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Chapter 2

Content-Based Instruction
in
Foreign Language Education:
Models and Methods

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Content-Based Instruction in a Basic Russian Program

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Editors' Note: Since the eighteenth century, Russians have experimented with various forms of CBI. It is appropriate, then, that the Russian program was among the first to implement CBI at the Foreign Service Institute. The Basic Russian Program, designed to take students from ILR level 0 to level 3 in forty-seven weeks of intensive study, proved to be an ideal setting for experimentation with CBI. Leaver describes a two-stage implementation process: textbook supplementation and textbook development. The former proved highly successful and demonstrated that CBI can be used successfully at elementary levels of foreign language proficiency, even in languages considered "difficult." The latter was less successful. The author concludes that perhaps the CBI textbook project should have been an effort to replace the textbook with authentic materials and subject matter textbooks from Russia. The use of authentic materials to the near-exclusion of textbooks has subsequently been found to be successful in other foreign language programs, including programs in Slavic languages. General references for this chapter are located in the bibliography at the end of this volume.

The Foreign Service Institute

The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is the training arm of the U.S. Department of State. It consists of three schools—the School of Language Studies, the School of Area Studies, and the School of Professional Studies, as well as two centers—the Center for Foreign Affairs and the Overseas Briefing Center. The School of Language Studies trains students to proficiency levels in speaking and reading that are set by the posts at which the students will be working. Most students are required to reach levels that the FSI labels as Speaking (S) -3 and Reading (R) -3, described as "minimal professional proficiency." The FSI levels, now more widely known as the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) levels, are discussed in Chapter 1.

FSI students attend class for up to thirty hours a week, for periods ranging from six weeks to forty-seven weeks, depending on the exit proficiency level required and the established difficulty level of the language. Classes are relatively small, typically three to six students per class. The language instructors are all "educated native speakers" (ILR-5) of the languages they teach. Most are immigrants; some are second-generation (or "heritage") speakers.

The Russian Section

The Russian section has traditionally been one of the largest at the FSI, occupying an especially important political position during the 1980s—the last days of the Cold War before the fall of the Berlin Wall. As a result, while resources were usually scarce, there was administrative support for innovation and creativity in Russian language teaching.

The Russian Section was one of the first foreign language departments at the FSI to implement elements of content-based instruction in a beginning program. Three principal reasons why the seeds of CBI found fertile ground there were: 1) student need and readiness, 2) the unique disposition and skills of the instructors, and 3) the importance of Russian in the international community.

The students, who would soon find themselves living and working overseas, needed to learn a great deal of sociopolitical and cultural information to function successfully at their posts. In 1984, the year that the Russian Section undertook course revisions, there were many Russian instructors who were skilled and experienced in the use of CBI. Philosophical agreement and enthusiastic mutual support existed among many of the language training supervisors (including three other contributors to this volume—Esarey, Stryker, and Ryding), and there was strong administrative support in both the School of Language Studies and the School of Area Studies for the concept of integration of area and language studies. Consequently, it is not coincidental that the CBI program in Russian, as well as the other FSI programs described in this volume, were initiated during this period.

The Rationale

A new Basic Russian Program, a forty-seven-week course aimed at taking students from an ILR level 0 to level 3, was completed in 1983. Although this curriculum was already proficiency-oriented, the needs of the students and the disposition of the faculty facilitated a strong movement in the direction of content-based instruction. As most of the Foreign Service

Officers posted to the USSR were seasoned officers—mid-career and senior political officers, economic officers, cultural attachés, general services officers, security officers, and military attachés—they had accumulated a wealth of experience, expertise, and knowledge. Most were proceeding to sensitive diplomatic positions that would require them to utilize that expertise. CBI was recognized as an ideal method to capitalize on those students' sophisticated professional schemata. A majority of the students had learning style profiles that did not match the generally inductive Notional-Functional and Natural Approach orientations of their course materials. Most students had well-developed analytic and deductive skills (as opposed to synthetic and inductive skills), and it was felt that CBI could foster a productive application of these skills to analyze content. Another factor favoring CBI in the Russian Section was the content limitation of the curricular materials, especially for study beyond the 2+ level. At the time that the CBI supplementation began, only about 50 percent of the students routinely reached the S/R-3 level required for their positions in Moscow and Leningrad. CBI was seen as a possible vehicle to accelerate students from an S/R-2+ level to the S/R-3 level needed for adequate job performance.

Designing the Curriculum

CBI in the Basic Program in Russian was implemented in two stages. The first stage was "textbook supplementation," and the second was "textbook replacement." Even as the textbook supplementation project got under way for the beginners, the Russian Section undertook the development of an entirely content-based Advanced Course for students already at level 3 or 3+ who needed to increase their proficiency to even higher levels. The development of a curriculum for the advanced students had a very positive impact on the Basic Program. The Advanced Course had a "trickle-down" effect on the development of the content-based components of the Basic Program, in large part due to daily contact between students and instructors and activities in which all the students of the Russian Section participated. In some cases, talented beginners were actually able to enter the Advanced Course near the end of their first year in the Basic Program.

Scope and Sequence of the Program

Given the experience and needs of Foreign Service Officers, most of the new CBI curriculum was designed around the study of political, economic, military, and cultural, themes or professional concerns such as security, general services, cultural and scientific exchanges. Other topics were specific to the individual needs of students. The themes of Soviet life and world view permeated the entire program.

The initial CBI effort in Russian concentrated on job-oriented Language for Special Purposes (LSP) modules offered in the last twelve weeks of the Basic Program in an effort to "top off" students' training with a final push toward level 3 (as was the case in the Arabic, Indonesian, and Spanish models described in later chapters). As a result of the success of the modules in the final twelve weeks, CBI was added to the beginning and middle of the program, and the goal became the design of a fully content-based program from start to finish. This led to Stage Two, the development of a CBI textbook.

