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## Book Review: *Etazhi: Second Year Russian Language and Culture*

Cori Anderson  
*Rutgers University*

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for the purposes of this review was just as powerful. The editors of the volume and all the contributing authors are to be commended for their outstanding work, work that has the potential to change our classroom practices—*your* classroom practices—and have an enormous impact on the world language education of all students. It has already had an impact on the way I teach.

*Benjamin Rifkin*  
*Fairleigh Dickinson University*

**Evgeny Dengub and Susanna Nazarova. *Etazhi: Second Year Russian Language and Culture*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021. 412 pages.**

The options for second-year Russian textbooks have been very limited, despite a growing number of textbooks at the first-year level and more advanced levels. *Этажи* fills the need for a stand-alone textbook that can be used for students who have already reached Novice High-Intermediate Low proficiency. What sets *Этажи* apart is the focus on real-life communication and conversation, and the use of real-life stories, provided by both native speakers of Russian and advanced learners. These written and recorded stories fill the book with relatable content and relevant cultural information, covering topics from dating to holidays to the Russian cafeteria, and serve as the primary linguistic input throughout the book. The topics of the stories are intertwined with the vocabulary and grammar exercises throughout the book, which imparts an authenticity to the activities. This leads to more natural conversations about realistic scenarios, which will attract and keep the attention of students. The book offers a plethora of conversation-based activities, supplemented with vocabulary building activities, grammatical review, and a thorough grammar reference at the end of the book. *Этажи* will suit the needs of any instructor looking to engage intermediate students (the book could easily be used for second- or third-year courses) with true-to-life conversation topics.

The thematic content includes familiar topics for this proficiency level: family, clothes, health, food, travel, home, school, and work. The organization of the book is novel: there are six units in total, with each

broken into smaller parts. These parts focus on one topic, related to the others in the unit. The first three units have three parts, e.g. the first chapter “Семья, Характер, Отношения” while the last three have just two parts, e.g. the final chapter “Учёба, Работа”. The parts themselves do not follow a uniform structure, but each begins with a list of vocabulary items that should be familiar to the student, and a list of new words and phrases that will be encountered in this part. The new vocabulary is activated through example sentences for students to comment on, and discussion questions to be completed with a partner. Following the vocabulary activities, the structure of each part varies. There is at least one real-life story, and at least one grammatical topic in every part, both with several related activities. Every chapter includes multiple listening activities, with comprehension questions and follow-up exercises. The audio is available online, both in streaming format and for download; transcripts are available at the end of each chapter. The book balances the daily life in the stories with elements of high culture; each chapter includes a Russian painting by artists like Chagall and Kustodiev, and a short story by such authors as Chekhov, Teffi, and Zoshchenko. The chapters are also supplemented with contemporary authentic materials, such as restaurant menus and magazine articles, and include drawings and photographs of contemporary Russia.

The grammatical elements covered in the book are wide-ranging and focused on the communicative needs of students for the thematic topics. For instance, the words *оба/обе* are covered in the part on family, as they are frequently used when talking about family. Short form adjectives and imperatives are presented in the chapter on appearance, clothing, and health. Similarly, the more common prefixes for verbs of motion are reviewed in the first half of the book, while the full range of prefixed verbs of motion, including transitive verbs of motion, are reviewed in the second half. One aspect of the book’s approach to grammar deserves special recognition: the connection of vocabulary and grammar. The authors have thoughtfully included tricky areas for students, such as expressing the concepts of “different” and “same” in Russian. The reference grammar includes a list of useful phrases for expressing opinions, expressing agreement and disagreement, sequencing information in an argument, etc., which can be used in class discussions and written assignments. Much attention is also given to verb conjugation, with charts to be completed by students throughout each chapter (plus complete charts for many verbs

in the grammar reference), in addition to vocabulary-based activities that put the verb forms into context. On the other hand, the review of cases is largely done in context of the stories or other texts. Students are instructed to identify words and phrases in one or two cases throughout a text, then read about the functions and review the forms of the case(s) in the grammar reference, and finally complete cloze exercises with the cases under review. Instructors who prefer a more drill-oriented approach may find the number of exercises to be insufficient.

Like many newer textbooks, *Этажи* does away with the stand-alone workbook. The authors have provided a sample schedule of the first chapter for instructors, demonstrating which exercises in the book can be assigned as homework, and which should be done in class. The instructor's materials, available on the publisher's website (<http://press.georgetown.edu>), also include an answer key and a sample review sheet and test for the first chapter. The website also contains all audio recordings, as mentioned above, as well as links to online flashcard sets for students. The reference grammar at the back of the book is also a valuable resource for students, containing a wealth of information about case, prepositions, adjectives, pronouns, verbal aspect, verbs of motion, time expressions, participles and verbal adverbs, complex sentences, and much more. Indeed, *Этажи* provides a robust set of material for any intermediate-level course, allowing students to apply the grammar in relevant, real-world scenarios, and to get further acquainted with contemporary Russian language culture through the eyes of native and L2 speakers.

*Cori Anderson  
Rutgers University*