure 2. CLS Self-identified Non-White participants studying Russian, 2013–2019*

As noted in figure 2, in 2013 31% of all CLS participants at the intermediate and advanced levels identified as non-White, increasing to 40% by 2019. Among Russian language participants, only 23% identified as non-White in 2013, increasing slightly to 26% by 2019.²

A further breakdown of the CLS application data shows that

² Of the 15 languages supported, some include beginning levels, while other languages, including Russian, have prerequisites. To account for this, only data for applicants with prior language study were included in the analysis. As of 2019, Russian requires only one year of prior study instead of two.
relatively fewer students applying to study Russian selected identities other than White compared to other languages offered by the CLS Program. An analysis of application data across four years (2018–2021) shows that only 3% of applicants to the Russian program identified as Black or African American, compared to 9% for Chinese and 13% for Japanese, the other two languages with two years of college-level study required. For that same time frame, 8% of Russian applicants identified as Hispanic or Latino(a) compared to 10% for Chinese and 13% for Japanese; similarly, 6% of applicants to the Russian program selected multiracial compared to 10% of applicants for Chinese and 13% for Japanese. A smaller percentage of applicants identified as Asian (Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander are counted separately) for Russian (6%) compared to applicants for the study of Chinese (26%) and Japanese (22%).

Given that participation is restricted to U.S. students with prior college-level study of Russian or the equivalent, data for the CLS Russian program may suggest either similar trends in demographics for those enrolled in Russian classes across U.S. campuses (given the prerequisite for prior language study) or students’ reservations regarding opportunities to study abroad in Russia. This finding may be a result of multiple factors, including the accessibility of Russian language coursework across the United States or the distribution of Russian programs across institution types, such as community colleges and minority serving institutions (MSIs). Anecdotally, some study abroad representatives have expressed reservations regarding the safety of students of color in Russia, in some cases citing safety concerns that were prevalent in the era following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and which may also contribute to the CLS application demographics. This finding suggests that funding alone may not be sufficient for addressing underrepresentation in study abroad.

4. Recruitment and selection strategies
The data provided by the Open Doors report, as well as the work of national organizations and practitioners in the field inform CLS Program efforts to recruit applicants from underrepresented institutions, such as community colleges, MSIs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities. Similar initiatives seek
to increase participation among student populations traditionally underrepresented in study abroad.

In terms of equity, recognizing that resources for advising on the application process are limited for institutions underrepresented in study abroad, such as community colleges, which may lack both fellowship advisors and study abroad departments, CLS Program staff prepare application tips and host webinars to provide support and advice for the application process, which students may not be able to access through their home campuses.

In 2013, CLS Program staff worked with a committee of faculty and staff from a range of institution types to review and revise the application and selection process for the program. As a result, the application was redesigned in 2014 to make it more equitable by decreasing the emphasis on prior awards and achievements, and by replacing a long essay prompt—which may have advantaged students attending institutions with ready access to fully staffed fellowships offices that contribute to the preparation of highly polished essays—with a series of shorter, focused questions that ask students about their ability to adapt to new environments and the unique perspectives they may bring as citizen ambassadors, thereby providing space to talk about a diversity of experience. The CLS Program values diversity not only in its applicants and participants but also in the college and university faculty, staff, and administrators who serve as evaluators in the CLS Program selection process. Overall, the 2021 CLS selection process involved 375 professionals representing 46 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico from 270 institutions, including 25 community colleges and 70 MSIs.

5. Inclusive student support
Concurrent with recruitment initiatives, the CLS Program seeks to prepare all students for the program experience so that they benefit from the opportunity. CLS Program resources and support networks are informed by discussions in the field of education abroad, the experience of program staff and host institutions, feedback from participants, and ongoing input from alumni.

Additional demographic questions were added to the CLS application related to first generation students, Pell grant recipients, and veterans. More recently, the application was revised to include expanded options related to gender identity and a question regarding identification as a Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color (BIPOC).
This effort to prepare students holds across a wide range of topics, including health and safety, cultural adjustment, academics, management of anxiety and depression, and other areas that may pose challenges for participants. These topics are provided and discussed as part of the work of preparing students for their experience abroad. The CLS Program applies this same principle to support underrepresented students and reduce the barriers that may negatively impact their ability to succeed—to learn in the classroom, participate on program activities, and engage in the community. Initiatives to reduce barriers involve working with host institutions, developing pre-program materials and orientations, and connecting with program staff and alumni networks to provide support to students throughout the program.

6. Working with host institutions
While the CLS Program recognizes the benefits of cultural and academic immersion, it also devotes considerable attention to understanding U.S. students on the part of host institution staff. Program staff work with international partners through yearly dialogue during the planning phase as well as through an annual meeting of representatives from host institutions. The annual planning meeting provides a venue for program staff to explain the expectations and requirements for hosting a federally funded program and for program staff and partners to share lessons learned and discuss new approaches to supporting students.

As program implementers, CLS staff work with host institutions to identify and mitigate barriers or negative experiences that detract from students’ overall well-being and ability to engage. Monitoring and evaluation tools include weekly meetings with participants led by program staff, mid-program check-ins with each student, and regular program surveys completed by students. Program surveys incorporate questions about how identity has shaped students’ program experience. Insights from the field of education abroad and feedback from participants, alumni, and program staff form the basis for continued efforts to strengthen orientation materials for teachers, program staff, host families or roommates, and language partners (peers drawn from the host community) to better understand the challenges diverse American students face overseas and to better support students when they have negative encounters in the host community.
Discussions between program staff and host institutions take place over time and shift to address changing needs. In the earliest years of the program, the work involved developing a curriculum and pedagogical materials for some of the languages, integrating learner-centered teaching methodologies, and toolkits for building host family networks. Most recently program implementers have focused on mental health and emotional wellness needs of participants, as well as the needs of underrepresented students. This includes talking about the various identities that CLS students may bring to the program and discussing common challenges that students may experience on the program, such as otherness fatigue, double-adapting within the host community as well as within the student group, unwelcome attention or touching, being considered “not American enough” or, conversely, for some heritage learners, being considered “too American.” Program implementers can also provide suggestions on how best to support students by being an empathic listener, providing resources and support, and by taking steps to avoid dismissing or invalidating the students’ experiences.

The U.S. Department of State recognizes capacity building as one of the primary objectives of the CLS Program by including it in the federal call for proposals to implement the CLS Program. (Notice of Funding Opportunity SFOP0007818 2021, 4). Capacity building requires sustained effort and involves multiple initiatives. CLS staff work closely and regularly with representatives from 20–25 overseas institutions on common challenges, with a particular emphasis on bringing together program directors from all program sites to exchange ideas and strategies, and to help orient new partners to the program. Work with partners is generally an iterative process—a single training session has limited ability to ensure an environment free of harassment, discrimination, or microaggressions. Therefore, the CLS Program takes steps to integrate the topic of diversity into every annual meeting of representatives from each host institution, typically in tandem with a guest speaker who focuses on providing a deeper understanding of the needs of specific underrepresented groups, such as students of color, participants with disabilities, and emergency mental health first aid, among others. These sessions aim to provide insights into the historical, cultural, and social contexts of diversity for those responsible for directing the trainings at the home institution.
and provide time for questions that host institution directors have, based on training materials or past incidents.

Program staff also provide partners with information that is more specific to the experiences of CLS students while on the program. Individual or small-group discussions and feedback based on language or region are often more effective at introducing these materials than large-group sessions with partners from around the world. These small-group discussions include overviews of different identities that students bring to the program and the common challenges or sources of friction that are often referenced by study abroad participants broadly and CLS participants specifically as part of their responses in regular program surveys. Small-group discussion also involves nuances of the specific host community culture, which can involve both long-standing historical trends and new elements, such as the passage of specific laws or election of officials with specific attitudes toward minority groups.

Examples explored during training sessions draw directly from the experiences of study abroad students, whether from the CLS Program or from discussions in the field of international education, and they serve as a framework for the training materials developed for use with faculty, staff, host families and language partners. In part, the materials are also drawn from mid- and post-program surveys, which include questions about how identity and cohesion in the participant group has affected the program experience.

In particular instances, with partners who have developed a better sense of the issues of diversity and inclusion over time, the program has carefully initiated conversations aimed to address common practices that students often find alienating, such as an imbalance in calling on students based on gender, the use of materials based on stereotypes, or the use of overtly heteronormative essay prompts (“my ideal husband/wife”). The revision of essay prompts focuses on avoiding situations where students must decide either to suppress their identity or take on a forced personal conversation with teachers and classmates. While in some countries, including Russia, discussions about sexual orientation or gender identity may be raised, the CLS Program operates in countries where such discussions would not be deemed suitable for the classroom and any such conversations with the partner about the curriculum and materials used is by nature dependent on the social and cultural environment of the host.
community. Each host institution is based in a social and cultural context that has developed over time.

In a recent training case, program staff worked with Dr. Olga Klimova of the University of Pittsburgh and Dr. Iza Savenkova of Dickinson College to share ideas for integrating a broader range of the human experience into the lesson plan to help students from various backgrounds feel more included and to increase students’ awareness of diverse experiences within the host country. Some examples include introducing the concepts of многодетная семья ‘large family’ and мать одиночка ‘single mother’ to a lesson on family, or introducing images and examples based on the experiences of different races, ethnicities, and religions within the Russian-speaking world.

Much as is the case for study abroad participants, host institution staff learn best when information is put into practice—by interacting with students, hearing their perspectives, and reviewing information that is firmly based in the students’ experiences. As with any training program, change often comes from practice processing real-life situations, opportunities for reflection, and continued dialogue.

7. Student preparation and support
The CLS Program is open to U.S. citizens from any academic major and from any type of U.S. institution accredited at the undergraduate or graduate levels, so materials and support structures have been designed for students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. However, best practices for supporting study abroad students undergo constant realignment to accommodate new challenges affecting student success, frequently mirroring initiatives on U.S. campuses. In recent years, study abroad practitioners have focused on providing mental health resources, strategies for building resiliency, and support for participants traveling to countries with widespread gender-based street harassment. Support for underrepresented students seeks to address specific challenges faced by students across a range of identities, including those from minoritized racial and ethnic groups, first-generation students, students needing disability accommodations, students requesting adjustments for religious observances, heritage speakers, and students with unique gender identities and sexual orientations. Students, like all people, have multiple identities, some visible and some invisible. Students’ different identities
also impact their experiences during study abroad to different degrees. It is important to keep in mind that students with intersecting identities (such as race and sexual orientation or religious affiliation) may encounter different and sometimes more specific stereotypes or safety concerns.

Preparing students to be successful in their new host communities requires continually assessing and adjusting to meet changing needs. The CLS Program recognizes that an equitable approach addresses the specific concerns and needs of underrepresented students in response to the challenges they may face by providing resources and support networks to draw on before, during and after the program.

CLS Program staff have identified three key goals for preparing students for their experience abroad: (1) Setting realistic expectations, (2) identifying support networks and (3) building ties in the host community. While these goals inform the work of preparing all students, the program continues to further develop resources and support systems to improve the experiences of underrepresented students.

7.1 Setting expectations
To prepare students for the study abroad experience, program staff work to better align student expectations with the real-life challenges that are part of the study abroad experience. Most students express excitement and enthusiasm, even alongside some common anxieties and trepidation. While setting realistic expectations, it is important not to dampen interest or create fear but to fill in some of the gaps in the context of historical and contemporary life in the host communities. Program materials and recorded alumni interviews that outline both the highlights as well as some of the frustrations that come with an intensive immersion program can be important tools. These tools also talk about some common challenges that some students may experience because of their identities. This work runs parallel to initiatives to help students from all backgrounds develop realistic and manageable expectations for a rigorous and challenging program experience—past students reported that these tools led to students feeling less surprised by and better prepared to overcome frustrations or feelings of doubt about their ability to succeed.

The CLS Program only accepts Russian language students who have taken at least one year of college-level Russian or the equivalent prior to participation in the program. As with participants across the
entire program, many who have not spent time abroad may not have considered in depth what it might be like to live in a country with social and cultural norms that have developed in a different historical, cultural, and social context from that of the United States. And while students may be aware of or may have experienced racism, sexism, ableism, harassment, and discrimination in the United States, they may not have thought in advance about how such incidents might occur while they are abroad, with what frequency or degree of openness, and how they might respond if they either view or experience such incidents. Responding to student feedback on the subject, program staff has taken steps to provide more information about these topics before the program begins. Efforts to prepare students for questions about how their identities may affect the program experience include creating and sharing information in a variety of formats and venues, such as general and site-specific handbooks, live webinars and video recordings, and meetings with program staff and alumni, all of which incorporate discussions about race and ethnicity, religion, attitudes about sexual orientation and gender identities, and the experiences of heritage speakers, among other topics.

For example, the CLS handbook is a significant source of information that students can digest at their own pace. The first part of the handbook is an open-access online resource intended for all students regardless of the language they will study during the program that devotes significant attention to identity and how students of some backgrounds may be perceived abroad. For example, an introduction to how race may be perceived differently outside of the U.S. is included in the “Maintaining Your Identity Abroad” section:

In many overseas countries, an “American” is understood to be Caucasian. For non-White CLS participants, this can be a unique challenge. People from your host community may be less familiar with Americans with Asian, Hispanic or Latin-American, Indigenous, or African heritage, and they may lack knowledge and context when it comes to the acceptable use of language or the history of race in the United States. As a result, they may ask questions or provide commentary that would be considered offensive or discriminatory in the United States. (CLS Online Participant Handbook 2021, 33)
The second part of the handbook, which is specific to the location of the program site, provides a more in-depth discussion about what to expect. It focuses first on strategies for staying physically safe during the program (as part of the duty of care responsibility that program providers hold), and which are applicable for all students—including students of color, who may receive more attention, some of which can be, at times, aggressive. The materials also discuss microaggressions, which tend to be more prevalent than acts of aggression or overt hostility. These examples provide a framework for encounters related to identity that students may have as part of an immersive study abroad experience. With time, students who immerse themselves in the host community will likely find themselves participating in discussions and uncovering perspectives that are nuanced and complex, based on the history of their host country and their companions’ individual experiences.

Simply providing context does not mean that students will not experience uncomfortable situations. Program staff also provide concrete strategies for students to employ in situations that do not readily accommodate their identities. For example, there may be strong expectations in some countries that men and women will marry a member of the opposite sex relatively early in their young adult life, and there is less exposure to LGBTQ+ individuals and relationships than is common in the U.S. Students are likely to receive questions during their time in Russia and Kyrgyzstan (and many other CLS host countries) about their familial relations, as well as their own marital status and intention to marry and have children. For many U.S. students, direct questions about marriage and children from strangers or new acquaintances may be uncomfortable, but for LGBTQ+ students, such questions may raise additional concerns related to safety or unwelcome attention. Program resources and recommendations from alumni offer some advice about how students can redirect these types of conversations in situations where a student may not want to share personal information, and may call to mind strategies students have used to navigate challenging situations in the U.S. For example, students may consider redirecting a conversation about their marriage prospects by talking about their current focus on their academic or professional goals, or talking about life in the United States, such as when people typically get married, how one finds a spouse, or how
weddings are celebrated rather than responding to personal questions. This strategy is not presented as a directive to avoid conversations on the topic of gender identity or sexual orientation but rather as a strategy to help participants manage a conversation they are not interested in pursuing.

In addition to providing advice, program staff also seek to provide authentic perspectives of program alumni or others who have lived in the host community to talk about the role of identity:

*My Experience as an African American in Kyrgyzstan*

For me, living in Kyrgyzstan as a minority was both a challenging and rewarding experience. Naturally, being African American in Central Asia brought me a lot of attention. This was sometimes good and sometimes bad. Often times, I found myself being the first African American that people had ever seen or had the chance to interact with. Sometimes just walking down the street was a unique experience as people would usually stare and sometimes take pictures. Unfortunately, there are times when people base their perception of African Americans on stereotypes from the media. However, being African American in Kyrgyzstan was a huge opportunity to educate people on what Americans look like and about African American culture. By the end...I was giving lectures and presentations about African American history and diversity in America. I would especially encourage other minorities to go and experience Kyrgyzstan. Not only will it be an exciting learning experience, but you can also teach others. I think Kyrgyz people are very curious, hospitable, and interested in other cultures and YOUR presence can be instrumental in breaking any negative stereotypes and misconceptions that some people may have. (CLS Participant Handbook, Kyrgyzstan 2019, 14).4

Alumni testimonials can be deeply impactful, as an individual’s concrete experience or perspective tends to be more powerful than generalities from staff about what “may” happen on the program. Such stories can be the catalyst for an incoming student’s critical analysis of challenges that they may face on the program and may encourage them to

4 Quote from Peace Corps volunteer Drake Mayo.
reach out to program staff, alumni, or other resources to brainstorm how they might mitigate similar challenges during the program. These stories can also be a powerful tool to foster empathy from other students in the group to understand better the importance of supporting their peers.

7.2 Identifying support networks
The second goal in working with underrepresented students involves strategies for identifying or creating networks to lean on for support while overseas. These networks can provide comfort and familiarity when students feel overwhelmed with the strangeness of a new environment and can be a sounding board to reflect on new experiences and cope with challenges. Such advice can be beneficial for all study abroad participants, but many of the resources in the field developed for underrepresented students emphasize the importance of being able to reach out to a support network (Diversity Abroad 2018, 13).

In response to the need to reach out and connect with others, the CLS Program developed an innovative resource for incoming students in 2015 to connect them directly with alumni. The CLS Alumni Support Network features alumni who have volunteered to speak with incoming students about a variety of topics, either through direct outreach or through a formal mentoring program organized by program staff.

Those who volunteer to participate in the Alumni Support Network provide a photo, information about their CLS program year and location, their current job, and topics they are interested in talking about with incoming students. Program staff compile this information into directories by region and issue them to students (CLS Alumni Support Directories 2021).

The directories allow new CLS students to reach out directly to alumni to talk candidly about their questions and concerns and to begin building a connection to someone who may understand what the experience might be like before they begin their travel. Some topics may be relevant for a broad range of students, such as tips for language learning, budgeting, or places to explore, but many focus on race and ethnicity, being LGBTQ+ abroad, gender identity, being a religious minority abroad, being a first generation or community college student, traveling with a disability, or managing mental health and wellness abroad.

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5 Over 700 alumni contributed profiles for the 2021 directories.
Incoming students can also elect to be paired one-on-one with an alumni mentor who agrees to speak with them individually before and during the program. The CLS Program also maintains language-specific Facebook pages for alumni and participants across the years. These networks provide an opportunity for informal conversations and can help put students in touch with one another in familiar, lower-stakes and less intimidating environments than reaching out via email to a former participant or to a staff member.

Outside of the structure of the CLS Program there are other support networks that students might draw on for support during their time on the program including family and friends, LGBTQ+ or Black student organizations, campus Offices of Disability Services or other resources on home campuses, as well as counseling services.

7.3 Building relationships
The third goal in working with students prior to the program start is to build relationships between staff and students and students and the community. The overarching reasons for building connections with staff members is so that students feel comfortable reaching out to someone in advance of the program to ask questions about what to expect or to make arrangements tailored to specific needs, or during the program to talk about uncomfortable or confusing encounters. These relationships are fostered through individual and group communication starting at the point of acceptance to the program and continuing through the pre-program orientation and arrival to and orientation in the host city.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that while pre-program orientations can contribute to a successful program experience for both partners overseas and U.S. students, there are limits to what pre-departure training can accomplish. While implementing partners learn more about the American experience by interacting with U.S. students, students also learn most about the host country while they are experiencing it. Our goal in working with host institutions and students is not to impose a specific set of opinions, values, or beliefs but rather to prepare all parties to consider each other’s point of view and come to these interactions with some tools to learn from uncomfortable situations and move past them. For students, this means that even when they encounter attitudes or beliefs of the host community that they disagree with, they consider
what they can learn from the encounter, how they can gain experience in navigating unexpected experiences that may challenge their own perspectives or worldview, and how they can best represent themselves, their communities, and the diversity of the U.S.

References


The Russian Coordinating Conjunctions и and а:
Their Meaning, Function, and Pedagogy

MARK J. ELSON

1. Introduction
This paper is concerned with the systemic status of the coordinating conjunctions и and а in Contemporary Standard Russian. Most previous treatments of и and а have, without comment, viewed them as minimal syntactic units (i.e., words) defined, for systemic purposes, functionally—as equating or likening in the case of и but contrasting or opposing in that of а. However, these treatments, whether intentionally or unwittingly, have left unattended the possibility that и and а, although syntactic units, are more properly defined grammatically (i.e., are systemically characterized by an invariant grammatical meaning of which their functions are derivative).¹ At least one previous treatment, by Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), does treat meaning, but it is limited in scope with questionable conclusions and therefore leaves the issue of the systemic basis of и and а—function or grammatical meaning—unresolved.

My focus herein is the relevance to this question of, to the best of my knowledge, a heretofore unmentioned peculiarity of the following frame with respect to the occurrence of и and а:²

Иван поёт ... Мария смотрит телевизор,
‘Ivan is singing and/but Maria is watching television.’

I will henceforth designate this frame I−M abbreviating Ivan x Maria y and define it as a compound sentence comprising two simple sentences differing in both subject (i.e., here Ivan versus Maria) and predicate (i.e., here x versus y). For analytic purposes, I will oppose this

¹ For a concise statement and illustration of the difference between GRAMMATICAL MEANING and FUNCTION OR SYNTACTIC MEANING, see Jakobson (1984a, 65, 69–71), which clarifies the difference with reference to the treatment of case in Russian.
² To avoid a potentially confusing proliferation of punctuation marks, I have refrained from using the period and question mark in the citation of data, although not in glosses. I have replaced the period in citations with subscript s and the question mark with subscript q, abbreviating STATEMENT and QUESTION respectively.
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frame to Иван поёт ... Мария поёт, ‘Ivan is singing and Maria is singing,’ which I will designate I+M abbreviating Ivan x Maria x and define as a compound sentence comprising two simple sentences differing in either subject or predicate but not both (i.e., sharing either subject or predicate, here the latter as x). It had been my understanding that, with regard to the occurrence of у and a characterized functionally, I+M requires у because it can be understood only as an equation and is therefore compatible only with у, which functions to equate. I understood I–M, however, to permit both у and a with the expected difference—that is, у functioning to equate (i.e., signal that the speaker wishes to communicate that both I and M are engaged in activity) and a functioning to contrast (i.e., signal that the speaker wishes to communicate that I and M are engaged in different activities). This understanding was challenged when my use of у in I–M was corrected to a by a native speaker colleague informing me that у is not possible in such sentences—that is, у is the only possibility in I–M even in the absence of contrast (i.e., even if the speaker’s communicative goal is to equate rather than contrast) and that a can also be used to communicate neutrally, without equating or contrasting. Upon inquiry of other native speakers, however, I encountered disagreement, with most confirming the unacceptability of у in I–M (i.e., requiring a regardless of the speaker’s communicative goal) but some accepting it, for example, as one speaker noted, in answer to the question Чето делают дети, ‘What are the children doing?’ An instance of у in I–M does in fact appear in Launer (1974, 65), although not with reference to I–M, which is unmentioned elsewhere in the literature on coordinating conjunctions.