Faculty and Materials

In spite of much moral support from the administration, early efforts at course supplementation with CBI were largely unfunded. Faculty devoted extra time, including weekends and evenings, to preparing materials in time for an early 1984 launch.

Fortunately, the twenty-four Russian language and culture instructors brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the task of developing a CBI program. Many had been content teachers or successful professionals in the Soviet Union and had turned to language teaching when they emigrated to the United States. For example, one instructor, a high-ranking Soviet Army officer, had taught at a military academy, another had been a docent at a museum, and yet another was a professional actress. Many of those who were language teachers by profession had received training or had experience in CBI in Russia, where CBI had been a typical feature of the "special foreign language schools" (described in Chapter 1). Thus, the teachers were generally inclined to embrace the CBI philosophy and to find creative ways to include it in their classrooms.

Materials came from a number of sources. In the mid-1980s, obtaining authentic materials from the Soviet Union was very difficult. Nevertheless, FSI graduates who were stationed in the former Soviet Union supported the plan to develop a CBI curriculum. Many purchased materials out of their own pockets; others found ways to use official budgets to obtain materials. Nearly every week during the 1980s, newspapers, magazines, pictures, and assorted realia arrived by the "State Department Pouch," along with letters wishing the section well in its CBI endeavor.

In 1986 an unrelated development facilitated access to authentic video materials. Spearheaded by the enthusiasm of Richard Robin, a professor at George Washington University (GWU), the FSI, the Office of Training and Education, and GWU joined together to establish the Listening Comprehension Exercise Network (LCEN). This network provided Russian

teachers across America with exercises to accompany Satellite Communications for Learning (SCOLA) broadcasts. These broadcasts became additional tools for teachers to use as they struggled to find enough authentic materials to meet the demands of course supplementation. (SCOLA has become a major source of materials for foreign language instructors worldwide. For information on SCOLA, see Appendix A of Chapter 4.)

Even the Soviet embassy in Washington helped supply authentic materials. Every Thursday, after embassy personnel had finished watching the latest movies from home, the cultural attaché would make them available to the FSI. (This was a service of the Soviet embassy of which a number of local universities also took advantage, although in the cloak-and-dagger days of the Cold War, it is not clear why Soviet embassy personnel were willing to help the U.S. Department of State.)

Soon after the materials arrived, teachers prepared them for use in the courses. They wrote booklets to accompany a "monolingual language training" (MOLT) program, additional job-oriented LSP modules, and supplemental reading materials for the early stages of language acquisition. Between 1984 and 1986 twenty-five content-related booklets of authentic materials were completed, most of them prepared with little administrative support in either dollars or time. These included eleven MOLT booklets, eight LSP booklets, *Mark Smith's Diary*, a set of area studies exercises and readings, and four reading books.

With limited time and resources to edit and field-test these materials, once again friends came to the rescue. Faculty at Harvard University and Columbia University offered to field-test the materials with their own students. In most cases, students at these universities used the materials before the FSI students were ready for them. Useful comments and suggestions from the Russian faculties there facilitated revision of the materials before their use with FSI students.

Implementing the CBI Curriculum

Stage One: Textbook Supplementation

The CBI initiative in Russian was launched piecemeal, relying on the good will of students and extra efforts of the faculty. During the first year of development, the sequence of the supplementation matched student proficiency level step-for-step, beginning with the Monolingual Language Training (MOLT) modules, the writing of *Mark Smith's Diary*, the Special Courses (or LSP modules), and the professional conference. The following year the area studies modules and a series of reading books on content topics for the entire duration of the program were introduced.

Monolingual Language Training (MOLT) Modules: The MOLT lessons were extended role plays lasting a total of three hours over a three-day period. The MOLT instructor, a former actress, played a variety of roles very convincingly. Other instructors would occasionally assist. The first role plays were modifications of the notional-functional themes of the textbook (such as buying theater or airline tickets) but these were integrated into larger contexts (such as taking a train trip across Siberia) and combined with content themes (such as meeting educators on the train and comparing Russian and American educational systems). Later, as students became accustomed to dealing with real content, the themes became more academic or professional, dealing with topics such as “comparative political systems.” In these scenarios students played the roles of American diplomats and conveyed information about life in America, American values, and American institutions to their Russian counterparts, played by Russian instructors.

Mark Smith's Diary: Cross-cultural information was imparted via diary entries of Mark Smith, an imaginary American diplomat living and working in Moscow. The diary consists of Mark Smith's written records of ongoing conversations with his Russian friend, Nikolai. They share their cross-cultural observations, comparing and contrasting differences in Soviet and American reactions to events. For example, the two exchange commentaries on daily interpersonal interactions (e.g., why someone didn't smile back: Russians don't smile at strangers; why Mark's wife offended her pregnant Russian friend by giving her a baby gift: a gift before the birth of a baby is a bad omen); differences in Soviet and American “values” (e.g., the concepts of government or of mental illness); and cultural imagery (e.g., the word *border* suggests the image of a wall or stop sign to a Russian but suggests the image of a passport or a line to be crossed to an American). Initial diary entries were in English with a few Russian words and phrases added. By lesson twelve, the entries were only in Russian. (Mark Smith became proficient in Russian after a twenty-three-lesson stay in Moscow!)

Mark Smith's Diary was originally intended as a consciousness-raising activity designed to make students more sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. It turned out to be a major feature of the program and was very popular among the students.

Individual teachers used the materials in unique ways. Some teachers used the materials as a basis for further classroom discussion. Others took a more elaborate approach and reenacted the contents in some way. Still other teachers used the contents as a springboard for students to interview native speakers who had emigrated to the United States about these topics.

