

Russian Language Programs in the United States

A Language Learning Framework for
Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

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Introduction

Overview of contents

In the 1990's American educators have been deluged with documents called curriculum guidelines, national standards, state standards, and so on. Why another? The answer lies in the central word of the title of this document: *framework*. The aims of this project are at once both broad and practical: we seek both to describe a theoretical foundation for Russian language curriculum design and to define shared content in order to help educators (and students!) understand and function better within the nation's Russian language offerings in American schools and colleges.¹

It is important to view this framework on its own terms, and not through the lens of predefined notions of what it must be, based on familiarity with other documents for national, state or district audiences. Educational standards define minimum outcome levels or benchmarks, and are usually specified for particular grade-levels (4, 8 and 12, for example). Curriculum guidelines set the content of academic programs and/or the pedagogical approach and tend to be too prescriptive to work in a wide range of settings. This framework is intended to move beyond those restrictions and provide a context in which to better discuss and recraft the academic programs in which the majority of classroom learning takes place in this country.

¹ We would like to thank the National Foreign Language Center for support provided to the authors as Mellon Fellows in the summers of 1991 and 1992. We would also like to thank the Russian Language Institute at Bryn Mawr College for hospitality and use of facilities during our work in the summer of 1992. We had the benefit of the collective and individual wisdom of some 35 participants at two workshops conducted at Bryn Mawr and supported by the Ford Foundation, NEH and CORLAC. In the final years of this project, this work was supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation to the National Foreign Language Center. In this last phase, we joined with representatives from professional organizations of many other of the less commonly taught languages in a process to develop language learning frameworks for their respective languages. Throughout the project, Richard Brecht provided invaluable vision and support.

The development of the Russian Language Learning Framework (RLLF) was part of a larger project, funded by the Ford Foundation, to develop similar frameworks for nearly all of the less commonly taught languages taught in the US. One of the most compelling arguments for undertaking this project has to do with national resources. If you view programs in these languages from the perspective of national need, and think in terms of overall capacity to train functioning users of these languages, it quickly becomes clear that both the programs and the learners represent relatively scarce resources. The goals of the RLLF are: 1) to help programs be maximally effective at producing functioning users of Russian, 2) in such a way that the learners can move among programs. The latter goal stems from the observation that few learners reach the first goal within the confines of a single program.

The framework in this first manifestation is comprised of two central parts. First, as a guide for curriculum development in Russian language learning programs across their two largest academic settings, there are necessarily theoretical components, here in the form of **six principles**. Second, following from these principles we define **three stages** of Russian language learning that provide a logical structure to the general pattern of requiring three years of college Russian prior to semester programs of in-country study.

A pressing practical need regarding articulation is addressed in chapter four as a **common curriculum** (that is, as a recommended subset of any high school or college Russian program's overall curriculum). As only one component of an overall program, the common curriculum needs to be embedded in the larger curriculum of any high school or undergraduate program. There is no neat algorithm for this, but general ideas are presented in chapter five as **approaches to implementation**.

The principles are intended to be theoretically neutral, and in fact were designed with reference to the learning of any of the less commonly taught languages. They are quite general, but also very powerful principles, which can be met in a wide variety of ways. The stages are a Russian-specific proposal that attempts to provide a rational, shared approach to the classroom learning that leads up to in-country study. The common curriculum is much more specific, but again, is not intended to favor any particular approach to language learning. Its specificity derives from the need to facilitate smooth transitions by learners across institutions. The implementation sections are offered not as further requirements, but as demonstrations of flexibility, as examples of the creative incorporation of relatively minimal fixed elements into a much larger and malleable whole. Through all of this, even when the framework is at its most specific, it is intended to be compatible with a broad range of textbooks and programs.

While the framework is intended to be as neutral as possible with respect to textbooks and pedagogical approaches, it is also intended to provide a certain

amount of principled uniformity. While the need for this uniformity is most acute as students move from high school to college programs, it is relevant as a resource issue at all levels at which students might move among programs. Furthermore, the general structures outlined in the stages have strong cognitive and developmental motivations, and we believe them to be valuable for purposes of curriculum for any high school or college Russian program.