The disagreement among native speakers relating to the occurrence of у and a in I–M, I wish to argue, is not merely one of idiosyncratic preference but evidence for grammatical meaning as their systemic basis, thus rendering their functions a result of that meaning. It is specifically the incompatibility of у with I–M and consequent necessity of a that are the focal points of my argument and therefore the data from which I will proceed. First, however, I will turn to a preliminary matter regarding the domain of my treatment, then to a brief survey and critical summary of representative previous treatments of this topic (i.e., to a

3It is important to note that there is no structural or other injunction against the appearance of both у and a in a given frame. There are frames in which both can occur with a concomitant difference in communicative result; see Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008, 6) for an example.
review of the nature—largely if not exclusively functional—and extent of their coverage, thereby demonstrating that I–M is not only unmentioned in them but unaccommodated by the treatment they offer). In this regard, with the exception of Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), scholars have assumed that у and а both have fixed values, whether meaning or function, у being associated in some sense with equation or likeness and а with contrast or difference, although some previous treatments observe in passing and without recognizing its implications a property of а relevant to the resolution of I–M that I will offer. Nevertheless, if а is consistently associated, either directly or through meaning, with contrast as its function, we cannot systemically accommodate the absence of contrast that speakers may wish to signal with I–M or the inability of у to occur in it signaling the equation they may intend. I will conclude with attention to the consequences of my findings for the teaching of у and а in the Russian language classroom.

1.1 A preliminary matter: The domain of the corpus

The analysis of у and а is complicated by the occurrence of both in contexts that are not compatible with conjunction as the instantiated part of speech. In these contexts, the usual response is to recognize them as instantiations in the contemporary language of particle, and in that capacity not a part of their synchronic treatment as conjunctions. Nevertheless, the occurrence of у and а as particles does relate to their occurrence as conjunctions because, diachronically, the former emerged from the latter. As a result, it is a potential source of evidence for the systemic organization that characterized the latter and may still characterize it. An overview of their occurrence as particles, especially the differences between them in this regard, is therefore useful.

Particles are defined, according to Vasilyeva (n.d., 8) citing Vinogradov (1947, 663), as:

classes of those words which, as a rule, have no completely independent real, or material, meaning, but for the most part introduce additional shades into the meanings of other words, phrases or sentences, or are used to express all kinds of grammatical (and, consequently, logical and expressive) relation.

4 For the relevance of historical information in synchronic analysis, here the emergence of у and а as particles in Russian to their status as conjunctions, see Kiparsky (1968).
Relevant to the dual status of и and а, she comments:

It is very difficult to distinguish between particles and the conjunctions they have evolved from, since the conjunctive particles generally retain, to a greater or lesser degree, their *copulative* function. (n.d., 12; emphasis added)

With regard to the retention of copulative function by а, she observes:

In dialogue, the particle а is placed at the beginning of the sentence, especially in questions, which is a sign of ellipsis, of a hidden logical *link* with the omitted parts, and which emphasizes the spontaneity of a live conversation. (n.d., 151; emphasis added)

Vasilyeva’s use of link may be understood as an implicit recognition of the retention by а of copulative function (i.e., function as a conjunction although undoubtedly diminished in force and with no element of contrast, in at least some instances of its occurrence as a particle, specifically those instances which are sentence-initial). Wade (2011, 510) gives examples of such instances accompanied by functionally oriented descriptive labels:

(1) stating the apparently obvious; e.g., *Что же мне теперь делать?* а *очень просто.* ‘What should I do now? It’s very simple.’

(2) instantiating a conversational exchange; e.g., *Митя можно а он на работе а когда он будет.* ‘Can I speak to Mitja? He’s at work. When will he be home?’

To these we can add instantiating *specification or definition*—e.g., (3) *Нас было трое, а именно: Панов, Белова и я.* ‘There were three of us: Panov, Belova and me.’ In other instances of а as a particle, we must assume the absence not only of contrastive function but also copulative function. By contrast, although и may, according to Vasilyeva (n.d., 134) retain an element of its copulative function, it is also typically characterized by other functions—e.g., imparting and emphasizing *regularity, correspondence*, and the *naturalness of connections*, all of which can, perhaps, be seen, although Vasilyeva makes no mention of it, as an outgrowth of its equating function as a conjunction (e.g., regularity as equating to an established norm). This is unlike а, which, in its occurrence as a particle, seems not to retain contrastive or other...
function beyond copulative. We may speculate that u in its systemic essence as a conjunction, whether grammatical or functional, was and is, in some semiotic sense, more substantial than a, and thus u was generally not reduced, in particle usage, merely to a diminished variant of linkage as, apparently, a was or could be. This observation is significant because it is compatible with, and even suggestive of, the argument I will make for the systemic relevance of meaning rather than function in the synchronic status of u and a as conjunctions. Thus, at the very least, we can be reasonably certain that the diachrony of u and a cannot be seen as problematic for the view that meaning rather than function is synchronically their systemic basis.

2. Previous treatments: Introductory remarks

Previous treatments of Russian conjunctions, like those of other parts of speech and the linguistic system generally, differ considerably in depth and detail, as a reflection, we may assume, of their purpose and, in that connection, intended audience. With these differences in mind, we can, for organizational purposes, typologize the treatments as formal or informal, with formal treatments invoking the principles and structures of theoretical linguistics and informal treatments relying primarily on translation sometimes accompanied by limited commentary referring to function, usually under one of its aliases: use and occurrence. Informal treatments are further divisible into instructional and consultative, with instructional treatments characteristic of textbooks and consultative treatments characteristic of reference grammars. In relying on translation and commentary, instructional and consultative treatments are similar in content and cannot be called analyses in the strict sense but only descriptions because there is no reference to system. Formal treatments, by contrast, do refer to system and therefore do qualify as analyses. In this regard, I note that the status and role of meaning and function in all sources, but especially informal, are often difficult to determine and may well be moot because, with the single exception of Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), on which I will comment in a following section, there is no evidence in any of the sources that the distinction played a role in the analysis or was recognized as relevant by the investigator in the evaluation of data. Phraseology suggestive of function is usual regardless of the level of formality, but we also
find references to meaning, although there is nothing to suggest that meaning, as opposed to function, was the object of investigation or that the investigator recognized the difference for purposes of analysis. Dengub and Rojavin (2010, 148–153), a consultative treatment, provides a case in point in the section designated meanings AND functions of the coordinating conjunctions u, a, no. This designation notwithstanding, the phraseology is indisputably suggestive of, or refers explicitly to, function (e.g., “the core function of the conjunction u is to unite ...” with an explicit reference to function, although in a preceding sentence the authors refer to “semantic meanings” with regard to u and other coordinating conjunctions). Nor, with the exception of Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), a formal treatment, do we find any component of the apparatus we typically associate with grammatical as opposed to syntactic and/or pragmatic treatment (e.g., the designation of a relevant grammatical meaning or category). Excluding Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), I will therefore assume the general absence of attention to meaning in previous treatments to be indicative of a failure to recognize it as relevant, and in my summary of them I will, for consistence, use phraseology compatible with function.

2.1 Previous informal treatments
Informal treatments of u and a, especially if we include those online, are numerous, and consistently, whether instructional or consultative, they fail to distinguish explicitly between meaning and function, although the terminology and phraseology they use more often than not suggests function. Among instructional sources—i.e., textbooks—I consulted beginning-level Nachalo (Lubensky et al. 2001, Live from Russia (Lekić, Davidson, and Gor 2008), Golosa (Robin, Evans-Romaine, and Shatalina 2012), Troika (Nummikoski 2012), and Mezhdu nami (deBenedette et al. 2016). The upper-level textbooks I consulted—i.e., V puti (Kagan, Miller, and Kudyma 2006) and Panorama (Rifkin, Dengub, and Nazarova 2017)—do not review conjunctions. I have summarized the beginning-level textbooks in appendix 1, which includes three older exemplars (i.e., Lunt 1968; Stilman and Harkins 1972; and Clark 1983) for comparison with more recent ones and in support of my view that contemporary (i.e., communicatively oriented) textbooks are no more enlightening than their predecessors were in the presentation of u and a. Appendix 1 also includes
Launer (1974), which, although not a conventional language textbook, is introductory in level. All of the exemplars—either directly via descriptive language or indirectly via translation (i.e., English equivalents)—associate it with equation or likeness in some capacity and a with contrast or difference. Thus, these exemplars provide no insight into the potential relevance of meaning or the peculiarity of I–M (i.e., its failure to permit it, thereby preventing the speaker from equating I and M as both engaged in activity, which results in the requirement of a regardless of the speaker’s communicative goal). These instructional sources, therefore, require no further attention.

Among consultative sources, I included Borras and Christian (1971); Offord (1996); Rozental’, Golub, and Telenkova (2016); and Wade (2011), all of which may be considered representative. Of the four, Rozental’, Golub, and Telenkova (2016, 274–275) is the most detailed with respect to both the description and exemplification of it and a. The description is suggestive of function rather than meaning and begins with a simple division of conjunctions (i.e., союзы) into соединительные (i.e., coordinating) and подчинительные (i.e., subordinating), with the former subcategorized into, among others, соединительные (i.e., uniting [= equating]) and противительные (i.e., contrasting). Uniting (i.e., equating) conjunctions like it are characterized as expressing отношения перечисления ‘relationships of enumeration,’ and contrasting coordinators like a as expressing отношения противопоставления, несоответствия, различия ... ‘relationships of opposition, (of) the absence of correspondence, (of) difference.’ The illustrations of a require no comment because, functionally, they all involve contrast in some obvious sense. The illustrations of it are more varied. In general, they, too, involve function, in particular enumeration in various manifestations (e.g., sequences, unordered lists, etc.). They do not, however, include obvious examples of equation like I+M, which is the function of it commonly illustrated in other sources, and it is possible that the authors view the equating function of it as inherent in enumeration, which is normally, like equation, a concatenation of similar items. They do include examples in which it introduces a clause of result (e.g., [4] Он уже уехал, и [поэтому] невозможно было с ним поговорить, ‘He had already left, so it was not possible to chat with him.’). This function of it often goes unmentioned but is noteworthy in demonstrating that it is
more than enumerative and equative in its function as a conjunction. It may be significant that Rozental’, Golub, and Telenkova provide these characterizations in their discussion of morphology (2016, 176–282) but illustrate them in their discussion of syntax (2016, 284–339), implying, perhaps, that they recognize, or at least assume, the systemic relevance of meaning as well as function. Nevertheless, they often use служить ‘serve (as)’ for descriptive purposes seemingly without attention to its implicit reference to function. In any case, despite their relatively comprehensive presentation of и and а, they leave unexplained the ability of а to occur when contrast is not the intent of the speaker, as may be true in I–M. On the contrary, in mentioning no и однако in connection with а,5 they imply identity among the three with regard to the impartation of contrast although allowing for “additional shades of meaning.”

Borras and Christian (1971), Wade (2011), and Offord (1996) are less detailed in their comment on, and illustration of, и and а. Offord (1996, 374–375) relies heavily on translation but offers snippets of commentary suggestive of function (e.g., “а may also translate English and, when that conjunction has contrastive meaning [= functions to contrast]”). There is, however, nothing relevant to the peculiarity of I–M. Borras and Christian (1971, 270–272) and Wade (2011, 486), although very much the same in content as Offord (1996), are nevertheless significantly different in one detail: they both recognize the ability of а to occur when there is no contrast (i.e., when the speaker’s communicative goal is not contrast)—in contexts that should be incompatible with а if we follow previous treatments, which consistently associate а with contrast. This is the situation presented by I–M for those speakers whose internalized grammars do not permit и: they can use а in it without intending to signal contrast. Wade makes this observation in the following statement labeling а as an adversative conjunction, but adding that it

links ideas which contrast without conflicting ... [in this regard, it] introduces a positive statement via a preceding negative ... [and it] introduces parenthetical statements. (2011, 486; emphasis added)

5 A full treatment of coordinating conjunctions in Russian must include attention to contrastive no и однако in addition to и and а but cannot be profitably undertaken until the relationship between и and а has been clarified; see Wade (2011, 487) for informal comment on no и однако.
This observation, reminiscent of the comment made to me by the speaker who challenged my use of \textit{и} in I−M, is important, but it still leaves unexplained the inability of \textit{и} to conjoin simple sentences differing in both subject and predicate that the speaker wishes to equate (i.e., sentences expressing “compatible ideas,” to use Wade’s phraseology [2011, 485]) in response—for example, to \textit{Что делают дети}. Borras and Christian (1971, 270–275), too, although going no further than a list of functions in the section designated \textit{the conjunctions ‘а,’ ‘и,’ and ‘же,’} nevertheless include an implicit recognition that the characterization of \textit{а} as functionally contrastive or adversative is inadequate when they state:

[The conjunction] \textit{а} in Russian is often merely an alternative for \textit{и} (and) or \textit{но} (but).

Although this statement, which may appear on its face to be self-contradictory in likening \textit{а} to \textit{и}, is not elaborated, it, like Wade’s statement regarding the use of \textit{а} to signal contrast without conflict, is relevant to the analysis I will propose. The meaning of both statements, to which I will later return, is clear, and it is compatible with Vasilyeva’s view referenced previously that although \textit{и} as a particle often, like \textit{а} as a particle, retains weakened copulative function, it may, unlike \textit{а}, take on additional function (e.g., emphasis) arguably derivative in origin of its function as a conjunction.

\textbf{2.2 Previous formal treatments}

Formal treatments often assume that \textit{и} and \textit{а}, although syntactic units (i.e., words), are essentially \textit{pragmatic} in nature and that they must therefore be defined functionally—i.e., be seen to have pragmatic function. Meaning is, accordingly, ignored even if it is mentioned; see, for example, Jasinskaja and Zeevat (2008, 65), who write in their abstract:

The functional space covered by the conjunctions \textit{and} and \textit{but} in English is divided between three conjunctions in Russian: \textit{i}, \textit{а}, and \textit{но}. We analyze these markers as \textit{topic management devices}, i.e., they impose different kinds of constraints on the discourse topics (questions under discussion) addressed by their conjuncts.

In their introduction, however, Jasinskaja and Zeevat refer to \textit{meanings}, albeit in quotes, leaving us uncertain as to the relevance and
role of meaning, which plays no obvious role in their treatment. We must therefore conclude that they assume there is no meaning as such (i.e., in the conventional sense) associated systemically with conjunctions, or, alternatively, that they fail to recognize the difference between such meaning and pragmatic function. Other formal treatments are similar in this regard. The pragmatic, i.e., “supra-syntactic” or discourse, concern of treatments like Jasinskaja and Zeevat (2008) virtually excludes attention to meaning, and therefore to the problem posed by I–M, which is a syntactic construction thus raising no discourse issues. Hence it is not surprising that we find no reference to I–M in these treatments and, as a result, no treatment of the ability of а to occur in noncontrastive contexts at the sentential level.

The formal treatment in Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), by contrast, is indisputably meaning based, although not avoiding references to function. The authors adopt a Praguian approach to grammatical meaning. This approach conceptualizes each systemically justified grammatical meaning as a category C instantiated by a feature f (e.g., number instantiated by [singular]). Features are binary, occurring as [+1] or [−] and yielding oppositions of the form f versus non-f (e.g., [+/-singular] yielding the opposition singular versus nonsingular). If a feature is [+], the forms it characterizes, termed marked, obligatorily signal f in all instances of their occurrence and can therefore occur only in contexts compatible with that meaning. If, however, a feature is [−], the forms it characterizes, termed unmarked, although ordinarily signaling the polar opposite meaning, designated the Hauptbedeutung (i.e., usual meaning) of the [−] value, are not limited in their occurrence (e.g., [−singular] ordinarily signaling plural, its Hauptbedeutung, but nevertheless compatible with singular contexts, thus in Russian verbs forms of the second person plural used to express politeness with reference to a singular addressee). The authors apply this approach to their corpus, which they describe as Russian frames with the structure P–Q, in which P and Q are conjoinable clauses and, in principle, compatible with u or а, depending on the relationship between them. The focus of their discussion is the relationship they

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6 See Jasinskaja and Zeevat (2008), Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008), and Uryson (2013) for representative bibliographies of formal treatments to date.
7 For the Praguian view of grammatical meaning, see Jakobson (1984b, 47). For a more extensive statement, see Vachek (1966, 84–85).
describe as expected outcome—for example, (5) [P] It started raining in the morning, and [Q] the children were not taken to the beach, with Q here expressing the expected outcome that the children had to remain home due to inclement weather and requiring \( u \) in the Russian translation. The feature they propose to accommodate the occurrence of \( u \) and \( a \) in Russian frames of this type is [contraexpectation]. In this analysis, the positive (i.e., marked) value signals unexpected outcome and is instantiated by \( a \), while the negative (i.e., unmarked) value usually signals—as its Hauptbedeutung, although the authors do not identify it as such—expected outcome and is instantiated by \( u \). This analysis correctly predicts \( u \) in the Russian version of (5) as a reflection of the expected outcome. However, it brings with it a significant difficulty: the claim that \( a \) is marked while \( u \) is unmarked, a position that is at odds with the statements of Wade (2011) as well as Borras and Christian (1971) that \( a \) is, in some instances, virtually the equivalent of \( u \), suggesting, in a meaning-based approach, that \( a \) has unmarked status. In addition, the authors do not accommodate in any obvious way the occurrence of \( u \) and \( a \) in other constructions, thus leaving I–M unaccommodated, although, unlike others, they do recognize it, if unwittingly, in their consideration of a second P–Q frame, which they correctly claim requires \( a \):

(6) Коля богатый а Ваня бедный,
‘Kolja is rich and/but Vanja is poor.’

Their recognition must be seen as unwitting because they identify sentences like (6), following the Russian tradition, as comparisons, and they seem to view comparison as a phenomenon that, in its connotation of contrast, tolerates only \( a \), thereby providing an explanation for the exclusion of \( u \) in this instance. Nevertheless, (6) and sentences like it meet the requirements of I–M—a compound sentence differing in both the subject and the predicate of its constituent simple sentences. They may therefore be considered a subtype of I–M in which the components express the opposite and, as a result, irreconcilable ends of a gradation and for that reason require \( a \). In the instances of I–M that concern me,

\[8\] This is my formulation of the feature, which I prefer to Rudnitskaya and Uryson’s (2008) somewhat unwieldy formulation: [contrariety-to-expectation]. For justification of this negatively oriented feature, see Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008, 2–3).
gradation, and therefore reconcilability, is not an issue; it is possible, in
principle, to view Ivan and Maria as compatible with equation (i.e., as
both involved in activity).

3. The argument for meaning-based treatment
We may assume that informal treatment of Russian coordinating
conjunctions via translation and/or commentary referencing function,
use, or occurrence, and ignoring the possibility of meaning, is not an
acceptable approach if the goal is knowledge of them on their own terms
(i.e., without filtering them through the distorting lens of another language,
here English). With regard to formal treatment, the facts relating to I-M,
heretofore uninvolved in treatments of и and а, argue strongly in favor
of the systemic centrality of meaning rather than function, especially if
we consider that both Borras and Christian (1971) and Wade (2011) treat
а as contrastive in function, although it may be used in contexts that are
not contrastive if the speaker deems the contrast irrelevant or, in Wade’s
words, the contrast does not give rise to a conflict.

Vasilyeva’s observation that и, even when instantiated as a
particle, frequently retains an element of copulative function and,
beyond that, adds function while а need not do either is compatible
with Wade’s (2011) statement. We must conclude that the function
of а as a conjunction, however we understand it, is fundamentally
different from that of и in both the literal sense (i.e., и and а do not
have the same function) and in another less obvious one: а, unlike и,
can be used even if the function normally associated with it is absent
or mitigated (i.e., there is contrast, but not conflict, according to Wade
[2011], or merely, according to Borras and Christian [1971], as an
alternative for и). This observation cannot be formally accommodated
by the assumption that function is the defining characteristic of
и and а, but it is readily accommodated by the Praguean theory of
grammatical meaning, adopted by Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008)
although without full consideration of the relevant data, resulting in
an incorrect conclusion regarding markedness, and without attention
to category but only to feature. If we accept the status of и and а as
entities defined grammatically by a feature f instantiating a category
c with their functions a derivative of that meaning, the analytic task
becomes the identification of a category and an instantiating feature
resulting in $u$ as marked (i.e., [+f]) and $a$ as unmarked (i.e., [−f]). In the resulting system, it is the unmarked status of $a$, which we infer from the comments of Borras and Christian (1971) and Wade (2011), that permits it to occur in I−M even if the speaker’s intent is not contrast but equation, because, for reasons I will discuss, marked $u$, although functioning to equate, is nevertheless incompatible with I−M.

