Effects of Computer-based Interactive Assessment on Students’ Linguistic and Metalinguistic Development in Russian

PROJECT DIRECTOR
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FUNDING LEVEL REQUESTED: Phase II

DURATION OF FUNDING PERIOD: Two years
II. ABSTRACT

Continuing a project initiated in 2012 with a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Phase II Grant, this proposal focuses on the development of a new generation of computer-based interactive assessment instruments for Russian language learners. These interactive language tests will provide students with immediate feedback and will serve as a tool for self-assessment which will allow for greater flexibility in the place and time of exams, thus accommodating learning differences and potentially lowering test-related stress and anxiety. This study will additionally examine the effects of this new assessment on students’ language gains, sense of agency, self-confidence, and engagement.

Two faculty members will develop the language tests, which will be formatted for the course management system (OnCourse). Pre- and post- tests will be administered to second-year students of Russian, who will be divided into experimental and control groups. Qualitative and quantitative analyses will offer insights into differences between two groups. Students will also complete a questionnaire evaluating their experience with the interactive computerized assessment tools. The results of this study will enhance language assessment and provide insights into computer-assisted language testing.

III. RESEARCH PROJECT

1. STUDY PURPOSE & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The proposed project combines two key components: (1) development of new computerized interactive self-assessment tools and (2) an examination of the effects of such assessment on students’ learning of Russian language and culture. This project is closely tied to our previous study supported by the SOTL grant, which helped us identify linguistic and socio-cultural features that our learners find particularly challenging.

Why do we need to develop our own assessment tools?

In the field of Russian, teaching materials supported by publishers have traditionally lagged behind more popular languages (French, Spanish, German), and it was only in the late 1990s that we moved beyond obsolete topics and vocabulary such as “pioneers,” “komsomol” or “Supreme Soviet.” Changes in content have sometimes been accompanied by changes in teaching approaches, and as a result recent Russian language textbooks embrace communicative teaching and focus on linguistic functions instead of discrete lexico-grammatical forms. One would be tempted to expect that assessment instruments disseminated by key publishers too reflect new pedagogical approaches, but one would be wrong. Astonishingly, available tests are nothing but remnants of the audio-lingual drill-and-kill method (See Appendix 1).

From drills to meaningful participation

The Russian language program at IU is a pioneer in the field, embracing new ideologies of language teaching that conceptualize learning as participation in meaningful cultural practices and position learners as social actors who are trying to achieve membership in the target community (cf. Bourdieu, 1991; Kramsch, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2002; Peirce, 1995). To ensure our students’ success we strive to help them engage in various cultural practices as early as possible (e.g., looking up information such
as a weather forecast on Russian weather channels; creating a travel itinerary using appropriate Russian websites; reading or posting comments on Russian social networking websites). We prioritize students’ functional linguistic abilities over rote memorization and we try to hone their self-management skills from the very beginning of the instruction because we want them to be able to set personalized learning goals and assess their own progress. The proposed computerized interactive assessment tools are one of our attempts to enhance students’ self-management and agency, while at the same time fostering their metalinguistic awareness and analytical skills. New assessment instruments will serve as a diagnostic tool indicating to students their strengths and weaknesses as well as pointing toward improved performance. Students will also synthesize lexical, grammatical, and functional knowledge, so that each activity can be easily transferred to real-life interactions.

From potentially face-threatening in-class corrections to stress-free self-monitoring

Another benefit of implementing the proposed assessment tools will be the lowering of students’ anxiety. It has often been pointed out in second-language acquisition studies that students experience high levels of anxiety particularly when being corrected in classrooms (Dörnyei, 1994; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003; Young, 1999). Completing the assessment at home will make it less face-threatening compared to classroom corrections.

From general to individualized guidance

As with any skill development, learning a foreign language relies on guidance and scaffolding. The proposed assessment tools will not only increase the guidance by making it available outside the classroom, they will also make guidance more accessible and individualized. It often happens that students do not understand their instructor’s explanations or corrections but they do not feel comfortable asking for repetition. Similarly, students differ in what they find challenging. The interactive feature of our assessment will address both issues.

