

A Generic Template
for Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Courses for High-Level Foreign Language
Students

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I. Introduction and Background Information on the Project

This template is the third component of the project “Development of Integrated Four-Skill Workbooks in Russian for Students Studying toward Distinguished-Level Foreign Language Proficiency, with a Generic Template for Other Languages.” The major purpose of the project is to develop replicable materials in socio-cultural, and sociolinguistic aspects of communicative competence for students at ILR Level 3 (ACTFL Superior) proficiency trying to attain ILR Level 4 (ACTFL Distinguished) proficiency. The project is funded by a grant from the Department of Education given to the Coalition of Distinguished Language Centers (CDLC) in June 2006.

The CDLC was founded in October 2002 for the purpose of providing support to universities, institutions, and schools with programs that teach foreign languages to the near-native level as well as to individuals learning to those levels. The CDLC is currently located in Washington, DC. It serves as an umbrella organization providing resources and recognition for its members, as well as for institutions wishing to develop distinguished language centers. Indirectly through its affiliates and directly through its various services, the CDLC seeks to foster collaboration among those experienced in teaching at/to ILR Level 3 (ACTFL Superior) and ILR Level 4 (ACTFL Distinguished) foreign language proficiency. It does so in order to improve the current status of teaching foreign languages to high levels of proficiency in the United States. .

The CDLC serves affiliated institutions in the following and planned ways:

- Publishing a semi-annual journal (Journal for Distinguished Language Studies) and books devoted to theory, research, and practice;
- Organizing and conducting an Annual Conference;
- Coordinating a comprehensive research project to define ILR Level 4 (ACTFL Distinguished) proficiency and to determine best practices in teaching/acquiring that level;

- Assisting with faculty development ;
- Maintaining databases containing research results;
- Facilitating collaboration among member institutions;
- Advocacy and PR on behalf of affiliates;
- Awarding of a Certificate of Native-like Foreign Language Proficiency (for institutions without existing programs).

The Workbooks and the course template developed by CDLC for the above mentioned project seeks to fill an existing gap in instructional materials and methodologies for instruction aimed at Superior and Distinguished - level foreign language students. The need for such materials is especially obvious today when the United States requires experts who understand nuances, subtleties, and hidden meanings in foreign speech. These experts must also be socio-culturally sophisticated able to apply appropriate sociolinguistics and pragmatics. They must also be able to use the foreign language as effectively as native speakers in order to promote international and regional security, political and economic stability, and cooperation on health, environmental, anti-terrorism activity, climate change, and social issues in mutually desirable ways. The lack of such proficiency, according to The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, poses a threat to national security.

The failure of higher education to bring students to native-like levels of foreign-language proficiency in the US is legendary and has frequently been lamented by national media. This problem has come up time after time since the late 1990s. Our schooling is simply not getting students to high enough levels of foreign language proficiency to conduct this nation's business. Thus, the major aim of this project is to try to fill this gap and provide learning materials for students who possess ILR Level 3 (ACTFL Superior) FL proficiency and want to reach ILR Level 4 (ACTFL Distinguished/"near-native") FL with the focus on Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic competences.

The population to be served, is an elite but very important group of students¹ who possess ILR Level 3 (ACTFL Superior) FL proficiency and want to reach ILR Level 4 (ACTFL Distinguished/“near-native”) FL, for whom currently existing materials are insufficient. The goal is to fill this gap in the area of studying culture through language. The materials, while meant to be used by teachers in a classroom, will take into account that many students at the superior level are teacher-less and have become good independent language learners. There is also a possibility that these materials are likely to have a washback effect on the teaching of foreign language at lower levels of proficiency, and some of the materials, e.g., some socio-cultural components, could possibly be introduced in an adapted form as early as ILR Level 2, or the advanced level².

As previously stated, this template is the third component of the project “Development of Integrated Four-Skill Workbooks in Russian for Students Studying toward Distinguished-Language Proficiency, with a Generic Template for Other Languages.” The first two components of the project are the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook and the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook. The choice of the Russian language is explained by several reasons. Russian continues to be an important language for the United States; its inclusion in this project as a strategic language underscores this. For the purpose of this proposal, however, the strategic importance of Russian is less important than the fact that there is more expertise in teaching Russian at high levels than in any other language field. Already during the Cold War, high-level Russian language programs began within the US government as at that time study abroad was very limited and the classroom was the only option for achieving distinguished levels of proficiency. We want to harness this expertise, concretize it, and share it in a form that allows others

¹ The majority of students who have reached superior level of language proficiency are professionals who use the target language in a job-related environments on a regular basis. The only group of university students who may have superior level are heritage speakers.

² Field testing of the developed materials with students who had levels of proficiency from ILR Levels 2 to 3+ showed that it is difficult for students with levels lower than ILR Level 3 to master the chosen components of SCC and SLC without significant simplification and adaptation of the language materials and exercises.

to benefit from the 20+ years of experience in teaching high-level Russian in the US.

II. Recommendations on Course Design in Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Competences for High-Level Learners.

The recommendations outlined below are based on several sources:

1. Existing research in teaching socio-cultural and socio-linguistic competencies;
2. Experience accumulated in the process of working on the Russian Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Workbooks by the project team including:

- Boris Shekhtman, President, Specialized Language Training Center in Rockville, Maryland and Operational Director of the Coalition of Distinguished Language Centers;
- Ekaterina Kuznetsova, Curriculum Solutions Manager, ESI International;
- Svetlana Sibrina, Associate Professor, DLI
- Irina Kopylenko, Russian Language Instructor, World Bank
- Oksana Prokhacheva, Library Manager, Global Resources Center, Gelman Library, GWU

3. Russian Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Workbooks evaluation by a team of experts teaching Russian at high levels including:

- Maria Lekic, Associate Professor of Russian Language and Literature & Graduate Director for Russian, University of Maryland; Head Curriculum Developer for the National Russian Flagship Program, American Councils for International Education, Russian native speaker;
- Dr. Benjamin Rifkin, Vice-Dean at Temple University, high-level speaker of Russian, Russian proficiency tester, textbook author

- Dr. Richard Robin, George Washington University, Level-4 speaker/professor of Russian, Russian tester, and co-author of a textbook for heritage speakers
- Natalia Lord, Counselor in the Learning Consultation Service, Research, Evaluation and Development, Foreign Service Institute, native Russian speaker
- Irina Krasner, DLI Professor, native Russian speaker

4. Feedback from specialists teaching socio-linguistic and socio-cultural competencies in Arabic and Spanish including:

- Gerald Lampe, PhD, Deputy Director, National Foreign Language Center, Level 4+ speaker;
- Alicia van Altena, a senior lecturer in Spanish at Yale University, Spanish native speaker

5. Feedback from the audience of a panel session the 2007 Annual Conference of the CDLC.

In December 2007, the results of the project were presented during a panel devoted to this topic. Betty Leaver outlined the goals and objectives of the project. Boris Shekhtman covered the specifics of students at the superior-level of foreign language proficiency and discussed major approaches to developing learning activities for this group of students. Ekaterina Kuznetsova and Oksana Prokhacheva presented two chapters from Russian workbooks: “Teaching Russian Allusions To Superior-Level Students” and “Teaching Russian Styles and Genres To Superior-Level Students.” Natalia Lord introduced the follow up discussion by attendees. Both presentations received very positive feedback and comments..

6. Final evaluation of the project by Dr. Madeline Ehrman, Ph.D, former Director of Research, Evaluation and Development at the Foreign Service Institute.