With regard to the details of category, feature, and markedness, I believe that we already have a satisfactory answer in Jakobson’s (1984b) category of Taxis, which, in serving as the grammatical basis for syntactic concatenation, accommodates conjunction as a part of speech, and which is instantiated, following Jakobson (1984b), by the feature [dependent] with marked [+dependent] realized, in the case of Russian coordinating conjunctions, by $u$ and unmarked [−dependent] by $a$. Jakobson (1984b, 51) defined the positive value of [dependent] as “signaling a narrated event concomitant with another, principal narrated event” and thus coordinated with it, because his discussion focused on taxis in nonfinite verb forms—i.e., the participle and gerund of Russian verbs, in which we have, in effect, the equivalent of a subordinate clause with relative tense, and therefore a dependency. However, there is no reason to think that this category and its instantiating feature as identified by Jakobson cannot be extended to other syntactic dependencies or to constructions that can be understood as such, whether or not there is a narrated event. This extension is possible if we assume that $u$ as a reflection of its marked status with respect to dependency functions to unite, or coordinate, one syntactic entity (i.e., a word or clause) with another, usually preceding, syntactic entity that it in some well-defined way consummates or completes (e.g., by expressing a result, an expectation, or the final element of an enumeration) and on the existence of which it is therefore dependent. Within this framework, $u$—as a reflection of its meaning [+dependent]—must therefore be compatible with at least three unifying functions associated with its occurrence: equation, enumeration, and result. We can add a fourth function if we extend dependency to Rudnitskaya and Uryson’s (2008) frame P−Q as it relates to expectation, and we (1) view expectation as a function rather than a meaning, which is a defensible adjustment because expectation can be seen as a type of result, and (2) we replace [contraexpectation], which proceeds from $a$ as marked, with [confirmation (of expectation)], which
proceeds from \( u \) as marked to accommodate the indisputable evidence in support of that relationship in markedness.

With this revision of Rudnitskaya and Uryson’s treatment, there are four unifying functions—equation, enumeration, result, and confirmation—that must be compatible with \( u \) as [+dependent]. The nature of the dependency is obvious for the functions of result and confirmation. In each, the syntactic unit that \( u \) precedes is a consequence or outcome of the syntactic unit preceding it, and in that sense is inextricably linked to, or dependent on, it. These dependencies can be designated contingencies. As an example, we may take (7) Я опаздываю на встречу, и (поэтому) я должен уйти, ‘I’m late, and I (therefore—i.e., as a result) have to leave.’ The dependency of contingency instantiated as a result and marked by \( u \) in this sentence is made clear by sentences like (8) Я не опаздываю на встречу, а должен всё-таки уйти, ‘I’m not late for the meeting, but I must nevertheless leave.’ In which there is no dependency of contingency and \( u \) is therefore not possible, making \( a \) necessary although there is no contrast. The absence of contrast (i.e., of the usual function associated with the Hauptbedeutung of \( a \)) is unproblematic because \( a \) is unmarked, and although it normally occurs in its Hauptbedeutung of independent, thus signaling contrast or opposition, it need not occur in that capacity.

Enumeration and equation, by contrast, are not dependencies of contingency but rather may be designated dependencies of parity, in which the syntactic unit that \( u \) precedes and the syntactic unit preceding it can be viewed as mutually or reciprocally dependent. Thus, in a dependency of contingency between syntactic entity A and syntactic entity B with \( u \) preceding the latter, B is contingent on A, but A is not contingent on B. In a dependency of parity, by contrast, syntactic entities A and B with \( u \) preceding the latter are in a mutual or reciprocal relationship of dependence (e.g., enumeration), in which each element has the same status, and it is their parity that functions to bind them and produce an enumeration, or list. This interpretation also accommodates the function of equation, and thus I+M as a representative of sentences with a shared constituent (e.g., Иван поёт и Мария поёт), in which \( u \) is marking a dependency of parity, in this case an equation, in the unshared constituent (i.e., Ivan and Maria are both singing). It should be noted that \( u \), in effect, acts as a type of inflectional morpheme because it is normally
proclitic and therefore, like inflectional morphemes, not characterized by primary stress. Thus, \( u \) preceding a noun or other syntactic entity acts to inflect it for taxis as [+depend] just as, for example, the bound morpheme -\( \text{а} \) in the past gerund of Russian inflects the verb in question for dependence on the main verb with regard to tense and subject.

Returning now to I−M, how are we to reconcile its peculiarity with [depend] as the feature instantiating taxis? Why can I+M be understood as a dependency of parity while I−M cannot be understood as such (i.e., as signaling the speaker’s desire to communicate that Ivan and Maria are the same in both being engaged in an activity), thus permitting \( u \) as does I+M, in which there is a shared predicate and \( u \) is the only possibility? We must infer that \( u \) has a proviso in addition to [+depend], its feature content, rendering it incompatible with I−M although, in principle, it can be construed as a mutual dependency. Nevertheless, I−M cannot be seen as a dependency within the context of the grammar of Russian. That proviso can be formalized succinctly using the framework of Blühdorn (2008, citing Lang [1984, 66]), as follows:

The semantic \textit{relata} of coordinative constructions must be tied up by a \textit{common integrator}. This term refers to a superordinate conceptual category, under which both \textit{relata} can be subsumed.

However, in the instance of Russian \( u \), the integrator appears not to be a “superordinate conceptual category” but a syntactic constraint: A dependency instantiated by \( u \) is possible only within the confines of \( S_n \) (e.g., \textit{Иван и Мария пьют}, ‘Ivan and Maria are singing;’; \textit{Иван пьет и смотрит телевизор}, ‘Ivan is singing and watching television.’). It may therefore transgress \( S_n \) —thus uniting \( S_n \) with \( S_{n+1} \)—if and only if \( S_n \) and \( S_{n+1} \) are syntactically combinable in a relationship of dependency, either of contingency (e.g., result; i.e., \( S_{n+1} \) is the result of \( S_n \)) or parity (e.g., equation; i.e., a constituent of \( S_n \) is identical to a constituent of \( S_{n+1} \) that can serve as the basis of a relationship of equation).

My hypothesis of a syntactic constraint on the occurrence of marked \( u \) and the concomitant implicit hypothesis that semantic considerations do \textit{not} play a role in the ability of \( u \) to occur were supported by the results of a short, informal questionnaire, which I include as appendix 2, completed by seven native speakers (raised and educated in St. Petersburg) and one heritage speaker. The respondents were presented with six situations,
each comprising sentences meeting the requirements of I–M (i.e., absence of a shared constituent, as a subtype of which I included partially shared constituents—e.g., читать книгу/читать газету ‘read a book/read a newspaper’) and each including a prompt suggesting, either directly or indirectly, sameness as a semantic concept available to serve as a basis for combining \(S_n\) and \(S_{n+1}\) via \(и\) in the absence of a shared constituent. A, B, C, and D were prompted externally with respect to \(S_n\) and \(S_{n+1}\) by a question suggesting sameness (i.e., a plural subject in A and B, и ... и in C, оба in D), while E and F were prompted internally by a matrix clause uniting \(S_n\) and \(S_{n+1}\) and therefore suggesting sameness with regard to the lexical content of the matrix (e.g., я не знал in E). For each item, respondents were asked to conjoin \(S_n\) and \(S_{n+1}\) either with \(и\) or \(а\). The prompts did not, generally, result in the use of \(и\), and the responses were therefore consistent with a formal rather than a semantic integrator.\(^9\)

It follows that I+M (i.e., Иван поёт ... Мария поёт) is compatible with \(и\) because, although it comprises two sentences, there is a shared constituent (i.e., поёт) that can serve as the basis of a dependency of parity functioning to equate Иван and Мария, thus permitting reduction to \(S_n\) (i.e., Иван и Мария поют) at the discretion of the speaker, but it also follows that I–M (i.e., Иван поёт ... Мария смотрит телевизор) in the absence of a shared constituent is not compatible with \(и\), at least for some if not most speakers, nor is reduction possible. The same constraint, it should be noted, regulates participles and gerunds in Russian. They must occur within the sentence of the syntactic entity on which they are dependent—i.e., no dependency is possible between a participle or gerund in one sentence and a syntactic entity in another unless the sentences share a constituent in terms of which they can be united. However, unmarked \(а\), unlike marked \(и\) and nonfinite verb forms, is not constrained by \(S_n\).

\(^9\) The support for the relevance of syntax is direct in A, B, C, and D, all with a prompt suggesting semantic sameness but having no effect on the ability of \(и\) to occur in its equating function in the absence of a shared constituent. E and F, each with a matrix clause suggesting, or at least compatible, with sameness, seem at first to support a role for semantics (e.g., E1 and F1, for which \(и\) occurs in the absence of a shared constituent) but in fact are easily accommodated by the additional stipulation that a subordinating conjunction, in this instance что, can itself serve as the shared constituent required for the occurrence of \(и\) and I+M—i.e., subordinate clauses as instantiations of \(S_n\) and \(S_{n+1}\) can be united with \(и\) even in the absence of a shared constituent provided the relevant subordinating conjunction precedes both of them, in effect serving as a substitute for a shared constituent internal to \(S_n\) and \(S_{n+1}\) (cf. in this regard F4, which includes a shared constituent and elicited \(и\) in the absence of что preceding \(S_{n+1}\)).
because it does not mark a dependency. This means that а is compatible with I−M and is in fact required by it in the inability of marked и to occur. Although the occurrence of а usually signals, functionally, contrast, which is reflective of its Hauptbedeutung, it can also, by virtue of its unmarked status, occur when the speaker’s communicative goal is not contrast but either a neutral statement or the equation of activities as such (i.e., Ivan and Maria are both engaged in an activity).

Those speakers who accept и in I−M presumably proceed from an internalized grammar in which the syntactic constraint on the occurrence of и apparently does not exist or is only weakly operative—i.e., the occurrence of и is governed exclusively by its marked meaning and the intent of the speaker to equate regardless of syntax. In this connection, we may speculate that if the answer to Что делают дети q, for which we observed that а is at least normal if not obligatory, goes beyond two (e.g., [8] Иван поёт, Мария смотрит телевизор ... Пётр убирает комнату, ‘Ivan is singing, Maria is watching television, and/but Peter is cleaning his room.’), then the preference for и as the conjunction between the penultimate and final items rises because the longer chain is more likely to be understood as an enumeration (i.e., a mutual dependency), at least in the view of the speaker, and а is therefore no longer required. If this is true, the acceptability to some speakers of и even with only a two-place answer may be the intrusion of the notion of enumeration. A two-member construction is not normally construed as such, but for some speakers, as an alternative in casual speech, it may have made the transition to a type of list (i.e., a minimal enumeration).

4. Conclusion
To conclude, I will summarize my claims, following which I will offer brief comments on their relevance to pedagogy—i.e., the Russian language classroom.

4.1 Summary
Unlike those who have previously treated Russian и and а and who have not discussed their systemic basis but rather assumed it to be function, I have argued that they are defined systemically by grammatical meaning, with their respective functions a reflection of that meaning. This argument is based on a peculiarity of а—the requirement that it occur in I−M regardless
of the speaker’s intent, whether equation or contrast—and further on the comments of Borras and Christian (1971) and Wade (2011) that \(a\) can be used more neutrally and perhaps even as a virtual replacement for \(u\). This peculiarity and the comments of Borras and Christian and Wade find a straightforward explanation in the Praguian conception of grammatical meaning, which accommodates the facts without difficulty in terms of its primes of category, (binary) feature, markedness, and Hauptbedeutung. Rudnitskaya and Uryson (2008) had already invoked this framework but without attention to its details, specifically the relevant category, and had decided to assign unmarked value to \(u\) despite the indisputable evidence in favor of unmarked status for \(a\).

With regard to category and feature, I argued that Jakobson’s (1984b) category taxis instantiated by [dependent] accommodates the functions of \(u\) illustrated by Rozental’, Golub, and Telenkova (2016) and can be extended to Rudnitskaya and Uryson’s treatment of \(P–Q\) with appropriate modification (i.e., analysis of confirmation as a result). It is relevant in this regard to note that [dependent] also accommodates conjunctions traditionally designated subordinating, thus providing the basis for an integrated understanding of conjunction as a part of speech and rendering it parallel to other parts of speech in having grammatical meaning as the systemic source of its functional properties. The compatibility of [dependent] with subordinating conjunctions as well as coordinating is not problematic. It means only that we must establish the additional oppositions that instantiate the difference (e.g., temporal versus nontemporal to accommodate subordinating conjunctions with a reference to time). In this regard, I note that Jakobson (1984b, 198, 51–52) acknowledges the necessity of additional oppositions in hypothesizing sequential versus nonsequential within [+dependent], and consequential versus nonconsequential in [+sequential].

The additional oppositions suggested by Jakobson might accommodate contingency and parity (e.g., contingency as [+sequential]), which, in any case, do require formal accommodation in the analysis I am suggesting. More generally, there is the necessity, if my analysis proves to be justified with further investigation, of transition in the formal treatment of conjunctions from the familiar functionally based descriptive terminology as primary to terminology that is grammatically based, thus incorporating [dependent] instantiating taxis. The commonly occurring labels coordinating and subordinating with respect to conjunctions are themselves functionally based and may not bear a direct relationship to the feature designation(s) justified in a meaning-based treatment. While it is true that functions and associated descriptive terminology must be compatible with meaning and its terminology, there is no requirement that the relationship be direct.
4.2 Pedagogy
Two pedagogical issues emerge regarding the teaching of Russian у and а: the use of translation as opposed to explanation in matters of grammar, and the incorporation of grammatical explanation in situations like this one, in which everyday grammatical jargon will not suffice if more detailed coverage is the goal. With regard to the use of translation, the difficulty is obvious: the correlation between Russian and English coordinating conjunctions is inexact (i.e., у and and are not identical either in meaning or function, nor are а and but). However, the difficulty goes beyond the inadequacy of translation, requiring attention to the second issue, grammatical explanation, because the markedness relationship between English and and but is the reverse of that between Russian у and а. Regarding and and but, there can be no doubt that but is marked and thus unlike Russian а, to which it is normally, and mistakenly, likened. In terms of function, the available evidence suggests that but consistently signals contrast (i.e., it signals contrast in all instances of its occurrence). If there is an unmarked member in the English opposition and versus but, it must therefore be and, and the data support this view. Without doubt, and can be used when there is contrast; e.g., I expected to see him, and didn’t, in which and is unambiguously contrastive in the sense that the speaker’s expectation was not met. Thus, English, structurally, appears to oppose but, which is functionally specified for contrast,11 to unspecified and usually signaling noncontrast although it is compatible with contrast. It follows, if this is true, that the conjoining function of unmarked Russian а should be paralleled, if at all, by unspecified English and, and this appears to be so. In answering the English equivalent of Что делают дети? (i.e., ‘What are the children doing?’), therefore, speakers of English can impart contrast via specified but (e.g., John is reading but Mary is not.), but if the question is answered neutrally, it must be done with and (e.g., John is reading and Mary is not.), signaling non-contrast although contrast may be understood because and is unmarked, leaving open the connotation of contrast from context. The question of dependence does not arise in English as it does for the conjunction у in Russian because, unlike у, with which it is normally compared, English and is unspecified. Further, unspecified English and,

11 To maintain the distinction between meaning and function, I use specified and unspecified instead of marked and unmarked in referring to function and therefore in referring to the coordinating conjunctions of English, which have yet to be examined for meaning, although I assume the category taxis with the feature [dependent] is justifiable for them.
like unmarked Russian a, can, by virtue of its unspecified status, function merely to conjoin, as a particle; e.g., And what, pray tell, will you do today? (cf. A что вы будете делать сегодня, ‘And what will you do today?’), in which Russian a is performing its copulative function as a particle with no hint of contrast.

With regard to the second issue, the question is how do we incorporate the relevant information, and when? I begin with two observations that I believe relevant, both of which I make anticipating the objection by some that the information in question is, in its complexity, not suitable for the language classroom:

a. there is precedent for more sophisticated classroom presentation in morphology and grammar—i.e., in the presentation of both form and meaning; e.g., for form, Lekić, Davidson, and Gor (2008) and Rifkin, Dengub, and Nazarova (2017) in the presentation of conjugation; for meaning, Janda and Korba (2008) in the presentation of aspect;
b. there is precedent for a tacit reference to markedness; e.g., in the presentation of verbs of motion, in which pedal verbs are unmarked and, although normally used for motion on foot, are also used in situations that are not walkable, such as when destinations within city limits are not realistically reachable without vehicular transportation.

There is no reason in principle, therefore, to avoid a more sophisticated, and thus more accurate, presentation of и and a in the classroom. With regard to specific suggestions for such a presentation, I offer the following for introduction no earlier than the second year of instruction:

a. introduction and clarification of the difference between lexical meaning and grammatical meaning, the former being the type of meaning students encounter in glossaries and dictionaries, the latter being the type they more typically encounter in explanations of the usage of forms and which is often presented as informal oppositions, with the structure a versus b relating to familiar grammatical concepts (e.g., feminine versus masculine relating to gender, perfective versus imperfective relating to aspect, vehicular versus pedal relating to motion);
b. reconceptualization of oppositions to incorporate markedness and thus transition from the format A versus B (e.g., perfective versus imperfective), with which students are already generally acquainted, to F versus non-F (e.g., perfective versus nonperfective), accompanied by explanation of the significance of the reconceptualization (i.e., the status of non-F as unmarked and as such, although normally signaling the polar opposite of F, not being required to do so);
c. a reminder to students that they already encountered this reconceptualization, but only informally, when they studied such topics as the occurrence of pedal verbs of motion in contexts normally associated with vehicular transportation;
d. reconceptualization of и versus а as conjunctions from A versus B to F versus non-F, using the terminology of function (i.e., transition from equation/result versus contrast to equation/result versus nonequation/result) rather than that of meaning because the concept of function is more concrete and will therefore be more readily accessible to students than direct reference, at least initially, to meaning as [dependent];
e. discussion of English coordinating conjunctions and and but to demonstrate that simple association with Russian и and а is insufficient if the goal of communicative competence is accorded due attention;
f. introduction of the concept of constraint relating to the marked member of an opposition and specifically to the view that the marked member of an opposition may be understood as a set of conditions that must be present for its use. If any part of the set is absent or violated (e.g., the integrator required by Russian и is absent), the unmarked member, which may be designated the default for instructional purposes, will occur.

Following these preliminaries, and with prior review of topics such as verbs of motion as a point of reference to remind students that they have already encountered grammatical meaning as oppositions and the concept of markedness, a spiraled approach in the general sense of building on that which has preceded serves well, making the transition gradually from a conceptually less complicated situation to a conceptually more
complicated one. The final step for the instructor is exercise preparation in which at least some of the frames included permit either и or а as a reflection of the communicative intent of the speaker. The Rozental', Golub, and Telenkova (2016) exemplars of и and а provide models for the creation of more contemporary—and nonliterary—exemplars by the instructor. Other types of exercises, with function replacing meaning to enhance student accessibility, may also be of value; e.g.,

a. exercises distinguishing and from but in English to reinforce the concept of opposition in which one term is specified but the other is not and is therefore characterized by a usual function (i.e., the polar opposite of its partner) but not confined to it;
b. exercises focusing on the function(s) of и and emphasizing its marked value but including a reference to the restriction on its occurrence—the syntactic constraint;
c. exercises introducing а not as the polar opposite of и, although that function is usual, but as the default capable of occurring in conjunction with constraints on the marked member of the opposition;
d. support via reading and the examination of attestations in authentic texts.

There is little doubt that the more sophisticated grammatical presentation required for a deeper understanding of Russian и and а demands special effort and dedication on the part of both instructors and students. The additional exertion, however, is not difficult to justify, especially in upper-level courses, in view of the stated goal of contemporary language instruction: communicative competence. Construed broadly, communicative competence is not restricted to oral communication on everyday topics with the additional communicative ability provided by specialized lexicon to discuss less-common topics. In principle, communicative competence should be extended as well, especially at the advanced levels of instruction, to scholarly and professional endeavors—i.e., endeavors that involve translation as well as oral communication and in which there is, as a result, a need for the grammatical precision required by close reading and accurate comprehension that more sophisticated grammatical presentation of topics—generally those topics in which Russian differs in its detail from that of the native language of the learner—provides.
# Appendix A: Representative Treatments of Russian $u$ and $a$ in Beginning-Level Russian Language Textbooks

## Table 1. Older exemplars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Usage Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lunt 1968, 31–32</td>
<td>$u$; joins words that are on the same level; represents equality or addition</td>
<td>no exact equivalent in English;</td>
<td>sometimes translated as <em>and</em> and sometimes as <em>but</em>; denotes a contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stilman and Harkins 1972, 47–48</td>
<td>connects several members of a sentence to which the statement made is equally applicable</td>
<td>separative; two different statements are made about two members of a sentence; merely different although not contrastive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark 1983, 62</td>
<td>$u$</td>
<td>$a$ (rather)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launer 1974, 66–67</td>
<td>combines two elements into a unit; its mathematical analogue is a plus sign</td>
<td>exclusivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Table 2. More recent exemplars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Usage Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lubensky et al. 2001, 32</td>
<td>joining</td>
<td>joining and contrasting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lekić et al. 2008, 54</td>
<td>$u$; signals similarities</td>
<td>signals differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin et al. 2012, 102–103</td>
<td>$u$; two things are the same; there is no contrast</td>
<td>two contrasts; two different comments are made about two different topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nummikoski 2012, 59</td>
<td>$u$; parallel</td>
<td>$u$/but; slight contrast; often starts a question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deBenedette et al. 2016, 2.2</td>
<td>connects items; a $+$ sign; connects nouns and phrases and clauses into a chain</td>
<td>no single English equivalent; introduces a phrase that contrasts with a previous one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: The Russian Conjunctions и and а with a Semantic Integrator in Native Speaker Responses
(8 respondents)

Table 3. External semantic integrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC INTEGRATOR</th>
<th>SIMPLE SENTENCE 1</th>
<th>SIMPLE SENTENCE 2</th>
<th>и</th>
<th>а</th>
<th>и/а</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Что делают дети?</td>
<td>(1) Иван читает книгу</td>
<td>Мария смотрит телевизор.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Иван читает книгу</td>
<td>Мария читает газету.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Что они делают?</td>
<td>(1) Иван читает книгу</td>
<td>Мария смотрит телевизор.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Иван читает книгу</td>
<td>Мария читает газету.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) И он и она заняты?</td>
<td>(1) Да, Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>Мария смотрит телевизор.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Да, Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>Мария пишет сочинение</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Они оба заняты?</td>
<td>(1) Да, Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>Мария смотрит телевизор.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Да, Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>Мария пишет сочинение</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Internal Semantic Integrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC INTEGRATOR</th>
<th>SIMPLE SENTENCE 1</th>
<th>SIMPLE SENTENCE 2</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>u/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(E) Я не знал,</td>
<td>(1) что Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>что Мария смотрит телевизор.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) что Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>Мария смотрит телевизор.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) что Иван читает газету</td>
<td>что Мария читает книгу.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) что Иван читает газету</td>
<td>Мария читает книгу.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Вы уверены,</td>
<td>(1) что Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>что Мария смотрит телевизор?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) что Иван пишет письмо</td>
<td>Мария смотрит телевизор?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) что Иван читает газету</td>
<td>что Мария читает книгу?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) что Иван читает книгу</td>
<td>Мария читает книгу?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


From Error Annotation to Quantitative Analysis: Patterns in Russian Language Learning

IRINA KOR CHAHINE, EKATERINA UETOVA

1. Introduction

Although learner corpus research has been progressively growing into an independent branch of corpus linguistics, the learner corpus cannot yet fully benefit from corpus analysis methods. This is due to several technical obstacles involving data collection, error annotation, and finally, data processing. When it comes to data collection, compared to corpus linguistics, learner corpus is biased because some of the learner corpora are still collected manually: Optical character recognition (OCR) is not yet sophisticated enough to transform a student’s handwritten copy to a digitized text. This fact significantly slows the collection of learner corpora. Furthermore, typed students’ texts present another problem: access to spell-checkers and other proofing tools obscures students’ real language skills. Moreover, annotation of the learner corpora presents inherent difficulties: the learner corpus represents a collection of productions in the language, also called interlanguage, which deviates from the codified standard language on several linguistic levels (morphologically, syntactically, discursively), and these deviations are not yet taken into account by the processing software. This constitutes one of the challenges of current learner corpus research (Granger et al. 2015). Finally, unannotated learner corpora usually cannot be fully processed by quantitative analysis, as is the case with computerized corpora of standard texts, because of a number of erroneous forms, most of which cannot be yet recognized by the machine. However, it is possible to digitally analyze the annotated data, and this opens new perspectives particularly in the fields of foreign language acquisition and teaching.