From delayed to immediate feedback

Corrective feedback is one of the most powerful tools in fostering students’ learning, particularly when it is provided during or right after the completion of a task. However, in foreign language classrooms students often receive delayed written feedback (on their written tests and quizzes or oral examinations), which is not as effective because by the time students receive the feedback they have already forgotten the task. In contrast, our assessment will be immediately available.

Programmatic needs

The launching of this project will also address our programmatic concerns by helping us recruit and retain students for continued study of the language. Competing with most-commonly taught languages, we experience considerable attrition after the first semester of classes. As students’ evaluations show, they often become disenchanted with Russian because of its complex grammar. Our hope is that being able to practice grammar at home and receive immediate feedback will help students overcome their distaste of Russian grammar. We also hope that computer-based self-assessment activities might be more attractive to “digital natives” than traditional pen-and-paper tests.

Having students complete self-assessment at home will also free valuable classroom time that will be
devoted to communication and group activities. We cannot overemphasize how important it is for Russian language courses to be able to increase classroom instruction time. As studies conducted by the Foreign Service Institute show, there is a direct connection between time of instruction and positive learning outcomes (Omaggio-Hadley, 2001). For instance, it takes a native speaker of English 575 hours to achieve the superior level of proficiency\(^1\) in Spanish and 1320 hours to reach a comparable proficiency in Russian, meaning that after two years of Spanish, American students can discuss current events and refute their opponents’ arguments, while a similar time spent on Russian will only result in students’ ability to order a meal at a restaurant or read classifieds. The only solution to this is intensifying the instruction by making it more targeted and individualized.

Research questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1) Does immediate computer-based interactive assessment positively affect students’ acquisition of Russian? (e.g. students show higher gains compared to their peers in control groups.)

2) Does immediate computer-based interactive assessment lower students’ anxiety about their performance in Russian?

3) Does immediate computer-based interactive assessment result in students’ greater sense of agency vis-à-vis learning Russian?

4) Does immediate computer-based interactive assessment result in students’ growing confidence as members of the global Russian speaking community?

5) What skills benefit most the immediate computer-based interactive assessment – e.g. lexicogrammatical competency, socio-linguistic competency, listening or writing skills?

6) How do students evaluate immediate computer-based interactive assessment compared to other forms of assessment – e.g. written tests and quizzes, oral examinations?

7) How do students evaluate immediate computer-based interactive assessment compared to other forms of evaluative feedback – e.g. classroom feedback, delayed written feedback?

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH RESULTS

Our project draws on three areas of inquiry – computer-based second language assessment, corrective feedback in language learning, and individual learner differences.

The last 20 years have seen an unprecedented rise of computers in second language teaching, including assessment. While initially computerized assessment was nothing but traditional paper-and-pencil tests converted into formats suitable for electronic delivery, in recent years instructors have tried to make better use of computer capabilities to tailor assessment to learners’ individual abilities and interests (for a review see Clapham, 2000; Jamieson, 2005). In addition to often-cited benefits of the computer-based assessment (CBA) – i.e., more reliable and almost instantaneous scoring and convenience for test-takers – it also allows for a greater authenticity as well as integration of skills (e.g., audio input is paired up with written response; reading is matched up with aural response) (Read; 2000). Needless to say, CBA is an expensive enterprise that not many programs can afford\(^2\) (Ockey, 2009). Fortunately,

\(^1\) Based on the ACTFL scale (ACTFL, 2012).

\(^2\) Brigham Young University offers a Russian Achievement Test, New York University, the Russian Middlebury School, the University of Wisconsin-Madison has a number of tests for grammar, listening, and writing. At the national level, there exists an ACTR Russian AP test still waiting for approval at the Educational Testing Services. Noteworthy, none of these
IU’s Oncourse software allows creating computerized assessment relatively efficiently, including the incorporation of various media as well as adding links to authentic Russian websites (for students to perform real-life tasks). Although, most existing studies focus on statistical merits of language testing, our project will explore an uncharted territory of learners’ reaction to computer-based assessment as compared to pen-and-pencil tests.

