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Rationale and Research Basis for Teaching Materials on Narrative and Conceptual Proficiency in Advanced-Level Russian

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Narrative Skills in Advanced-Level Russian

I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Russian project at CALPER was to create a set of instructional materials to foster advanced proficiency in speaking Russian. To create such materials, we first had to answer the following questions:

- 1) How is advanced language proficiency in speaking currently defined in the field of Russian language teaching in the US?
- 2) What is the place of speaking in advanced-level curricula?
- 3) What opportunities for practicing advanced-level speaking skills are offered in Russian textbooks?
- 4) How do advanced American learners of Russian perform on advanced-level speaking tasks when compared to native speakers of Russian?

During the four years of our work on the Russian project, my research assistants, Viktoria Driagina (2003-06) and Nina Vyatkina (2002-03), and I have attempted to answer these questions in a variety of ways. Our first three strategies were relatively straightforward. We began by examining the revised *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking* (Breiner-Sanders et al., 2000). Then, we conducted an informal survey of Russian language programs in US colleges and universities in order to determine the goals and contents of courses labeled "advanced". We examined the contents of these courses through their course descriptions and, where available, through sample syllabi. We have also examined existing research on the development of advanced proficiency in Russian. Subsequently, we conducted our own study where we compared the performances of advanced American learners of Russian on advanced-level speaking tasks to those of native speakers of Russian on the same tasks. The combined results of our survey and our empirical study allowed us to formulate our ideas with regard to what types of speaking skills and competencies should be addressed in our instructional materials.

II. HOW IS ADVANCED LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN SPEAKING CURRENTLY DEFINED IN THE FIELD OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE US?

The most common definition of "advanced level proficiency" adopted in the field of foreign language education in the U.S. is found in the **ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines** for Speaking (Breiner-Sanders et al., 2000; <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/GuidelinesSpeak.pdf>). The **ACTFL Guidelines** differentiate between *Advanced Low*, *Advanced Mid*, *Advanced High*, and *Superior* proficiency and specify that learners at the *Advanced High* level of proficiency should be able to do the following:

- narrate fully and accurately in all time frames
- provide structured arguments to support their opinions
- construct hypotheses (albeit with a degree of errors)
- discuss concrete topics, as well as some abstract topics, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise
- use precise vocabulary and intonation to express the desired meaning
- use compensatory strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration, in case of difficulties with grammar or lexical choice.

In turn, speakers at the *Superior* level of proficiency should be able to do all of that plus:

- communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives;
- discuss their interests and special fields of competence;
- explain complex matters in detail;
- provide lengthy and coherent narrations with ease, fluency, and accuracy;
- explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured arguments to support their opinions;
- construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities;
- use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations;
- command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone;

- demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures and make only sporadic errors in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines have several weaknesses: (a) the hierarchy of language competence assumed in the ACTFL Guidelines has yet to be demonstrated empirically; the Guidelines address a limited set of language features, leaving out, as will be discussed later, important aspects of sociolinguistic competence; (c) they also exhibit a preference for on particular type of proficiency, modeled on the educated native speaker standard.¹ In addition, the Guidelines exhibit a bias toward a particular type of proficiency, based on the educated native speaker standard. At the same time, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines have a major advantage over other definitions of proficiency because they offer a set of specific, and in many cases easily quantifiable, skills that can be translated into proficiency tests, such as the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). Consequently, in what follows, we will adopt the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as a starting point for our analysis and examine how advanced Russian-language curricula and textbooks promote the skills of narration, argumentation, explanation, hypothesis structuring etc.

III. WHAT IS THE PLACE OF SPEAKING IN ADVANCED-LEVEL CURRICULA?

To learn more about how speaking is currently incorporated in advanced-level Russian curricula, in the year 2002-2003, we **conducted an informal survey** of Russian language programs across US colleges and universities. The survey was conducted mostly through internet searches, although in some cases, we also conducted informal interviews. Two of the researchers engaged, Viktoria Driagina and myself, also brought to analysis our own experiences of teaching advanced level Russian courses. Our goal was to establish whether our sampling of Russian language programs shared a similar understanding of: (a) the point in the instructional process when advanced classes should be offered, (b) speaking skills that should be emphasized in these classes and (c) instructional materials that aim to develop these skills. Throughout, we tried to determine if advanced-level speaking skills outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were reflected in the course curricula.

