

Introduction to Volume 61

The editors of *Russian Language Journal* are pleased to present fifteen new academic studies by U.S. and Russian specialists engaged in the study and teaching of Russian as a foreign language at the advanced and professional levels. In keeping with established practice, all papers in the special issue underwent anonymous external reviews, prior to editing and acceptance for publication. The resulting set of papers were specifically recommended for inclusion in this special issue of the *Journal* commemorating the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Language Flagship Program and the “Results 2012” Conference at Hunter College in October of 2012.

All papers in the present volume focus on a theoretical issue, an empirical study, or a report to the profession on one or another aspect of the Russian Domestic or Russian Overseas Flagships (ROF), which has been hosted by St. Petersburg State University since the Program’s inception in 2004-2005.

The opening paper by Kira Rogova provides an articulation of the theory and central position of reading in the acquisition of professional or near-native literacy in Russian language and culture. Professor Rogova is one of the principal architects of the ROF curriculum in St. Petersburg and continues to teach in the program to the present day. The study by Kolesova of the student thesaurus underscores the critical role of the learner’s mastery of productive and receptive lexical control, including mastery of collocations in the transition from Level 2 to Level 3 proficiency for all four skills, while Sadullaeva’s article addresses the challenging problem of integrating essential background knowledge, intertextuality, and the recognition of higher-frequency embedded cultural references into the ROF curriculum through a very popular Flagship course on “reading between the lines.” Makarova reports further on the same subject, but from the point of view of incorporating the language of Griboedov’s *Горе от ума* on the level of the individual Flagship tutorial, while Semenova’s and Schukin’s studies describe approaches to the identification and utilization of political and folklore sources, respectively, which are ubiquitous and critical for comprehension and participation in contemporary Russian public and professional discourse.

Riabova’s study reports on the “capstone” experience within the year-long capstone program: the design of the course and curriculum, which is the proving-ground for integrating all else that Flagship students have learned. Riabova describes a sheltered course, where Flagship students diagnose and develop their professional speech through role plays, debates, formal presentations, and nearly non-stop discussions.

Two studies in this volume compare and contrast the learning profiles, curricular interventions, and overall learning trajectories of heritage and non-heritage participants in the ROF. Kagan and Kudyma examine eight years of Russian Flagship training within the context of UCLA's domestic Flagship, while Davidson and Lekic compare curricula, behavior, and ultimate outcomes for both groups in the overseas learning context. The two reports provide data and research results addressing the critical issue of heritage speaker participation in Flagship, typical outcomes for heritage speakers completing the Flagship program, and the possibilities of a differentiated approach to heritage students within domestic and overseas program designs.

Kisselev, Yatsenko and Freels devote attention to domestic learners of Russian at the advanced levels through one of the few studies of its kind in the Russian field. The study is focused on a scientific description of the internalized lexical and grammatical structures reflected in the written production of American learners of Russian. Murphy, Evans-Romaine, and Zheltoukhova present a 360-degree perspective of the domestic Russian learning environment, in which institutional and program goals are examined from the points of view of both Flagship students and their Russian language tutors.

Kolesova and Voznesenskaya discuss their use within the context of the ROF of Internet-based genres (forums and blogs) in training oral and written presentational and interpersonal communication skills. Tony Brown provides a report from BYU on the power of new technologies to facilitate advanced and professional-level discourse development through direct training in target-language argumentation coupled with actual international debating contests with counterparts in Russia.

The final two articles by Khrunenikova and Grazhdankina remind the reader of the ongoing lexical and grammatical challenges faced by students of Russian at Level 3 and above, where precision in choice of words (including the issue of the appropriate use of Anglicisms in contemporary Russian) and accuracy of grammatical constructions are much more likely to be salient at Level 3 for Russian interlocutors and audiences than is the case at lower levels of proficiency.

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