Recommendations are focused on the following aspects of teaching SCC and SLC:

1. Specific nature of superior- and distinguished - level students. The first reason behind starting any textbook or workbook with an analysis of the target audience is obvious – a primary audience profile impacts all aspects of the teaching process. This profile usually includes demographic features -age group, first language and culture, professional background – the entry and target proficiency levels. For this research, the most important elements of the audience profile are the entry and target levels of proficiency. The target audience of this research are the superior level students who are working towards distinguished level foreign language proficiency with a special focus on socio-cultural and sociolinguistic competences. Since this group is characterized by near-native levels of foreign language proficiency, it is particularly important to understand what near-native proficiency actually means. It is important to understand how this target group both resembles and differs from educated native-speakers.
2. Importance of developing SCC and SLC for students working towards near-native level of language proficiency. We must demonstrate the significance of SCC and SLC rather than just stating this need. To be persuasive, the demonstration must contain specific and clear examples that illustrate the point being made.
3. Definition of SCC and SLC. Students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach without clearly defining what they are working towards. The definition should not only be concise and clear but also serve as a basis for further learning activities;
4. Components of SCC and SLC chosen for practical mastering. Different research studies single out various components of SCC and SLC and a comprehensive list of these components will necessarily be long. The main reason to focus on any component(s) is its (their) relevance and wide use in a target language.

5. System of learning activities. The purpose of SCC and SLC courses is not just presenting the relevant information on competencies but also providing students the opportunity to practice these competencies through a system of learning activities. In our opinion, the most efficient way of helping students to master SCC and SLC components is affording them ample opportunity to practice that which will prepare them to demonstrate these competencies in real-life communication.

1. Specific characteristics of the target audience

As we mentioned earlier the major goal of the project is to develop instructional materials that can help superior-level foreign language students to achieve a distinguished level of foreign language proficiency. ILR S-3 foreign language speakers who are aiming for the ILR S-4 are our primary target audience³. ILR S-4 foreign language students are closest to native speakers and are often referred to as having a “near-native level of proficiency.” In order to be able to reach this level of language proficiency it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what differentiates native speakers from non-native speakers. In this research, we define the specific nature of native speaker communicative competence by the correlation between the ideational and the mechanical planes of their speech⁴.

This correlation refers to the level of attention paid by a speaker to meaning and form in the process of communication. The native speaker communicates without much thought given to linguistic form. S/he focuses on the *what* not the *how* of communication. In contrast, beginning foreign language students are usually preoccupied mainly with *how* to express what they want to

³ Detailed descriptions of ILR S-3 and S-4 levels of foreign language proficiency in speaking, reading, writing, and listening can be found on the ILR website <http://www.govtilr.org>.

⁴ *Developing Professional-Level Language Proficiency* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). Boris Shekhtman, Dina Kupchanka, *COMMUNICATIVE FOCUS: Teaching Foreign Language on the Basis of the Native Speaker's Communicative Focus*, MSI Press, 2007

say. They are focuses on selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary. In the native speaker's communication, there is complete coincidence between the ideational and mechanical planes. Moreover, the mechanical plane is hidden: one perceives only meaning. This happens for one reason: the mechanical part is absolutely automatically controlled. The total concentration of the native speaker is on *what* he or she is saying simultaneously with an almost complete absence of attention to *how* he or she is saying it (except under special circumstances when he or she deliberately wants to control some aspect of language). We can say that, in the case of a native speaker, meaning and form overlap, that they do not exist separately, that there is harmony between the *what* (meaning) and the *how* (form, language).

Everything changes, however, when a non-native speaker begins to speak. One immediately sees the difference between *what* (meaning) and *how* (mechanics). The non-native speaker constantly encounters situations where she or he cannot express a clear, simple thought either because she or he doesn't know *how* to express it due to a lack of linguistic knowledge or the lack of automaticity of this knowledge. The nonnative speaker, then, performs dual activity in real time: increasing the cognitive load by keeping track of the idea s/he wants to express and generating foreign sounds, grammar and words in correct sequences. In other words, conversational interaction for the nonnative speaker is communication mediated by language, i.e. formularized intercourse, since for the nonnative speaker *what* to say and *how* to say it are two distinct and equally important aspects of interaction. The difference in the language performance of native and non-native speakers thus lies in the focus they have on either the meaning or the form of communication.

The ILR S-3 level of proficiency is the first level which is characterized by significant control of standard grammatical and lexical aspects of linguistic form and in this respect they are almost equal

to native speakers⁵. Due to automatic mastery of grammar and vocabulary they can focus on meaning during communication. This has several implications for their language instruction. First of all, it means that all the instruction for these students can be and should be done in a target language. Secondly, students are capable of understanding elements of linguistic theory that help them to improve studied competencies. Thirdly, superior level students are capable not only of understand the methodology of teaching and learning (what the teacher is doing and why s/he is doing it) but to actively participate in selecting and developing the teaching/learning tools and techniques that can maximize learning. As a result, “teacher-student interactions change from master –apprentice to near-peers with the same mission” (Betty Leaver and Boris Shekhtman, “Principles and Practices In Teaching Superior-Level Language Skills, Developing Professional-Level language Proficiency”, 2002, p. 18).

The close resemblance of a superior level foreign language student’s speech to that of a native speaker with regard to the mastery of grammar and vocabulary, does not mean that he or she can fully function as a native speaker in the language.. There is a huge gap between the FL student and native speaker which becomes obvious if you compare their levels of proficiency in other major components of communicative competency including socio-cultural information and sociolinguistic pragmatics. Superior level students still lack the specific socio-cultural and sociolinguistic competence that an educated native speaker possesses and readily displays. The main purpose of the current project, is to try to fill this particular gap by explicitly teaching that which a native speaker has learned by osmosis and implicitly.

2. Establishing the significance of developing SCC and SLC for students working

⁵ It doesn’t mean that at level 3+ students have no challenges in grammar, vocabulary or strategic competencies. At this level students still need to master the obscure, complex, and erudite grammar models that are not generally considered the “basic system” but an elaboration of it, domain-specific vocabulary, and particularly complex aspects of discourse analysis/competence.

towards near-native level of foreign language proficiency

We strongly recommend starting the course by explicitly focusing on the significance of SCC and SLC. It is of paramount importance for the target audience to understand that in acquiring a new foreign language, building socio-cultural and sociolinguistic competence is as essential as acquiring structural, functional, and discourse control. Experience has shown that even advanced learners' communicative behaviors, may deviate from accepted language use conventions and that these deviations may cause cross-cultural misunderstanding. Without socio-cultural and sociolinguistic competencies "superior level" students cannot reach the "near-native distinguished level" of foreign language proficiency and cannot communicate with native-speakers as equals. (In an introduction to his Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, E.D. Hirsch Jr. wrote: "Reading and writing are not simply acts of decoding and encoding but rather acts of communication. The literal words we speak and read and write are just the tip of the iceberg in communication. An active understanding of the written word requires far more than the ability to call out words from a page or the possession of basic vocabulary, syntax, grammar and inferencing techniques. We have learned that successful reading also requires knowledge of shared, taken-for-granted information that is not set down on the page.")

It is therefore recommended, to start the course with some vivid examples of cross-cultural misunderstanding that occurred as the result of insufficient SCC and SLC. These examples should demonstrate not only the relevance of the two competencies but also the interconnectedness of language, culture, and society⁶. By developing SCC and SLC competencies, students also learn more about the culture and society of the target language which is the second and probably even more important argument for focusing on these competencies.

⁶ In the Russian Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Workbooks we provide many examples demonstrating these two points. One of them is the true Cold War era story when a translator's ignorance of a Russian idiomatic expression used by then Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, caused serious consternation in the White House.

We recommend demonstrating the influence of society and culture on a particular language at the outset. Social and cultural contexts of human life shape language to a great extent. Languages express the cultural legacy and social experience of a people. They serve as a conduit of knowledge about lives that is transmitted from generation to generation. The bond between a language and the culture which produced it cannot be neglected if we wish to understand the language fully and to use it proficiently. A clear understanding of this accumulative-transmissive function of language, elicited through vivid, real-life, language-specific examples, will reinforce students' motivation to master SCC and SLC competencies.

3. Definition of SCC and SLC

The practical mastering of SCC and SLC needs to begin with a consensus on what is meant by these terms. We recommend starting with an overview of existing literature on SCC and SLC. More specifically, we recommend starting with language-specific definitions of SCC and SLC. For this reason, in the Russian Workbooks, we focus exclusively on research relevant to this topic conducted by Russian linguists.