Mark Smith's Diary has been made available to the public through the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Literature and through serialization in the American Council of Teachers of Russian's *ACTR Letter*. Of course, Russia has changed immensely since 1990, and *Mark Smith's Diary* has not been updated to reflect the changes. (A sample lesson from *Mark Smith's Diary* is in Appendix A.)

Language for Special Purposes seminars: Language for Special Purposes (LSP) modules, called “spetsseminary” (special seminars) by the Russian students, the third element of CBI to be added after MOLT and *Mark Smith's Diary*, started toward the end of the Basic Program, when most students were at a level 2 or 2+. For two hours per day during the final three months of the program, students were enrolled in a special seminar dealing with the professional area in which they would be working in Russia. Six special seminar modules were developed for the end of the program: military affairs, political affairs, economics, security studies, general services, and consular affairs. These modules encompassed a total of one hundred classroom hours of study and were based primarily on authentic materials. Each special seminar was unique—based on the specific needs of the students in the seminar. Special seminars were similar only in the number of hours assigned and the use of a booklet with the activities and authentic materials. Some seminars used Natural Approach techniques that focused primarily on getting messages across and understanding. In other seminars, focused more on accuracy of expression, teachers used more traditional methods. Some seminars used newspaper articles while others incorporated popular books, role plays, authentic documents, and, occasionally, traditional situational dialogues.

The political affairs and economics seminars were based on readings of authentic texts from multiple sources. One frequent task was to make comparative analyses of what Russian sources stated and what American experts believed. Economic topics included both microeconomics and macroeconomics. Political topics included political structure, key players, and political action. In addition to newspapers, both seminars incorporated television broadcasts and documentaries.

The consular seminar, using documents sent from the American embassy in Moscow or consulate in Leningrad, was based on role plays in which students performed the kinds of tasks expected of consular officers in Russia, such as handling complaints or dealing with bogus documents. In designing the consular seminar, the course developers also had access to useful materials from the generic Consular Officer Course taught in the FSI School of Professional Studies.

The military special seminar used two "textbooks." The first was a manual handed out to Russian inductees into the Soviet Army. An "easy read" (written at a *Reader's Digest* level), it presented anecdotes about enlisted men who had performed great, unsung war deeds and described the various branches of the armed forces and how they were organized. The second "textbook" was much more challenging—a book well-known in Russia on battle tactics and strategies, written by a high-ranking official working in the Russian Ministry of Defense. In later years, the seminar incorporated several video tapes made by a former Soviet Army officer who taught at the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Garmisch, Germany. Popular Russian films with military themes also were used as "authentic input" for part of the program.

The security and general services special seminars were the most traditional in format and were linguistically oriented. Because security officers and general service officers had to use language accurately in order to perform their jobs adequately, emphasis was placed on precise usage of vocabulary and accuracy in sentence and grammar structure. Thus, these two seminars had the structure of traditional courses, although the content was, indeed, specific subject matter. The general services seminar was conducted in three phases. First, students learned to use the documents associated with their work, supplied by the American embassy in Moscow and the American consulate general in Leningrad. Second, students participated in a series of role plays associated with general services situations. Third, students developed linguistic knowledge and skills, using a core dialogue as the point of departure. (Appendix B contains sample lessons.)

These LSP modules were developed with the assistance of various departments of the American Embassy in Moscow and the American consulate general in Leningrad. As the Russian Section received comments on the effectiveness of the particular topics in the modules from Embassy and Consulate personnel, the teachers modified the content to more closely match the diplomats' needs. The modules were subsequently field-tested and revised as needed. The revision of these modules was an ongoing process as the needs of the embassy and consulate changed, with diplomats sending samples of their work to the Russian Section, providing new documents, and other useful materials to aid in the process of revision. (Needless to say, Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (rebuilding) engendered much revision in all of the Russian Section's materials in the late 1980s.)

In recent years, the time and duration of study allotted to these special seminar modules has been expanded (Bernhardt 1994). (Unfortunately,

the LSP modules are the only components of the original Russian CBI experiments that still thrive today.)

Area Studies: During the Basic Russian Program the students attended three hours per week of area studies instruction given in English in the FSI School of Area Studies. The topics encompassed political, economic, military, cultural, and foreign policy issues. Two years into the supplementation process, a handbook was prepared in Russian to accompany the weekly topics presented by the School of Area Studies. Each lesson in the booklet contained a reading on the topic that was understandable yet challenging to the average student. In addition, each lesson contained an intensive reading assignment, usually taken from authentic sources, that provided new information and represented a linguistic challenge for most students. The most capable students often incorporated this information into their own speaking and writing; the less capable students used them to find specific pieces of information and learn the most important concepts associated with the topic. In all, there were twenty lessons, each lasting about two weeks.

In addition to the material presented in the area studies courses, teachers developed their own area studies activities. For example, teachers showed videos, found newspaper articles on the same topics, and conducted in-class discussions. Occasionally, field trips were taken, such as one to the Hillwood Museum in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the lesson on Art and Architecture; there, a tour was conducted entirely in Russian by Russian-speaking museum personnel. Teachers also worked in teams of two or three to conduct debates or simulations, for example, leading a debate on the role of Kievan Rus' (Kiev, Ukraine, was the seat of the first Russian government) in Russian history from the point of view of three different religious persuasions. Such presentations began in the very first weeks of Russian instruction. Student activities associated with these presentations took a variety of forms, including writing an analysis (in-depth if written in English or in outline form if written in Russian), reenacting the presentation with classmates, or arguing for their own interpretation, depending on their level of proficiency at the time.