¹ For a more extended discussion, see a special issue of *Foreign Language Annals*, 2003, 36 (4). As one of the creators of the Guidelines, Liskin-Gasparro (2000), readily acknowledges, "the Guidelines posit a particular hierarchy of language competence that has yet to be fully demonstrated empirically" (p. 20). She also admits that they "address only a small portion of the features of learner language" (p. 20).

To begin with, we found that not all Russian programs offered classes labeled "Advanced" and of these, there were significant differences in the timing of these courses. Most often the courses were offered during the third year of language instruction, following a two-year long sequence of beginning and intermediate courses. However, some courses labeled "Advanced" were offered following a three-year-long sequence of beginning and intermediate level courses, and others were offered following a one-year long sequence of introductory courses.

Is it possible that in some programs students achieve intermediate-level Russian proficiency after just one year of instruction and are ready for advanced-level classes in their second year? Thompson (2000) used the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines to examine levels of proficiency achieved by Russian students, recruited at the Middlebury Russian Summer School, after 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years of instruction. *She found that Russian students achieve advanced proficiency in speaking by the end of the fifth year of study.* This means that classes offered during the second or third year of language instruction are in reality intermediate-level classes, despite being labeled Advanced.

Secondly, we found that while there were differences across programs in terms of the timing of the courses labeled Advanced, there was consistency in terms of the course content. Several of the course descriptions we reviewed stressed that advanced level classes offer a comprehensive review of Russian grammar and conversational practice. Almost all descriptions and syllabi stated that the study of Russian will be conducted through the use of authentic materials, such as literary texts, periodicals, films, videoclips, and TV programs. Some course descriptions also stressed the fact that the courses will provide students with conversational practice. However, only a few syllabi and course descriptions went beyond the generic label 'conversational practice' and listed specific speaking skills as narration, description, comparison, or explanation, outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Our analysis of these descriptions and syllabi suggests that the primary goal of the current advanced-level Russian instruction in the US is cultural literacy and the secondary goal is understanding of Russian grammar. In emphasizing authentic materials, Russian programs aim to place the study of Russian in a cultural context, to familiarize students with Russian customs, culture, literature, and history, and to enable students to work with a variety of texts. Specific speaking skills are rarely emphasized in these courses. In the informal interviews we conducted, course designers often suggested that speaking skills required by

the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are best developed through a combination of classroom conversation practice and naturalistic exposure to the language during the study abroad. Consequently, the development of specific skills, such as narration, explanation, or argumentation, is not stressed in the course design.

But what does research have to say about conversational practice fostering advanced speaking skills? A study by Rifkin (2002) set out to examine this issue. The researcher found that students from an experimental class that stressed the development of narrative skills told stories that were similar to those told by native speakers of Russian and were more complex and grammatically accurate than those told by students from a traditional conversation class. In other words, the study indicated that conversation classes per se may not fully develop the skill of narration and more attention to development of narrative proficiency is needed to help students make a transition from intermediate to advanced level of speaking proficiency.

To sum up, we found that the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in speaking do not appear to directly inform all of the Russian-language college curricula we reviewed. It is possible however that while advanced-level course descriptions and syllabi do not stress specific speaking skills, textbooks adopted in advanced level classes offer students structured opportunities to develop the skills of narration, explanation, or construction of arguments and hypotheses. To see if this was the case, we examined speaking exercises in a selection of textbooks commonly adopted in advanced-level Russian classes.

IV. WHAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICING ADVANCED-LEVEL SPEAKING SKILLS ARE OFFERED IN ADVANCED-LEVEL RUSSIAN TEXTBOOKS?

Our survey identified the following texts as **most commonly adopted in advanced-level Russian classes** (see also the results of the SEELANGS 1999 survey at <http://aatseel.org/teaching/textbooks.html>):

Textbooks

Dabars, Z., Morris, G. & T. Stramnova (1997) *Mir russkix*. ACTR/Kendall-Hunt.