SCC has been defined as the possession of sufficient background knowledge (BK) and capability to activate this relevant BK in the process of culturally appropriate communication. Background knowledge is generally defined as a body of knowledge that is shared by native-speakers of a particular language. This common knowledge facilitates the ability of individuals to communicate, work, and live together. BK unites a community and is a distinguishing characteristic of a national culture.

Sociolinguistic competence has been defined by Russian linguists as mastery over broad range of modern Russian language use evident in distinguishable spheres and in delineable social groups.

The specialists of Spanish, Arabic, and English languages who gave us feedback⁷ on the Russian Workbooks confirmed that these definitions of SCC and SLC by Russian linguistics are applicable not only to Russian, but to Spanish, Arabic, and English as well. This helps to confirm our hypothesis that that SCC and SLC competencies include not only language-specific qualities and characteristics, but generic aspects as well. Let demonstrate the correlation between generic and language-specific aspects of SCC and SLC.

Let us begin with the SCC. As we mentioned earlier, definitions of this competence in Russian linguistics are based on the concept of background knowledge. The most obvious link in Russian linguistics between SCC and BK is in linguocultural didactics, a trend in the methodology of teaching Russian as a foreign language based on close relations between language and culture. The connection between SCC and BK has been made not only in Russian linguistics but is reflected also in the schema theory of reading and the concept of cultural literacy which emerged in the US but are widely accepted by linguists throughout the world.⁸

⁷ This feedback was provided through our questionnaire (See attachments) discussions at the CDLC Annual Conference and personal conversations.

⁸ Anderson, R. C. (1984a). Role of the reader's schema in comprehension, learning, and memory. In R. C. Anderson, J. Osborn, & R. J. Tierney (Eds.), **Learning to read in American schools: Basal readers and content texts**. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Anderson, A. C. (1984b). Some reflections on the acquisition of knowledge. **Educational Researcher**, 13, 5 - 10.

Armbruster, B. B., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Learning from Reading: The role of meta-cognition. In R. C. Anderson, J. Osborn, & R. J. Tierney (Eds.), **Learning to read in American schools: Basal readers and content texts**. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bransford, J. D. (1984). Schema activation and schema acquisition: Comments on Richard C. Anderson's remarks. In R. C. Anderson, J. Osborn, & R. J. Tierney (Eds.), **Learning to read in American schools: Basal readers and content texts**. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Briggs, L. J., & Wager, W. W. (1981). Handbook of the procedures for the design of instruction (2nd Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Educational Technology Publications.

Derry, S. J., & Murphy, D. A. (1986). Designing systems that train learning ability: From theory to practice. **Review of Educational Research**, 56, 1 - 39.

According to the **schema theory of reading**, previously acquired information (or **background knowledge**) that readers hold is embodied and stored in mental structures called schemata. In connected speech, the speaker/writer can omit certain elements that the listener/reader can infer. This is accomplished by relying on their shared knowledge of schemata. It is a lack of mutually shared schemata that may cause a non-native reader's failure to comprehend a text.

The concept of cultural literacy emerged in the USA in the late 1980s, building upon and extending the schema theory. Cultural literacy is defined as the common stock of relevant **background knowledge** of people, places, sayings, events and ideas broadly shared by all the literate members of a speech community. This core information, which is part of a national cultural heritage, makes that culture unique.

It can thus be concluded that the very fact that SCC of the Russian language is linked to shared BK reflects a generic aspect of SCC. The specific “content” of the BK repository of the Russian Language, however, the classification of BK, and the greater emphasis of certain areas of BK are language-specific and cannot be directly transferred to other languages. For example, religious BK may not be as relevant for modern Russian as it is for Arabic and Spanish.⁹

Let us examine the generic and language-specific aspects of SLC of the Russian language. As mentioned above, the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook first of all subdivides Russian into literary (standard) and non-literary (non-standard) language. Within standard Russian, we identify a number of functional styles, registers and genres. We classify and examine identifying characteristics of each. Within non-standard or non-literary language, we delineate identifying characteristics of professional

Hirsch, E. D. Jr. *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

⁹ We should rather say that religious BK is not particularly relevant for analyzed corpus of language examples.

and social jargons and the so-called “common jargon.” Arabic, Spanish, and English specialists agreed that our definition of SLC is acceptable for their languages¹⁰. The specific list of the most relevant registers and genres as well as the linguistic characteristics of each, vary significantly from language to language.

We examined the literature of the field of second language acquisition looking for a non-language specific, “universal” definition of SCC and SLC. The most representative models of SCC and SLC we feel were developed as part of the communicative competence model. In 1972, Hymes, in reaction to the Chomsky’s dichotomy of *competence* (i.e., knowledge of a language) and *performance* (i.e., actual use of a language), put forth the notion of communicative competence, arguing that “there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (p. 278).

According to Canale and Swain's (1980) and later Canale's (1983) classic definition, communicative competence consists of four indispensable components: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. Simply put, grammatical competence deals with sentence-level rules only, discourse competence with rules that govern the relationship among sentences to form a meaningful whole, sociolinguistic competence with rules of speaking that depend on pragmatic, socio-cultural elements, and strategic competence with the way the speaker manipulates language to fulfill communicative goals. If the foreign language course aims at enabling learners to reach a level of communicative competence, all four components are of great importance. For superior level students who have already gained control over grammatical and discourse competencies and for whom strategic competency is much less relevant, the significance of SCC and SLC is impossible to overestimate.

4. Components of SCC and SLC chosen for practical mastering

¹⁰ The fact that a particular definition of a competency is applicable to another language doesn’t mean of course that this definition is the only possible one. For example, the following definition of SLC was proposed as an alternative definition for the Spanish language. It is the ability to produce the appropriate response according to the rules of usage and the participants in a given communicative situation.

For the purposes of this research project, we accept the description of SCC and SLC given in the Generic Learning Profiles, **GLP 3+/4** , as these descriptions were developed by experts in language learning and acquisition specifically for teaching/learning environments and they are widely accepted by the professional community in this field. The profiles include the following components:

Socio – cultural Competence:

- understands nearly all literary allusions in reading texts of all varieties (classical literature, popular literature, and interpersonal written communications) that would be considered accessible to the average educated native speaker,
- reads beyond the lines, using knowledge of cultural and generational backgrounds for accurate interpretation
- understands culturally loaded expressions and prolepsis
- correctly interprets religious references
- correctly interprets historical references
- correctly interprets folkloric references
- correctly interprets references to children's literature, games, and songs
- understands most allusions in popular journals to popular culture artifacts
- nearly always responds appropriately to expressions of power, solidarity, and social rank shown in written communication as it is expressed in the target culture (via grammatical forms, particles, lexical choices, etc.)

SLC:

- recognizes and understands professional, social, dialectal, age, gender, and country versus city registers
- recognizes appropriateness of forms of address for elders, children, pets, strangers, professionals,

and others

- ❑ correctly interprets slang as used by various social classes
- ❑ correctly interprets professional jargon
- ❑ understands a wide range of acronyms from a variety of common and specific fields

In different languages, the structure of SCC and SLC as well as the relevance of their various components will of course have significant distinctions.. For this reason, the components chosen for practical mastering not only can but need to vary from language to language. For example, if for the Russian language the core of SLC is the mastery of social and professional dialects, for the Arabic language, the most relevant component of SLC is its territorial dialects.

When choosing components of SCC and SLC that will be mastered through the proposed system of learning activities, we recommend selecting those which are the most relevant for your particular language. The Russian Socio-cultural Workbook focuses on idiomatic expressions, allusions, and reading between lines. These are considered to be the most frequently use mechanisms of activating different types of BK.