One of the key features of the proposed CBA is its interactivity – i.e. students will receive immediate feedback on their performance. This feedback will reinforce systemic rules of the Russian language as well as knowledge of communication strategies and socio-cultural norms. While grammatical knowledge has been identified as a sound predictor of students’ gains in speaking and listening during study abroad in Russia (Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg, 1995), no evidence exists to support this relationship in non-immersion contexts. Moreover, studies in languages other than Russian, disagree on the role of grammatical knowledge in skill-development: some report strong causal relationships (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Mecartty, 2000; Sheen, 2007)\(^3\), while others argue that no such relationships exist (Vandergrift, 2006). Our project will address these discrepancies; it will investigate the relationship between grammatical knowledge and four linguistic skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) in the classroom context. Furthermore, no existing tests in Russian language (or other foreign languages) incorporate socio-linguistic knowledge; our project will address this gap by developing such tests and examining their efficiency in students’ understanding of Russian socio-cultural conventions.

The pedagogical effectiveness of oral corrective feedback has been illustrated by a wealth of second-language acquisition studies that argue in favor of explicit over implicit corrections (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006, Lyster & Šaito, 2010; for a review see Li, 2010). The studies, however, diverge in their evaluation of written corrective feedback. Thus, Truscott (1996) mounted a case for its abolition, while other researchers try to show its benefits (Bitchener, 2008), and yet another group of scholars calls for combining oral and written corrective feedback (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). The proposed project, instead, shifts its focus to the issue of immediacy of the feedback – i.e., does immediate written feedback (available in computer-based assessment) result in greater learning outcomes than delayed written feedback (comments on pen-and-paper tests). Also, we will examine what linguistic skills benefit most from the immediate written input: grammatical accuracy, listening or reading comprehension.

Finally, we will explore effects of the computer-based assessment on students’ agency and self-reflection. As the field of foreign language teaching moves toward encouraging students to take responsibility for learning outcomes, the implementation of self-assessment becomes an important mechanism through which students can develop necessary introspective skills to evaluate their own progress. As reported in the second language testing literature, students’ self-assessment is usually unreliable and overestimates their real competencies (Butler & Lee, 2006; Ross, 1998). The proposed study will explore whether self-assessment instruments enhanced with the interactive component help students evaluate their linguistic abilities more accurately.

3. STUDY SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

Impact on undergraduate teaching

\(^3\) E.g., in all these studies grammatical knowledge accounts for 30 and more percent of the variance.
The project will have direct and significant effects on two large populations of undergraduate students – those who take Russian language courses within the IU GenEd curriculum and those who take Russian language courses at SWSEEL. The most tangible benefits for our undergrads will be: 1) more time-on-task; 2) more classroom time spent on communication; 3) lowered anxiety; 4) individualized and immediately accessible feedback; 5) increased sense of agency.

With the current maximum enrollment for Russian language courses set at 20, it is virtually impossible to engage students in meaningful L2 communication and provide individualized feedback. Consequently, even though we embrace the communicative approach to teaching, we do not offer students enough learning opportunities for practicing various skills. The proposed assessment instruments will allow students to practice all four skills and receive individualized corrective feedback after each learning unit. Taking assessment outside the classroom will also give us the much-needed time to engage students in meaningful face-to-face interaction.

Impact on graduate teaching/learning

It would not be an overstatement to say that graduate teaching instructors will benefit at least as much as undergraduates for whom the proposed computer-based interactive assessment is intended. Unlike their counterparts in other languages, our graduate teaching instructors not only prepare and teach classes four times a week, they also grade students’ homework assignments, quizzes, and tests. Having students complete self-assessment will take off some of the burden of our graduate instructors.