In the early weeks of the program, in order to make area content more accessible to students, teachers used a form of "scaffolding" by relating information to students' schemata (see a fuller description of scaffolding by Ryding and Stowasser in Chapter 5). An example of this scaffolding-building process is the students' first geography lesson, taken from lesson 1 (see Appendix C). In this lesson, students learned geographic terms (continent, mountain, river, city, capital, etc.) in Russian as they described

familiar American topographical features and the location of American cities on a map of North America. They later moved on to Russian geography and the location of Russian cities and terrain features. In this way new vocabulary and information were introduced in a familiar context.

Supplemental Reading Packets: Separate from the area studies booklet, the Basic Program textbook was supplemented by reading packets that contained authentic articles on political affairs, economics, human rights, social welfare, and other current topics. These reading packets were thematically organized in order to develop vocabulary and structure through extensive exposure to authentic materials. At very low proficiency levels (0/0+), students were given sorting and identification tasks. For example, on the first day of class, students received a collection of a dozen or more articles containing many cognates. Their task was to sort these into categories such as "kosmos," "meditsina," "politika," "sport," and "ekonomika." As they progressed through the program (0+/1) they graduated to skimming, scanning, and "gisting" (i.e., grasping only the general idea or gist of the article), often comparing Soviet and American articles on the same event and analyzing the differences in reportage and interpretation. This type of exercise not only provided background information in English (a bit of a "cheat sheet") but also gave students an insight into the Russian ethos. Toward the end of the program they were asked to analyze texts in greater depth, identifying elements that were culturally loaded or ambiguous, specifying the underlying simple structure of linguistically complex passages, and for students who would be posted to positions requiring translation skills, proposing alternative translations of culturally or linguistically complex materials.

The Conference: "The conference," in which all students participated, served as a capstone activity at the end of the year-long program. Both Basic Program and Advanced Course students presented papers in Russian on area studies topics of their own choice. The criteria for selecting a topic was that it dovetail with those studied in the School of Area Studies and that it represent the same sophisticated level of thinking that students were capable of in English. Papers ran fifteen to twenty minutes in length, followed by ten to fifteen minutes of answering questions from an audience composed of teachers, other students, and invited guests.

In addition to individual papers, the conference featured debates and roundtables that focused on current issues such as *perestroika*, an analysis of Gorbachev's first days in office and their significance for the future, and the outlook for improvement in Soviet-American relations. Roundtable

topics were announced only two or three days in advance of the conference. Although students routinely discussed these topics in their classrooms, there was no advance preparation of position papers specifically for the roundtables. Students from the Advanced Course and those students from the Basic Program who had reached at least ILR S-3+ proficiency by the time of the conference conducted the hour-long roundtable, at which they extemporaneously discussed the chosen topic. Sample paper presentations and debate topics are listed below.

Sample Paper Presentations

- "Scientific and Cultural Contacts Between the United States and the Soviet Union"
- "The Current Status of Sino-Soviet Relations"
- "Perestroika in the Economics Sphere"
- "The Struggle for Human Rights in Russia"
- "The Influence of American Policy Towards Refugees on Soviet-American Relations"
- "Differences in Soviet and American Social Values"

Sample Debate Topics

- "Should Cultural Contacts Between the U.S. and Russia Be Expanded?"
- "Is the Party Apparatus Yielding Power to the KGB or Armed Forces?"
- "Should NATO Modernize Its Forces in Europe?"
- "Can a Policy of Economic Sanctions Be Effective?"

The deans of the Schools of Language Studies and Area Studies hosted the conference and shared responsibility for opening and closing remarks, usually speaking in English. Students acted as Russian interpreters—sometimes receiving the texts in advance, often not. Most of the outside guests were speakers of Russian; non-Russian-speaking guests were paired with student interpreters. Conference participants from the outside learned new information or gained new insights from students' presentations.

As a capstone to their training in the School of Area Studies, Basic Program students were required to write a ten-page term paper on some aspect of Russian history or politics. Students were given the option of writing those papers in Russian. Most students worked long hours to polish their conference presentations for this purpose, and teachers worked with students to ensure a literate product. One student subsequently published

his Russian language paper—an analysis of actual Soviet military capability versus Soviet rhetoric on the topic.

Testing:

No formal tests were given during the Basic Program. Approximately once every three months an interim oral proficiency interview was administered to ascertain whether students were “on track” to the required end-of-training proficiency level (typically a level 3 in speaking and reading). If specific deficiencies were discovered during the interim tests, students were “tracked” (put into a special skill-building class one hour a day) for work specifically in the deficient area. Examples of “tracking” included vocabulary enrichment, focus on structural accuracy in speaking, improvement of listening comprehension skills, and enhancement of discourse competence.

Stage Two: Textbook Development

By 1986 the Basic Program was supplemented by elements of CBI from the very first week of class, and by 1988 as much as one-third of the daily work was based on supplemental CBI materials.

In 1987, encouraged by favorable comments of students and embassy officials and having observed significantly improved end-of-training scores, the administration of the North and East European Languages Department decided to move forward with full-day implementation of CBI from the first day of class. This was to be realized through the preparation of a new “Basic Program CBI Textbook.” The topics for the CBI lessons were to be based on area studies topics. The twenty supplemental area studies lessons and *Mark Smith's Diary* lessons were to form the core of the textbook.

Unfortunately, in spite of favorable student response and documented proficiency gains in students who field-tested the first five lessons, all twenty lessons were never completed. The project was significantly underfunded and understaffed. Growth pains caused by a dramatic increase in the student body and the hiring of a number of new instructors created a need for faculty development without adequate time or resources to train new faculty concurrently with the development of a new textbook. In addition, personnel changes in administration created waning support for nontraditional programs.