The meaning behind an idiomatic expression is an element of background information that became the part of the language. Idiomatic expressions are therefore inextricably connected to a fragment of BK. For this reason, the system of idiomatic expressions of each language is culturally loaded and culturally unique. In fact, the word *idiom* comes from the Greek root *idio*, meaning a unique signature. Each language contains expressions that make no sense when translated literally into another tongue.

The connection between allusions and background information/knowledge, although obvious, is not as close as in case with idiomatic expressions. Allusion is understood as an indirect reference to some historical or cultural person, event, statement, or fact. For sociologists or historians, allusions

provide important clues to the contexts that provide a literary text with added significance. Writers using allusions in a text assume that readers will recognize the reference and in some fashion apply the extra-textual information in their interpretation of this text.

“Reading between the lines” usually applies to a text and means decoding, understanding and interpreting any implicitly referred to information. *One rich source of such information is background knowledge that is encoded by author of a text and decoded by a reader.*

In the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we used the following definitions and classification of idiomatic expressions. An **idiomatic expression** is a fixed expression which is not created in speech but used as a whole and functions semantically as a unit. The meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot be deduced from the literal definitions and arrangement of its parts but refers instead to a figurative meaning that is known only through conventional use. We agreed on the following **classification** of idiomatic expressions:

Origin (Russian, borrows from other languages and cultures),

Style (conversational, bookish, stylistically neutral),

Grammar (verbal, nominal, adjectival, adverbial, conjunctive, sentence-like).

Allusions are implied or indirect references to something assumed to be known. This may include a well-known work of literature, a historical event, a person, a place, or a work of visual or performing arts..

There are two types of allusions in the Russian language: direct and transformed. A direct allusion is identical with a referenced text or its component. A transformed allusion changes a referenced text or its components. For example, “To be or not to be” is a direct allusion to Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “To beat or not to beat” is an example of a transformed allusion.

We divide Russian allusions into the following classes:

literary allusions,
cinematographic allusions,
performance and visual arts allusions,
historical allusions,
political allusions.

We defined **reading between lines** as the ability to decode, understand and interpret implied background information relevant for understanding a written text or oral utterance. For building a student's background information, we focused on the following areas:

historical,
social,
ethnographic and folkloric

In Spanish, Arabic, and English, , idiomatic expressions, allusions, and reading between the lines are also important components of SCC that can be chosen for practical mastery. Specialists in Spanish and Arabic confirmed that the definitions and classifications of these three components of SCC used in the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook are applicable in their respective languages. The following additional classifications of idiomatic expressions have been recommended for Spanish. These include classification by origin: (visual, auditory, tactile, etc), by concept: (human interaction with the environment), by simple or complex scene representation (relationship between characters and circumstanced), and by empirical evidence or conventional wisdom..

Additionally, it was suggested that in Spanish, idiomatic expressions require historical, cultural and anecdotal clues to be interpreted appropriately. In the teaching of Spanish as a second language, therefore, it is recommended that these components be occasionally pulled apart, analyzed and then put back together as if they were narratives, in order to help the student understand the

cultural and social integration.

For Spanish as well as for Arabic and English, direct allusions are much more important than transferred allusions, which appear so often in Russian. In both Arabic and Spanish, religious allusions seem to be more frequent and significant while social and economic allusions are apparently more common in Spanish.

Both the Arabic and Spanish specialists acknowledged the importance of the third component of SCC which we tackled, namely reading between the lines. In addition to classification of background information in the Russian Language the following classes of BK have been proposed: political, religious, geographical and national.

Respondents to the questionnaire agreed on the relevancy for Spanish and Arabic of the components of SLC used in the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook. These include functional styles, genres, social and professional jargon and the so-called “common jargon”. In addition to these, the following was proposed for Spanish. Due to the considerable linguistic differences among countries and regions using Spanish, geographically -related distinctions should be added to the following list of SLC. This full range would include professional, social, dialectal, age, and gender related registers; appropriate forms of address for elders, children, pets, strangers, professionals and social slang, professional jargon; and a wide range of acronyms from a variety of common and specific fields.

In the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, we utilize the following definition and classification of functional registers and genres. **The functional style/register** of the Russian language is a combination of language elements that serves a specific sphere of life and that came about as a result of the historical development of the literary language. **Genre** is a more specific variation of a register that is characterized by specific linguistic and discursal indicators and serves

a narrower communicative goal. The major functional styles/registers of the Russian language were identified as

1. Publicistic genres: news articles, interviews, commentaries, news reports, surveys, press releases feature articles, lampoons
2. Scientific genres: monograph, research articles, dissertations, textbooks, dictionaries, teacher manuals, student manuals, popular science articles;
3. Official genres: power of attorney letters,, receipts, applications, certificates, contracts, agreements, business letters, instructions, minutes of meetings, orders, resumes, presentations, negotiations, business conversations, laws, acts, decrees, resolutions, summonses, etc.) ;
4. Conversational genres: face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, informal testimonials, opinions, jokes, complements, toasts, congratulations, condolences, arguments, personal letters, postcards, notes, diary entries);
5. Belles-Letter genres: novels, short stories, novellas, fables, poems, plays, tragedies, comedies.

While the concept of identifying specific registers/styles and genres can be applied to any language, how these registers/styles and genres will be differentiated and their comparative importance will differ from language to language. In addition to the above categories studied in the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, it was suggested to add the following SLC components for Spanish and Arabic respectively.

For Spanish: 1. referential function of the language (how to deliver a message), 2. emotional function (how to describe feelings); 3. imperative function (how to provoke a reaction or a response from the other person).

For the Arabic language: 1. summary, 2. persuasion, 3. comparison and contrast, 4. apology

In the Russian Sociolinguistic book, “common jargon” was defined as a system of social and

professional non standard usage (?) vocabulary and phraseology that due to frequent and common use in mass media and everyday communication, has become accepted Russian usage by a majority of native speakers. The existence of a “common jargon” is confirmed in Spanish but the question becomes complicated by diglossia (actually multiglossia) in Arabic.. Learners need to distinguish when it is appropriate to use Standard Arabic and when Colloquial Arabic is called for. It is clear that the media has helped to standardize spoken Arabic, but interviews are increasingly conducted in Colloquial Arabic as well.

5. System of learning activities

We contend that in order to help our students master components of SCC and SLC, it is insufficient to simply present relevant information about the linguistic phenomena being addressed. In order for students to learn to use these competencies with the level of automaticity and confidence of a native speaker, procedural and not simply declarative mastery needs to occur. We believe that specifically designed learning activities are the most important ingredient of a program that expects its graduates to demonstrate proficiency in utilizing SCC and SLC in their speech. In the process of developing a system of learning activities, we recommend taking into consideration the following:

There needs to be a balance between theory and practice. We introduce only such theory that can serve as the basis for learning activities, and provide practice in using the linguistic phenomena introduced in the theoretical overview. This balanced approach allows us to achieve the most efficient way to improve students’ proficiency in SCC and SLC. The aim is procedural knowledge and skill, based on the prerequisite declarative knowledge.

Targeted practice is essential for a student to achieve automaticity in recognizing and especially in using of socio-cultural and socio linguistic information. We believe that it is only through a sufficient amount of relevant practice that students can increase retention of the material and

build automaticity and comfort of its use in real-life communication.

In the Russian Workbooks, we suggested two groups of exercises, namely the preliminary and primary. The primary exercises are subdivided into the following categories:

1. Identification exercise
- 2 Substitution exercises
- 3 Mimicking exercises
- 4 Complication exercises
5. Interpretation exercises¹¹.

The purpose of the preliminary exercises is to introduce the studied competency components, to demonstrate their variety and address the significance of correctly identifying them in the process of communication. For example, in the chapter on Russian registers and genres, students read examples of major Russian registers accompanied by detailed notes highlighting their distinguishing features.

In the case of preliminary exercises on allusions, however, their goal is somewhat different. Since an allusion is a reference to a referenced fact, it makes sense to subdivide the process of teaching/learning allusions into two steps. The first step is helping students master the referenced facts, the second step is to help them master allusions based on these referenced facts..