This study presents an analysis of the Russian learner corpus, from annotation taxonomy to data processing and interpretation. The purpose of this study is to classify and quantify the data from the Russian Learner Corpus (RLC),\(^1\) as well as to reflect on the associated difficulties and discuss the results of primary data processing.

\( ^1\) Open access: http://www.web-corpora.net/RLC/
The study is based on the annotated segment of the French subcorpus of the RLC, collected in 2015-2018. The main objectives of the study are: 1) to identify general trends in the acquisition of Russian linguistic categories in the French-speaking environment and 2) to identify the linguistically “problematic areas” for two groups of learners (FLs and HLs).

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a general overview of learner corpora processing problems and specifics of error annotation taxonomies. Section 3 is devoted to Russian Learner Corpora website and its error annotation taxonomy. Section 4 describes aspects of the working corpus and collection methods used. Section 5, classifies and analyzes learner errors through five linguistic categories, i.e. spelling, morphology, syntax, lexis and discourse. Section 6 presents general observations and suggests additional lines of research.

2. Learner corpora processing and error annotation taxonomies
The automatic processing of learner corpora is still at the beginning of its development. Although automatic error annotation can be used with learner corpora (Hana et al. 2010, Rosen et al. 2014, Rakhilina et al. 2016), it is possible exclusively for regular forms and labeling parts of speech. Many erroneous items, which are difficult to label automatically, do not allow a faithful reflection of part-of-speech usage. Currently, this represents a challenge for learner corpus research (Rosen et al. 2014, Kutuzov and Kuzmenko 2015). Therefore, the only way to effectively annotate a learner corpus is to do it manually. However, this method raises other problems: many scholars have already pointed out that, in addition to the problem of objectivity of this method, manual annotation is a labor-intensive and time-consuming task (Rosen et al. 2014, Rakhilina et al. 2016, Kisselev and Furniss 2020) that requires additional skills in identification and labeling of erroneous forms. Moreover, consistency is usually lower with manual annotations.

There is a large body of literature devoted to error annotations, and this issue has been discussed in academic papers since the very beginning of learner corpus research (Granger 2003, López 2009, Hana et al. 2010, Rosen et al. 2014, Brunni et al. 2015, Rakhilina et al. 2016, Rozovskaya and Roth 2019). What emerges from the discussions is that error annotations are highly biased by specific research purposes. Furthermore, it is often
difficult to apply the tools designed for a given language to another language, as language structures are different. Nevertheless, it is still possible (and useful) to apply these tools to linguistically close languages (Brunni et al. 2015). Moreover, to be efficient, corpus annotation needs to avoid any theoretical influence and to be more general in tag labeling (Leech 1993, Mathet and Widlöcher 2019).

There are several annotation models used in learner corpus research (see Lüdeling et al. 2005). One of the most currently applied is a multi-layer standoff model, which offers multiple choice of hypotheses for one error and gives the possibility of storing the annotation apart from the text. This design was adopted by recent learner corpora, such as the FALCO corpus of German (Lüdeling et al. 2005), the Czech learner corpus CzeSL (Rozen et al. 2013), Russian Learner Corpus, RLC (Rakhilina et al. 2016), the COPLES2 of Portuguese (del Rio and Mendes 2018).

Additionally, the adopted tag annotation taxonomy varies depending on the corpus research purposes. Some of them have a restricted annotation schema, like the COPLES2 corpus of Portuguese (del Rio and Mendes 2018) with only three linguistic categories: spelling, grammar and lexis. Others are more expansive, like the NOSE corpus of Spanish with its six linguistics categories: spelling, punctuation, word grammar, clause grammar, phrase grammar, and lexis as well as four additional layers comprising an entire tagset of 612 tags (Díaz-Negrillo 2012). Small tagset taxonomies are easy to manage but they don’t allow categorisation and description of errors. By contrast, fine-grained tag annotation taxonomies are difficult to structure, and they may contain errors in annotation.

On this point, Rozovskaya and Roth’s paper (2019) is particularly interesting for our study. Like our corpus, it is based on RLC tagset, and covers Russian learner corpus of American English-speaking students (RULEC-GEC). It presents an elaborate tagset of 23 items covering “syntactic and morphosyntactic errors, spelling and lexis,” but presented tags include more specific tags covering not only general linguistic categories (such as punctuation or spelling) and specific phenomena (like verb:number/gender) but also mechanisms (like replace) involved in errors. As an example of the most frequently occurring errors it presents the following: spelling, noun:case, lexical choice, punctuation, missing word, replace, extra word, adj:case, preposition, word form, noun:number, verb:aspect, etc. Such taxonomy allows to calculate error rate and to
identify some frequent errors. The paper is not devoted to error analysis but there are some questions that arise about error annotation taxonomy. In particular, without more detailed information, some authors’ choices remain unclear. For example, do errors in case in nouns, which are most frequent grammatical errors, depend on government (прогулка по городу), or occur in independent (нет автобусу < автобуса) or nominal construction ((в) маске льва < льва), or whether they are of morphological origin in the choice of correct paradigm (читает журналы < журналов)? These questions are particularly important if one wants to use the data for language instruction. This kind of tagset taxonomy is not helpful for such purposes.

The main purpose of our taxonomy was direct application of data in the teaching process, and this point of view determined our approach to the tagset design.

3. Error annotation in the RLC corpus
While the RLC website presents an elaborate tagset (Rakhilina et al. 2016), the error annotation process is not sufficiently systematized. With the exception of raw texts that do not have a linguistic annotation of errors, most texts contain what we can call non-systematic annotations. By “non-systematic annotations” we mean labeling in a non-systematic manner, when tags are not given in an orderly way. For example, the tag “Verb – Ortho – Inflexion – Morph – Miss – Lex” for the same erroneous lexeme, would be placing errors from different linguistic categories and at multiple linguistic levels in the same tag window. This makes automatic processing of such data problematic. Nevertheless, such tag labeling makes it possible to look for a certain type of errors such as an erroneous verbal form or morphological errors.

In our work we adopted position-based tags already used in other corpora (see del Rio and Mendes 2018) which we believe to be more convenient for cross-sectional studies. As far as we know, cross-sectional studies on learner errors in relation to this corpus have not been performed. The entire error annotation process comprises three steps: first, manual labeling of errors in position-based order; second, automatic processing of manual annotations and generating of Excel tables of classified errors; and, third, checking the tables and adding more detailed error labels for the fine-grained description of errors.
The first step of labeling consisted in manual annotation of errors. In our annotation system, the top-level is represented by a linguistic category. The RLC website already subdivided all tags by general categories to which we added the “discourse” label. So, the top-level tagset included five linguistic categories, namely, spelling, morphology, syntax, lexis and discourse. Each linguistic category label could then be followed by additional tag(s), relevant for each category. Second-level, and, possibly, third-level labeling comprised more specific annotation, such as linguistic mechanisms for spelling (substitution, insertion, etc.). These additional annotation levels allowed more detailed classification within each category and facilitated automatic processing of errors. However, since second-level labeling design is still in progress for all categories, we will not discuss it in this paper and focus only on the top-level, since it already yields interesting results.

For automatic processing purposes, it was important that each type of error was labeled in a specific tag window: the spelling errors appeared separately from morphological or lexical errors, and so on. If a lexeme or an erroneous segment had more than one error, it was labeled by several tags. Like most recent learner corpora (Lüdeling et al. 2005, Rozen et al. 2013, del Rio and Mendes 2018), the RLC system offers multiple choices of categories for one error and contains a simple function to add tags by compounding them. For example, in “фон-тан безко нечно рабо тает B2, FL”, безко нечно was tagged by three tags “Ortho – Subst / Morph – Altern / Lex – Subst”: i) “Orpho – Subst” was used for possible substitution з/c which are not clearly differentiated in pronunciation, ii) “Morph – Altern” for possible ignorance of morphological alternation of voiced/voiceless consonants in a word derivation, and iii) “Lex – Subst” for erroneous lexical choice because the adverb непрерывно is preferable in this context. In this case, the identification of the linguistic category was somewhat ambiguous (is it a spelling or a morphological error?), and the double error labeling (Ortho and Morph) was counted twice.

After the first step of manual annotation by the linguistic category and additional classification of errors if necessary, the second

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2 Punctuation is one of the problematic areas of language learning, but punctuation errors were not included in our study, nor are they included in the RLC tagset. Usually, there is no special punctuation course in Russian programs in France.

3 About the marking process in the RLC website, see Rakhilina et al. (2016).
step consisted of automatic processing of data: the tags were generated automatically into Excel tables. All tables used in this paper are available on Google Drive.

Then, at the third step of data processing the task consisted in checking the tables and adding more detailed error labeling (second- and third-level) to complete error classification. This classification was made following the guidelines which have been developed (and are still under review) for each top-level category on the basis of erroneous linguistic phenomena. When structured error annotation design could not rely on previous research on Russian data, this step was executed manually. We intend to achieve a second-level taxonomy and to edit the final guidelines in the upcoming works.

4. Data and methods
This study is based on written works produced by university students from Nice, Lyon and Sorbonne University between 2015 and 2018. The working corpus includes 191 students (142 foreign learners and 49 heritage learners, see Table 1 below) aged 17 to 26.

Table 1 shows that the analyzed corpus is unequally distributed with predominant levels of A2 (38.22%) and B1 (17.80%), which represent more than half of the corpus (56.02%) and make up the bulk of students studying Russian in France. In addition, data for certain levels are relatively scarce. We are aware that the number of B1 informants in the heritage language, 1.57% (3 informants), is too low for significance testing, and they do not represent a robust sample. However, using a descriptive statistical approach, the data are intended to be purely informative and allow for the facts to be observed and described. Moreover, as the percentage of errors for each level is determined by

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4 The RLC website automatically subdivides all texts into sentences which facilitates annotation and checking since each sentence is followed by two corrected versions: the first one avoids spelling mistakes and the second one shows a modified version according to annotators’ suggestions. All texts with annotations can be downloaded into Excel tables including key information, such as text number, original sentence containing errors, tagset for the error reflecting its nature (spelling, morphological and so on), erroneous and corrected items, additional comments, and additional data (proficiency level, experiment group, informant’s name, etc.).
5 www.shorturl.at/cpAS7
6 The term heritage learners refers to speakers who are fluent in two languages at the same time, with one being reserved for the family environment and the other being used in a linguistic environment outside the family (study, work, social life).
the number of errors relative to the number of words, the error ratio remains the same regardless of the size of the group.\footnote{It is understandable that such a small sample cannot be generalized with the same confidence as a large or diverse sample can, and these results should be checked on a larger sample.}

Table 1. Number of participants according to their level and group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A1</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
<th>Total students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Learners</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>38.22%</td>
<td>17.80%</td>
<td>5.76%</td>
<td>3.66%</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.57%</td>
<td>3.14%</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>12.04%</td>
<td>25.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>38.22%</td>
<td>19.37%</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>12.57%</td>
<td>12.04%</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, our corpus includes metadata containing background information (age, gender, L1, language(s) spoken at home, time spent living in France or in a Russian-speaking country) and L2 acquisition details (university of study, course, second and foreign languages, self-rated proficiency). Once again, the collected metadata show an unbalanced distribution, particularly by gender. Due to the demographics of university-level language studies in France, our corpus contains data from three times as many female students as male students (76.41% women versus 23.56% men for the analyzed corpus), as shown below.

Moreover, the French corpus is a Multi-L1 corpus reflecting the demographics of the French society, which is especially obvious at the University of Nice. Thus, our participants included native French learners but also students from various Slavic countries (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Poland, Croatia), students from the Romance language areas (Italy, Romania), and others (native Chechens, Armenians, Hungarians). These nonnative French speakers were, however, mostly raised in France or spent several years in a French-speaking environment; thus, French was their dominant language. The most common foreign languages already
spoken by study participants were English, Spanish and Italian, which are also the most studied languages in the French educational system.

Table 2. Level groups by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Foreign learners (% of the FLs data)</th>
<th>Heritage learners (% of HLs data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>11 (5.76%)</td>
<td>6 (3.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>61 (31.94%)</td>
<td>12 (6.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>25 (13.09%)</td>
<td>9 (4.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>8 (4.19%)</td>
<td>3 (1.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>7 (3.66%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students by gender (% of the total)</td>
<td>112 (58.61%)</td>
<td>30 (15.71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect of the study concerns language testing. The student’s language proficiency level was determined by the students’ language instructors and in accordance with the participants’ self-assessment. Most of the participants were identified by their first name with their permission (or, rarely, by a nickname). This identification method was advantageous, since the knowledge of the learners dominant language or L1 would help the annotator who is familiar with them and is able to guess the students’ intentions. However, we are aware that this could also be seen as a flaw in the annotation process, since objectivity and privacy are lost.

Thus, the working corpus includes work at all language proficiency levels, from beginners (A1 level) to the highest Russian proficiency level in the CEFR, a near-native C1 and a native C2. In addition, the corpus includes written productions of two groups of students: foreign learners (FLs) and heritage French-Russian learners (HLs). The analyzed annotated
data comprised more than 42,000 words. Details concerning the corpus are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Annotated corpus (token counts) in RLC website according to French students’ level and group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language background</th>
<th>Language level</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
<th>Number of texts</th>
<th>Average number of words per text</th>
<th>Standard deviation in number of words per text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Learners</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>5.74%</td>
<td>2416</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>109.82</td>
<td>87.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>27.74%</td>
<td>11673</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>113.33</td>
<td>77.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>16.24%</td>
<td>6836</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>151.91</td>
<td>65.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>2527</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>157.94</td>
<td>54.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>4.13%</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>193.33</td>
<td>87.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FL Total</td>
<td>59.86%</td>
<td>25192</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>129.19</td>
<td>78.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Learners</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>0.44%</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62.33</td>
<td>31.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>2.30%</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>58.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>12.84%</td>
<td>5402</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>158.88</td>
<td>78.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>24.56%</td>
<td>10336</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>240.37</td>
<td>166.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HL Total</td>
<td>40.14%</td>
<td>16891</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>196.41</td>
<td>137.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td><strong>42083</strong></td>
<td>281</td>
<td>149.76</td>
<td>104.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data was collected by manual typing from handwritten sources submitted by students during Russian L2 training, from 2015 to 2018. The written works included students’ essays, biographies, summaries, and occasional translations from French; some of them were written during timed exam sessions, while others were written at home.
Once the data were collected and ordered by language proficiency level, the second step was to annotate them. The text annotations were carried out by at least two annotators. However, double annotation in the RLC website was problematic: it could not allow simultaneous labeling by different annotators. The second annotator could see the edited labels and was able to make changes to the labeling, by erasing previous labels. Therefore, the annotation process was organized as follows: the markup assistant was responsible for detecting and marking errors in a raw document, the second (if there was one) made its own annotations, and then the referring annotator (authors of the paper) checked and corrected the annotations if necessary.

5. Linguistic categories and quantitative analysis
In this section, we describe linguistic phenomena found in five linguistic categories, i.e., spelling, morphology, syntax, lexis and discourse. Before discussing the results of error analysis, this general overview (see Table 4, p. 50) presents error distribution by students’ group and level for each linguistic category.

5.1. Spelling errors
This is the only linguistic category that is automatically detected by the program, since the part-of-speech annotation with spelling entries is applied in the RLC. The nonnormative items are already highlighted in the raw corpus. However, not all nonnormative items should be considered spelling errors. Some errors are obviously morphological (like Арабые A2 -> Арабские with a missing suffix in derivation), and others, involving word usage, are lexical (like пиано A2 -> пианино as a case of direct transfer from French piano). Thus, the category of spelling errors is limited to errors that do not fit into any other category of linguistic development and follow four main patterns (see below).

Inspired by the RLC tagset, spelling errors are classed by four mechanisms: substitution (ещё B1 FL > ещё), insertion of extra letters (дольго A2 FL), omission of letters (станцию A1 FL), and transposition of letters (старше C2 HL > старше). We also mark the abusive use of Latin graphemes (Виолет B1 FL) as a subgroup of substitution: they reveal cognitive mechanisms in acquisition. Typographical errors involving hyphenation (когда(-)то, когда(-)то C1 HL) or word or nonword spacing
(На конец A2 FL > Наконец) were of lesser interest to us, as they did not disturb word meaning; they also represented a very small ratio of the overall errors.

Figure 1. Progression of Spelling Errors in FLs (bold line) and HLs (dotted line)

Spelling errors characterize any written work. Figure 1 shows the progression of spelling errors made by our groups (FLs and HLs) according to the CEFR proficiency levels (from the beginners A1 and FLs to the Russian native speakers C2). In the Figure 1 here and in the Figures below, the x-axis indicates the language level of the students (from A1 to C2), and the y-axis shows a ratio between the number of errors and the number of words at each level.

The two descending curves in Figure 1 represent the gradual decrease in error number proportional to the students’ increase in language proficiency, and this tendency is observed for both FLs and HLs. However, the two categories of learners master spelling in different ways. For FLs, a relatively large number of errors remains stable at the two initial levels (A) and then slowly decreases until they are nearly equal at the last two levels (B2 and C1). For HLs, the problem of spelling is the greatest difficulty at the initial B1 level: nearly 2.5 times as many errors

\[\text{This is likely to be true for native speakers as well. However, we are not aware of any study of this kind. The learner corpus of Russian L1 CoRST (http://web-corpora.net/learner_corpus/) with its annotated corpus of 1.06 mln tokens, could be used for such a comparison.}\]
as the FLs at the beginning levels and 4 times as many errors as at the FLs B1 level. At subsequent levels, the number of errors produced by HLs dropped sharply, and much more rapidly (especially between the first and the second level of proficiency) than for FLs (see Figure 1). Their stronger linguistic background in Russian oral skills can probably explain this fact. Therefore, our foreign students needed three levels to master Russian spelling, while our heritage learners required only two: the number of errors for both groups becomes approximately equal at the C1 level.

Table 4: Error distribution by students’ group and level for each linguistic category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language background</th>
<th>Language level</th>
<th>Students’ errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spell.</td>
<td>Syntax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>1109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL Total</td>
<td>1399</td>
<td>2234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL Total</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^*$ Total number of errors without complex errors.
A deeper analysis of spelling errors revealed that the most frequent spelling error involved the substitution of letters (47.5% of all spelling errors), and 70% of substitutions involved vowels (mostly between a and o). The substitution of Cyrillic letters by Latin graphemes is also quite frequent (4.3%), as it outnumbers the errors in transposition (3.5%), which are a subgroup apart. Observed only during the first three levels of language learning, the substitution of Latin graphemes is influenced by “the writing memory” of the already mastered writing system, of French in our case (Иван! A1 FL, Билет B1 FL, укавото B2 HL > у кого-то). The FLs also made an important number of mistakes in missing letters (филь B1 FL, прие(з)жает B1 FL, рус(с)КОго B2 FL).

The factors that influence spelling errors may be of two types: contextual and noncontextual. The contextual (or syntagmatic) factors mainly concern transposition errors, where two inverted letters are situated nearby (прибыли A2 FL > прибыли, встретила B1 FL > встретила, православный B2 HL > православный). The noncontextual (or paradigmatic) factors have various origins, i.e., cognitive, intra- and interlinguistic, and extralinguistic. They mostly lead to omission errors. Thus, in cases like воз(в)ращаюсь A2 FL, Тринадцать B1 FL, Чю(в)ствовать C1 HL, the omission is motivated by peculiarities of pronunciation (assimilation or devoicing) and therefore by the sound perception of learners; the missing consonants are less audible for a non-Russian speaker (also лес(ти)нце A1 FL, быстра A2 FL). Cases of the substitution of a by o may be the result of a lack of attention or of “hypercorrection”, i.e., a self-correction of the frequent item (here a letter) in a wrong position (пассо-жИры B1 FL, сначало C1 HL). However, contextual and noncontextual factors are complementary, and this is often the case in most errors of substitution and insertion.

5.2. Morphological errors
Errors that involve the morphemic structure of an item or its inherent morphological features were considered morphological errors. During the annotation process, two main morphological aspects were identified as most problematic, namely morphological mechanisms (alternation and derivation) and morphological features (gender, number).

Morphological mechanisms represent almost 90% of all morphological errors, according to our data. We considered alternation
as a contextual phenomenon where the choice of a correct form depends on the left-hand (nature of the ending phoneme) or the right-hand (nature of the initial phoneme) context. This group was primarily divided into strictly alternation errors and errors in inflectional endings.

