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Book Review: *Modern Russian Grammar in Use: A Systematic Reference and Practice Book*

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On the whole, *Russian: From Novice High to Intermediate* is an excellent textbook that can be used in various academic years and is sufficient as the primary course textbook. It meets the needs of both experienced and novice instructors and provides diverse, engaging activities that encourage students to actively participate and develop their ability to communicate as literate and culturally aware users of the Russian language at the Intermediate level of proficiency.

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References

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Russian National Corpus. <https://ruscorpora.ru>

Minakova-Boblest, Elena. 2020. *Modern Russian Grammar in Use: A Systematic Reference and Practice Book*. Moscow/Munich: Asbuka. 309 pages.

Elena Minakova-Boblest's *Modern Russian Grammar in Use* is a much-needed comprehensive reference grammar and workbook for students of Russian, which can be used in the classroom and by students who study the language on their own (the answer key is a welcome addition for the latter). The book is a good supplement to virtually any contemporary textbook and can also serve as a standalone reference and exercise book for beginning- or intermediate-level language students.

The book starts with an "introductory course" that presents the basic structures of the Russian language. The lexical items used in the examples and the exercises in that section are of high frequency, which makes it possible to use this section at very early stages of language instruction. The "main course" includes sections such as "the noun" (mostly dealing with case forms and usage broken down into six cases), "the adjective," "the adverb," "the verb" (conjugation, imperative and subjunctive moods, verbal aspect, and verbs of motion), "the participle," "the verbal adverb," "the numeral" (including sections on giving the

date and telling time), “the simple sentence,” “the compound sentence,” and “the complex sentence” (broken down into sections based on types of clauses). A unit titled “Real Life” appears at the end of each of these sections and provides communicative practice of grammatical structures. At the end of the book, there is an answer key and a “grammar overview” section containing declension and conjugation charts, as well as a chart with selected perfective verbs with their forms and translations.

The book’s design is very convenient: all topics are laid out on a two-page spread with the explanation and examples on the left page and the exercises on the right. This layout is familiar to all learners of English who used the famous *English Grammar in Use* by Raymond Murphy (Murphy et al., 2004). The book’s enormous popularity was largely related to the way it was structured and the convenience of its use. By adopting a similar structure, the creators of *Modern Russian Grammar in Use* made their book very user-friendly for students in traditional classrooms and for individual learners.

The grammatical explanations are clear and frequently brief, which is partly determined by the book’s layout. While some topics are adequately covered, others (for example, verbs of motion, verbal aspect in the past tense, and *mo*, *umo* clauses) could benefit from a longer and more detailed treatment. In the introduction, the author designates advanced students as the book’s target audience (along with beginners and intermediate students); however, some advanced students might find the information in the chapters too basic and, at the same time, will not find topics suitable for their level, for example, punctuation rules, figurative use of verbs of motion, and short forms of participles.

Stress is marked for all Russian words throughout the book. English translations accompany all of the examples in the explanations, and some words in the exercises are glossed. Footnotes provide additional information about unfamiliar concepts. The author often offers additional context for target structures through common phrases and illustrations.

The book features many wonderful drawings, photos, and illustrations, setting it apart from similar books on the market, which usually feature no or very few illustrations. All the images in the book are black and white and straightforward, but they serve two important purposes: 1) they enliven the text and often illustrate certain cultural

realia, and 2) they add to the explanations of structures and illuminate them. Several exercises in the book are based on illustrations. The book's numerous charts, tables, and graphs help to organize the information and present it in an effective and concise way.

I would love to see more inclusion and diversity in the next editions of this book. For example, there is often disparity in gender use in exercises and examples, in which more male names (or no females names) are used (ex. 3, p. 219; ex. 3, p. 233; ex. 3, p. 265, to name just a few). More gender-inclusive language would be welcome to replace such words as "salesgirl" (p. 185) and "saleswoman" (p. 174). Some students might also find discussing gender stereotypes (ex. 3, p. 175) awkward and offensive even when asked to argue with them. Most of the book's references to the Russian culture concern Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Expanding the cultural geography to other areas of the Russian-speaking world, as well as using personal names other than traditional Russian names, would also be a welcome change.

Overall, this book can be used as a supplemental text for first-, second- or even third-year Russian language courses or as a primary self-study material for adult learners of Russian.

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References

Murphy, R., Viney, B., & Craven, M. (2004). *English grammar in use with answers and CD ROM: A self-study reference and practice book for intermediate students of English* (Vol. 1). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas Jesús Garza, ed. *Practices That Work: Bringing Learners to Professional Proficiency in World Languages*. Hollister, CA: MSI Press LLC, 2021. 212 pages.

Practices That Work is an excellent resource for both new and experienced foreign-language instructors, as well as for foreign-language learners. The volume is a compilation of short, thematically organized articles written by numerous experts in the field of foreign-language teaching who share invaluable insights about bringing learners to high-level professional