The five types of primary exercises lead students from gaining passive recognition to active, independent use of SCC and SLC. Students begin by working on the passive skills of recognition and identification of a studied phenomenon in communication. They then analyze its structure and repeat it following a particular example. Finally they move on to “active” skills of using the studied

¹¹ These exercises were successfully used at various institutions such as the Foreign Service Institute, Defense Language Institute, Howard University and the , Specialized Language Training Center. They have been presented in lectures and seminars in the US, Canada and England. In the Bibliography we provide a list of works where the theoretical framework for creating and using language exercises with superior-level students effectively and efficiently has been presented.

phenomenon independently in communication and demonstrate an ability to interpret it. For each exercise type, we suggest several possible examples of exercises which can be used as a model and adapted to specific teaching/learning situations. The number of exercises necessary for mastering a studied phenomenon, will also vary from student to student and exercise type to exercise type. Each exercise assignment has a reference to the part of the chapter that student should know in order to complete the assignment and to the answer key that includes not only the correct answer but additional comments as well. We encourage our colleagues to develop their own exercise in addition to the ones provided that will be beneficial for improving SCC and SLC of students.

Identification exercises¹² teach the student to recognize the studied component of a competency, its type or linguistic characteristics. This type of exercises is aimed at developing the passive skill of recognizing and identifying a studied phenomenon in the flow of oral or written communication. We recommend starting with identification exercises for written communication and then move on to taped oral communication and finally to live oral communication as this progression will provide increasing challenges for students.

Without developed skills in passive recognition of studied components of SCC and SLC, students cannot move towards the more active skills of analysis, and then assisted, followed by independent use and creation of these components. After completion of this group of exercises, students should be able not only to identify a particular component but to also identify its classification and major linguistic indicators. With this skill, students are usually ready to move on to the next group of substitution exercises.

Language materials that are used in this group of exercises will also be used in other types of exercises and are the key to the entire system of learning activities. They increase retention of

¹² See Appendix 2 for exercise examples.

knowledge and further skills gained by students as a result of working on the previous exercises.

Examples of this type of exercises are given below.

- Read the text (sentence) or listen to the oral utterance (conversation) and identify **the given class of a studied component**. If necessary, refer to the relevant part of the chapter. Check your answer against the key.
- Read the text (sentence) or listen to the oral utterance (conversation) and identify **the linguistic characteristics** of a studied component that allow you to determine its type. If necessary refer to the relevant part of the chapter. Check your answer against the key. If necessary refer to the relevant part of the chapter. Check your answer against the key.
- Read the text (sentence) or listen to the oral utterance (conversation) and identify **the structure or a component** of a studied phenomenon. If necessary refer to the relevant part of the chapter. Check your answer against the key.
- Read the text (sentence) or listen to the oral utterance (conversation) and identify **the linguistic phenomenon on the basis** of which a studied component was formed. If necessary refer to the relevant part of the chapter. Check your answer against the key.

Substitution exercises allow students to further master the linguistic characteristics and structure of the studied phenomenon. This exercise group requires from the students more active analytical skills. In the process of working on these exercises, students practice the cognitive functions of replacing, matching, distributing, and grouping (classifying). From passive recognition they move to more active manipulating of studied components. This requires further integration of theoretical knowledge gained by the students earlier and analysis how this theory manifests itself in the reality of language. Examples of this exercise type are given below.

- Match the studied components of SCC or SLC with their **classification type**.
- Match the studied components of SCC or SLC with their **meanings**.
- Match the studied components of SCC or SLC with **correct completion of a component**.
- Match the studied components of SCC or SLC with **their linguistic characteristics**.

Mimicking exercises allow students to repeat a studied component of a competency following a given example. The positioning of this group of exercises after identification and substitution exercises is not accidental. The seemingly passive nature of these exercises is misleading. In our system, mimicking exercises are the first group of exercises aimed at the development of active skills of component use.

We believe that students cannot repeat, retain, and effectively use a language component if this component considerably surpasses their level of proficiency. Even if a student manages to do just that, as students with an excellent memory are sometimes able to do, the outcome of this activity will be the desired one. Students may learn the language phenomenon but will not be able to effectively use it in communication, as it was not previously analyzed, understood, and properly internalized.

We view these exercises not as a mechanical repetition, but as a necessary stage in the process of internalization. They help students memorize a component and reach the required level of comfort and automaticity of its use. It is important to underscore that these exercises which require repetition of highly complicated native-level speech, at the same time allow students a certain level of improvisation and choice while pushing them beyond their natural comfort zone. This exercise type is intended to expand the students' flexibility and range of SCC and SLC components. Examples of this exercise type are given below.

- Listen to the taped dialogue of two native-speakers **who cannot hear each other**. In order to

facilitate their communication you serve as a sounding board for everything they are saying. Repeat their remarks paying attention to the studied components of SCC or SLC used by them.

- Listen to (or read) the dialogue of two native-speakers. **Summarize the content** of their conversation and try to repeat as many components of SCC and SLC as possible.
- Read (or listen) to the numbered list of studied components of SCC and SLC. The teacher will give you the number of the component and you must then **repeat the component**.
- Watch the video clip several times while repeating the remarks after the personages. Watch the clip with the sound turned off and **sound the clip**.

Complication exercises are at the pinnacle of a student's active involvement in working on competency components. Student independently use the SCC and SLC components presented to them in the process of written and oral communication. While doing so, students achieve two major objectives:

1. They enrich their speech with relevant components of SCC and SLC. In order to help students achieve this objective instructors need to analyze students' speech and subsequently introduce speech improvements, which students then automate.

2. As a result of enriching their speech, students move out of their comfort zone and raise their proficiency. Complication exercises are designed to change students' practice and, therefore, habit in speech use, and in so doing, raise the bar. Specifically, these exercises force a student into less familiar territory, purposely stretching the student's linguistic sophistication by enriching his or her speech with less frequently encountered SCC and SLC components. Examples of this type of exercises are given below.

- Read (or listen to) two texts (oral utterance or dialogues) – without and with studied

components of SCC and SLC. **Retell the text containing these components** paying attention to their use.

- Read (or listen to) a text and a list of SCC and SLC components after the text. Write **a new text enriching the initial text with SCC and SLC components**. Retell the new text.
- Read the text and identify its socio-cultural or sociolinguistic characteristics (for example, register or genre). **Rewrite the text** changing its socio-cultural or sociolinguistic characteristics.
- **Create your own text** with socio-cultural or sociolinguistic characteristics given to you by your teacher.

Interpretation exercises serve the dual purpose of developing students' skills of independent interpretation while encouraging students' creativity in using the target language. Without much assistance from instructors students interpret SCC and SLC components' meaning in communication. To successfully complete this exercise, students need to demonstrate their ability to understand an allusion's meaning, or to access the background information necessary to fully understand a written text or oral utterance, a humorous effect or a stylistic mistakes made on purpose, etc.).

The creativity of interpretation exercises clearly distinguishes them even from complication exercises. Despite their active nature, complication exercises still remain within the boundaries established by the theoretical overview of the chapter and language materials introduced earlier. These boundaries can be very broad and exceed the students' comfort zone, but they are clearly identified. In interpretation exercises on the other hand, students may for the first time be asked to step outside these boundaries, by being assigned the task of explaining, interpreting, and evaluating language materials that have not been previously introduced and analyzed.. Students can be asked to

explain the meaning of new idioms or analyze the linguistic indicators of a text that presents an unusual mixture of styles or genres. Examples of this type of exercises are given below.

- **Explain the meaning** of the given components of SCC and SLC.
- Interpret **the difference in meanings** of synonymous components of SCC and SLC.
- Analyze the difference between the meaning of a component in **a target language and its equivalent in your native language**.
- Create a competency component with **the indicated meaning**.