- Davis, P. & D. Oprendek, D. (1973) *Making Progress in Russian*. Wiley & Sons.
- Kagan, O. & F. Miller (1996) *V puti*. Prentice Hall.
- Lekic, M., Rassudova, O. & T. Kirsh (1994) *Chto vy ob etom думаете?* ACTR/Kendall-Hunt.
- Nakhimovsky, A. & R. Leed (1987) *Advanced Russian*. Second ed. Slavica.
- Rifkin, B. (1996) *Grammatika v kontekste*. NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Rosengrant, S. & E. Lifschitz (1996) *Focus on Russian: An interactive approach to communication*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Thompson, I. (1991) *Reading Real Russian*. Second ed. NJ: Prentice Hall.

Grammar references

- Levine, J. (1999) *Russian grammar*. McGraw-Hill.
- Mahota, W. (1996) *Russian motion verbs for intermediate students*. Yale University Press.
- Miller, F. (1991) *Handbook of Russian prepositions*. Focus.
- Miller, F. (1989) *A handbook of Russian verbs*. Focus.

Rifkin's review of Russian textbooks (<http://slavica.com/teaching/rifkin.html>) categorizes most of the textbooks above, with the exception of Dabars et al. (1997) and Nakhimovsky & Leed (1987), as intermediate-level texts. This discrepancy, once again, suggests that understandings of 'intermediate' and 'advanced' vary in the field and are oftentimes distinct from the notion of 'advanced' reflected in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

To learn more about speaking opportunities offered to students by existing textbooks we have analyzed the eight textbooks above (we have excluded grammar texts from our analysis, as their role was clearly circumscribed to that of reference texts). Below are the summaries of analysis of each text, followed by an overall summary.

Davis, P. & D. Oprendek (1973) *Making Progress in Russian*. Wiley & Sons.

This popular textbook, currently in its second edition (1997), is intended for a second year college course. The text focuses on the development of vocabulary and of metalinguistic knowledge of Russian grammar. Short texts opening each lesson are followed by an expanded description of particular issues in Russian grammar and students are then asked to answer questions about grammar usage (e.g., explain the use of aspect in this sentence, what case is this and why?). Activities consist of fill-in-the blank and transformational exercises that offer opportunities to practice the grammatical forms in question, sentence translation exercises, and questions that require single-sentence responses. In a few cases, students are asked to answer questions based on a set of pictures and these activities may turn into opportunities for narrative practice. While this text aims at second year students, there is no reason why

these students should not be encouraged to tell short stories using the vocabulary and grammatical forms they already know. This traditional text, however, sends students an implicit message that they need to develop an in-depth grammatical knowledge of and about Russian grammar, and to use this grammar perfectly on a sentence level, before they are allowed to string sentences together into stories.

Dabars, Z., Morris, G. & T. Stramnova (1997) *Mir russkix*. ACTR/Kendall-Hunt.

This is a very reader-friendly book that aims to develop both cultural literacy and speaking skills in intermediate- and advanced-level students. Each lesson is devoted to a particular topic. Lessons open with an original expository text devoted to the topic, followed by communicative exercises designed to check students' understanding of the text and to practice the new vocabulary, and in some cases by another text on the topic. Next, students are asked to read a slightly abridged literary text, also followed by communicative exercises. These are followed by a grammar section that includes some fill-in-the-blank and transformational exercises.

The text familiarizes students with Russian writers (e.g., Aksyonov, Baranskaya, Tokareva), artists (e.g., Kandinsky), customs and traditions and offers them multiple opportunities to develop the skills of storytelling and expressing opinions. Story-telling is encouraged by questions that elicit students' stories and opinions and by exercises that ask students to use a set of pictures to compose a story. Argumentation is encouraged by exercises that offer students specific vocabulary and grammatical structures to express their opinions and by provocative questions that are likely to engage the students in discussion of Russian and American cultural traditions. Both skills are also developed through role playing exercises that ask students to assume particular roles and express opinions on particular topics.

Kagan, O. & F. Miller (1996) *V puti*. Prentice Hall.

The goal of this text is to develop communicative competence of intermediate-level students. Each lesson focuses on a particular topic. Lessons open up with a set of short expository texts or dialogues aimed to illustrate the key topic. These texts and dialogues are followed by communicative exercises that offer students multiple opportunities to converse in Russian. Each lesson also contains grammar explanations, followed by fill-in-the-blank and communicative exercises. Most of the communicative exercises in the text offer opportunities for dialogic communication and for practicing speech acts (e.g., requesting, advising, etc.). A few encourage students to go beyond the sentence level and to tell short stories, either orally or in writing. Some exercises also offer opportunities to practice explanation skills. The text is unique in that it offers students opportunities to express their own emotions and to describe emotions of others.