A metaphor might help to understand the nature of the articulation problem. Suppose two committees have been charged with building a two-story house. The only requirement is that the two stories be connected in ways that facilitate a certain amount of movement between stories. In the design process, there are going to be principles involved. The existence of gravity and wind, for example, lead to principles about structural support. General human needs lead to requirements concerning, for example, plumbing, lighting, and air circulation. Second, the fact that this is a two-story facility that must allow movement imposes certain common constraints on design that must be met by cooperation to make sure that supports are in the right places, the plumbing meets appropriately, and that the staircase is planned for the same place. Finally, the needs of the constituents served by the committees produce a set of design requirements concerning functions of spaces, connections to the outside world, decoration, and so on. The committees spend a certain amount of time, therefore, considering different design approaches that will be consistent with the principles, the common constraints and their clients needs.

Our profession is in much the same position. We are charged with building learning "houses" in which our students can comfortably learn at different points in their learning careers—but we have a history of forgetting to include the stairs. This framework is an attempt—one that will need much revision over time—to lay out some rules to follow if we want our programs to be functional in the context of long-term learning.

This general discussion of the framework needs to be followed by three caveats. First, the title of this document means what it says regarding the institutions at which it is aimed. Although the principles may be relevant for all Russian language education, the common curriculum and the examples are geared for high school and undergraduate learners, not middle school or graduate students. Second, this document is intended to be practical, not theoretically elegant. It is not an academic monograph intent on demonstrating the history and nuanced ownership of each idea, nor is it offered as a comprehensive theory of teaching or learning. There has been and probably always will be an ongoing, and very healthy debate about textbooks, course and program goals, and maximally effective pedagogy, but this document endeavors to remain largely agnostic on these questions². Third, readers are often tempted

² Of course it is impossible to be truly aloof from such issues; more precisely, the intent here is to develop a framework whose applicability does not hinge on the theoretical

to jump straight to a part of a book that particularly interests them, and then think that they can guess at the rest. In the case of this document, the sections covering the introduction, the framework, and its implementation contain important material as well; the section on the common curriculum should not be read in isolation.

A note on the intended audience is also in order. Clearly, there is no reason to publish a document for teachers who cannot be troubled to read professional materials. There is also little need to produce a document for those who might be considered the visionaries of the field. They are already well-read, and already tend to talk with one another. The intent here, therefore, has been to produce a document that is useful, accessible, and manageable for the Russian teacher of above-average professional dedication; that is, for teachers who will take the trouble to read such a document and who are willing to put some thought into the design of their program's Russian curriculum.

In order to make the document manageable, it is intentionally not a self-contained do-it-yourself primer on curriculum design. There is extensive detail in the places where there exists no similar text (delineating the common curriculum, for example). In other cases, where there already exists a vast literature of materials (in the section on pedagogical issues, for instance), this document contains only an overview of the topic with enough bibliography for the interested reader to continue independently.

Next steps: A proposal to the Russian language teaching profession

Finally, a look to the future of this framework is appropriate. The National Foreign Language Center and the American Council of Teachers of Russian are endeavoring to establish an Internet presence to facilitate the distribution of high quality learning materials for Russian. The Language Learning Framework is slated to be at the core of the organization of that Web site and in the development of its materials. The creation of this document has therefore proceeded with an eye to hypertext. It is hoped that future versions will be on-line and replete with links to materials that augment and exemplify the framework.

The principal contribution of this document is intended to derive from its hoped-for value as a framework for the design of Russian language programs in the United States at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Much of the detailed material that is included here, including, for example, all of the specific components of the stages defined in chapters 3 and 4, is offered as the best-guesses of the authors. We will be pleased if the general ideas of the framework are acceptable to the majority in our profession. We will not be even remotely

underpinnings of programs.

upset if the details of the stages as we suggest them are totally revised. In fact, we would like to suggest that the profession begin with the assumption that revising this document will be an immediate and ongoing task for some organization or committee within the profession.

In this spirit, we would like to propose that the two principal national organizations for Russian teachers, the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) and the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), jointly designate a body to have as one of its principal tasks the ongoing reexamination and refinement of this framework. One obvious possible candidate for this role is the Committee on College and Pre-College Russian (CCPCR). This committee already has as its charge to gather information and consider issues germane to the study and teaching of Russian across the high school-college juncture, and it would be an easy organizational matter to add to the charge this committee.