More importantly, as portions of the CBI textbook were completed, the course developers themselves began to question the viability of a “CBI textbook.” The materials that were being put into the textbook would clearly become obsolete and have to be replaced periodically; finding “authentic

materials” that would not quickly become dated was very restrictive. In addition, trying to meet the needs of individual groups of students required introducing specific materials that reflected their interests and learning styles. The strong emphasis on teaching to students’ learning styles, which had become the norm in the Russian Section, meant that even with a CBI textbook (i.e., one that was subject-matter based and used authentic materials), teachers were still supplementing and adapting lessons in order to meet the learning needs of specific groups of students. No two groups of students received exactly the same instruction, because no two groups of students had exactly the same learning needs. A key question arose: Why are we writing a CBI textbook, if, in order to implement a good CBI course, we have to use current and authentic materials?

This question arose in all of the FSI sections that were experimenting with CBI (see Chapters 5, 8, and 10), and all seemed to be reaching the same conclusion: CBI and the use of a single textbook are mutually exclusive concepts. This same conclusion was reached at the Defense Language Institute. Corin (Chapter 4), describing a course for Serbian and Croatian in which students used authentic materials exclusively, concludes that a single integrated textbook is incompatible with effective CBI.

The Advanced Russian Course

As mentioned earlier, the ongoing development (and continued success) of the Russian Advanced Course during this time had a significant impact on the Basic Program. The advanced students and portions of their curriculum were constantly accessible to the Basic Program students and influenced them. The Advanced Course used an unusual model of instruction that compensated for lack of teacher expertise in esoteric subject-matter areas.

The Advanced Course functioned entirely at the ACTFL “Superior” level of proficiency, its purpose being to take students from ILR level 3 to level 4. Students in the Advanced Course interacted with Basic Program students and provided excellent models for them. Some of the Russian Section activities included joint participation by both the Basic Program and Advanced Course students. Most notable was the conference, during which the Advanced Course students conducted roundtables and debates, while Basic Program students made short individual presentations and acted as interpreters for guests. Students in the shorter specialty courses entertained with skits, rap, or music. In some cases, outstanding students who completed the Basic Program early were enrolled in the Advanced Course.

The Advanced Course presented students with the opportunity to completely "sculpt" the program to match their own interests, experience, and learning needs. Students selected the subject matter they wished to include in the syllabus and the length of time they wished to spend on each subject. For example, one class composed of many consular officers chose to spend over half the course on the topic of political dissidents. Other classes did not even include this topic. Because teachers could not be expected to be knowledgeable in all topic areas, students who were experts in the fields undertook to conduct research in Russian on the topics and lead the class discussions. Teachers facilitated students' work by providing authentic materials in addition to those that students were able to find in the Department of State Library and by assisting with the development of language skills needed to discuss the topic at an educated native-speaker level. In addition to participation in the conference and the term paper that each student wrote for the School of Area Studies, Advanced Course students had one more requirement to fulfill: a public lecture in Russian. Each advanced student selected a topic and presented an evening lecture at a gathering of local Russians. The lecture lasted thirty to forty minutes and was followed by a question-and-answer period in which views on the topic were exchanged. As with all other activities in the Advanced Course, the lecture used the Russian language as a medium of communication of complex ideas, not just as a linguistic system to be studied and analyzed. The class activities, including student research and student-led seminars, all led to the point where a student could stand alone in front of a Russian-speaking audience and lecture in Russian as an expert. The Advanced Course was highly successful in turning students into independent learners, capable of "flying on their own."

Evaluation and Conclusions

The CBI courses proved to be an asset to the Russian Section in a number of ways: 1) student response was favorable—the first time in many years; 2) student proficiency gains were evident; and 3) feedback from the American embassy in Moscow was positive. Unfortunately, the courses required levels of resources that made them difficult to maintain.

Student Response

On end-of-training questionnaires, Basic Program students routinely pointed to the CBI elements as the most effective aspects of their training. Comments from students who participated in field-testing of the CBI textbook generally focused on the confidence that they gained by discussing

"adult-level content" in Russian from the very start. After completing the partially developed CBI textbook and returning to the standard textbook with supplemental materials, most students reported feeling a "loss of momentum" and a "change in intensity" of the program. On end-of-training questionnaires, many commented on their disappointment in having to return to a non-CBI textbook. Advanced Course students, who achieved parallel rapid increases in their language proficiency and confidence, became advocates of CBI. In fact, one student made a presentation on the course at a meeting of the Interagency Language Roundtable, and two other students made a promotional videotape, sharing the techniques used in the class and describing the impact of the CBI program on their learning.

Proficiency Gains

Results on the end-of-training proficiency tests were also positive. When CBI was introduced at the beginning of the FSI Russian program in 1984, the percentage of students who started at 0 and reached S-3/R-3 in a ten-month period rose from 52 percent (the previous five-year average, as well as 1983 graduation level) to 83 percent in spring 1985. From 1985 to 1988 that percentage remained close to 90 percent. At higher levels of proficiency, the differences were even more pronounced. Prior to the addition of CBI elements to the program, only 18 percent of the students reached scores that exceeded level 3. After addition of the CBI elements, 42 percent of the students reached scores higher than a level 3. Of those students in the Basic Program who were placed in the CBI Advanced Course toward the end of their initial training, 100 percent reached at least S-3/R-3, 92 percent reached 3+ or higher, and 16 percent reached level 4 in a ten-month period of study. (Most had entered with no previous study of Russian.)

Even during the short period in which the new CBI textbook was used, there was a perceptible difference. Progress was rapid during the first ten weeks of the program and resulted in interim proficiency test scores of 1 or 1+ for most students, with more than half reaching 1+, a level equivalent to that typically achieved by fourth-year students in many college Russian programs and not reached with the traditional FSI Russian materials until much later in the course. When students returned to a program that was less intensive in its CBI structure, the rate of progress visibly slowed.