Lekic, M., Rassudova, O. & T. Kirsh (1994) *Chto vy ob etom dumaete?* ACTR/Kendall-Hunt.

This textbook is designed to support a video course produced by ACTR and may be used in the third, fourth or fifth level of Russian instruction. As evident from the title, the goal of the course is to develop students' speaking skills and in particular the skill of expressing opinions. Both 'previewing' and 'active viewing' exercises aim to develop students' listening proficiency and comprehension of both verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication. Follow-up questions encourage students to express beliefs and opinions on the topics raised in the films and interviews in the video course. Of particular importance here are exercises that attract students attention to ways in which Russian speakers word their arguments.

Nakhimovsky, A. & R. Leed (1987) *Advanced Russian. Second ed. Slavica.*

This traditional text, accompanied by tapes, consists of twelve lessons. Each lesson opens up with expository texts and dialogues, followed by vocabulary comments and explanations. Then, each lesson offers a discussion of new grammar and vocabulary and a set of exercises, consisting of fluency drills, translation activities, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and communicative and role-play exercises. Both communicative and role-play exercises offer students opportunities to engage in conversational practice and, in a few cases, to create stories (e.g., describe your day) and to offer opinions and arguments.

Rifkin, B. (1996) *Grammatika v kontekste. NY: McGraw-Hill.*

The purpose of this text is to offer second-year students multiple opportunities to understand, practice, and acquire grammar in context, in particular a literary context. Consequently, all lessons are structured around particular grammatical issues (e.g., aspect, cases, verbs of motion), illustrated through texts and an excellent selection of popular classic and contemporary poems. The modularity of the text allows instructors to pick and choose the order of presentation and to use the text alongside another textbook. Activities consist of pre- and post-reading tasks, translation and fill-in-the-blank exercises, and metalinguistic exercises that promote understanding of how Russian grammar functions. Some of the pre- and post-reading activities aim to assist in development of narration, argumentation and expression of opinions. A unique feature of the text are end-of-the-lesson exercises that raise students' awareness of cohesive devices and ask them to identify and keep track of all connecting words and phrases encountered in each unit.

Rosengrant, S. & E. Lifschitz (1996) *Focus on Russian: An interactive approach to communication. John Wiley & Sons.*

This textbook is organized on the basis of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. All lessons begin with thematically selected vocabulary, followed by vocabulary notes and grammar

explanations. Then, students are offered a variety of activities, among them fluency drills, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and translation activities. Then, they are invited to listen to and read a text on the topic of the lesson. Each lesson contains exercises that target specific speaking skills outlined in the ACTFL Guidelines. From the first lesson on, creative exercises allow students to practice description skills, inviting them to describe pictures, people, living arrangements, current fashions, and medical conditions. Starting with lesson five, exercises allow students to practice a variety of narrative skills: students are asked to create stories based on a set of pictures, express their opinions and hypotheses as to what might have happened in a particular situation, provide explanations and solve problems. A variety of exercises also allow students to practice the speech acts of advising, accusing, and arguing.

Thompson, I. (1998) *Reading Real Russian*. Second ed. NJ: Prentice Hall.

This text, divided into twelve thematic units, aims to promote reading, writing, and speaking skills in intermediate-level students. Each lesson features a variety of texts, signs, forms, and ads. Accompanying questions foster cultural competence necessary for understanding of these texts. Exercises and questions allow students to practice expression of beliefs and opinions, advising, and argumentation in speaking and writing. Some of the exercises are not particularly creative, however, and appear to be translations in disguise (e.g., "Write a brief letter to Katya Novitskaya. Tell her how impressed you are with her story and ask her additional questions about her career and family").