Another more lasting and more important effect will be enhancing pedagogical methods of graduate instructors. Participating in new teaching practices will greatly benefit graduate students’ professional development. As part of the project, some of our graduate students will work on developing the proposed self-assessment instruments.

Impact on assessment

This project will significantly improve assessment practices in the IU Russian language program by 1) switching to computer-based assessment; 2) emphasizing the agency of the student; 3) increasing the effectiveness of feedback; and 4) developing individualized learner profiles.

4. OUTCOMES FROM THE WORK AND HOW THEY WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY, WHETHER THAT BE WITHIN A COURSE, A CURRICULUM, A PROGRAM, OR INSTITUTIONALLY

The key objective of our project is to upgrade current assessment practices in the IU Russian language program at the GenEd level. The new-generation assessment will be first implemented in two GenEd courses - SLAV-R 201 and SLAV-R 202, as well as two SWSEEL courses – Level 3 and Level 4. Subsequently, we plan to introduce new assessment in all Russian language courses within the GenEd curriculum. Potentially, new assessment tools could be transferred to other Slavic

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4 We plan to implement the project at the second-year level of instruction, including academic year courses SLAV-R201 and SLAV-R202 and the SWSEEL Level 3 and Level 4 courses.
languages.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This is a cross-sectional experimental study with one treatment group and one control group. The treatment group will be completing self-assessment throughout the semester, while the control group will work with traditional pen-and-paper tests.

Pre- and post-testing will be carried out through: 1) oral proficiency interviews as outlined in the ACTFL proficiency guidelines\(^5\); 2) written grammar-and-vocabulary test; 3) written socio-pragmatic knowledge test. T-test for independent means will be performed to compare linguistic development of the treatment group with the control group.

Qualitative and quantitative analyses of students’ writing samples (essays) will also be performed. Essays will be analyzed and coded for lexical richness, syntactical complexity, fluency, and accuracy (adopted from Larsen-Freeman, 2006)

Students will also complete a questionnaire evaluating their experience with interactive computerized assessment tools.

6. MEASURING THE PROJECT SUCCESS

The project incorporates built-in instruments to evaluate its efficiency. First, students’ exit tests will demonstrate whether our computer-based interactive self-assessment have helped in their linguistic development. Second, students’ responses to the experience questionnaire will show whether our assessment was instrumental in reducing their anxiety and increasing their agency and self-monitoring skills.

7. DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The study results will be presented at the Slavic and foreign language professional conferences – ASEEES and AATSEEL. Results will also be presented at the Slavic Department graduate symposium as well as pertinent IU forums, including presentations at the SOTL event series.

8. REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICE

This project is inspired by reflective teaching and will serve to further our self-reflective practices. Not only instructors participating in the project, but also those instructors who will be using new assessment, will greatly benefit from continued discussion of the project outcomes.

IV. BUDGET NARRATIVE

The proposed budget is relatively modest for a project of this scope. We make effective use of IU CITL and other units’ resources, including Oncourse capabilities. The Director of the project is a certified ACTFL OPI tester for Russian, and she will conduct pre- and post-test OPIs for the assessment of students’ oral development. This alone will help significantly minimize the cost of the

\(^{5}\) One of the study participants, Maria Shardakova, is a certified ACTFL proficiency tester.
project, for instance, the fee for an academic ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview is $139 per interview. The project costs are primarily for test formatting, data collection, data entry in SPSS, the purchase of the SPSS license through the IU Research Analytics, and conference-related travel. We also hope to procure additional funding for conference travel from the Slavic Department, which usually grants $200 - $400 annually to faculty presenting at a national conference. The investigators do not seek funds for themselves beyond travel support, instead the purpose of this grant is to support graduate and undergraduate students incentives for participating in this project.

1. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS/ GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

_Pre- and post-testing (data entry)_

We will administer three types of pre- and post-tests – OPIs, written test of lexico-grammatical knowledge, written test of socio-pragmatic knowledge – in both the treatment and the experiment groups. With 40 students in both groups, data entry will take about 54.4 hours (20 minutes per test, 4 x 40 x 0.34, OPIs are not included). Additional 10 hours will be spent on entering the data from the experience questionnaire that will be administered only in the treatment group among 20 students (these will take 30 minutes per test, 20 x 0.5).

_Transferring assessment instruments onto IU Oncourse_

After we have developed the assessment instruments, we will employ a graduate student or an upper-level undergrad to input the assessment items as well as performance comments and explanations into Oncourse. This will take a minimum of 15 hours (3 hrs. per assessment unit, 3 x 5 = 12.5).

_Transcription of oral speech_

An estimated pool of 20 participants per semester will generate 100 unit-tests including 5 hours of audio-recordings (self-recordings will be set at 3 minutes maximum per test). Based on a professional estimate, an hour-long recoding takes between 4 to 8 hours to transcribe, depending on its quality. Given that second-language speech is usually slower, we estimate the ratio to be 1:3. Therefore, transcription of the audial data will take about 10 hours.

_Coding and data entry (oral and written speech)_

To code and to enter the collected data into the SPSS spreadsheets will take about 200 hours. We determined this estimate based on the following calculation: self-recorded speech samples will generate about 4,000 words (40 words per assessment). Students will also write essays which will result in approximately 7,000 words of written texts (70 words per assessment). The total audial and written speech samples will comprise 11,000 words, which roughly corresponds to 2,200 sentences. Each sentence typically takes about 3-6 minutes of parsing, coding, and entering into the database, or about 183 hours of data entry.

_A semester-long cycle_

Transcription, coding, and data-entry will amount to 262.4 hours in one semester. Employing a graduate student (or a qualified undergraduate) at $10/hr. will cost $2,774.00 per semester. We will reduce the project cost during its second cycle by administering only post-testing (because post-tests of

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6 SPSS - IBM SPSS Statistics is a computer application that supports statistical analysis of data
7 Data from the Transcribe-it Inc, http://www.transcribeitinc.com/faq.html
the previous semester will serve as pre-tests). We also hope that graduate assistants (or qualified undergraduates) who work during the first semester will become more efficient at uploading the assessment in Oncourse as well as coding and entering the data. Therefore, the second year-long data collection period – more desirable for producing statistically significant analysis - will cost $1,930.00 (we plan a speed increase of 30%, based on our own experience with data coding and data entry\(^9\)).

**First-cycle costs**
- Transferring assessment instruments into IU Oncourse – 15 hours at $10 per hour = $150
- Data entry (pre- and post-tests) – 64.4 hours at $10 per hour = $644
- Transcription of audio-taped data – 15 hours at $10 per hour = $150
- Data coding (audial and written) & data entry - 183 hours at $10 per hour = $1,830

**Second-cycle costs**
- Transferring assessment instruments into IU Oncourse – 10 hours at $10 per hour = $100
- Data entry (post-tests) – 40 hours at $10 per hour = $400
- Transcription of audio-taped data – 15 hours at $10 per hour = $150
- Data coding (audial and written) & data entry - 128 hours at $10 per hour = $1,280

2. **RESEARCH RELATED TRAVEL/ CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

We would like to request funds to cover the costs of two principal investigators’ registration fees and travel expenses for the following conference that we are planning to attend at the end of 2015.

- ASEEES– Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies – November 2015, location is yet to be announced (conference early registration fee $130 per person, total $260).