These types of exercises can be used for developing of all four basic communicative skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Depending on which skills the students are working on, assignments can be modified. Materials can be presented to students in the form of a written text or an oral utterance or dialogue (taped or role-played by native-speakers). The completion of the exercise can involve listening, speaking or writing and the outcome of the learning activities can belong to oral or written communication.

Respondents acknowledged the efficiency of the proposed types of exercises for developing SCC and SLC. Survey results allow us to conclude that despite the fact that further research is needed to fine-tune the possible tools and techniques for teaching SCC and SLC, the current project has outlined a general approach that is relevant for different languages and can serve as a template for developing future courses.

III. Conclusion

The purpose of this template is to provide guidance in creating workbooks for learners working towards ILR S: Level 4 of foreign/second language proficiency. The recommendations given here are developed by experienced Level 4 teachers and course developers, who have used this approach in preparing the Russian Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Workbooks. The input from

teachers of other languages, shapes this template as well. The thought behind pulling out the generic aspects of these workbooks, is that a generic template will make the preparation of workbooks in other languages easier.

The authors realize that not all languages are alike, and that there may be some activities, some genres, some styles that are not relevant for the language that you are teaching. Likewise, there may be some specific aspects of your language that are not covered in the template. The template is meant to be flexible, and to guide you through the thinking process for producing workbooks in your language.

We also realize that sociolinguistic competence and socio-cultural competence are but two aspects of ILR Level 4 foreign language proficiency. ILR Level 4 comprises a very complex set of skills, knowledge, and capability. For this particular project, we isolated SLC and SSC because of their relative lack of discussion in the literature and the dearth of their presence in language learning textbooks or other teaching materials. Further, these are two competencies that students almost never are able to acquire on their own efficiently. The available research indicates that most students need to have formal instruction for developing SLC and SSC. Hence, the development of materials that facilitates such teaching and learning.

Certainly, one can take other aspects of ILR Level 4 speech and writing and use this template as a guide to thinking about those aspects, as well. Such things as grammatical competence (the obscure, complex, and erudite uses of grammar that are not generally considered the “basic system” but an elaboration of it), domain-specific vocabulary, and discourse analysis/competence are among the other areas that can and should be taught by teachers of highly proficient students. We offer this template, then, as a way to think through these aspects of language learning, as well.

Finally, we admit that the capability and knowledge that is needed to reach ILR Level 4 proficiency is broad and deep. One set of workbooks certainly is not enough to address all students' needs. Moreover, at this level students differ very distinctly one from another. Our purpose is not to satisfy all these needs, but to provide a guide, i.e. a template, that can flex and grow to meet the individual needs of any particular student or group of students and provide teachers with a support staff for helping students to march past ILR Level 3 to ILR Level 4 and beyond.

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Appendix 1:

Questionnaire On Teaching Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Competences To Superior – Level Students

General Questions:

1. Do you think that mastering SCC and SLC requires formal instruction?
2. What level of language proficiency is the most appropriate for teaching/learning SCC and SLC?
3. What learning experience outside the class-room is the most effective for mastering SCC and SLC?
4. Can SCC and SLC be mastered as a result of student's independent study?
5. What combination of in-class instruction, independent study, in-country experience, etc. is the most adequate in the process of mastering SCC and SLC?
6. What is your experience in teaching SCC and SLC to Superior-level students? What best practices in teaching SCC and SLC would you like to share?
7. Do you think that mastering SCC and SLC require development of specific teaching/learning methods and techniques?
8. Do you think that the understanding of these two competences and teaching approach vary depending on a specific language? Please be specific.
9. What learning/teaching resources can you recommend to student and teachers who are working on improvement of SCC and SLC?

Course-specific Questions:

1. In the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we defined SCC as the possession of sufficient (comparable to the background knowledge possessed by an educated native speaker) background knowledge and capability to activate this relevant background knowledge in the process of culturally appropriate communication. Is this definition applicable to your language? Can you suggest any other definition(s) of SCC that would facilitate the teaching/learning of SCC in your language?

2. In the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we identified the following components of SCC as relevant for the Russian Language:

- understands nearly all literary allusions in reading texts of all varieties (classical literature, popular literature, and interpersonal written communications) that would be considered accessible to the average educated native speaker,
- reads beyond the lines, using knowledge of cultural and generational backgrounds for accurate interpretation
- understands culturally loaded expressions and prolepsis
- correctly interprets religious references
- correctly interprets historical references
- correctly interprets folkloric references

- correctly interprets references to children's literature, games, and songs
- understands most allusions in popular journals to popular culture artifacts
- nearly always responds appropriately to expressions of power, solidarity, and social rank shown in written communication as it is expressed in the target culture (via grammatical forms, particles, lexical choices, etc.)

What components of SCC are relevant for your language?

3. In the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, for practical mastery we chose three components of SCC: idiomatic expression, allusions, and reading between lines. Are these components important for developing/improving SCC in your language? If-not, what components would you include in your course for practical mastery?

4. In the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, each component of SCC is covered in a separate chapter. Each chapter has the following standard structure:

I. Introduction

II. Short review of existing research on the studied phenomenon

1. phenomenon definition.

2. phenomenon structure

III. Classification of the studied phenomenon

IV. Exercises

1. Preliminary exercises

2. Primary exercises

3. Answers key to the exercises

V. Conclusions

Bibliography

Appendix

How would you modify the chapter structure if you write a workbook on SCC in your language?

5. In the first chapter of the Socio-cultural Workbook, we defined an idiomatic expression as an fixed expression which is not created in speech but used as a whole and functions semantically as a unit and whose meaning cannot be deduced from the literal definitions and the arrangement of its

parts, but refers instead to a figurative meaning that is known only through conventional use. Is this definition applicable to your language? What definition of idiomatic expression would you prefer to use in your course?

6. In the first chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we presented the following classification of Russian idiomatic expressions:

By origin:

1. Russian;
2. Borrowed from other language and cultures.

By style:

1. Conversational;
2. Bookish;
3. Stylistically neutral.

By grammar:

1. Verbal;
2. Nominal;
3. Adjectival;
4. Adverbial;
5. Conjunctional;
6. Sentence – like.

What classification of idiomatic expressions is relevant for your language?

7. In the second chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we defined allusion as an implied or indirect reference to something assumed to be known, such as a well-known work of literature, a historical event, person, place, or work of the performing or visual arts. Is this definition applicable to your language? What definition of allusion would you prefer to use in your course?

8. In the second chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we distinguish between direct and transformed allusions. Direct allusion is identical with a referenced text or its component. Transformed allusion transforms a references text or its components. For example, “To be or not to be” is a direct allusion to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. , “*To beat or not to beat*” is an example of a transformed allusion which exists in the Russian language. We focused primarily on mastering transformed allusions as they form the predominant group of allusion used in Russian, and are more important for students studying SCC than direct allusions. Do these types of allusion exist in your language? If-not, what types of allusion exist in your language and which types are the most important for developing SCC?

9. In the second chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we presented the following classification of allusions:

1. Literary allusions
2. Cinematographic allusions
3. Performance and visual arts allusions
4. Historical allusions
5. Political allusions

What classification of allusions is relevant for your language?

10. In the third chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we defined reading between the lines as the ability to decode, understand and interpret implied background information relevant for understanding a text. Is this definition relevant for your language? What alternative definition would you prefer to use in your course?

11. In the third chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook, we introduce the following classification of background information:

1. Historical;
2. Social;
3. Ethnographic (and folkloric ?)
4. Semiotic (symbols, signs, etc.)

Is this classification relevant for your language?

12. In the third chapter of the Russian Socio-cultural Workbook “behind the text information” is the background information relevant for understanding and interpreting a text. Is this concept relevant for your language? Is this concept important for improving SCC?

13. In the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, we defined SLC as mastery of a social stratification of the modern Russian language which includes the mastery of major functional styles and genres within literary language and major social and professional jargons within non-literary language. Is this definition applicable to your language? Can you suggest any other definition(s) of SLC that would facilitate teaching/learning of SLC in your language?