Realistically, some of the improvement could be accounted for by other changes in the curriculum, such as greater expectations placed on the students, immersion, greater flexibility in adapting classroom and homework activities to match learning styles, and the introduction of systematic use of Russian in a student-emigrant internship program. However, the students

themselves most frequently attributed their increased confidence and proficiency to the CBI elements in the curriculum. The greatest gains in proficiency, as measured by interim tests, were made during the periods when students were receiving the greatest amounts of content-based instruction.

The conference appeared to be especially important to student language gains. In addition to very favorable student response, the conference gained renown both inside and outside the FSI. Invited guests came from the FSI, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Naval Academy, the Jewish Community Center, Russian emigrant groups, and local universities. Guests were impressed with the conference and student proficiency. A note from the director of the FSI called the conference "an imaginative and clearly very successful adjunct to everyday training," and went on to say, "I have heard nothing but rave reviews." A professor from a local university program, a native speaker of Russian, wrote, "I am impressed to see that someone is training students to this level of proficiency." More importantly, however, from the time preparation for the conference began (about two weeks before the event itself) to the final proficiency tests of students (about two weeks after the conference), most students made measurable linguistic progress. From 1985 to 1987 interim proficiency tests were given at the outset of the conference preparation. During that time period more than half of all students made a half-point proficiency gain in the short period of time surrounding the conference. On a qualitative basis, both teachers and students commented frequently on the way in which students' language skills developed into an effective communication tool that students used with comfort.

Even better results were obtained in the all-CBI Russian Advanced Course, one of the most successful courses ever implemented at the FSI. During the period that this course was taught, no student who entered the Advanced Course with the prerequisite level 3 in reading and speaking and who attended the full six-month course failed to reach at least a level 4 in both skills upon exit; some reached level 4+ in one or both skills.

American Embassy Feedback

Feedback from the embassy was very supportive. Students who completed the CBI-supplemented program found that they were comfortable in doing their daily work in Russian. They maintained contact with the FSI Russian Section, something that had not been done routinely, and assisted in providing materials for the subject-matter supplements for future students. The relationship with the Ambassador and the Post Language Officer

improved. Where there had been criticism, there was now emerging support. Over time, supportive materials and interactions became routinely bidirectional. The Consul General in Leningrad, who had completed the first Russian Advanced Course, wrote that he would have been devastated following his first meeting with the Executive Council of Leningrad (the equivalent of our city council) had he not been exposed to comparative political behaviors as part of the Advanced Course. As a result of his studies, he knew how to react to the slow beginning of the meeting, and he knew when he had accomplished his aims. Instead of feeling devastated at the conclusion of the meeting, he was ecstatic. He went on to win the confidence of the Executive Council, to conduct all business in Russian, and to be a very effective consul general.

Difficulties in Maintenance

Although the results from the CBI courses between 1984 and 1988 were very encouraging, lack of resources and a change in administration with an accompanying wane in administrative support prevented their completion and consolidation. As a result, some elements of Stage One (text supplementation) were eliminated, and implementation of Stage Two (text preparation) was halted. Remaining today from Stage One are the use of cultural materials, the use of authentic reading materials (although the books and other textual materials themselves have become outdated and have been replaced), and the LSP modules (which have continued to receive administrative support and expansion). These materials and activities still give the FSI Russian Basic Program of the 1990s a CBI flavor.

Analysis of our text preparation efforts provides some insights into the problems inherent in a comprehensive CBI text at early stages. While the desire to move beyond textbook supplementation to something more broad-based was legitimate, forcing CBI into a textbook format was not practical. Had foresight the acuity of hindsight, a more appropriate approach of "textbook supplantation" would have been taken—with subject matter textbooks from Russia. Having learned this important lesson at the FSI, I was able to experiment with this approach in a Defense Language Institute (DLI) Czech course in the 1990s. The Czech Department at the DLI used task-based instruction and authentic materials exclusively for the first half of the course (Maly 1993). The latter half of the course was fully content-based, using student-elected subjects, such as physics, mathematics, grammar, and folklore. Teachers imported textbooks on these subjects from Czech high schools, or in the case of grammar and folklore, from elementary schools. Students reported that the course was "fun" and that they "could

not help but learn.” They considered themselves advantaged over their peers in the more traditional Czech course because they learned more with less effort (Duri 1992). Results showed that while typically 40 to 50 percent of graduating Czech students in the traditional course reached the exit goal of Reading-2, Listening- 2, and Speaking-1+, all of the students in the Czech CBI course reached levels of at least Reading-2, Listening- 2, and Speaking- 2, and 60 percent reached a level 3 in one or more of the skill levels (Maly 1993). A Ukrainian “conversion course” (see Corin, Chapter 4, for an explanation of conversion courses) produced even more impressive results: 88 percent of students reached a level 3 in all skills after four months of half-time study (Leaver and Thompson 1993). In both cases, the “textbook issue” was resolved by using truly “authentic textbooks” rather than a single foreign language textbook.

In sum, the very nature of content-based instruction, whether for beginning or advanced learners, requires going beyond any single textbook and using many and varied authentic materials in a variety of content domains. The major conclusion I have reached concerning alternatives to a fixed textbook and syllabus design is that the best “content-based text” would not be a bound text with prescribed lessons but one which provides teachers with models and general methodological guidelines that could be adapted to any kind of content-based curriculum—not unlike the format of this book.



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List of Appendixes

Appendix A: *Mark Smith's Diary*

Appendix A is an excerpt (Lesson 15) from *Mark Smith's Diary*. In the original *Mark Smith's Diary*, the lesson is in Russian. It is translated here for readers' convenience.