In the strictly alternation subgroup (26% of the category), we deal with the alternations occurring in roots, which vary in nature. The alternation of this type occurs mostly in verbal roots (50% of errors). They concern palatalization patterns, such as т / ч, с / щ, ск / ш, (пописут А1 FL > подпишут, подпишали А2 FL > подписали, хотет B1 FL > хочет) but include other cases of alternations occurring in verbal roots (мыут А1 FL > мойт, брает B2 FL > берёт, заканчивают B2 FL > заканчивают). Even if the previous cases may occur in nouns as well, errors of this kind are rare in nouns. Most cases in nouns affect epenthetic vowels (рынке A2 FL > рынке, зайца B1 FL > зайца). Other cases with irregular nouns, such as друзья А2 FL > друзьями, деревами B2 FL > деревьыми, must be mentioned.

Other alternations involve affixes. In addition to the cases of inflectional affixes shown below, we mostly find verbal suffix alternations, such as -ова-/у-, -нy-/–, etc. (рисовает А2 FL > рисует, достигли А1 FL > достигли) or postfixes with -ся / -сь alternation (встречала-сь А1 FL > встречалась, одеваясь A2 FL > одеваюсь) but also find errors in prefixes (подбежала А2 FL > подбежала, безконечно B2 FL > бесконечно).

Finally, there are some errors related to the sandhi phenomenon. Errors of this kind usually occur with prepositions (25% of errors) involving a misuse of epenthetic vowels with в, с, к, etc. (во парке А1 FL > в парке, в(о) Францию A2 FL) or with third-person pronouns where an epenthetic н is missing or wrongly inserted (у (н)их есть А2 FL, старше нее B1 FL > старше её).

As Russian endings appeared to be the main source of difficulties for non-Russian learners, appearing in approximately one-third of all morphological errors, we chose to classify them into a particular subgroup: errors in inflectional endings. The quantitative analysis shows the following error distribution by part of speech: inflection errors occur mostly in nouns (56%), the ratio of verbal and adjective errors is 25% and 17%, respectively, and the remaining 2% involve pronouns and numerals. The alternation errors are found in nominal and adjective
inflections, where the inappropriate form of the flexional alternation was chosen: украинцы C1 FL > украинцы, так много волосов A1 FL > так много волос, людей B2 FL > людей; родительского B1 FL > родительского, младшим B2 FL > младшим. Thus, according to Russian phonological and spelling norms, the ending _и after _ц (instead of _ы) is due to the frequent confusion of _ц with a hushing consonant (which implies such a choice), and a flexional _е does not appear after a velar consonant (родительского vs. среднего) nor does an unstressed _о appear after a hushing consonant (cf. старшего).

It is important to emphasize here that the errors of this kind concern only “obviously correct” forms on the syntagmatic level, such as the choice of regular plural genitive endings for nouns (between _ов/-ей/zero flexion for the errors above) or the 1st and 2nd plural inflections of the verb (-ем/ем; -ете/-ите): хочем B1 FL > хотим, увидете C1 HL > увидите. When the choice is wrong on the paradigmatic level (i.e., a genitive inflection morpheme instead of a dative morpheme), the problems are not morphological but syntactic. However, if the error cannot be explained by alternation mechanisms (on the syntagmatic or paradigmatic level), we are dealing with derivational instances.

Another set of errors concerns derivational mechanisms includes various phenomena. It may appear in the cases of “paradigmatic intruders” when a morpheme combination does not belong to the word paradigm, while the morphemes are correct independently. This is the group of word form creations in which the inflectional (in most cases) morpheme is chosen from another paradigm. Thus, in forms such as письмы A1 FL and человечки A2 FL, linguistic features of the items are not respected: if the nominal inflection _и is used to mark plural, it is used here with nonrespect to the morphological gender of a noun (the plural neuter implies _а, письма) and to its suppletive plural form (люди). The same problem occurs in the following examples: ногами A1 FL (noun with adjectival flection), по выходным A2 FL (adjective with noun flexion), плакать A1 FL (confusion of verb derivational suffix), Толстой B1 FL > Толстого (adjective declension confused with a nominal declension for Russian last names), лучше A1 FL > лучше (inappropriate comparative suffix for this suppletive form), ездит B2 HL > ездит (fusion of two paradigms: infinitive basis of <езди>ть (езdit) and the third-person inflection of ехать (ед<ет>).

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In addition to this case of regular morphemic items, another group is represented by word creations that disturb the morphemic entity of the word. We consider here examples such as отношениенів A2 FL > отношений, французских A2 FL > французов, климатной C1 HL > климатической, which contain inappropriate or missing morphemes. Word creation of this kind usually indicates a lack of mastering derivation mechanisms: in отношениенів, the ending -ий of отношений is wrongly interpreted as an inflection (not as a part of the root), in французских, the plural genitive noun is derived from an adjective (французский), and климатной does not use the appropriate derivational adjective suffix. However, all such errors cannot be so easily explained, and word creations like осается A2 FL > оставаться, пасутся A2 FL > па- сутся are usually not clear without a large context. Most of them are apparently conditioned by a cognitive ability of individual memory (phonetic or written memory of words). Nevertheless, some particular but rare creations are remarkably good and worth mentioning as well: лыжит A1 FL > едет/катается на лыжах, добрость A1 FL > доброта. Finally, errors that imply categorical change (like the use of an adjective русский instead of an adverb по-русски) are considered lexical errors (see below).

Figure 2. Progression of Morphological Errors of FLs (bold line) and HLs (dotted line)
Another group of learner errors illustrates a problematic use of morphological features. The small number of errors of this kind (approximately 10% of the category) does not mean that they do not represent a source of difficulties for our participants. Rather, the small number is explained by our methodological choices: only inherent morphological features of nouns are taken into account here, and the verbal aspect, due to its borderline nature putting it between morphology and syntax, is considered among syntactic problems. Thus, erroneous interpretation of gender in nouns and erroneous use of number in singularia or pluralia tantum remain relatively rare. The errors in gender are not be considered inflectional errors and their identification is mostly possible through a larger context (particularly, thanks to adjective agreement): for instance, Россия <многонациональный> государство(o). C1 HL. Errors in gender are obviously influenced by cognitive and/or interlinguistic factors; however, their interpretation is debatable. Thus, in К ним подбежает собак(a) Шарик. A1, FL, the noun собака is missing the flection, like most masculine nouns, visibly by association with the semantic genre of the noun that refers to a male dog Sharik, but it can also be explained by the influence of its French masculine counterpart (le chien). On the other side, words like temperatura(a) A2 FL, гитара(a) A2 FL with the same missing ending were not interpreted as morphological errors in gender (their French counterparts are feminine: la temperature, une guitare and the context does not suggest any information about their gender), so, errors like this have to be considered as lexical errors by loan translation from French.

As for errors in number, they are usually influenced by a semantic factor: the inappropriate plural forms are prevalent and correspond to collective nouns: (люблю есть) рыбы A1 FL > рыбу (<j’aime> le poisson, singular in French). Once again, the interlinguistic influence may be strong: in French, the plural is often required in such a case: покупать одежду A2 FL, картофели A2 FL (e.g., acheter les vêtements, les pommes de terre). In addition to these cases, errors in number can also be of a syntactic (agreement in number for adjectives: красивый <фотки>. A1 FL) and discursive nature (the choice of plural for generalization, for instance) and will be treated in the corresponding sections.

10 (…) температура(a) тепло и не обычно облачно. (Marine A.-C., A2, FL)
11 Я люблю смотреть экстремальные виды спорта, новости и теле сериал(ы). (Petya, B1 FL)
Therefore, the use of morphological features is directly linked to extralinguistic factors such as cognitive ability of individual’s memory and interlinguistic influence. These morphological issues require special attention at all stages of learning, both for foreign and heritage students.

Morphological errors may also be viewed from the perspective of language acquisition. Morphology is the first grammatical domain in Russian language training in the university educational system. Syntax, although present at the introductory level, is reduced to some basic constructions. Thus, it is predictable to find a higher number of morphological errors at the introductory levels. Indeed, quantitative data based on the error ratio in our corpus at each proficiency level of Russian shows a high ratio of errors at the beginning A1 level and its steady decrease from level to level indicating gradual mastery of morphology with language training (see Figure 2). This tendency is characteristic for both groups. Thus, while the number of morphological errors made by FLs is very high at the initial A levels, their number declines gradually through B2 level. The difference in the ratio of morphological errors made by FLs and by HLs becomes small at the high intermediate level. Overall, in regard to both morphology and spelling, our two groups (FLs and HLs) are situated equally at the B2 level. As the data show, the first four levels of training, which usually correspond to the number of years of training, are fundamental for mastering Russian morphology; with the assimilation of morphological forms, the number of errors is gradually reduced. However, it is remarkable that at the B2 and C1 levels, the situation becomes stable. It turns out that FLs, who are fluent in Russian, continue to make certain morphological mistakes and do not reach, according to our data, the level of morphological mastery characteristic of native speakers C2, who themselves still make a certain number of errors.

The factors influencing morphological errors have yet to be fully determined, but this preliminary view shows that both intralinguistic (determined by other Russian forms) and interlinguistic (i.e., linguistic transfer, motivated by French, English or other L1) factors are strong influences.

5.3. Syntactic errors
Syntactic errors violate the rules of word combination. Since syntactic errors are varied in nature, they will have to be analyzed in greater
detail in a future study. We propose here only an overview of syntactic points included in this category and discuss specific problems related to the annotation choices. For efficient data processing, we divided all syntactic errors into three groups, grouping them by their proximity. Thus, the first group contains all agreement errors, where case, gender, number or person agreement is not respected. The second group involves errors occurring in syntactic constructions. Finally, the third section includes other syntactic errors covering mainly the argument structure of particular items and parts-of-speech syntax. Agreement errors may affect any variable part of speech: nouns, adjectives, verbs, pronouns, and numerals. According to their nature, they may vary on four morphological parameters: on case (Ex. 1), gender (Ex. 2), number (Ex. 3) and person (Ex. 4):12

1) Французский народ и его культуру протеста. (Fr2, F, A2, FL) > культуры (A / N)
2) <Конференция> состоялась на прошлой неделе в Париже. (Emilie C., A2, FL) > состоялась (m / f)
3) Арабский <страны> готовы инвестировать 12 миллион долларов к проекту. (Ed, A2, FL) > арабские (m sg / pl)
4) <Моя подруга> очень люблю читать. (Amandine M., B1, FL) > любит (1sg / 3sg)

There are no specific difficulties in labeling errors of this kind except for the subgroup of case agreement. Indeed, the RLC tagset presents three tags that are very similar and particularly difficult to distinguish at first sight. They are a “Case agreement”, “Government” and “Constructions”, which are not exclusive, particularly, “Constructions”. What is the appropriate syntactic tag to be used for a sentence like “Город Москва находится на европейский часть россий. (Marielle, A2, FL)”? One can say that there is an error in a verbal construction since европейская часть does not respect the case implied by the prepositional government after the verb. From a semantic point of view, it might be so, but we decided not to include cases like this in the construction phenomena group and reserve the term “construction” for specific patterns (see below). Therefore, in the example above, the error had to be classified as an agreement or a government phenomenon. We classified часть as a government error.

12 Due to lack of space, we will not detail the parameters of each morphological class and refer the reader to any Russian grammar.
implied by a verbal prepositional government (находиться на + L) with a nonrespect of implied case (nominative instead of locative). However, the adjective европейские is an example of an agreement error, as it does not agree with the associated noun in gender (but it is in agreement in case, which is assumed to be inanimate accusative by the student) and has to be treated separately. As for России (россий), we believe that for such a case, the error probably comes from spelling, under effect of the left-hand context (otherwise, it is a government error since the genitive is required by its function as a nominal complement). Therefore, a government error is an error that always implies hierarchical dependency between the main word and a subordinate word(s), while an agreement error appears in an equal relationship of word compatibility. That is why errors in case agreement are specifically errors of adjectival or participial case agreement (Ex. 5) and of a subject marking (Ex. 6):

5) Много студентов и ректоров сожалели об этом, потому что это передаёт плохую картину об итальянских университетах (...) (Chiara, B2, FL) > итальянских (N=A / L)

6) У него есть жену. (Chloé, A1, FL) > жена (A / N)

The subject postposition (Ex. 6) presents an additional difficulty in case marking, as the postposition is usually associated with an object position (most likely, by transfer effect): many erroneous examples that use accusative instead of the nominative case testify to this fact. The errors of this kind occur in the HLs’ productions as well (На столе стоит черную лампу. Ruslan, B1, HL).

The subgroup of constructions covers various syntactic patterns, such as comparative (Ex. 7), impersonal and related to it constructions (Ex. 8, 9), negative constructions (Ex. 10) and other constructional errors (like Ex.11 with missing subject), but the latter are rare:

7) У нее брат [старше ее (на) девять лет]. (Mathez, B1, FL)

8) [Люди без квалификации есть много], им трудно найти хорошую работу на бирже труда. (Arlo, C1, HL) > людей (N / G)

9) [Вам нужны более двадцать четыре часа], чтобы приехать в Новой Зеландии. (Caroline, B1, FL)

We choose not to differentiate the terms “locative” and “prepositional” and use only “locative” for both cases. From the other side, the nominative has to be considered as a mixed case of “Nominative/Accusative” since часть is a homonymous form for both of these grammatical cases.
10) Дети [(не) знают ничего] о мире. (Fr1 (M), A2, FL)
11) Я купался в море, [(он) было теплым]. (Marion, A1, FL)
12) Конференция состоялась [в прошлой неделе] в Париже. (Laurie, A2, FL)

In this section, we also take into account errors in prepositional constructions viewed as independent prepositional phrases (marking time, space, purpose) (Ex. 12), which have to be distinguished from errors in government (see below). The ratio of errors in prepositional constructions is very high, since a lot of attention is given to them in a typical training course and because prepositions are among the most used items in Russian\(^{15}\) and mastering prepositions in L2 is usually difficult. A preliminary analysis of data reveals that a high number of errors at A1 level are due to omission of prepositions (especially for в- and на-constructions), but at A2-B1 levels mistakes in prepositions are more frequent (particularly in the same constructions with в and на). For a more detailed presentation of prepositional constructions in the French learner corpus see Kor Chahine, Perova-Nouvelot, and Uetova 2019.

The last subgroup presents the remaining syntactic issues, which can be divided into two sections: argument structure problems and a parts-of-speech syntax. The preliminary results show that the verbal argument structure (verbal government) is the most problematic point for our learners (Ex. 13), along with the usage of verbal categories (aspect, tense, mood) (Ex. 14, 15):

13) Я увлекаюсь спортом, музыку. (Bogan, B2, FL) > музыкой (A / I)
14) Обычно я опаздываю. (Djaïa, A2, FL) > опаздываю (PF / IPF)
15) Дядя Федор решить уйди искать клад. (Cosme, A1, FL) > решил (inf / pst)

The most frequent errors in this subgroup concern government (76%). Interestingly, the number of government errors does not decrease between the A1-B2 levels. This peculiarity can be explained by the fact that the study of items and their government patterns is an arduous process, since each verb must be memorized separately due to its specificity, in contrast, for example, to mood and passive voice for verbs, the material of which is more grammatical and can be summarized in general rules.

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From Error Annotation to Quantitative Analysis
Kor Chahine, Uetova

Figure 3. Progression of Syntax Errors in FLs (bold line) and HLs (dotted line)

Other syntactic errors deal with the use of auxiliary verbs, the choice of attribute case markings for nouns or the use of long / short forms for adjectives and participles; other syntactic errors can be labeled with additional tags and be associated with the aforementioned errors:

16) Ты <будешь быть счастливее> чем все животные! (Fr1, M, A2, FL) > будешь счастливее (Aux extra)
17) <Любовь очень опасная>. (Fr1, M, A2, FL) > опасна (LF / SF)
18) Отец <был преподаватель> в университете. (Camille, B1, FL) > преподавателем (N / I)

This overview of syntactic issues that cause errors among learners can also be supplemented by other syntactic points discussed in Uetova et al. (2019). As for the quantitative data including all syntactic errors, its general picture is presented in Figure 3. According to the descending curves and a high error ratio at the initial levels, A1 for FLs and B1 for HLs, a new syntactic system of Russian apparently destabilizes students’ syntactic habits in some way. However, the “grammatical shock” does not last more than one level, and at the next step, the A2 and B2 levels for FLs and HLs, respectively, the error ratio becomes almost stable, before decreasing until the C1 level for FLs, where the syntactic error ratios of both groups are very similar. A slight increase in the number of errors
at the C1 level in HLs may be explained by learners’ confidence in using more diversified linguistic constructions, but a qualitative analysis of syntactic errors is needed to confirm this hypothesis. Thus, as for the morphological category, at the end of their training, FLs and HLs master syntactic questions to almost the same level, but they continue making some syntactic errors that prevent them from approaching the C2 level of native speakers. This observation seems to be a general tendency for our participants who, for the most part, continued academic training and did not leave the educational system.

5.4. Lexical errors and errors in discourse
Lexical errors and errors in discourse follow similar trends and can be discussed together. They also present a slightly different picture in error progression compared to the previously mentioned purely grammatical parameters, as we will see below. However, these categories concern different linguistic questions, and they are annotated separately for both data systematization and more sufficient automatic processing.

Lexical issues are usually related to semantic questions. However, in the case of foreign language acquisition, the area involving lexical errors is broader and exceeds the limits of semantics. Some errors reveal a derivational mechanism of word creation, such as direct loans from French (or other languages, L1 or L2) (like температур(a) A2 FL, гитар(a) A2 FL, seen above), which do not conform to Russian linguistic norms, or cases of code switching, namely, for proper names (в городе Annecy в Альпах A2 FL > Аннеси), but this mechanism does not truly represent a linguistic error, as it is currently well represented in Russian media. Other errors are lexical calques, i.e., loan translations (большие окно двери A2 FL > французские окна, from fr. portes-fenêtres). However, errors of this kind are rare. Most of the errors (almost three quarters) involve a substitution of words belonging to Russian vocabulary. Such errors occur in any part of speech\(^\text{16}\) (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and numerals). Nonetheless, lexical errors of this kind involve not only semantics (очень много меняется C1 HL > быстро, from fr. change

\(^{16}\) As prepositions are always related to singular patterns (as a prepositional phrase or depending on a verb or a noun), they are described in the syntax category. As for interjections, they are extremely rare in written texts.
beaucoup) but also grammatical features of words: in many examples  
the semantically close lexemes are grammatically confused (Меня  
зобут Жиль и я французский. A2 FL > француз, from fr. je suis  
Français (Noun / Adj)). The preliminary analysis of data confirms  
the previous statement that lexical substitutions have extralinguistic  
origins involving linguistic transfer.

Thus, the lexical category comprises various errors, namely, errors  
in word substitution as mentioned above, errors in conjunctions and  
reflexive verbs, and usage of erroneous part-of-speech forms and idioms:
19) Дядя Федор читает что-то и кот ест колбасу с молоком. (Cosme,  
A1, FL) > а
20) Когда мы устаем мы идем в ретсоран и пить вино, чтобы себя  
разогреть. (Amandine M., B1, FL) > согреться
21) Позже, когда он стал старший, она всегда садилась в кресле  
и он приносил не подушку, а цветы. (Manon, A2, FL) > старше
22) Однако самый север страны находится за полярным поясом,  
там где лет никогда не тает. (3730, C1, HL) > полярным кругом

It is not surprising that students make most errors (half of the errors)  
with verbs, since, in addition to the semantics of simple verbs, Russian  
verbs can differ by their prefixes (перейти-пройти, уходить-выходить),  
which determine their meaning. Lexical errors are also frequent in nouns,  
adjectives and adverbs. Erroneous substitution of pronouns occurs rarely.
As for the misuse of prepositions, such errors should not be attributed  
to vocabulary, but rather to syntactic constructions (see above), since the  
choice of a preposition depends on the word that governs it in most cases  
(usually a verb or a noun).

While lexical error annotation does not present particular  
difficulties, errors in discourse raise some questions. The discourse  
section itself is closely related to lexis, but the word usage here depends  
on different contextual parameters. As a result, we find here perfectly  
grammatical constructions that, nevertheless, turn out to be anomalous  
in relation to a wider context. Even though the discourse category was  
not as detailed as other categories, the preliminary results reveal some  
characteristic trends. Thus, most errors in discourse represent examples  
of a misuse of referential lexis (principally, a subject or object being  
inserted or missing) in anaphoric or cataphoric position (Ex. 23-25) and  
errors in discourse word order (Ex. 26-27). The explanation of erroneous
word order usually comes from a transpositional mechanism: as learners first lexicalize their thoughts in French, they frequently transpose the word order of French constructions to Russian (notably with есть “il y a” in the initial position, Ex. 26). However, transpositions from English are not so rare, as the learner wants to move away from the syntax of his or her native language: this is probably the case in Example 27, where the Russian construction follows the same word order as in French (cf. le soutien des Français / French support).

23) Я сказала, что увидела много интересных мест и я встретила много друзей. (Vanya, B2, FL)

24) Но подожди, я буду объяснять вам почему я думаю это. (Fr1 (M), A2, FL) > я так думаю

25) В регионе Веллингтона, есть много вина, особенно белое вино. (Caroline, B1, FL)

26) Город лежит на Северном острове (есть два острова в Новой Зеландии). (Caroline, B1 FL) > в Новой Зеландии есть два острова

27) Оппозиция получила французскую поддержку. (Ed, A2, FL) > поддержку французов, probably from English
In addition to the referential lexis and word order, this category also includes errors in discursive lexis (Ex. 28-30) and discursive constructions (Ex. 31), which are close to purely lexical issues. Annotating these phenomena separately enables a more detailed analysis in the future.

28) В дом моих мечтаний, будут тоже чердак над спальнями… (Fr1 (M), A2, FL) > также

29) (...), массовый туризм разрушает землю и более конкретно туристических объектов. (Alexandre, B1, FL) > в частности

30) Правда говоря я уже задумывался об этих фактах раньше, когда я изучал Французский язык. (Rouslan, B2, HL) > по правде говоря

31) ЭТО КАНИКУЛЫ! (Alexis, A1, FL) > Наступили каникулы!

Thus, the quantitative data of lexis and discourse reveal quite similar trends in error progression. Therefore, Figures 4 and 5 (see below) are the first not to show steadily decreasing lines. Instead, they seem to point out gradual changes in error number, both in lexis and in discourse, which, however, still decreases with improved proficiency. This tendency is typical for both groups of learners (foreign and heritage students).
In addition, preliminary data also show some differences between our two groups. At the B2-C1 levels HLs make more mistakes in idiomatic expressions and conjunctions than FLs.