14. In the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, we identified the following components of SLC as relevant for the Russian Language:

- recognizes and understands professional, social, dialectal, age, gender, and country versus city registers

- recognizes appropriateness of forms of address for elders, children, pets, strangers, professionals, and others
- correctly interprets slang as used by various social classes
- correctly interprets professional jargon
- understands a wide range of acronyms from a variety of common and specific fields

What components of SLC are relevant for your language?

15. In the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, for practical mastery we chose two components of SLC: functional styles and genres of the Russian literary (standard) language and common jargon of the Russian language. Are these components important for developing/improving SLC in your language? If-not, what components would you include in your course for practical mastery?

16. In the first chapter of the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, we defined the functional style of the Russian language as *a combination of language elements that serves a specific sphere of life and that is established as a result of the historical development of the literary language*. Is this definition relevant for your language?

17. In the first chapter of the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, we introduced the following classification of functional styles in the Russian language:

- Publicistic
- Scientific
- Official
- Conversational
- Belles-Letters

Is this classification relevant for your language? If-not, what classification of functional styles do you have in your language?

18. Within Russian publicistic style, we differentiated the following genres:

Informative: news article, interview, commentary, report, survey, press release. **Analytical:** analytical report, analytical article, analytical interview, analytical commentary, monitoring, rating, analytical survey, journalist investigation, forecast. **Feature publicistic:** feature article, satirical article, lampoon

Do these genres exist in your language? What publicistic genres are important for improving SLC in your language?

19. Within scientific style, we differentiated the following genres:

Scientific: monograph, research article, dissertation, dissertation summary.

Educational: textbook, (student why?) dictionary, teacher manual, student manual.

Popular science: popular science book or article.

Do these genres exist in your language? What scientific genres are important for improving SLC in your language?

Within official style, we differentiated the following genres:

Administrative:

written – power of attorney letter, receipt, application, certificate, agreement (contract), business letter, instruction, minutes, order, resume;

oral – business conversation, negotiations, presentation.

Legal:

written – law, act, decree, resolution, summons;

oral – speech in court, interrogation.

Diplomatic:

written – communiqué, international agreement, resolution, diplomatic correspondence;

oral – international negotiations, summit.

Do these genres exist in your language? What administrative genres are important for improving SLC in your language?

19. Within conversational style, we differentiated the following genres:

Oral: face-to-face conversation, telephone conversation, informal testimonial, opinion (of a film, book, etc.), joke, compliment, toast, congratulations, argument, description of an object, person or event, etc.

Written: personal letter, postcard, note, diary.

Do these genres exist in your language? What oral genres are important for improving SLC in your language?

Within Belles-Letters style, we differentiated the following genres:

Prose: novel, short story, novella.

Poetry: fable, poem, song.

Drama: tragedy, comedy, play.

Do these genres exist in your language? What Belles – Letters genres are important for improving SLC in your language?

20. In the second chapter of the Russian Sociolinguistic Workbook, we defined common jargon as a system of social and professional jargon vocabulary and phraseology that due to frequent and common use in mass media and everyday communication became a part of the Russian language used by the majority of native speakers. Do you have an analogical phenomenon in your language? How important is it to know common jargon to be an effective communicator among native speakers of your language?

21. In the Russian Workbooks we suggested 5 categories **of exercises**: extraction, substitution, mimicking, complication exercises, and interpretation exercises. These categories reflect students' progress from the passive skills of identifying recognizing a studied phenomenon in communication, to analyzing its structure and repeating it following an example to active skills of using it independently in communication and being able to interpret it. For each category, we suggest several possible examples of exercises on the basis of which each teacher can develop her/his own system adapted to a specific teaching/learning situation. The number of exercises necessary for mastering a studied phenomenon should also be identified by a teacher.

Identification exercises:

- Identify referenced facts for allusions given below
- Identify allusions in the extract given below.

Substitution exercises:

- Choose the correct meaning of the allusion.
- Correlate allusions with its taxonomy class

Imitation exercises:

- Read the text with allusions and retell it repeating allusions used in the text
- Students asks the teacher a question; the teacher answers the question using allusion(s) and redirects the question to students; students repeat teacher's answer with allusion(s)

Complication exercises:

- Read a basic text and the list of allusions after it.
- Create a complicated text and retell it

Interpretation exercises:

- Analyze the formation of an allusion's meaning in the text given below

What additional exercises can you recommend for mastering SCC and SLC competences?

Appendix 2: Sample Exercises

The sample exercises given below were handouts accompanying a panel presentation on two chapters of the Russian Socio-cultural and Sociolinguistic Workbooks given at the December 2007 Annual Conference of the CDLC. The presentations were in English, and the handouts were adapted for an English speaking audience, translating or adapting the Russian examples used in the course based on the Workbooks.

Sample exercises from the chapter “Teaching Russian Allusions to Students of Near-Native Proficiency Level” by Ekaterina Kuznetsova (ESI International)

Identification exercise: Identify the allusions that appear in the extract given below. If necessary, refer to the comment section that follows the extract.

Extract from the story "Pervaya Popytka" by Viktoria Tokareva, translated by Kristine Shmakov

" Five years passed. Nothing was happening in our country. Scared by the Prague Spring, Brezhnev tried to fix it so that nothing would change and everything would remain the same. No fresh currents flowed. Life gradually turned into a swamp and was covered by duckweed."

Comments:

From Wikipedia:

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev ([Russian](#): [Леонид Ильич Брежнев](#) ([help](#)·[info](#)), *Leonid Il'ič Brežnev*) [December 19, 1906](#) [O.S. [December 6, 1906](#)] – [November 10, 1982](#)) was [General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union](#) (and thus political leader of the [USSR](#)) from 1964 to 1982, serving in that position longer than anyone other than [Joseph Stalin](#). He was twice Chairman of the Presidium of the [Supreme Soviet](#) (head of state), from 1960 to 1964 and from 1977 to 1982.

The **Prague Spring** ([Czech](#): *Pražské jaro*, [Slovak](#): *Pražská jar*) was a period of political liberalization in [Czechoslovakia](#) starting [January 5, 1968](#) when [Alexander Dubček](#) came to power, and running until [August 21](#) of that year when the [Soviet Union](#) and its [Warsaw Pact](#) allies (except for [Communist Romania](#)) invaded the country.

The term *Prague Spring* was coined by Western media after the event and became known worldwide. The expression was eventually adopted in Czechoslovakia itself. It made reference to the *Spring of Nations*, a lyrical title given to the [Revolutions of 1848](#).

The **European Revolutions of 1848**, known in some countries as the **Spring of Nations** or the **Year of Revolution**, appeared to be a [revolutionary wave](#) which erupted in [Sicily](#) and then, further triggered by the [revolutions of 1848 in France](#), soon spread to the rest of [Europe](#) and as far afield as [Brazil](#). These European revolutions were the violent consequence of such a wide variety of causes, that it is difficult to view them as resulting from any one movement or coherent social phenomenon. Changes had been taking place in Europe in the first half of the [19th century](#). In [politics](#), both [liberal reformers](#) and [radical politicians](#) were seeking change in their nations' governments. In society, technological change was creating new ways of life for the working classes. A popular press, extended political awareness, and new values and ideas such as [popular liberalism](#), [nationalism](#) and [socialism](#) began to spring up. The straw that broke the camel's back was a series of [economic downturns](#) and crop failures that left the peasants and the poor working classes [starving](#).

Substitution Exercises: What does the allusion mean?

- “There’s no joy in Mudville today.”
- A) Something one says when they find themselves in an exotic place very different from their normal environment
 - B) Something one says when they are planning to do what they always do and not try to think outside the box
 - C) Response to bad news
 - D) Something is very wrong somewhere

Substitution exercises: Where does the allusion come from?

- “I’ll be back”
- Literature
 - Cinema
 - Performing or visual arts
 - History
 - Politics

Imitation exercises:

- 1) The student asks a question.
- 2) The teacher answers the question using allusion(s) and throws the ball back into the student’s court.
- 3) The student must reproduce the teacher’s answer with as many allusions as possible. For example:

Student:

You mentioned that 1968 wasn't the most exciting year in your life. Why?