Summary

To sum up, our analysis singles out three texts as displaying the greatest number of creative exercises that offer students structured opportunities for development of narrative skills as outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines:

- Dabars, Z., Morris, G. & T. Stramnova (1997) *Mir russkix*. ACTR/Kendall-Hunt.
- Lekic, M., Rassudova, O. & T. Kirsh (1994) *Chto vy ob etom думаете?* ACTR/Kendall-Hunt.
- Rosengrant, S. & E. Lifschitz (1996) *Focus on Russian: An interactive approach to communication*. John Wiley & Sons.

These texts offer learners multiple opportunities to practice the following skills:

- description (e.g., exercises that ask students to describe what they see in a particular picture or set of pictures, exercises that ask students to describe a particular activity)

- narration (e.g., exercises that ask students to compose a story based on a particular set of pictures; questions that elicit students' own stories)
- expression of beliefs and opinions (e.g., questions that ask students to state their beliefs and opinions on a particular issue, role playing exercises)
- hypothesizing (e.g., exercises that engage students in expressing hypotheses as to what might have happened in a particular case)
- explanation and argumentation (e.g., exercises that ask students to substantiate their particular view or opinion with evidence, role playing exercises)

Notably, however, all of these exercises offer students opportunities – and in some cases, useful vocabulary items – for narration or argumentation, but they do not engage students in reflection on unique aspects of the narrative activity (e.g., similarities and differences between sentence grammar and discourse grammar), nor do they inform students about cross-linguistic differences in ways speakers of English and Russian construct narratives.

V. HOW DO ADVANCED AMERICAN LEARNERS OF RUSSIAN PERFORM ON ADVANCED-LEVEL SPEAKING TASKS WHEN COMPARED TO NATIVE SPEAKERS OF RUSSIAN?

In order to uncover similarities and differences in ways in which speakers of Russian and English tell narratives, and to see how advanced American learners of Russian fare in this task, we conducted our own cross-linguistic study of narrative proficiency. Part of our study was conducted at the same site as several other studies of Russian, that is at the Middlebury Russian Summer School. In the study we asked 28 students (=L2 Russian) enrolled at the highest levels of instruction to participate in the following two tasks — a life story interview and a retell tasks, which required students to retell the contents of three short films. One film, "The Letter", was made by myself and used elsewhere also and two films were selected from the popular "Mr. Bean" series (UK TV Series 1990-1995; (<http://www.mrbean.co.uk/>)). The students' performance was then compared to that of 28 native speakers of Russian interviewed at the University of Tomsk (January 2002) and 40 Russian-English bilinguals interviewed at the Pennsylvania State University (2004-2005). The study yielded a large **Corpus of Russian Narratives** that has been added to CALPER's

Learner Corpus Database, and will become available in the near future. We subjected this corpus to contrastive analysis.

The Data Collection:

Participants:	28 native speakers of Russian (20 females, 8 males), ages between 18 and 21, students at the University of Tomsk, interviewed in Tomsk, Russia Pennsylvania State University, Office of Research Protection, IRB #15220
	30 native speakers of English (15 females, 15 males) ages between 18 and 22, students at the Pennsylvania State University, interviewed in State College, PA Pennsylvania State University, Office of Research Protection, IRB #15220
	40 Russian-English bilinguals (20 females, 20 males) ages between 21 and 27, students at the Pennsylvania State University, interviewed in State College, PA Pennsylvania State University, Office of Research Protection, IRB #15220
	30 advanced American learners of Russian (15 females, 15 males), ages between 21 and 27, enrolled at the 6th and 7th levels of the Intensive Summer Immersion Program at Middlebury College, interviewed in Middlebury, VT Middlebury College, Human Subjects Review Committee, Proposal 04-63

Our analysis of advanced learners’ narratives demonstrated that the students in our study, none of whom have ever participated in a study abroad program, conformed overall to the ACTFL Guidelines for advanced levels of speaking: They could tell stories in different narrative genres (personal vs. fictional narratives), construct lengthy and more or less coherent narratives, as well as arguments and hypotheses within the narratives, discuss concrete and abstract topics, express their opinions and beliefs, manipulate intonation and vocabulary to express the desired meaning, and use compensatory strategies.

However, a comparison of the learners’ narratives with narratives elicited with the same films and questions from native speakers of Russian revealed the following weaknesses in the students’ performance:

- **Narrative structure:** Although the students did tell coherent narratives, they often lacked the necessary cohesive devices: for instance, they did not always use identifiable narrative openings and closings.