Figure 4. Progression of Lexical Errors of FLs (bold line) and HLs (dotted line)

Figure 5. Progression of Discourse Errors in FLs (bold line) and HLs (dotted line)
Finally, the acquisition of discourse category also takes place gradually: while it is relatively easy to learn a linguistic form, its usage in an appropriate context is much more difficult and needs more practice. Our figures also show that the intermediate B1 level represents an important step in lexical or discursive acquisition, as the error ratio suddenly increases. A plausible explanation for this finding may be that, at this level, learners “feel more confident” in the Russian grammatical system and are expected to explore more challenging lexical topics and types of writing that go beyond simplified lexical domains and expository texts. However, factors influencing lexical and discursive mastery require further investigation.

6. General observations and further perspectives
The main purpose of this paper was to show that even “simple” primary data, without the usage of sophisticated statistical manipulations, can yield interesting results for use in learner corpus research. Thus, Figures 6 and 7 present the overall error distributions of the FLs and HLs (see next page).

As the data show, in both groups, the error ratio gradually decreases for each linguistic category. In addition, the large error ratio shows which areas are problematic for our groups and are likely to generate errors. It is worth mentioning here that the error rate in our groups is distributed as follows (see Table 5): the FLs are at 21.15% error rate, while the HLs reach almost 11% on average. For the advanced students (B2 and C1 levels), the error rate falls between 9.48%-13.11%, which is slightly higher than 6.3% error rate in RULEC-GEC Russian data, but still remains low on average compared to other learner corpora (English, Arabic) (Rozovskaya and Roth 2019, 6).

Table 5. Error rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A1</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>32.57</td>
<td>23.76</td>
<td>18.70</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>10.52</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>21.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>31.55</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>10.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32.57</td>
<td>23.76</td>
<td>19.04</td>
<td>13.11</td>
<td>9.48</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>15.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Dynamics of Errors in FLs by linguistic category

Figure 7. Dynamics of Errors in HLs by linguistic category
Due to specificity and different purposes of each learner corpus analysis, the comparison with other learner corpora data can be made only partly. Thus, Russian corpus RULEC-GIC of American students's texts places Russian spelling, vocabulary, noun case usage, punctuation and missing word at the top five error categories for FLs and HLS (Rozovskaya and Roth 2019, 6), while English corpus analysis points out English vocabulary, articles, and spelling as most problematic areas for Spanish students (López 2009, 684). As for our data, all mistakes made by FLs and HLS of Russian in a French-speaking environment are classified by linguistic category as follows:

Table 6. Ratio of errors made by FLs and HLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Morphology</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Lexis</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Learners</td>
<td>26.26</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td><strong>41.94</strong></td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Learners</td>
<td><strong>34.87</strong></td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>32.26</td>
<td>15.57</td>
<td>10.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data show that the most problematic area for our FLs group is Russian syntax (42%), followed by spelling (26%), morphology (13%), lexis (12.5%) and, finally, discourse (6.5%). On the other hand, for our HLS group, the greatest challenge is spelling (35%), closely followed by syntax (32%), lexis (15.5%), discourse (10%), and morphology (6.9%). In summary, except for the spelling problems for HLS, syntax turns out to be the most problematic area for our groups of learners. However, this statement needs to be more nuanced: morphology and syntax in Russian are closely related. For example, inflectional morphemes in nouns are not only cumulative—they mark gender, number and case—but they also assign a syntactic role in a phrase. This also applies to verbs: morphologically inherent aspectual features imply restrictions to the verbal syntax. Thus, case and aspect choices were counted as syntactic problems in our data. Perhaps, it would be more appropriate for these particular questions to be further investigated by distinguishing a morphosyntactic category via a tag label, which would allow a more detailed picture of general error distribution to be drawn.
Besides general patterns reflecting Russian language proficiency, our study reveals important aspects for improving teaching methods: understanding typical areas of difficulty for specific learner groups allows to pay more attention to these issues during training. Identification of more problematic issues in each linguistic category of Russian grammar and for each linguistic level and group would be the next stage in error analysis. For these reasons, we believe it is necessary to set up a more effective error annotation system with a fine-grained description of each category. Moreover, quantitative analysis should gain in effectiveness when it is complemented by qualitative analysis since the same error ratio doesn’t imply the same type of errors in different learner groups, and this is a topic for future research.

Acknowledgements
The authors would like to thank Natalia Partenheimer, Amanda Edmonds and the anonymous RLJ reviewers for their expertise, valuable comments and stylistic suggestions which substantially helped the authors improve the first draft of the paper.

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Excerpt from
Ключевые идеи русской языковой картины мира

The Breadth of the Russian Soul

ALEXEI D. SHMELEV

Translated by NICOLE-MARIE KONOPELKO
Preface by STEPHEN M. DICKEY

Preface

In 2005 a collection of articles appeared under the title Ключевые идеи русской языковой картины мира (‘Key Ideas of the Russian Linguistic Worldview’), authored by Anna A. Zalizniak, Irina B. Levontina and Aleksei D. Shmelev and published by the Языки славянской культуры (‘Languages of Slavic Culture’) publishing house in Moscow. The studies in Key Ideas of the Russian Linguistic Worldview were inspired by the work of Anna Wierzbicka, most notably her Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, Japanese (Oxford University Press, 1997). The idea behind the volume is that language communities operate with a ‘linguistic picture of the world’, i.e., a linguistic worldview, which consists of a network of important concepts that can be specific to a culture in their particular configurations, and which, last but not least, are expressed by corresponding ‘key words’. The chapters of Key Ideas of the Russian Linguistic Worldview discuss numerous such key words of the Russian language. The first section of the book is titled ‘In place of an Introduction’, which is followed by five sections:—‘Space and Time’, ‘People: Soul and Body’, ‘Feelings and Attitudes’, ‘Intentions and Dealings’, and ‘Ethical Concepts’. The book then concludes with ‘In Place of a Conclusion’ and an appendix that contains a revised Russian version of Wierzbicka (2002) accompanied by a commentary from Shmelev. Sections two through six are the core of the book; each section contains between three and eight chapters on various words expressing the key concepts of the Russian linguistic worldview. These chapters present a wealth of information, ranging from the differences between Russian
The Breadth of the Russian Soul
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and western terms for periods of the day, to the precise nature of бы́т ‘daily life' and пошлость ‘crassness,' to the area of sensitivity (e.g., оби́дно ‘annoying/frustrating' and сове́стно ‘ashamed’), to name a few. The authors note repeatedly that the words they discuss resist translation into other languages (indeed, the translations given for the words above can only be taken as rough/contextual equivalents). The volume is well worth reading in its entirety, especially for foreign students/scholars of Russian who do not grow up with an intuitive grasp of these key cultural lexical items of Russian. However, as the volume is written in Russian, the information contained in it is relatively inaccessible to many foreign learners of Russian. And it seems that few outside the Russian linguistics community are aware of this vein of Russian scholarship, which is relevant for Russian cultural studies in general.

The essay translated below, «Широта русской души» (‘The Breadth of the Russian Soul’) by Dr. Aleksei D. Shmelev, stands out among the contents of the volume, as it directly involves issues of Russians’ self perception and self-identity, and discusses some of their important concepts. Encounters with this concept in popular Russian texts motivated Ms. Konopelko to translate this chapter into English, with the hope that the information it contains will be more accessible to Anglophone students of the Russian language and its culture.

Stephen M. Dickey

Reference

Translator’s Note
Many of the Russian terms discussed and mentioned in this essay are difficult to translate into English with single words, and in many cases there is more than one possibility and an appropriate English translation can only be determined by taking the context into account. To ensure a modicum of consistency, the Oxford Russian-English Dictionary was used to translate all of these words unless there was a compelling reason to go with a different translation. Cases in which I opted for a different translation are indicated in the footnotes.

Nicole-Marie Konopelko
The Breadth of the Russian Soul

ALEXEI D. SHMELEV

The phrase ‘breadth of the Russian soul’ (широта русской души) has almost become a cliché. And yet, all manner of senses can be attributed to it. The term ‘breadth’ (широта) in and of itself refers primarily to a certain kind of mental quality that is attributed to the Russian national character and that is related to personality traits such as hospitality and generosity. A ‘broad’ person is a person who loves ‘broad’ gestures, acts with passion, and maybe even ‘lives on a broad foot’ (живущий на широкую ногу), i.e., ‘lives the high life’. On occasion one can even encounter the expression ‘person of broad soul’ (человек широкой души). This expression describes a generous and selfless person who is not inclined to ‘nickle and dime’ (мелочиться), who is ready to forgive people for their minor wrongdoings and sins, and does not seek any reward for his or her services. This person’s generosity and hospitality might at times even become excessive. However, what matters is that in the system of ethical values surfacing in the Russian linguistic worldview, breadth is generally considered to be a positive quality. In contrast, ‘small-mindedness’ (мелочность) is without a doubt looked down upon and likewise the phrase ‘petty person’ (мелочный человек) is a condemnation.

Note also that there is a less common interpretation of the phrase ‘person of broad soul,’ which refers to patience and the possibility of entertaining opinions and points of view differing from one’s own. This phrase can be used to describe a person who is characteristically tolerant and understanding of different points of view regarding the same topic. More often this idea is expressed by the phrase ‘a person of broad views’ (человек широких взглядов). However, this phrase differs in some ways from a ‘person of broad soul.’ A ‘person of broad views’ is a tolerant person who holds progressive views, is prepared for differences of opinion, and is inclined to a pluralism that can occasionally even verge on a lack of principles. A ‘person of a broad soul’ in this sense is a person capable of understanding the soul of another person and having understood it, loving that other person for who they are, regardless of such disagreement. This interpretation of a ‘person of broad soul’ is relatively infrequent. Most commonly, this phrase refers to generosity, magnanimity, and a lust for
life. However, breadth in this sense is sometimes likewise attributed to “the Russian character” (note in this regard Dostoevsky’s characterization of the Russian people: “a broad intellect, open to everything”—широкий, всеоткрытый ум).

The expression ‘breadth of the soul’ (широта души) can also be interpreted differently, as referring to a tendency for the extreme, or rather for an extreme manifestation of any kind of personal characteristic. This tendency for the extreme, which includes an “all or nothing” mindset, insatiability, and absence of limits or restraining tendencies is often acknowledged as one of the most characteristic traits traditionally ascribed to Russians. Thus, in an article about the different kinds of stereotypes evident in language, Vladimir Plungian and Ekaterina Rakhilina note that “centrifugal forces,” i.e., a repulsion from the center, a connection to the idea of excess and impetuosity are indeed the one thing that combines ‘generosity and laxity’ (щедрость и расхлябанность), ‘hospitality and boldness’ (хлебосольство и удаль), and ‘swinishness and sincerity’ (свинство и задушевность)—traits that combine easily with the adjective ‘Russian.’ The combination of such apparently incompatible traits in the “Russian soul” leads Mitya Karamazov to make the following comment about the typical Russian: “A broad person, I would narrow him down.” At the same time, each of these traits reaches its logical endpoint, as in the following verses of Aleksey Tolstoy:²

If you love, then do it madly,
if you threaten, then do it seriously,
if you curse, then do it angrily,
if you chop, then do it straight from the shoulder!
If you argue, then do it boldly,
if you punish, then do it fairly,

¹ The specific nature of размах makes it very difficult to translate concisely into English. The Oxford Russian Dictionary translates the figurative sense of the word as ‘scope’ and ‘range’. Turning to Russian monolingual dictionaries, Ozhegov’s monolingual Russian dictionary has four possible definitions for the word, with the figurative sense defined as ширина, объём деятельности, работ ‘breadth, the scope of activity and work’). My translation is metonymic, but captures the spirit of the word that comes out of discussions with native speakers.

² I have used Jennifer Gliere’s 2016 translation of Коль любить, так без рассудку (‘If you love, then do it madly’), which can be found at https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=118328

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if you forgive, then do it generously,
and if there’s a feast, then make it lavish!

It should be pointed out that the last two lines of the poem not only speak of the tendency toward the extreme (breadth in the secondary interpretation), but also of ‘breadth of character’ (широта характера) as such: here we see a readiness to understand and forgive (If you forgive, do it from the heart), as well as hospitality and a lust for life (and if there’s a feast, then make it lavish!).

Lastly, the ‘breadth of the Russian soul’ is sometimes mentioned in connection to the possible influence of ‘vast Russian spaces’ (широкие русские пространства) on the Russian national character. The role of “Russian spaces” in the formation of the “Russian worldview” (русское видение мира) has been noted by many writers. There is a well-known remark by the Russian philosopher Pyotr Chaadayev on this topic: “We are but a geological product of vast spaces.” Nikolai Berdyaev wrote an entire essay on this topic entitled “On the Power of Spaces Over the Russian Soul” (О власти пространств над русской душой), in which he observes that “Russians are as broad as the Russian land—as broad as the fields of Russia.” He goes on to say that “Russians do not have the narrowness of Europeans, whose energies are focused on a small space within the soul. Russians do not have their prudence, conservation of space and time, or cultural intensity. The power of vastness over the Russian soul creates a whole range of Russian qualities and Russian shortcomings.” In Berdyaev’s words one can detect an echo of a well-known remark by Arkady Svidrigailov in Crime and Punishment: “Russians are generally broad people, Avdotya Romanovna. Broad like their land, and thoroughly inclined toward the fantastical—toward the chaotic.” Many others have also spoken of ‘the power of space over the Russian soul’. The novelist Gaito Gazdanov observed that “In Europe, there is only one country where one can truly understand what space really is—that country is Russia.” Vladimir Veidle, a well-known Russian literary and art critic, wrote that “The primary fact of Russian history is the flatland of Russia and its never-ending expanses [...] this is the source of the untranslatability of простор [the Russian word for ‘space’—NMK], which carries a nuance that is incomprehensible to foreigners.” (A whole series of quotes of this kind has been assembled in a textbook by Dimitri
and Aleksandr Zamyatin entitled *A Reader on Russian Geography. Images of the Country: The Spaces of Russia.*

All the aforementioned factors have come together to produce the unusual “geography of the Russian soul” (география русской души), a phrase coined by Berdyaev. The influence of “vast Russian spaces” (широкие русские пространства) on the breadth of “the national character” has been revealed by Valerii Podoroga: “Thus, the broad expanse of the unbroken plains, lowlands, and uplands produces an enduring psychomotor analog, an effect of *breadth,* and there one finds the ethical basis of the Russian character: openness, kindness, self-sacrifice, boldness, a tendency toward the extreme, etc.” And it is not surprising that this ‘*breadth* of the Russian soul’ surfaces in the Russian language in interesting ways, primarily in the particulars of its lexicon. Russian words and phrases that are in one way or another connected to the ‘*breadth of the Russian national character*’ (широта русского национального характера) turn out to be difficult to translate into different languages.

Many words that clearly reflect the particulars of the “Russian mentality” and correspondingly distinctive Russian concepts such as ‘melancholy’ (тоска) or ‘boldness’ (удаль), seem to bear the imprint of ‘Russian spaces’ (русские пространства). It is not without reason that the transition from ‘melancholy of the heart’ (сердечная тоска) to ‘swaggering revelry’ (разгулье удалое) is a common topic in Russian folklore and literature. Nor is it by chance that in all of this ‘something native is heard’ (что-то слышится родное). Often when Russians want to ‘cleanse the soul of melancholy’ (сплеснуть тоску с души), they basically decide “To hell with it all,” (пропади все пропадом)—and this is perceived as particularly “Russian” behavior. In this regard it is instructive to consider the following excerpt from Solzhenitsyn’s novel *Cancer Ward:* “In truly Russian fashion, Pavel Nikolayevich cast aside his recent fears, reservations, and promises. He wanted only to swill the melancholy out of his soul and to feel some warmth.” The poet Igor Guberman also finds “the consciousness of an era gone crazy rampaging in the Russian language” precisely in such “sudden lurches from volatility to melancholy.”

The Russian inclination toward ‘melancholy’ and ‘boldness’ has been noticed by foreigners again and again. It has become somewhat of a

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*Translator’s note: the Russian title is Хрестоматия по географии России. Образ страны: пространства России.*
commonplace, despite the fact that it is nearly impossible to translate these words accurately into any other language. A characteristic remark on this topic is made in an article titled “What is Healthy for a Russian is Death for a German,” published in 1996 in Volume 17 of *Foreigner* (Иностранец): “When it comes to their relationship with Russians, all Europeans have constructed a fairly dualistic mythology. One side of this mythology consists of the history of princes, borzois, caviar-and-vodka, Russian roulette, ‘the immeasurably broad Russian soul’ (неизмеримо широкая русская душа), and ‘melancholy and unrestrained courage’⁴ (меланхолия и безудержная отвага). The other side, however, consists of the GULAG, bitter frost, laziness, utter irresponsibility, enslavement, and theft.” The expression ‘melancholy and unrestrained courage’ of course calls to mind the ‘melancholy and boldness’ (тоска и удаль) familiar to Russians. The author consciously defamiliarizes these concepts, thus conveying their alienness to foreigners and their untranslatability into foreign languages.

The untranslatability of the Russian word тоска (‘melancholy’) and the national specificity of the mental state to which it refers have attracted the attention of many foreigners learning Russian. For example, the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke commented on the differences between Russian ‘melancholy’ and the condition expressed by the German word ‘yearning’ (Sehnsucht). It is difficult to even explain the meaning of ‘melancholy’ to a person unfamiliar with it. Dictionary definitions describe it as ‘a difficult, oppressive feeling, mental anxiety’ (тяжелое, гнетущее чувство, душевная тревога), ‘oppressive, wearisome tedium’ (гнетущая, томительная скука), ‘tedium, depression’ (скука, уныние), and ‘mental anxiety combined with sadness, depression’ (душевная тревога, соединенная с грустью; уныние). These definitions describe the mental states related to ‘melancholy’ (тоска) but none precisely capture to the feeling conveyed by the word. Perhaps detailed descriptions in the spirit of Anna Wierzbicka are the most suitable way to describe what тоска is: ‘melancholy’ is experienced by a person who wants something, but does not know what specifically he or she wants; all they know is that what they want is unattainable. And when the object of such melancholy can be established, it usually turns out to be something that has been lost and preserved only in vague memories. Examples of this include ‘melancholy for one’s homeland’ (тоска по родине) and ‘melancholy for

⁴Original emphasis inserted by A. D. Shmelev.
the vanished years of one’s youth’ (тоска по ушедшими годам молодости). In a sense, any type of ‘melancholy’ could be metaphorically presented as ‘melancholy’ for a heavenly homeland, or for a lost paradise. However, it appears that the feeling of melancholy is made possible or brought out by the endless Russian expanses; it is at the thought of these spaces that ‘melancholy’ arises. This is reflected in Russian poetry, such as in Sergei Esenin’s reference to a ‘melancholy for the endless plains’ (тоска бесконечных равнин) or Leonard Maksimov’s poem “What Am I to Do, a Pure Mountain Dweller, with this Melancholy of Space?” (Что мне делать, насквозь горожанину, с этой тоской пространства?)."

Many authors have pointed out the connection between ‘melancholy’ and ‘Russian spaces’ (русские просторы). “Why does there ceaselessly echo and re-echo in my ears the melancholy song which hovers throughout the length and the breadth of your borders?” Nikolai Gogol asks, addressing Russia from his “beautiful distance.” For him it was this song, which he describes as ‘melancholy’ (тоскливая) and ‘hover[ing] throughout the length and breadth’ (несущаяся по всей длине и ширине), that somehow symbolized Russia. The feeling of ‘melancholy’ frequently intensifies during extended travels through the boundless expanses of Russia. Compare this to the concept of ‘road melancholy’ (дорожная тоска). As in Maksimov’s poem quoted above, “Every long-distance train awakens a melancholy of space.”

Another distinctive Russian word is ‘boldness’ (удаль). This word refers to a mental quality somewhat similar to ‘audacity’ (смелость), ‘bravery’ (храбрость), ‘fortitude,’ (мужество), ‘valor’ (доблесть), and ‘courage’ (отвага). However, its real meaning is quite different. Fazil Iskander clearly felt this difference, and observed the following:

1) ‘Boldness’ (удаль). In this word, ‘distance’ (даль) is clearly heard. ‘Boldness’ is a type of daring that requires spaces and distance.

2) The word ‘fortitude’ (мужество) refers to a severe necessity and deliberateness in our actions and more precisely, our counteractions. It is fortitude of wit: fortitude of masculinity. It is a man who has thought things out and realizes that in various

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6 I have used most of the English-Grammar’s (english-grammar.biz) translation of Nikolai Gogol’s quote, (Почему слышится и раздается немолчно в ушах твоя тоскливая, несущаяся по всей длине и ширине твоей, от моря и до моря, песня?) with the exception of the website’s translation for “тоска.”
circumstances, when standing up for justice, one has to show a high degree of tenacity, and does so. Fortitude is confined to a goal—a goal dictated by one’s conscience.

3) ‘Boldness’ certainly assumes the risk of one’s own life; it assumes courage. However, when we examine the concept of ‘boldness,’ we feel that it is an inferior courage. There is an excess in it, a kind of intoxication. If one were to hold competitions for ‘fortitude,’ then ‘boldness’ would not be allowed at these competitions, for if ‘boldness’ would come, then it could only come out on top with the aid of steroids.

4) ‘Boldness’ requires space. The air of space pumps one up with artificial courage and intoxicates. And for such an intoxicated person, life is cheap. ‘Boldness’ is a panicked flight forward. ‘Boldness’ slashes to the left and right. ‘Boldness’ is the ability to slash about, moving farther and farther away from the place where those you have cut down are lying, so you won’t have to take time to think about whether what you have done is right. And yet, ‘boldness’ is a beautiful word! It drowns out ‘melancholy’ in meaninglessness.

In point of fact, we would not call a person who has not shown enough ‘boldness’ a ‘coward’ (трус). Rather, we would say he or she is a ‘prudent’ (расчетливый) person. A person who ‘fearlessly’ (смело) looks into the face of danger or ‘courageously’ (мужественно) endures agony has not displayed any ‘boldness’. It would also be inappropriate to use the word ‘boldness’ to speak of those who have met their deaths ‘valiantly’ (доблестно) or ‘courageously’ (отважно) in combat with superior enemy forces. Generally, ‘boldness’ is not used when speaking of ‘fulfilling one’s duty’ (исполнение долга). It turns out to be appropriate when speaking of someone who acts without any calculation, who rushes headlong into action and in doing so accomplishes what others would be unable to. ‘Boldness’ always suggests ‘success’ (удача). Here one can see a link with the verb ‘to succeed’ (удаться), which is the lexical source for both of these nouns.