V. **RESEARCH PLAN AND TIMELINE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Project Stage</th>
<th>Task Description</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
<td>INITIAL STAGE – PREPARATION</td>
<td>RESEARCH:</td>
<td>Shardakova, Asher, Graduate assistant/ Qualified undergraduate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Project detailed articulation both for research &amp; teaching</td>
<td>Based on our project supported by 2012 SOTL grant develop a battery of computerized interactive self-assessment tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Prepare assessment instruments for R201</td>
<td>Transfer assessment units onto Oncourse</td>
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<td>Develop written proficiency test to be administered pre- and post-program (targeting lexico-grammatical and sociocultural knowledge)</td>
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<td>Develop questionnaire for students’ self-reflection</td>
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<td>TEACHING:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Coordinate assessment units with teaching units</td>
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<td>• Develop detailed syllabus for R201</td>
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<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>STAGE ONE – LAUNCHING THE PROJECT; COLLECTING DATA</td>
<td>RESEARCH:</td>
<td>Shardakova, Asher, Graduate assistant/ Qualified undergraduate</td>
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<td>• Data collection</td>
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<td>• Tentative data analysis</td>
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<td>TEACHING:</td>
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<td>• Coordinate assessment units with teaching units</td>
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\(^9\) Cf., comparable estimates at [http://www.ehow.com/how_8548833_increase-data-entry-skills.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_8548833_increase-data-entry-skills.html)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Dissimination</th>
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| Winter 2015 | STAGE TWO – PRELIMINARY RESULTS: CONTINUE DEVELOPING NEW ASSESSMENT TOOLS  
• Prepare assessment instruments for R202 |  
- Administer pre-treatment tests in both the treatment group and the control group  
- Collect data on computerized self-assessment and on traditional pen-and-paper tests  
- At the end of the semester, administer post-testing in both groups, as well as experience questionnaire in the treatment group |  
- Carry out preliminary data analysis to evaluate students’ L2 development  
- Analyze responses to the experience questionnaire  
- Develop a new battery of computerized interactive self-assessment tools  
- Prepare assessment instruments for R202 |  
- Present the project at ATSEEL  
- Coordinate assessment units with teaching units  
- Develop detailed syllabus for R202  
- Present the project at ATSEEL  
- Present at the SOTL event series |
| Spring 2015  | STAGE THREE – SECOND CYCLE OF DATA COLLECTION in R202 |  
- Continue data collection and coding  
- Develop learner corpus and learner profiles  
- Administer post-testing, including experience questionnaire in the treatment group |  
- Present the project at a professional conferences (Midwest at OSU)  
- Present at the SOTL event series |
| Summer 2015 | COMPLETION OF TWO CYCLES TESTING THE ASSESSMENT IN SWSEEL |  
- Carry out quantitative and qualitative data analysis to evaluate participants’ L2 development  
- Further operationalize computer-based assessment for easier readings and scoring  
- Pilot the assessment at the SWSEEL |  
- Present results at professional forums (ASEEES)  
- Present at the SOTL event series |
| Fall 2015 | EXPANDING RESEARCH & TEACHING |  
- Compare the summer and the academic year results  
- Refine assessment tools  
- Develop additional research agendas based on this project  
- Begin the development of similar computer-based assessment tools for the 1st-year Russian courses  
- Implement the assessment in all groups of 2nd-year Russian  
- Begin introducing new computer-based assessment tools in the 1st-year Russian courses |  
- Present results at professional forums (ASEEES)  
- Present at the SOTL event series |
REFERENCES


APPENDIX
(One of the tests that come along with the widely used textbook *V Puti: Russian grammar in context*.

Контрольная работа 1 («В пути», глава 1)
Test 1 (V Puti, chapter 1)
114 points

День и число (Date and day) __________________________

Имя и фамилия (Name and Surname) ______________________________

A. Complete the sentences using the words in the parenthesis. Use the Prepositional case. Use prepositions where necessary.
   (54 points: 1 point for the correct ending and 1 point for the correct preposition)

1. Я учусь (Московский университет) _______________________________________
   (экономический факультет)_________________________________________(второй курс)

2. Павел приехал (from Новая Англия) _________________________________.