A challenge to the profession will be to maintain the interest and expertise needed to promote this framework, in whatever its form might be, as a source of guidance in program development. At a very concrete level, there will be an ongoing need to try to better define such components of the framework as the lists of topical knowledge recommended for each stage. Without speculating at great length on possible broad future directions, one that comes quickly to mind concerns the role of inter- and multidisciplinary studies and their potential impact on the foundation of the approaches to language teaching as they currently exist in the United States.

Finally, it will be necessary for those working on future renditions of this framework to be fully cognizant of the work being done or already completed on the language-specific national standards. This project was begun under the organizational umbrella of ACTFL in 1996 following the publication of the document *Standards for Foreign Language Study* earlier in the same year (see below, in chapter 2, for more details on this process).

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Issues in Designing the Framework

A document of this type never comes to exist in a vacuum, and therefore in reading it one must review the issues of the day in order to be clear about which issues are particularly salient at the time. The sections below address relevant issues in the following spheres: trends in education at the national level, in foreign language study more specifically, and in Russian language learning as the most particular subcase. Each of these issues is of central relevance to defining programs that seek to foster the learning of Russian. There is no new research described here, rather we attempt to bring together information and ideas from a variety of sources and present them in a coherent fashion. It is our hope that the process of reading (or rereading) about these ideas will help organize the challenging task of developing the conceptual structure of a curriculum.

National trends in education

The field of secondary education in the United States has been the focus of a great deal of public discussion in the last decade. In particular, a government-sponsored national standards effort has led to proposals in most of the major academic disciplines. ACTFL has been charged with establishing such standards for foreign languages, and their work will be discussed below.

There is probably no such thing as a "complete" theory of the classroom, but numerous focal areas addressed by various mini-movements in recent years are important to the overall structure of the classroom. For the purposes of this document, their importance has to do both with the support they lend to the six principles of chapter 3 and to the discussion of implementation in chapter 5. In the paragraphs that follow are brief synopses of some of the more significant of these focal areas. As with national standards, the role of technology is discussed below in the section on trends in foreign language instruction since its implementation in the foreign language profession is relatively well advanced.

Howard Gardner is well known for promoting the view that we possess not a unitary form of intelligence but multiple "intelligences," as he calls them³. This belief carries with it numerous implications for how we assess the intelligence and progress of our children and, more importantly, how we educate and guide them. There has developed very widespread interest the teaching profession in exploring the significance of this view both for the current methods of classroom teaching and for the structure of the entire educational process.

The work of Ted Sizer does not flow as neatly from a single precept, but his Coalition of Essential Schools shares the trait that the structure of entire schools is held up to examination⁴. A prominent feature of this framework is the notion that learning is best promoted in large-scale, multidisciplinary, student-managed projects. Assessment is often made on the basis of demonstrations of work, not by more usual uniform tests, quizzes and papers. He also argues for the organization of schools in smaller, more easily managed and comprehended schools within schools. Of particular relevance for all foreign languages is that his divisions of academic fields of inquiry into broader domains for the secondary level leaves foreign languages straddling domains, and at the core of nothing. While there is nothing necessarily incorrect about this formulation, it requires of foreign language teachers that they be both clear and vocal about their complicated position.

Cooperative learning is hardly a "new" concept, but it seems to have achieved a heightened profile in recent years⁵. Cooperative learning stands in contrast to individualized and/or competitive learning, and has particularly interesting ramifications for foreign language learning. Perhaps most important is that at the core of cooperative learning is communication among group members. This approach to learning addresses two of the clearest drawbacks to the traditional teacher-centered classrooms: inadequate opportunity for students to speak, and inadequate motivation for students to want to communicate. Whether or not one chooses to organize entire courses around this concept, it bears thoughtful consideration by any foreign language teacher.

Outcome-based education has generated a great deal of controversy. It is based on the straightforward notion that the quality of education ought to be assessed on the basis of outcomes, that is on what it produces, not on the process by which it got there⁶. This is a relatively obvious proposal, and parallels, intentionally, the way in which other organizations, especially businesses, run. In many ways, it might be viewed as a logical consequence of the proficiency movement within the foreign language community. This focus on outcomes might be termed one of the more extreme outgrowths of the trend

³ See especially his *Frames of Mind* and *Multiple Intelligences*.

⁴ See his *Horace's Compromise* and *Horace's School*.

⁵ Cite Johnson, Johnson & Holubec (ACSD pub), Nunan, and find other relevant ones in ACTRL or NE Conf.