Appendix B: Special Seminars

Appendix B includes sample lessons from the general services seminar, accompanied by a description of how these lessons were implemented.

Appendix C: *Area Studies Handbook*

Appendix C is a page from Lesson 1 of the *Area Studies Handbook* (and later, Lesson 1 of the CBI textbook) in which students learn geographic terms, first by locating American cities and terrain features, then by using the geographic terms to learn the location of Russian cities and terrain features.

Appendix A *Mark Smith's Diary*

Lesson 15

Lessons from *Mark Smith's Diary* (which were actually Mark Smith's written records of conversations he had with his Russian friend, Nikolai) in some cases were accompanied by multiple-choice questions or quizzes. Other times the lessons were reenacted in the classroom. For example, in the lesson on popular literature, Boris Shekhtman and Natalia Lord, the two FSI instructors who authored the diary, would gather all staff and students into one room, with the Russian teachers sitting on one side of the room and the American students on the other. They would ask two questions: “Who are the greatest Russians?” and “Who are the greatest Americans?” Russians inevitably listed writers, such as Tolstoy and Pushkin, but not scientists or political leaders. Americans listed scientists, such as Einstein, and political leaders, such as Washington and Lincoln, but not writers.

The partial diary entry below comes from Lesson 15, “Foreign Relations,” used about the thirtieth week of the course. This particular entry is entirely in Russian and translated here. Teachers used this entry in a wide variety of ways—discussion, as source material for a debate, enactment of a talk show, interviews of teachers or emigrants not associated with FSI, or a myriad of other activities limited only by teacher and student imagination.

Mark: Nikolai, if we take international political relations between the two countries, can we assume that some of their views of each other are the result of, so to speak, perceptual differences?

Nikolai: In principle, I don't know whether these differences can be called perceptual — but there is no doubt of their existence. I would more readily call them different approaches to the solution of foreign policy problems. In the first place, I would suggest that, if the Soviets in their foreign policy defend only the interests of the government-party apparatus, then the Americans often find it necessary to reflect the desires of groups whose interests do not coincide with the interests of the government. Take, for example, the problem of grain. American presidents have attempted more than once to halt delivery of grain to the Soviet Union, in order to punish it for aggressive policies. However, under the pressure of farmers interested in those deliveries, all American presidents, as if on command, have moved away from their positions and resumed the sale of grain to the U.S.S.R.

In this connection, it is appropriate to emphasize the fact that Soviet foreign policy is least of all susceptible to various types of humanitarian or moral influence. While young Americans were dying in Vietnam, lists of their names were published in the U.S. Their parents were interviewed, protest demonstrations were organized, petitions were signed, and virtually everything was done by American supporters of peace to end the war. Who knows how many Soviets have died in Afghanistan, but who has heard even one word of protest or seen even one mother sobbing over the grave of her son?

In addition, from my point of view, it wouldn't be bad to point out the effect of differences in the personalities of leaders on foreign policy. In the U.S., foreign policy is less coherent and stable because its leaders change often. In the U.S.S.R., individuals remain leaders for many years. How many Secretaries of State have come and gone in the U.S. in recent years, while Gromyko has been Minister of Foreign Affairs for more than 30 years? In addition, the individuals conducting foreign policy in the U.S. have more freedom of action. In my opinion, this is very important, since Americans

are inclined to evaluate the actions of Soviet leaders from their perception of the role of personality in government. In this way, Americans thought that if a new General Secretary came to power, Soviet policy might change fundamentally. In reality, the General Secretary can do only that which is demanded of him by the totalitarian system.

Appendix B

Special Seminars General Services Seminar

Example 1: The following excerpt is a sample of lessons that students complete in the middle stage of the seminar. Prior to doing this kind of lesson, students have worked with authentic documents, learning the basic vocabulary needed for filling them out accurately. Emphasis in the general services special seminar is on developing accuracy of expression. General services officers need to be precise in order to be effective officers. In the lessons, students enact role plays. The "problem" is reported to them by someone playing the role of a Russian employee. "What to say" provides them with some basic expressions to use in doing the role play. These expressions are instructions that could be given to Russian workers. Students are, of course, at liberty to elaborate and to use whatever else they know about repairs, living quarters, and the Russian language. These phrases are examples given to students of possible dialogue and are translated from the original Russian.

PROBLEMS	WHAT TO SAY
The freezer is not freezing.	Check out and, if needed, repair the freezer.
A pipe burst.	Mend the pipe. Replace the pipe.
The door does not shut properly.	Fix the door.
The shelf broke.	Repair the shelf. Put in a new shelf.
The refrigerator is not keeping produce cold.	Check the thermostat. Check the motor.
The refrigerator does not work.	Check the motor. Install a new motor.

Example 2: The following dialogue, from the third stage of the general services special seminar, has to do with fueling planes. Other topics include banquets, facilities rental (quarters, sports facilities, etc.), facilities maintenance, sales of personal merchandise, and excursions.

In general, the teaching techniques used with this seminar include role play, traditional reading for accuracy of information, and grammatical exercises. The scenarios are content-based in that the subject matter is general services content, and the situations and documents are authentic. The topics, tasks, and skills developed reflect the needs of this group of students. The dialogues are presented in two modalities, oral and written, to account for learning style differences among the students.

This lesson, including instructions on implementing the lesson, is entirely in Russian. A conversation between an American General Services Officer (A) and a Russian official (B) serves as a model dialogue and is translated here. The language may seem harsh. In post-USSR Russia, it would probably be inappropriate; however, in the Cold War days, when this seminar was first implemented, the language was typical. Relationships between general services officers and the Russians they worked with were often not very cordial. Students need to understand when they were being treated with lack of cordiality and how to respond accordingly.