B. Complete the sentence by putting a suitable verb in the Present Tense. Choose from the verbs below
   (22 балла: 1 point for correct choice of verb; 1 point for correct ending)

   терять, уставать, интересоваться, снимать, вернуться

1. Я ________________ бумажник и студенческий билет каждый месяц.

2. Нина ______________________ русской литературой.

3. Я сейчас много работаю и поэтому ужасно ____________.

В. Глаголы. Form imperative. (6 баллов)

1. (Поступать) ____________________________ в наш университет!

2. (Сказать) ____________________________ , что ты потеряла?

3. (Не терять) __________________________ больше свой рюкзак!
MARIA SHARDAKOVA
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maalshar@indiana.edu

EDUCATION


PROFESSIONAL TRAINING


2002 Certificate. Graduate Program in Technology and Language Instruction, National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Second language and Cross-Cultural Humor
Intercultural and Interlanguage Pragmatics
Second Language Acquisition, Bilingualism, and Identity
Second Language Pedagogy

EMPLOYMENT

2010 - present Assistant Professor, Russian Language Program Director, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

2008 - 2010 Senior Lecturer, Russian Language Program Coordinator, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

2004 - 2008 Lecturer, Russian Language Program Coordinator, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.
2002 - 2004 Coordinator, Continuing Education, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.
1998 - 2002 Teaching Assistant, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.
1996 - 1998 Instructor, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.
1995 - 1996 Instructor, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
1993 - 1995 Lecturer, Department of Philology, Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.

TEACHING RELATED PROJECTS

Fall 2012 Assessment battery for testing grammatical, lexical, and socio-cultural knowledge in SLAV-R201 and SLAV-R301.
Fall 2012 Series of pragmatic awareness raising audio-exercises for SLAV-R201 and SLAV-R301.
Summer 2011 Developer, Computerized Assessment Tools for Reading and Listening Comprehension in Russian, Middlebury Russian School, Middlebury, VT.

PUBLICATIONS

Book


Peer-reviewed articles & book chapters (under review) “Learners’ Comprehension of L2 Russian Textual Humor across Genres”


**Book Review**


**Peer-reviewed abstracts**


**PEER-REVIEWED PAPERS PRESENTED TO PROFESSIONAL AND LEARNED SOCIETIES**


“Who has the last laugh? Humor and politeness across languages and cultures,” Annual conference of American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, Seattle, WA, January 2012.

“I was just kidding”: Second Language Humor and Intercultural Identity Construction,” Annual meeting of the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, Honolulu, Hawaii, January 2011.


"Theology and the Preterit Forms in the 16th Century Literary Texts" [“Teologia i preteritnye formy v literaturnykh tekstakh XVI veka”], Regional Conference on Language and Culture, Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia, March 1993.

"Creating World with Words" [“Sozdanie mira s pomoschiu slov”], International Conference on Language and Culture, Moscow, Russia, January 1993

INVITED TALKS

“Pragmatic development in study abroad contexts,” Pragmatic Festival, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, April 2012.


“'Elluminating' the Russian Language Classroom,” Language Schools, Middlebury, VT, August 2009.

“‘Do I sound awkward apologizing in Russian?’ American Students' Acquisition of Pragmatic Competence in Russian,” Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, 2007.


“Role of Gender in Apologetic Behavior of Russian Native Speakers and American Learners of Russian,” Russian Department, Bryn Mawr College, PA, May 2005.

"New Tendencies in Political Russian," Russian Department, Bryn Mawr College, PA, May 1996.
Curriculum Vitae

Sofiya Asher

Education

1999  Masters of Arts, Drohobych Pedagogical University
      Language Pedagogy, with Honors
      Drohobych, Ukraine

2005  Postgraduate Certificate in Business English for Teachers
      College of Foreign Languages, Poznań, Poland

2009-2011  Masters of Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
           Teaching English as a Second Language

Languages:

- Ukrainian  (Native Fluency)
- Russian    (Near-Native Fluency)
- Polish     (Near-Native Fluency)

Professional Certifications

Certified Examiner in English for Polish national secondary school matriculation *(matura)* exams.