When trying to explain or understand what ‘boldness’ is, we inevitably encounter a kind of contradiction. All attempts at a rational explanation of the meaning of ‘boldness’ force one to recognize that there
is nothing particularly positive about it. In any case, ‘boldness’ is not as admirable a quality as are ‘fortitude’ (мужество), ‘audacity’ (смелость), ‘bravery’ (храбрость), ‘courage’ (отвага), and ‘valor’ (доблесть). This is indeed demonstrated by Fazil Iskander’s comment quoted above. At the same time, however, the word ‘boldness’ in the Russian language has strongly positive nuances. A typical combination with this word is ‘youthful boldness’ (удаль молодецкая). Pyotr Vail and Alexander Genis are of course speaking ironically when they write of ‘the ideal Gogolian Russia’ as ‘the coming kingdom of truth, goodness, and boldness,’ but the very possibility of ‘boldness’ appearing in this context is telling.

Presumably, an essential semantic component of the word ‘boldness’ corresponds to the idea of admiration. (However, what is sometimes involved is the self-admiration of those whose actions evince various degrees of ‘boldness’.) When speaking of ‘boldness’, we admire the ‘bold’ actions a person can take, which in and of itself lends the word a positive nuance. Additionally, the idea of selflessness is important for ‘boldness’; ‘boldness’ resists narrow, self-serving calculations. How does one explain why one should display ‘boldness?’ For the sake of ‘boldness’ and nothing else. Take the courier in “Steer Clear!”, a children’s story by Sergei Alekseev, who loved reckless sleigh rides and knocked General Alexander Suvorov himself down into the snow. Three days later, as he delivers some papers to Suvorov in Saint Petersburg, he unexpectedly receives a ring as a reward from the general:

“‘What for, your grace?!’ asked the messenger in amazement.

“‘For boldness!’

“The courier just stands there in disbelief, whereupon Suvorov continues:

“‘Take it, take it. It’s yours! For boldness. For the Russian soul. For bravado.’”

Perhaps the most typical displays of ‘boldness’ are rides at breakneck speed that any Russian loves. The image of the swift ‘horses of three’ (птица-тройка), which leave everything else behind and for whom other nations and governments “yield and get out of the way,” serves as a good example of what ‘boldness’ is and what associative field it belongs to in the Russian language. Evidently, the word (and concept of) ‘boldness’ could only come about among a boisterous people, and at that among
people accustomed to wide spaces. Writing on the geography of Russia, the philosopher Nikolai Fyodorov points out with complete certainty that ‘boldness’ arose under the influence of open spaces: “Space [...] could not develop stubbornness in an internal struggle, but did develop ‘boldness,’ which could have other applications, not only the fight with nomads.”

The connection of the concept of ‘boldness’ with the image of vast expanses is clearly illustrated by the passage by Fazil Iskander quoted above. He makes it clear how bold actions, which are taken out of ‘melancholy’, can at least partially assuage this melancholy. Other typical Russian concepts and the words for them, which resist translation and reflect the ‘breadth of the Russian soul’, are also connected with the concept of ‘boldness’: размах (‘lust for life’), разгул (‘bender’), and maybe even загул (‘binge’) and кураж (‘swagger’). The last word, кураж, is interesting because even though it is a direct loanword from French, its Russian meaning is fundamentally different. If in French courage means simply ‘bravery,’ in Russian the word has entered more into the territory of a Russian ‘binge’ (загул) and become characteristic of certain unrestrained states when a person has no “internal brakes.” The most typical combination with this word is ‘drunken swagger’ (пьяный кураж).

According to Sergei Starostin (in remarks quoted by a correspondent for Komsomolskaya Pravda), the Russian words resisting translation and lacking equivalents in other languages include—alongside ‘melancholy’ and ‘boldness’—хохотать (‘laugh loudly’) and хохот (‘roaring laughter’). The words смеяться (‘laugh’) and смех (‘laughter’) are to be found in most languages, but хохот (‘boisterous laughter’) cannot. The influence of ‘vast expanses’ is at best slight here, but the inclination for extremes and taking things to the extreme comes to the fore—“If one is to laugh, it’s not just laughter, but ‘boisterous laughter.’” Here, it is important to remember that хохом and хохомать are words commonly used in Russian, which refer to a ‘healthy laughter’ that does not provoke disapproval on the part of the speaker. In this sense, хохомать differs from хохомать (‘cackle’), as well as from words such as the English guffaw, which sometimes appears in Russian-English dictionaries as an equivalent of хохом. In contrast to the Russian words хохом and хохомать, the verb guffaw is not a word in common use and contains an evaluative component indicative of disapproval of the excess of unrestrained, loud laughter.
A concept concerning the interrelationship between the individual and society and a person’s place in the world and in particular in the social sphere, which is characteristically Russian, is reflected in the synonymous pair свобода (‘liberty’) and воля (‘freedom’). These words are often considered to be close synonyms. In actuality, there are deep conceptual differences between the two. If the word свобода generally corresponds in meaning to its Western European counterparts, a specifically Russian concept is expressed in the word воля. From a historical point of view, the word воля should not be compared with its synonym свобода, but rather with the word мир [...].

In contemporary Russian, the word мир (‘world’) expresses a range of meanings, including ‘the absence of war’ (отсутствие войны), ‘the universe,’ (вселенная), ‘a rural community’ (селская община), etc. However, all of the specified various meanings can be historically analyzed as modifications of an original meaning that we could characterize as ‘concord’, ‘improvement’, and ‘order’ (cf. remarks made to me personally by Tatiana Toropova about the semantic clustering of ‘peaceful life’ and ‘the universe’ in a number of Germanic languages). The universe can be viewed as a ‘world order’ (миропорядок), juxtaposed to chaos; hence, the Greek word cosmos. The absence of war is likewise connected to concord in relationships between different peoples. The Russian rural community—the term for which, as was pointed out, was мир—could be considered to be the essence of concord and order as they are represented in Russian, or also of лад (‘concord’), which became popular after the publication of Vasily Belov’s book of the same name. Community life is strictly regulated (i.e., налажен ‘smoothed out’) and any deviation from the accepted order is perceived negatively, as ‘disorder’ (непорядок), and so, abandoning this regulated order is referred to as ‘breaking free’ (вырваться на волю.)

Note. The fact that ‘freedom’ (воля) is opposed to a certain order perceived as the norm created the basis for the semantic development of...
the word during the Soviet era. In the speech of Soviet prisoners, the word ‘freedom’ referred to the entire world outside of the prison-camp system. The conception of ‘freedom’ in this usage led to the conception of ‘freedom’ as the outside, alien world. It is interesting that the word ‘freedom’ (and its derivative words ‘free’ (вольный) and ‘free woman’ (вольняшка)) could be used in this sense only by the prisoners themselves or speakers who otherwise ended up with their point of view. Thus, in The Cancer Ward, Lev Leonidovich informs Kostoglotov that he has been “where they are forever dancing and singing,” and to Kostoglotov’s question “And what were convicted of?” answers “I was not there as a convict. I was free.”

‘Freedom’ has long been associated with endless expanses of the steppe, “where all that walks is the wind... and me.” In his 1981 book, Russian Notes (Заметки о русском), Dmitry Likhachev points out the following regarding the connection between ‘freedom’ and ‘Russian expanses’: ‘Wide expanses have always reigned over the heart of Russians. They surface in concepts and ideas that do not exist in other languages. What, for instance, is the difference between воля (‘freedom’) and свобoda (‘liberty’)? Воля is ‘free’ (вольная); it is свобoda unified with space, with limitless, unfenced expanses.” Similarly, as Georgи Gachev writes in his book National Images of the World, “‘Broad soul’ and the Russian ‘lust for life’ are all ideas that originated in the elements of air and wind... a person strives to reach a place ‘where all that walks is the wind and me.’—there is a reason for this brotherly interlinking. It is no wonder that there is one action that comes naturally, that is near and dear both to the wind and to Russians: ‘roaming at will’ (гулять на воле), which is inherent in the verbs for ‘let oneself go/cut loose’ (разгуляться), ‘carouse’ (загулять), ‘binge’ (загул), ‘free time’ (отгул), and ‘bender’ (разгул). And it is no wonder that Gogol, who spoke of the Russian soul as one that ‘yearns to whirl until dizzy, to roam free,’ mentions actions that are just as likely to be done by the wind.”

Воля turns out to be associated with expanses, and thus with ‘melancholy’ (моска) and ‘boldness’ (удаль). It is also no accident that in descriptions of the psychological state of characters in Russian literature, воля (‘freedom’), простор (‘expanse’), and моска (‘melancholy’) often appear together, as in the following from Alexei Svirsky’s children’s book entitled Orange Milk-Cap: “Sasha—with his stories about how he walked ‘roamed in the open’ [гулял на просторе] with Polfunt, how they spent the night in the woods, and did everything they wanted—awoke in Spir’ka a feeling of
love for freedom and for an ‘unconstrained life’ [безневольная жизнь], and he started to ‘feel a painful melancholy’ [затосковал].” Compared to such freedom, свобода (‘liberty’) turns out to be somehow limited, and cannot be as equally desirable for the Russian soul. Petr Weil and Alexander Genis’s comments on the heroine in Alexander Ostrovsky’s play “The Storm” are interesting in this regard: “Katerina does not need a garden; she does not need money. Rather, she needs something elusive and inexplicable; maybe воля. She does not need свобода from her husband and mother-in-law, but воля in general. She needs open spaces as boundless as the world.”

In contrast to воля, свобода suggests order, but an order that is not so strictly regulated. If мир (‘world’) is conceptualized as the strict orderliness of rural community life, then свобода tends to be associated with life in the city. It is not without reason that слобода — the name for historical city settlements — is etymologically identical to the word свобода (‘liberty’). If a comparison of свобода to мир focuses on the fact that свобода denotes an absence of strict regulations, when comparing свобода to воля, what is important is that свобода is connected to a norm, to law and order. As Vasily Zhukovsky observes: “What is ‘civil liberty’ (свобода гражданская)? Complete subordination to the law, or complete capability to do anything, so long as it is not prohibited by law.” Свобода refers to one’s right to do what seems desirable, but one’s right is restricted by the rights of other people. Воля, however, is not limited by the concept of law at all.

Dmitry Oreshkin’s observations in his article entitled “Geography of the Spirit and Expanses of Russia” published in literary journal ‘Continent’ (Континент) are indicative in this regard:

At one point, speechwriters misled Former President Ronald Reagan when he was going to expose Russia as the ‘Evil Empire’: he mistakenly remarked in passing that the poor Russian language does not even have a word for ‘liberty’ (свобода). In actuality, there are two: свобода and воля. However, between them lies a shadowy boundary that only the Russian ear can detect. Свобода (or слобода) comes from self-governing artisan settlements in suburban areas, where serfdom was not in effect. Свобода means a code of guild rules and a recognition of the fact that your neighbor has no fewer rights than you. “My freedom to wave my arms ends five centimeters away from your nose,” as one Western parliamentarian put it. This is a very European view. The Russian слобода allows a little more
latitude in the treatment of someone else’s nose. Nevertheless, the main point is that ten or 100 personal freedoms coexisted fully in the limited space of an artisan alleyway. Свобода is an urban word.

The word воля is another matter. It wants to know no boundaries. Either one’s breast is covered in medals, or one’s head lies somewhere in the brush; it is two free wills encountering one another on the steppe and fighting until one overpowers the other. And it is also very Russian. Do not talk to воля about the rights of others, for she will not understand. There is Divine freedom (Божья воля), ‘royal freedom’ (царская воля), ‘Cossack freedom’ (казацкая воля), and so forth. If you say ‘Cossack liberty’ (казацкая свобода) instead, what you get is nonsense. Воля is a steppe word and is profoundly alien for the Western mentality. Maybe this is what the speechwriters of the former American president had in mind.

Теffi’s short story “Freedom” (Воля), in which the differences between воля and свобода are explained in a similar way, may also be mentioned in this regard:

Воля is not at all the same as свобода.
Свобода is liberté—the legal status of a citizen who does not break the law that rules his or her country.
Свобода can be translated into all languages and understood by all peoples.
Воля is untranslatable.
When you hear the words свободный человек (‘person at liberty’), what do you envision? You envision the following: a gentleman with his hat cocked slightly back, with a cigarette in his hands or his hands in his pockets. As he passes by the clockmaker’s, he looks at a clock—he still has time—and goes somewhere in the park, to the city wall. He wanders around, spits out his cigarette, whistles and goes down into a restaurant.

Now, when you hear the words человек на воле (‘person in freedom’), what do you envision? You envision a boundless horizon. There is someone walking without a path, without a road, and without looking at what is under their feet. They wear no hat. The wind tousles their hair.
and blows it into their eyes because for such people, the wind is always a part of the path. A bird flies by, its wings spread wide, and that person waves to the bird with both of hands, shouts after it wildly and freely, laughing.

Свобода is the law.
Воля does not reckon with anything.
Свобода is the civil status of a person.
Воля is a feeling.

We should also mention Pyotr Vail’s and Alexander Genis’ thoughts on the same topic:

Alexander Radishchev fought for свобода and equality for the people. The people, however, dreamed of something different. In Pugachev’s manifestos, an imposter grants his subjects land, water, forest, dwellings, meadows, rivers, fish, bread, laws, pastures, ore, cash salaries, lead and powder. He granted anything his subjects desired, so long as they would stay like the beasts of the steppes.

Radishchev wrote of свобода. Pugachev wrote of воля. One wanted to bequeath the people with a constitution—the other with land and water. Radishchev proposed for the people to become citizens, while the other proposed for them to become beasts of the steppes. It is not surprising that Pugachev turned out to have significantly more supporters.

Thus, the particulars of the contrast between мир and воля in the Russian linguistic consciousness come out clearly against the background of the concept of свобода, which is generally quite consistent with common European ideas. In a certain sense, this contrast reflects the ‘extremes’ (крайности) of the Russian soul (either ‘everything or nothing’ (все или ничего), or ‘full regulation’ (полная регламентированность), or ‘boundless anarchy’ (беспредельная анархия)). Or to put it another way—the ‘breadth of the Russian soul’ (ширина русской души).

References

Qiunn (Spasova), Shannon Donnally, and Liudmila Klimanova. 2021. LLC (Language, Literature, Culture) Commons: Open Resources for Online Teaching Slavic. llccommons.arizona.edu.

The web resource LLC (Language, Literature, Culture) Commons: Open Resources for Online Teaching Slavic, created by Shannon Donnally Spasova and Liudmila Klimanova, allows instructors to share quality online materials that can endure over time. LLC Commons organizes a set of online Russian language modules developed primarily by the authors. All of the materials on the website are licensed under a Creative Commons license, allowing instructors to revise, reuse, and redistribute the lessons as long as the authors of the lesson are given credit.

The modules are organized in a variety of ways, allowing users to search them by keyword, category (level, activity type, format, focus), or tags. The modules are also helpfully organized according to the sequences found in popular textbooks, including Beginner’s Russian, В путь, Между нами, Голоса (books 1 and 2), and Тройка. Judged by this list of textbooks, the LLC Commons collection currently focuses on lower-level Russian language courses, though the authors hope to expand the collection and offer more upper-level materials. The modules are also flexible; they are not specifically built for any particular textbook. Instructors may need to modify materials to better fit their own students, curriculum, or teaching style.

The online lessons are generally interactive and multimodal. The interactive videos allow learners to test themselves, and they receive immediate, targeted feedback. The modules vary in their pedagogical approach. Some modules follow a more deductive pattern of presenting grammatical explanations in English first before asking students to practice what they have learned in Russian. Others are more inductive by presenting Russian examples first, though explanations in English typically follow. Regardless of the approach, the modules represent a helpful way for learners to get explanations, linguistic input, practice, and immediate feedback. The modules can be used for flipped, blended, or fully asynchronous Russian language classes.
Included for each module is a link to an embeddable version of the material. The link can be inserted into most learning management systems (LMS). The authors also helpfully list all technology used in creating the lesson. To help instructors learn more about creating similar content on their own, the website includes a “Resources for Teachers” section. This additional resource includes instructions on how to use H5P and integrate YouTube activities into lessons. It also includes numerous links to webinars and media that discuss topics such as how to use Twitter or virtual reality in the classroom and how to gamify a course. The link to sample syllabi and lesson plans is empty as of August 2021, but these resources will certainly be a welcome feature for instructors developing or refining their curricula.

Instructors can use these materials in a variety of ways: (1) give students links to the activities on the LLC commons, (2) embed the activity into content pages in the LMS, or (3) with an H5P account, use the materials “natively” within the LMS. The first two options do not allow instructors to connect the activities to the gradebooks of their LMS. The third option does allow the connection, though the technical aspects will vary depending on whether the instructor has the free or paid version of H5P. A free account at H5P.org requires that H5P content be hosted on a separate, approved site, such as Moodle and WordPress. Getting these activities to work on the LMS may involve a bit of technical wizardry. For example, uploading H5P files from WordPress to Canvas involves translating the H5P to SCORM and then uploading the SCORM files to the LMS. Premium access to H5P.com, which is better done at an institutional level, will simplify this process and should allow H5P exercises to be linked to the gradebook.

To contribute material to the collection, instructors are directed to contact the authors, who presumably will do the work of tagging and organizing the materials. The site already has about 400 modules, and the authors hope to add many more.

All in all, the LLC Commons portal is a tremendous resource for teachers of Russian, especially at the elementary and intermediate levels. As more instructors add material to this website, the LLC Commons will benefit the wider teaching community.

Jennifer Bown
Brigham Young University

The Russian contribution to the Routledge Concise Grammars series is *Da!: A Practical Guide to Russian Grammar* by Tatiana Filosova. Different from the reference grammars more-advanced students and scholars of Russian may turn to, this book’s intended audience is the less-experienced language learner. Those familiar with the first edition know that within each of the book’s thirty-one chapters, the author suggests the relevance of each chapter’s content according to three levels of proficiency: elementary (referred to as level one), lower intermediate (level two), and upper intermediate (level three). Each level is given a description based on approximate equivalents with and expectations from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the Common European Framework, and Moscow State University. Sections labeled as level one introduce the student to a concept and discuss form and basic function(s) with examples. Sections labeled as level three provide advanced functions and exceptions, offer interesting colloquial alternatives, or cover more complicated grammar. Sections labeled as level two generally overlap in content with levels one and three. The author states that the book can be used as a supplement to other textbooks and course materials or for self-directed learning.

The chapters of *Da!: A Practical Guide to Russian Grammar* are divided according to grammatical categories, rather than communicative topics, and cover the equivalent of a typical second-year textbook (or higher) in that there are discussions on participles, verbal adverbs, and impersonal sentences. The book also contains a Russian-English glossary of grammatical terms and a brief introduction to the Russian language. Each grammar chapter is organized in a similar fashion, making it very easy for the learner to use. At the beginning of most chapters is a bullet-point overview of the contents, with each bullet point accompanied by an icon that refers the learner to a section in the chapter for more information. Learners of all levels are recommended to study the sections referred to in each overview, but the more in-depth discussions in the textbook include a recommendation to review one or more of the referred sections in each level. The book features an abundance of charts and examples, from a wide array of authentic sources including literature and the internet, to help
Illustrate the author’s points. Exercises, which address the grammar of a particular chapter, are also divided according to levels. These exercises are mostly fill-in-the-blank and translation-type exercises that focus on form. An answer key is included at the end of the book. In theory, this innovative approach would enable a student to use this book in multiple iterations in both self-directed learning and formal language learning contexts.

Inasmuch as this book targets the language learner, some of the grammatical explanations are sometimes simplistic and, unfortunately, inadequate, especially for learners defined as level one. For example, omitting an organizing model beyond first and second conjugation, such as the one-stem system, renders the chapter on verb conjugation overly generalized and complicates the later discussions on the formation of the imperative, participles, and verbal adverbs. Learners with little to no experience (level one) will find these discussions and the few suggested exercises challenging. On the other hand, the nine chapters covering nouns and the case system are smartly organized and generally offer sufficient explanations. Each case chapter (beyond the nominative and prepositional cases) divides the discussion according to usage with or without a preposition. In contrast to many other reference grammars, time expressions are not treated separately in this book, but rather each time expression is given attention according to the particular grammatical case and whether it is used with (or without) a preposition. The remaining chapters, devoted to adjectives, adverbs, numbers, pronouns, and prepositions, are not completely without their issues and typos, but they do their job, especially if the learner is using this book as a supplement to course materials.

A few things should be mentioned regarding the book’s exercises, which appear primarily at the end of each chapter. There are too few of them, especially for learners at level one, where there tends to be only one short exercise to reinforce a concept. Moreover, some of the exercises at this elementary level require more instruction and information than what is given. It will be quite difficult, for example, for level one learners to successfully complete a sentence with the correct form of a verb when given only infinitives and no information regarding conjugation type or to complete a Russian sentence when given only a preposition and no clear idea of what the sentence is supposed to mean. Some chapters do not include exercises for level one learners at all, despite including them in
the discussion section. Finally, there are several places where the level of vocabulary in a particular exercise does not match the learner level. This incongruity is especially true for exercises labeled as level two. Learners at this level will undoubtedly need a dictionary to complete even some of the fill-in-the-blank exercises. With all of this in mind, many of the exercises are very well done, especially at the more advanced levels. Instructors of Russian could even make use of them in the classroom as supplemental drill-type exercises.

Ultimately, this book is more approachable for learners of Russian than some of the other reference grammars on the market. Its innovative approach and the attempt to cater to learners at multiple levels is commendable. Learners with enough experience to start at level two, instead of those just beginning their Russian language adventures, will benefit more from the additional grammatical explanations and summative exercises. The same can be said for learners at level three. The book would be more effective as a supplement to more traditional learning materials and methods and should be used as such.