Note: The purpose of question 4 in the exercise which follows the dialogue is to develop a feel for Russian syntax, which is much freer than English syntax. In general Russian word order is highly flexible. Here the student is asked to change subject-verb-object word order into a variety of other possibilities. The teacher would then explain the subtleties in meaning associated with the various word orders.

Refueling of an American Plane in Leningrad

- A. Did you already check out the cargo?
- B. Yes. I can say that almost everything is in order. The only thing unclear is this beat-up container.
- A. They've already called from the Consulate and given permission to open the container, in order to show you that these are instruments.
- B. That's another matter!
- A. And what about the fuel line, which is leaking?
- B. Our mechanic and flight engineer are changing the filter in the air pump right now. As soon as they finish that, they will attend to the fuel line.

- A. How much time is that going to take?
- B. I think, ten to fifteen minutes. Well, on second thought, maybe twenty. No more.
- A. And after that you'll give an "OK" for take-off.
- B. Right away. I do know that your military attaché has a meeting arranged for today at General Headquarters.
- A. Okay, so now you understand why I am concerned about this delay. At first, some kind of problem with the engine, then this container thing . . .
- B. Mr. Johnson, this is not our fault. Your engine was made in America. And the container . . . Well, you must agree that I cannot allow the flight of a foreign aircraft with an unknown apparatus over territory where our important military-industrial complex is located. You know that very well.
- A. Your specialists will confirm that there are only measuring devices there.
- B. What kind, for example?
- A. Well, Geiger counters and some other such stuff.
- B. What? Once again you want permission to go to the Chernobyl atomic energy station?
- A. Ivan Stepanovich, after all, the medium range nuclear weapon agreement has already been signed. Our delegation will inspect the launch pads, silos, and depots.
- B. Yes, but not the warehouses! There's no radiation in the places where you will be.
- A. Well, just in case. You have the saying, "God takes care of those who take care of themselves."
- B. OK. You've convinced me. Look, the dispatcher is calling us. Your plane is ready. Bon voyage! If you see Peters in Moscow, say "Hello." He and I serviced many special flights and there never were any problems.
- A. I will definitely pass on your greetings. Good-bye.

Exercises based on the dialogue: (Instructions to students)

1. Listen to the dialogue.
2. Read the dialogue.
3. Answer the questions:
 - a. Who went to Moscow?
 - b. Why was the plane detained?
 - c. Where is the meeting for the military attaché to take place?

- d. How does the American explain the purpose of the military attaché's trip?
4. Put the subject into various positions in the sentence.
 - a. You already checked the cargo.
 - b. Our mechanic and flight engineer are changing the filter.
 - c. I know that your military attaché has a meeting scheduled for today at General Headquarters.
 - d. You know that well.
5. Explain the meaning of the following expressions:
[Here there are ten expressions in Russian which have cultural implications or odd grammatical features.]
6. Find the expressions from exercise 5 in the dialogue. Use them in new situations.
7. Imagine that you are Mr. Johnson and that your teacher is Ivan Stepanovich. You are the general services officer accompanying the airplane carrying the military attaché. Create a dialogue/role play based on this scenario.
8. Retell the story in the dialogue in the first person (you are Mr. Johnson, and you are talking about what happened to you).
9. Retell the story in the dialogue in the third person (you are telling about what happened to Mr. Johnson).
10. Write a report to your boss about the refueling incident in Leningrad.

Appendix C

Lesson 1: Geography of the USSR

This lesson is only one example of how teachers can implement a beginning geography lesson. The chart below (fig. C.1) is an example of the Lesson 1 geography activities from the *Area Studies Handbook* and subsequent CBI textbook. To help students acquire map terms, teachers show a map of North America and use the directions of North, South, East, and West to discuss where familiar cities and states are located. Students use the chart below as a worksheet to list cities that they know in each of these locations. After writing this information down, they share it with the teacher, in dyads, or with the larger group. Once students acquire the location terms and the expressions associated with them, they learn the locations of important Russian cities through a variety of means: map study, reading,

teacher-provided information, and dialogue in which two teachers discuss the topic in front of the students, while the students "eavesdrop." Once again, students use this simple chart (in Russian, of course) to fill in the information.

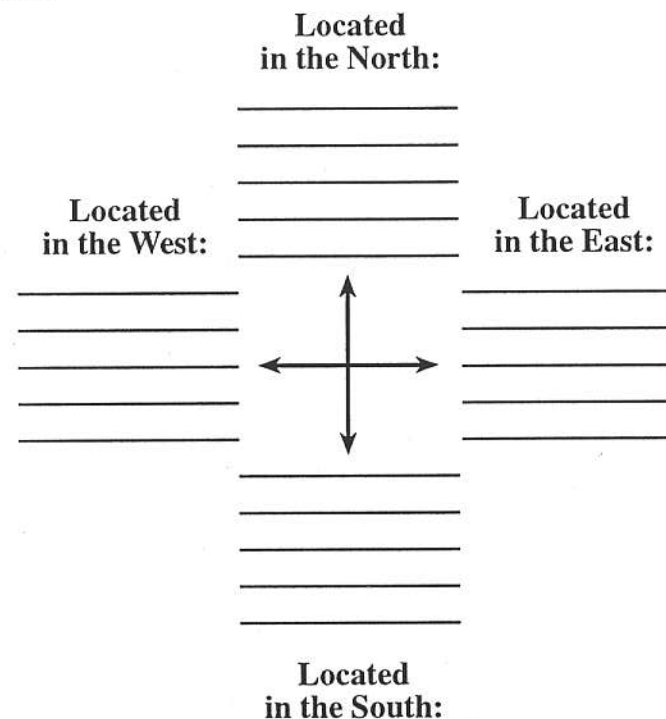


Fig. C.1. Geographical Chart