Teacher:

Well, nothing was happening in our country. Scared by the Prague Spring, Brezhnev tried to fix it so that nothing would change and everything would remain the same. No fresh currents flowed. Life gradually turned into a swamp and was covered by duckweed. You are too young to remember this time but I am sure you read about it. So, what do you know about 1968?

Student:

I read that nothing was happening in our country. Scared by the Prague Spring, Brezhnev tried to fix it so that nothing would change and everything would remain the same. No fresh currents flowed. Life gradually turned into a swamp and was covered by duckweed.

Complication Exercises:

The student reads a basic text and an accompanying list of allusions. The student is then tasked with retelling the text inserting allusions where appropriate.

Basic text:

"Five years passed. Nothing was happening in our country. Scared by attempts of political liberation in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the political leadership of our country tried to fix it so that nothing would change and everything would remain the same. No fresh currents flowed. Life gradually turned into a swamp and was covered by duckweed." (Guys, shouldn't you make this a really basic text without the fresh currents and swamp covered by duckweed? Don't the fresh currents and swamp with duckweed belong to the allusions list?)

Allusions: Prague spring
Brezhnev

Embellished Text:

" Five years passed. Nothing was happening in our country. Scared by the Prague Spring, Brezhnev tried to fix it so that nothing would change and everything would remain the same. No fresh currents flowed. Life gradually turned into a swamp and was covered by duckweed."

Interpretation exercises:

The student is asked to analyze the meaning and derivation of all the allusions that appear in the extract given below.

"Five years passed. Nothing was happening in our country. Scared by the Prague spring, Brezhnev tried to fix it so that nothing would change and everything would remain the same. No fresh currents flowed. Life gradually turned into a swamp and was covered by duckweed."

Sample exercises from the chapter “Teaching Russian Functional Styles and Genres Of The Russian Literary Language to Students of Near-Native Proficiency Level” by Oksana Prokhvacheva (George Washington University)

Identification exercise: The student is asked to identify the style and genre of a given text citing specific characteristics

- Вчера Госдума РФ приняла в третьем чтении поправки в Уголовно- процессуальный кодекс России, которые предусматривают перенос на три года - до 1 января 2010 года - окончания моратория на смертную казнь. Решение о продлении моратория было непосредственно связано с другим решением: в самом начале заседания депутаты перенесли на тот же срок введение в Чеченской Республике института судов присяжных.

[Yesterday the Gosduma approved in the third reading an amendment to the Russian Criminal Code that extended – until January 1, 2010 – the death penalty moratorium.. The decision to extend the moratorium was closely related to another decision. At the beginning of the session, the deputies delayed until the same date the introduction of jury trials in the Republic of Chechnia].

- Смертная казнь не выглядит подтверждением собственной моральной силы и правоты, она скорее - признак слабости и неуверенности. Иногда - следствие ситуационно мотивированной озлобленности. Но тем более нельзя вершить суд в гневе и пристрастии (найдется ли у нас сегодня в стране кто-нибудь, кто одобряет или считает справедливой казнь всей царской семьи, включая малых детей?).

[The death penalty does not look like a buttress of moral strength or right, but more like a sign of weakness and lack of confidence. Sometimes it is the result of bitterness in response to a particular situation. It is especially wrong to judge in anger or prejudice. Is there anybody in this country today who would approve s the death penalty decision for the Royal Family including their underage children?.

Identification Exercise:

Using the chart on lexical differences between various styles, the student is asked to identify to which style the identified expression belongs.

In this example, the student must distribute expressions among the following groups - scientific terms, official (administrative) vocabulary, socio-political vocabulary and conversational vocabulary:

Солнечная система (Solar system), в соответствии с достигнутой договоренностью (according to the reached agreement), предварительное следствие (preliminary investigation), Президент заявил о необходимости (the President announced the

significance), теорема Пифагора (Pythagorean theorem), что за штуковина (what the heck is this thing), установленный порядок (the established order), межпланетная станция (interplanetary station), перестань выпендриваться (cut the crap), получить горячую поддержку (receive whole-hearted support).

Mimicking Exercise:

The student is asked to reproduce texts of different genres relying on the English translation. For example:

- What is the established work schedule in your Company?
- The Company has established and maintains a five day workweek with two days off, Saturday and Sunday. The working day begins at 9 am and ends at 6pm. Lunch breaks are scheduled for a one hour period and can be taken any time between 12pm and 3pm... For some categories of employees, a specific work schedule is established. Any changes in work schedules and specific schedules for a particular category of employee, are subject to the approval of the General Director.
- Каковы требования к внешнему виду сотрудников компании?
- Сотрудники обязаны придерживаться делового стиля в одежде, так как внешний вид является одной из составляющих имиджа компании. Для мужчин деловой костюм и галстук являются обязательными. Для женщин обязательными являются деловой костюм с юбкой или брюками классического покроя или деловое платье.
- What is the Company's dress code?
- Since dress is one of the components of the Company's image, all employees should dress in a manner that is consistent with a professional business environment. Business suits and ties are required for men, and classical skirt or pant suits or dresses are required for women.

Complication Exercise:

The student is asked to create texts of different styles on his or her own by changing specific linguistic parameters of a given text thus transforming it from one style into another. For example,

In this example, the student has been asked to write two variants of the same text, one in a conversational, and the other in an official style.

Variant 1.

Заявление служащей начальнику

Дорогой Иван Иванович!

Отпустите меня на три дня в деревню, так как пора копать картошку, а мои родители старенькие, сами не справятся, да и мне стыдно будет, что я не смогла помочь им.

С приветом, Ксения Петровна

25 сентября 1998 г.

Memo to a supervisor:

Dear Ivan Ivanovich,

Please let me go to the country for three days as it's time to harvest potatoes and my parents are old and won't be able to do it themselves, and I'll feel ashamed that I couldn't help them.
Ksenia Petrovna

Variant 2.

Ивану Ивановичу Петрову
от Ксении Петровны Соколовой
Заявление.

Прошу предоставить мне отпуск на три дня в связи с поездкой домой, в село Котельниково, для оказания помощи родителям по уборке картошки.

25 сентября 1998 г.

К.П. Соколова (подпись)

*From K.P. Sokolova
To I.I. Petrov*

Memorandum

I would like to request three days leave, in order to visit and provide assistance to my elderly parents.

K.P. Sokolova

Interpretation Exercise:

In this exercise, students are asked to correct those stylistic mistakes that violate the rules of a particular style.

- Ленин - один из немногих людей, оставивших отпечатки своих пальцев на истории мира (Геннагий Зюганов). Lenin is one of very few people who have left their fingerprints on the history of the world (Ziuganov).
- Сегодня осталось две цитадели, которые порочат всю нашу историю, - это Кремль и, к сожалению, Останкино (Геннагий Зюганов). Today there are only two citadels left that embarrass our history – those are the Kremlin and, unfortunately, Ostankino (Russian TV station) (Ziuganov).
- Впервые за многие годы отмечено сокращение сброса поголовья скота (Виктор Черномырдин). For the first time in many years there has been registered a reduction in the decline of livestock (Chernomyrdin).
- Свои первые чувства относительно любви он выразил в стихотворении «К Наталье». His first feelings regarding love were expressed in the poem titled “To Natalia”.
- Князь Андрей на балу наслаждается Наташей, как наслаждаются старым, выдержанным вином. Он пьет ее молодость и невинность. Prince Andrei is enjoying Natasha at the ball as someone enjoys old, matured wine. He is taking in her youth and innocence.
- Все ребята играли либо кормили птиц, вследствие чего было очень интересно. All the children were playing or feeding birds, consequently it was very interesting.

- Во Дворце спорта было проведено шоу «В помощь детям Чернобыля». In the Palace of Sports the show “To help Chernobyl children” was held.