Professional Experience

08/2013 – current  Lecturer
                   Russian Language
                   Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
                   Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
                   (Russian 101, Russian 201)

08/2013-current  Lecturer
                 English as a Second Language
                 Intensive English Program
                 Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
                 Department of Second Language Studies

02/2013-06/2013  English as a Second Language Instructor
                 Intensive English Program
                 Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
                 Department of Second Language Studies
08/2010- 12/2010  **Polish Language Instructor Teaching Assistant**  
University of Illinois, Urbana, IL  
Department Slavic Languages and Literatures  
(Polish 301, 201)

08/2009-06/2010  **Teaching Assistant-- Instructor**  
Intensive English Institute, Urbana, IL  
(301—Advanced ESL Grammar)

10/2007-5/2008  **English as a Second Language Instructor**  
Lincoln Trail Elementary School, Mahomet, IL

5/2007-Present  **Assessment Test Scorer**  
Assessed language arts modules for IMAGE, ISAT, and other standardized achievement tests for elementary and middle school students.

2/2007-2008  **Reading and English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructor**  
The Reading Group, Champaign, IL  
Provided individualized instruction in ESL and Reading.

2/2000-8/2006  **English Instructor, Liceum im. Z. Herbert, Slubice, Poland**  
Full time English instructor for college-preparatory secondary school, beginner and intermediate levels.

2/2000-8/2006  **Private English Tutor**  
Private English instruction for individuals and small groups, all levels.

2/2000- Present  **Freelance Interpretation and Translation**  
Experience with ethnographic interviewing, interpretation for civil courts, translation of general texts, historical texts, court documents, and civil documents.

**Conference Presentation**

11/02/2013  **INTESOL**

Taming a Bear: Development of the Conversation Partner Program in the IEP
14 February 2014

Selection Committee
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grants
Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
sotl@indiana.edu

To Whom It May Concern:

I am very pleased to write in support of the proposal of Maria Shardakova and Sofiya Asher for a 2014 SOTL grant. Their proposal details an exciting and timely undertaking, which when completed will benefit all our undergraduate Russian language learners, majors and non-majors alike, as well as teachers and researchers in the field of second language students. I am also hopeful that the results of their work will be adaptable to other currently less commonly taught languages both in SLAV (and SWSEEL) and in other units at IU.

Their title, “Effects of Computer-based Interactive Assessment on Students’ Linguistic and Metalinguistic Development in Russian,” is slightly misleading in that it does not highlight enough the initial development of the assessment materials that are part of the project. Having first created them and put them into use, Shardakova and Asher will study their effects. Having this first aspect of their project in place will be extremely helpful to our overall linguistic and pedagogical effort.

The move away from traditional pen-and-paper tests to computer-based interactive self-assessment necessitates precisely the kind of analytic study they propose carrying out. On one hand, we anticipate a freeing up of class time and a savings of instructors’ time on scoring and feedback; on the other, we hope that this assessment will lessen student anxiety, extend individualized instruction opportunities, and increase our students’ sense of agency. Measurement of the effects of the new assessment by means of pre- and post-tests and by comparing linguistic gains in experimental and control groups is very well founded on current research. Post assessment student completed questionnaire will help of course gauge the effectiveness of this project, but will also tie into our ongoing effort to better understand student motivation in the context of attrition, which continues to be higher than we would like. Like other units, SLAV are currently in the process of discussing assessment on a broad curricular basis, and while language teaching is just part of what our faculty do, it is an important part and can serve as a productive model for literature and culture courses. I will therefore be very interested to see how both the assessment tools themselves and the analysis of their effects.
The research and teaching backgrounds of both participants dovetails especially well with the aims of the project, particular that of Project Director Shardakova, who is in the fourth year of a tenure track Assistant Professorship.

In sum, I cannot recommend this project any more highly. Please give the proposal your most careful consideration.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Russell Scott Valentino
Professor and Chair