Erik Houle
The University of Chicago


Natalia Parker’s *Russian in Plain English: A Very Basic Russian Starter for Complete Beginners* is designed for beginning students and independent learners who are not familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet. The textbook’s primary aim is to help students develop skills in reading aloud in Russian with correct pronunciation. The textbook is divided into ten units. Each unit centers on particular letters and sounds rather than on a specific theme. Every unit includes an objective (with the title “What’s the Plan”), information on Russian letters and the sounds they denote, reading exercises, speaking activities that can be used individually or in groups, some basic grammar material, and cultural information. In addition, after every unit, there is a review chapter (“Something Old, Something New”) with questions, exercises, and group activities aimed to consolidate students’ learning.
Russian in Plain English deserves high praise for its innovative, learner-friendly, and creative pedagogy. It has a light, conversational writing style in the form of a lecture, which the author delivers with a strong and authentic voice. She explains the material, shares problems her students encounter, and advises on overcoming each problem. While reading the textbook, the learner can hear her love for Russia, its people, and its language. In addition, the book has an abundance of interesting cultural information, and the author often shares personal stories about her family and her native town, Tula. All these features make the textbook very engaging.

In the preface for teachers, the author claims that the textbook is based on research in language acquisition and information processing. Indeed, the textbook presents the material gradually so that students can absorb it without being overwhelmed. The material is offered in small pieces, which are easier for students to process. The author broke up the Russian alphabet into four manageable groups: Group I (The Easy), Group II (The Tricky), Group III (Funny Shapes), Group IV (The Strangers). At the beginning of the book, she presents letters that are comparatively easy for English speakers. In the last two units, she introduces more difficult letters and words. Moreover, the distribution of complex material is balanced, and there is no unit that students will find too challenging. This balance of material is important because Russian language courses have a considerable early dropout rate, when students encounter the Russian alphabet and find it too difficult to learn compared to the Latin alphabets of other languages.

Furthermore, the textbook describes the basic grammatical structures that enable learners to communicate in Russian without using such grammatical categories as cases, conjugations, and so forth. For example, the author substituted theoretical information about the prepositional case with a simple rule: if learners want to express the idea that something or somebody is in a particular place, they need to use the preposition $В$ and to add $E$ to the end of the name of the place. Several exercises in which students use the prepositional case with various places that require the prepositional $В$ and the ending $E$ reinforce this rule.

The only shortcoming of the textbook may be the lack of audio recordings and assignments. Instead of listening exercises, the author suggests using free listening resources on the internet and checking
pronunciation of Russian words using free online programs. I agree with the author that students can check their pronunciation with free online programs and imitate difficult sounds from the internet. However, audio material is more than just listening and imitating. The textbook would benefit from listening comprehension and dictation exercises.

In “Preface for Teachers,” the author does not specify the audience. Instead, she states that the textbook has a flexible format and enough material for twenty lessons. The book can be used as a required textbook, or instructors can “pick and mix” some material from it. Indeed, the book contains explanations, exercises, and activities that instructors can use at the beginning of university-level courses to help students learn the alphabet and master reading in Russian. However, using the entire textbook in a North American university seems problematic because of the shortage of contact hours and the fast pace of Russian programs. For example, some programs have as few as forty-two contact hours per term. Given the limited time, it appears this book will not produce similar proficiency outcomes compared to other books after twenty lessons. However, the textbook would be a great addition for supplemental or noncredit Russian language classes that focus on reading and conversation skills.

Veta Chitnev
University of British Columbia


Ksana Blank’s companion to Gogol’s “The Nose” is an excellent new resource for students of Russian language and literature. The book consists of two sections: the first, a series of annotations to the story’s text, and the second, several short essays on a wide range of related topics. Finally, readers are provided with a carefully selected bibliography of secondary sources, which will be particularly valuable for those new to Gogol research and criticism.

Blank’s book truly shines in its first section. The annotations to the text are remarkably thorough and identify allusions, irony, and colloquialisms that the casual reader may miss and the second-language
student may struggle with even while paying great attention. These annotations are informed by a deep understanding of the historical and social context of the work; they not only identify interesting linguistic moments, but also point out ways in which the nineteenth-century Russian reader would have understood Gogol’s text. For example, the first annotation to part two of “The Nose” notes that not only does Gogol play with the double meaning of the verb *vskochit’* in his phrase “*pryshchik, kotoryi vcherashnego vchera vskochil u nego na nosu,*” but that in mentioning a pimple on the nose, Gogol calls to mind syphilis’s ubiquitous presence in nineteenth-century European society and the disease’s tendency to destroy the nose (Blank, 63). These thorough annotations are supported by the best of the book’s essays, “Language Game as the Engine of the Plot,” which is the concluding section of part one.

In this essay, Blank argues that Wittgenstein’s “language game” is a key concept in understanding “The Nose” and that it is Gogol’s play with idiom that drives the short story’s narrative. After a short introduction to the idea of a “language game,” Blank proceeds to separate the idioms found in “The Nose” into five groups, ranging from those expressions directly pertaining to the body part itself to the most complex aspect of Gogol’s language game, his use of “literalized collocations.” This section is an extraordinarily detailed look at Gogol’s language. It illuminates new aspects of “The Nose” and also provides a model for future scholarship on Gogol. In it, Blank provides a reading that is as valuable to a Gogol scholar as it is to a new student of his works.

In part two, Blank steps away from part one’s focus on Gogol’s language, and explores other ways of understanding his text. She pays special attention to the various forms of humor that can be seen in “The Nose,” devoting sections to joke, satire, mockery, and the absurd. Along with these sections are examinations of folk superstitions, castration anxiety, and receptions and adaptations of story. While Blank states in her note “Instead of a Conclusion” that in writing about these interpretations she has tried to “present them impartially,” she has not shrunken from providing evaluations of their merits (Blank, 219). In her section on castration anxiety, for example, she writes that “the psychoanalytic approach to ‘The Nose’ is long outdated” and further argues that “the psychoanalytic method draws our attention to the author’s private life and the caches of his psyche. With Gogol, who had such a complex
personality, this task is hardly feasible, however” (Blank, 167). The moments where Blank gives her own opinions of these arguments are among the most interesting of part two and will, hopefully, be expanded in further writing.

“*The Nose*: A Stylistic and Critical Companion” could benefit from a minor improvement, which will hopefully be made in future works in the Companions to Russian Literature series. The work includes a full text copy of the story in question. As Blank notes, this text is included so as to “make the use of annotations more convenient” (Blank, 9). Moreover, her analysis of the text’s idioms will be most valuable to the English-speaking reader. This being the case, it would be helpful either to orient the text directly toward the second-language student, and thus include accent marks and other aids in reading, or to provide a facing-page translation or gloss. For the Russianist, the text as given is more than adequate; for the new student of Gogol’s language, it is opaque.

Blank’s work could, as mentioned above, benefit from elaboration. This companion provides tantalizing glimpses into a wider Gogol analysis, one focusing on idiomatic *skaz*. It would be fascinating to see how Blank’s own argument that the manipulation of idiomatic expressions drives the plot of “The Nose” interacts with the other interpretations she provides in part two. Her argument itself could also be expanded, and readers of this companion will, no doubt, appreciate that further work.¹

On the whole, “*The Nose*: A Stylistic and Critical Companion” is a helpful resource for students of Russian literature as well as for scholars new to Gogol criticism. Its attention to style and language is especially refreshing. It provides a much-needed close reading of the story that will hopefully inspire other, similarly detailed analyses of Gogol’s works. It will be a valuable source for teachers of literature as well as for language teachers hoping to introduce upper-year students (especially those at the Advanced and Superior proficiency levels) to colloquialisms, proverbs, and, broadly, idiomatic speech.

*Sara Jo Powell*

*Harvard University*

¹ This expansion would also allow more thorough support of some of the interesting claims in “Language Game as the Engine of the Plot” that are not fully explored in this work, such as when Blank argues that in the doctor’s examination of Kovalev, a double entendre implies that the doctor “examines Kovalev as if he is not a human being but an animal, thus behaving very unprofessionally” (Blank, 91).

*The Art of Teaching Russian*, a recent volume on Russian language research, teaching practices, and first-hand experiences in constructing a Russian college course, could become the tabletop book for every Russian scholar teaching in North America. University professors, high school teachers, Russian department chairs, deans, and, especially, graduate students will find it not only professionally engaging but also beneficial in several other ways since the book provides brilliant observations on the last two decades of the Russian field.

The introduction from the editors emphasizes the connection between the current volume and the 2000 volume, *The Learning and Teaching of Slavic Languages and Cultures*, in proficiency-oriented teaching supported by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines, which is the measurement for Russian programs in North America. The editors acknowledge the swift development in teaching with technology, innovations in teaching language and culture, and the importance of addressing diversity and inclusion.

The volume covers different aspects of teaching the Russian language and culture. Part one includes several articles that provide an overview of the professional field. Part two focuses on the correlation between Russian language programs and World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. Part three delivers the methods of teaching Russian language and culture from some of the best Russian professors in the field. Part four concentrates on curriculum and material development. Part five centers on teaching Russian culture with a focus on extracurricular activities, literary canon, and intercultural competence. The concluding part six specifies methods of teaching Russian with technology, emphasizing blended learning and research-based internet writing projects.

In part one, Aline Germain-Rutherford offers the broadest context for Russian language teaching. She presents a historical look at foreign language education of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the place of the Russian language in this context. Her conclusion about the twentieth century appears to be negatively colored because
the US, a country of immigrants, tolerated non-English languages in its education system during the twentieth century. However, the picture changed at the dawn of the twenty-first century when the US government launched The Language Flagship program and National Security Educational Program, which identified several languages as critical to ensure national security. These programs were followed by the STARTALK project, the National Security Language Initiative for Youth, and the Critical Language Scholarship program. As a result, Russian became one of these critical languages (CL), and because of this status, it has been federally funded in high schools and colleges. Enrollment numbers, though, have been decreasing for both CL and traditional European languages, such as French, Spanish, German, or Italian (Dengub, Dubinina, and Merrill, 9). For Russian, the author provides data on CL undergraduate and graduate course enrollments data: 23,791 students enrolled in 1998 and 20,353 students in 2016 with some upward fluctuations in 2009 (26,740 students). The author emphasizes the recent change in the growing importance of foreign language expertise for successful job placement because of interconnected globalization and technological innovations, and she hopes that the US foreign language deficit will be overcome in the future. For US graduate students and directors of graduate studies, Germain-Rutherford’s article presents crucial data and provides helpful advice for making wise professional choices and setting appropriate career goals. Furthermore, this section establishes the future of the constantly shrinking Russian job market and explains this trend in context.

In her article on teaching Russian in the US in the post-Soviet era, Cynthia Martin brings no less eye-opening data on the trends dominating the Russian field. She stresses the shift toward real-world proficiency and communicative competence with unprecedented access to authentic materials in all modalities. After a two-year Russian program (before study abroad courses), learners will usually reach the Intermediate Mid proficiency. The increased proficiency is connected to the growing use of standardized approaches to teaching and testing, including proficiency-oriented college programs and widespread use of ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in accordance with tests in all modalities, such as the Oral Proficiency Interview, Writing Proficiency Test, Reading Proficiency Test, and Listening Proficiency Test. The proficiency movement is supported
by trends in independent learning, the technology revolution in teaching languages, and broad access to study abroad programs, independent programs as well as those funded by the US government. However, this proficiency-driven trend parallels a decreasing number of enrollments, degrees awarded, and faculty positions. Enrollments in Russian at two- and four-year institutions demonstrate a twofold decrease: 44,476 students enrolled in 1990 versus 21,962 students in 2013. Data on undergraduate programs in Russian language and literature display the same declining trajectory: 612 students enrolled in 1992–93 versus 371 students in 2013–14. Russian faculty positions posted on the Modern Language Association website are shrinking at the same swift rate. The faculty composition demonstrates an increase in US-based teachers with Russian as a native language after the fall of the Soviet Union, a population that entered the competition in this job market.

In their article, Angelika Kraemer, Jason Merrill, and David Prestel draw a typical portrait of a US college Russian program (usually four years of instruction) as small and particularly vulnerable in the situation of decreasing enrollments in all humanities in the US. The authors depict the ways in which colleges are taking steps to deal with these situations. In particular, Russian programs have become more innovative in teaching and technology, advertising the benefits of learning Russian for professional use through collaboration with other departments focusing on global competence. The authors suggest being more proactive and collaborative in the face of decreasing enrollments, sharing best practices for promoting Russian programs for students as well as for faculty and university managers. These practices include an increase in professional development, outreach programs, and curriculum development.

Cori Anderson, Julia Mikhailova, and Anna Tumarkin deal with problems connected to the widespread Intermediate level proficiency of bachelor of arts graduates who enter a US graduate program and must serve as teaching assistants providing level-appropriate teaching input. The authors investigate the causes of underprepared nonnative Slavic graduate students as well as the implications for job market competition for which announcements use vague “near-native proficiency” descriptions. The authors suggest the minimum requirement for oral proficiency should be of Intermediate High to fulfill all ACTFL standards so that graduate-level students can provide meaningful and comprehensive

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teaching inputs through a communicative approach. However, the typical US undergraduate program is constructed in such a way that it does not offer enough opportunities to develop this level of proficiency because of limited contact hours (three to five hours per week). Through a case study from University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic Languages and Literature, the authors propose several solutions to increase proficiency levels: include rigorous competency exams in the curricula, hold individual postexam meetings with the language program director to discuss deficiencies and develop an individual study program, and develop summer or yearlong study abroad programs or intensive summer programs in the US, funded by the Foreign Language and Area Studies program or from other sources. The authors suggest paying more attention to language and pedagogical training because they are essential to building a strong curriculum vitae for a highly competitive job market.

Opening part two is Thomas Garza’s article on the fourth edition of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages in teaching and studying Russian. He provides a brief history of their standards and structure and asks for more accountability and assessment from professional organizations, the job market, K-12 and postsecondary educators, and federally funded language programs. The author also shares the impact the standards have made on learners and educators, emphasizing that the next step is for learners to reach proficiency levels of Advanced or higher in order to answer market demands. Dianna Murphy, Narek Sahakyan, and Sally Sieloff Magnan continue to discuss the World-Readiness Standards but at the postsecondary level. The authors present their large-scale, mixed-methods study that investigated the relevance of the Standards for K-12-16 education. The study is based on two research questions: ‘‘Do the students’ goals correspond to the Standards’ goals?’’ Second, ‘‘How are the Five Cs [Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities] of the Standards represented in a hierarchy of students’ goals?’’ (Dengub, Dubinina, and Merrill, 125). The answer to the second question is of particular importance for teachers of Russian who create Russian language course syllabi because the answer highlights that students’ priority is Communities followed by Communication.

Part three, on approaches to teaching Russian, opens with Betty Lou Leaver and Christine Campbell’s article promoting the transformative
language learning and teaching (TLLT) approach. The authors recommend it as the next step following communication language teaching. Focusing on learners’ autonomy and personal transformation, TLLT emphasizes the crucial role of an autonomous and responsible learner in mastering language to near native level of proficiency that has been in demand from US government agencies for years. The authors highlight the change in the teacher’s role in learning, from instructing to facilitating and creating an immersive environment. They also share Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center experience in implementing this type of instruction in Basic, Post-Basic, and Defense Threat Reduction Agency intensive courses in Russian.

William Comer continues the discussion on the changes in approaching Russian teaching. He describes contemporary second-language acquisition models of grammar instruction implemented in US educational institutions, bringing the best examples from the textbook *Mezhdu nami* by Lynne DeBenedette, William J. Comer, and Alla Smyslova. Focusing on the beginning level of proficiency, he describes implementing six principles of form-meaning mapping connections in the textbook: (1) lexical level, “where learners map the words or phrases to a basic semantic meaning” (Dengub, Dubinina, and Merrill, 166), (2) grammar level, in which learners pay attention to inflectional morphology, (3) phonological level (intonation is connected to the question type), (4) functional level, on which learners “map the sentence type to the idea of making an inquiry about an object,” (Dengub, Dubinina, and Merrill, 166) (5) sociolinguistic level, and (6) contextual level, in which learners work to connect the sentence to a situation. Dealing with grammar teaching, the author relies heavily on input theory and insists that grammar should not be the primary focus for beginning learners but must be integrated into building the reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. He also proposes to pair grammar instruction with authentic materials for higher levels in the framework of content-based instruction.

Lynne DeBenedette continues this section with a description of her approach to teaching a third-year Russian, language-driven but not completely content-based course that aimed at helping learners achieve Advanced proficiency. The author shares the structure of her course and discusses the arguments and guiding principles of what she has included in her materials and why. Since this course is based on *Hipsters* (2011) by
Valerii Todorovskii, the author also describes how to deal with a film as a text for a language class focusing on language and culture and accompany the film with appropriate readings.

Benjamin Jens, Collen Lucey, and Benjamin Rifkin share their experience in constructing an advanced level course based on oral history and implementing it into the Russian language curriculum, in accordance with all the rules and regulations on projects involving human subjects. The oral history project connects the World-Readiness Standards with a research-driven course, step by step. The authors provide guidance on helping students to develop initial and follow-up questions, analyze the data, and understand the responses. They also offer students’ responses and evaluations of the oral history courses. This article is an invaluable resource and an excellent starting point in creating a content-based course in the Advanced-Superior level that connects culture and language through the personal experience of a learner.

The section’s closing article deals with perhaps the most popular and well-loved part of any language class: songs and singing. Karen Evens-Romaine, Stuart H. Goldberg, Susan Kresin, and Vicki Galloway deal with this topic, masterfully bringing up all the existent scholarship on songs in language learning to offer models and materials for every level of proficiency, including mixed-level and heritage classrooms. In addition, they provide data that supports the benefits of using songs in learning a foreign language. The spotlight of the article is Georgia Tech’s Critical Languages Song Project (https://clsp.gatech.edu/clsp19/), designed for upper-level courses and Advanced proficiency. For this reason, the antithetic songs are arranged to increase students’ time on task and to draw their attention to linguistic as well as cultural details.

In part four, Olga Kagan and Anna Kudyma offer their framework for developing textbooks of Russian as a foreign language as well as for textbooks for heritage speakers, combining a theoretical agenda with practical experience gained in the classroom. This article could be seen as a behind-the-curtain view of one of the most popular second-year Russian textbooks, V Puti. The authors describe how they implement backward design and aim at a proficiency level first. They explain how they approached the selection of vocabulary and grammar-focused activities and how they chose cultural context, based on nonauthentic and authentic texts for reading and listening activities. The authors emphasize
the importance of developing all modes of communication for learning experiences: real-life situations (task-based scenarios and role-play) for interpersonal communication combined with interpretative reading and listening as well as presentational writing or speaking. For heritage speakers, they offer to move from aural proficiency to literacy, from speaking to writing, and from a colloquial, home-based language register to a more formal and academic one. The article could be recommended for all professors who construct proficiency-based courses at any level, since it provides a conceptual starting point for creating such a course for a college-level Russian program.

Continuing the discussion of materials used for teaching Russian, Rachel Stauffer addresses the issue of diversity in Russian language textbooks. She suggests that most US-published textbooks do not reflect the identity of US-based Russian language learners because of their concentration on mainstream whiteness and privileged middle- and upper-class personalities. She advocates for a diverse representation of nondominant groups of learners to help them in their Russian learning. The author provides an analysis of Beginner’s Russian (2010) by A. Kudyma, F. J. Miller, and Olga Kagan; Golosa (2012), Book 1 and 2, by Robin, K. Evans-Romain, and G. Shatalina; Live from Russia! (2008) by M. Lekic, D. Davidson, and K. Gor; Mezhdu nami (2015) by L. DeBenedette, W. Comer, A. Smyslova, and J. Perkins; and Troika (2012) by M. Nummikoski. The author indicates that “the textbooks provide little to no representation of disability, non-heteronormativity, and nontraditional families in their imagery, vocabulary lists, and texts. Non-socially-dominant races and ethnicities are represented in the images and texts of all the books, although such representation is not equal to those of socially dominant categories” (Dengub, Dubinina, and Merrill, 288). The author suggests several ways to include races that are not socially dominant as well as ethnicity and diversity. One suggestion involves looking at other US-published foreign language textbooks, such as those for Spanish. The author provides a glossary of inclusive terms for introductory Russian textbooks.

The final article in this section emphasizes the importance of the Russian language corpus in language pedagogy. Olyesya Kisselev and Edie Furniss offer an approach to teaching Russian using Russian corpus linguistics to focus on authentic data combined with technology.
The authors briefly describe how to apply basic corpus methodologies in teaching Russian as a foreign language and provide a survey of recourses and examples that could be implemented in a Russian course using inductive learning. Such an approach, they argue, helps learners to create more native-like texts.

Part five on the teaching of culture opens with Ekaterina Nemtchinova’s article on intercultural competence as one of the primary goals in a Russian language classroom. The author brings a theoretical framework to discuss and develop intercultural competence in the classroom, including methods of assessment. She describes communication between Russian and US learners via the internet as one of the main ways to develop this skill. The project, called keypal exchange, aims to find differences and similarities through real-time communication, reflective writing in blogs, and individual presentations that connect American and Russian cultures. Other activities include teaching culture through activities based on proverbs and other sayings, inviting guest speakers, viewing paintings, and participating in scenario-based activities. The author also highlights that a significant outcome for learners is also the increased self-reflection on their own culture.

The final section, part six, is dedicated to teaching with technology. This topic has increased in importance since 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shift to remote learning. In their article, Shannon Spasova and Kristen Welsh answer the question that many colleges and universities face in Russian language courses: how can the course keep the same level of proficiency while reducing contact hours from five or six hours to three per week. The authors present their experiences in creating a blended student-centered environment for beginner and intermediate Russian courses in Michigan State University and in Hobart and Williams Smith Colleges. The authors present the structure and scheduling and discuss the benefits of blended learning and teaching with technology.

Stepping aside from writing as a grammar- and vocabulary-oriented assessment tool, Cori Anderson and Irina Walsh share their experience building proficiency-driven, student-centered writing assignments on Russian culture. These assignments help students become independent Russian writers by introducing them step-by-step to internet-based research, self- and peer-editing, blogging, and wiki
writing. Such projects motivate students to be autonomous learners, deal with authentic materials for reading and listening comprehension, and exercise presentational speaking at the end of their research work.

Finally, this volume serves as the best source for a bibliography on the latest research in the Russian teaching field. Every article is supported by an excellent bibliography specifically focused on the topic. Thus, this book can be the starting point for K-12 teachers and grad students and the point of return for in-service instructors to create proficiency-oriented and heritage student-centered courses.

Olga Mukhortova
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