- **Description of emotions:** The students had mastery of some emotion vocabulary, but often made semantically or grammatically incorrect choices: for instance, many used emotion adjectives and adverbs in contexts where native speakers of Russian used emotion verbs. The students also experienced difficulties when it came to emotion vocabulary, as seen in increased amounts of hesitation, pausing, laughter, and direct requests for help.
- **Description of motion:** Because Russian has a much more complex system of verbs of motion than English, these verbs are notoriously difficult for American learners of Russian. The students in the study were no exception: They experienced difficulties in selecting the right verbs and the corresponding prepositions and made a number of errors in the use of these verbs.
- **Tense and aspect:** Because tense and aspect differ in Russian and English, American learners of Russian have difficulties mastering the aspect system of Russian. As a result, the students in the study made several errors in tense and aspect assignment.
- **Identity terms:** The students also hesitated when talking about themselves and their lives, at times they lacked vocabulary they needed to express their own identities (e.g., gay, cheerleader, disabled, feminist, etc.).

Three of these areas of difficulty (narrative cohesion; tense and aspect; verbs of motion) are well-known in the field of Russian instruction; the other two (emotion vocabulary; identity terms) have not been discussed in the literature on teaching Russian, to the best of our knowledge, and represent the contribution of this study to the development of the understanding of advanced proficiency in speaking.

Summary: Advanced language proficiency as identity performance

Based on the results of our study, we argue that the skills of emotion description and presentation of identity constitute advanced-level skills ignored by the ACTFL Guidelines and yet critical for advanced- and superior-level speaking performance. *Advanced level proficiency* in the view proposed here involves much more than the ability to manipulate decontextualized knowledge, state opinions or verbalize hypotheses – it also involves

possession of sufficient sociolinguistic resources to represent oneself adequately in a range of contexts and genres. To put it simply, it is the level of proficiency that allows students to comfortably be themselves in a second language and express not only their thoughts, beliefs, and opinions, but also their identities and emotions, and to position themselves and others in ways recognizable to speakers of the target language.

Furthermore, we argue that advanced proficiency is not what we teach at the third, fourth or fifth year of instruction. We see approaches that keep students' speaking production at the level of single sentences until students exhibit superior mastery of the range of grammatical skills as deeply problematic. Rather, we advocate that advanced-level speaking skills are skills we should begin developing from the first day of teaching if we want our students to ever reach that level. In other words, this means that teaching should be oriented not only towards short-term goals (i.e. what the students need to know at a particular stage) but also toward the long-term goal of constructing credible and comprehensible identities in a second language.

Finally, we argue that unstructured conversational practice is not the most effective way of developing advanced-level narrative skills. To develop these skills sooner, students need structured opportunities. They also need opportunities to reflect on cross-linguistic differences in narration, argumentation, explanation, description, hypothesis construction, etc. Consequently, we have developed a set of materials that aim to provide Russian students with an opportunity to tell stories and to analyze similarities and differences between their own stories and stories elicited with the same films or questions from other American learners and from native speakers of Russian.

V. References

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- Rifkin, B. (2002) A case study of the acquisition of narration in Russian: At the intersection of foreign language education, applied linguistics, and second language acquisition. *Slavic and East European Journal*, 46, 3, 465-481.
- Thompson, I. (2000) Assessing foreign language skills: Data from Russian. In Kagan, O. & B. Rifkin (eds.) *The learning and teaching of Slavic languages and cultures*. Bloomington, IN: Slavica, pp. 255-284.

Useful websites

- [Advanced-level courses in Russian](#)

<http://www.carla.umn.edu/lctl/db/>

- [Russian language textbooks: overviews and surveys](#)

<http://slavica.com/teaching/rifkin.html>

<http://aatseel.org/teaching/textbooks.html>

<http://community.middlebury.edu/~beyer/publications/ccpcrdb.shtml>

Materials Created:

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Other Publications:

Pavlenko, A. & Driagina, V. (in press). "Russian emotion vocabulary in American learners narratives". *The Modern Language Journal* (to appear 2007)

Driagina, V. & Pavlenko, A. (in press). "Identity repertoires in learners' narratives." In Z. Hua, P. Seedhouse, L. Wei & V. Cook (Eds.), *Language learning and teaching as social interaction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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