⁶ Cite articles in ACSD journal

toward reform, and its implementation might have unwanted consequences. However, the general idea—that outcomes matter—should not be lost!

The so-called cognitive revolution that has been underway for some time now ties together a variety of disciplines, including psychology, linguistics, computer science, anthropology, and philosophy has shown up in the education field in one incarnation as brain-based learning⁷. Building on advances in our understanding of the functioning of the human brain over the last several decades, this approach to education views learning from the perspective of the brain, and the ways and contexts in which it functions most effectively. There is a school of pedagogy which is called brain-based learning.⁸ In the case of foreign language study, one can see a similar cognitive orientation in the work of Chamot and O'Malley⁹. This topic is discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

This overview is offered as a means of bringing out some of the more important ideas from public discussions on education. There is no intent to promote one or another of these ideas, nor should this be read an apology for eclecticism. Our intent here is to raise these issues for their relevance to the setting in which curriculum design is taking place in the US in the 1990s. Some of these ideas will be discussed in more detail below, in the section on implementation; however, this document cannot provide real depth of coverage. The reference list contains sources for further reading on these topics¹⁰.

Foreign language study in the US in the 90s.

Two conceptually large issues require discussion in this section: K-12 national standards, and the delineation of the possible missions of a foreign language program. Each of these is of vital importance for any program because they are relevant in the planning process at an early, definitional stage of development. With respect to the goals of this document, these two issues connect in different ways. The question of mission fits together with the principles of the framework, and has tremendous significance for the overall shape of a program. The issue of national standards provides a kind of parallel anchor (to the common curriculum) in structuring high school Russian programs. There is no conflict between, for example, the standards under development by ACTFL and the common curriculum of this framework. Rather, the two project should be seen as different filters through which plans for high school programs should pass. The ACTFL standards focus on pre-collegiate programs, and strive to define outcomes appropriate to specific points in students' careers with respect to a much wider set of goals than are directly included in this framework. The

⁷ Cite Caine & Caine, ACSD articles, and MIT Press volumes

⁸ Need brain-based learning reference

⁹ Cite Chamot and O'Malley

¹⁰ Note existence of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design, and National Learning Structure Initiative.

common curriculum of this framework focuses on different domains of learning in order to allow for articulation with continued studies of Russian in college.

National Standards for K-12 Foreign Language Study. The national discussion of education reform, stimulated by widespread dissatisfaction with the results of our nation's school systems, has been played out in our field, in part, in the work of the last several years as a collaborative effort of ACTFL, AATF, AATG and AATSP on developing national standards for language instruction. The first major step in this process has been realized with the publication in 1996 of *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st century* (henceforth referred to as *Standards*).¹¹ Work is now underway to develop language-specific standards for a wide variety of languages, including Russian.

The development of standards reflected in curriculum-wide goals and benchmarks for grades 4, 8, and 12 will require curriculum redesigns and will therefore provide an ideal context for the process of embedding the common curriculum described below in this document. It is important that the *Standards* and the common curriculum of this framework not be seen as competitors. In fact, the two sets of curricular recommendations have very different, but complementary aims.

The standards are expressed with respect to five major goal areas, 5 C's: 1) communication, 2) cultures, 3) connections (with other disciplines), 4) comparisons (with the learner's own language and culture), and 5) communities (around the globe). Within each of these five goal areas are two to three **content standards**. Note the term standards is taken to mean: what students should know and be able to do. The executive summary of the *Standards* presents the goal areas and standards as in the following chart.

¹¹ National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project.

STANDARDS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Communication Communicate in languages other than English

Standard 1.1: *Students engage in conversation, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.*

Standard 1.2: *Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.*

Standard 1.3: *Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.*

Cultures Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures

Standard 2.1: *Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.*

Standard 2.2: *Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.*

Connections Connect with other disciplines and acquire information

Standard 3.1: *Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.*

Standard 3.2: *Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.*

Comparisons Develop insight into the nature of language and culture

Standard 4.1: *Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.*

Standard 4.2: *Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.*

Communities Participate in Multilingual communities at home and around the world

Standard 5.1: *Students use the language both with and beyond the school setting.*

Standard 5.2: *Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.*

Figure 2.1: The Five C's: goal areas and standards ¹²

If we look at the act of communication itself, we can see that each of the five goal areas of the *Standards* represents a focus on a particular aspect of communication and the knowledge and settings that attend it. Figure 2.2 attempts to capture this.

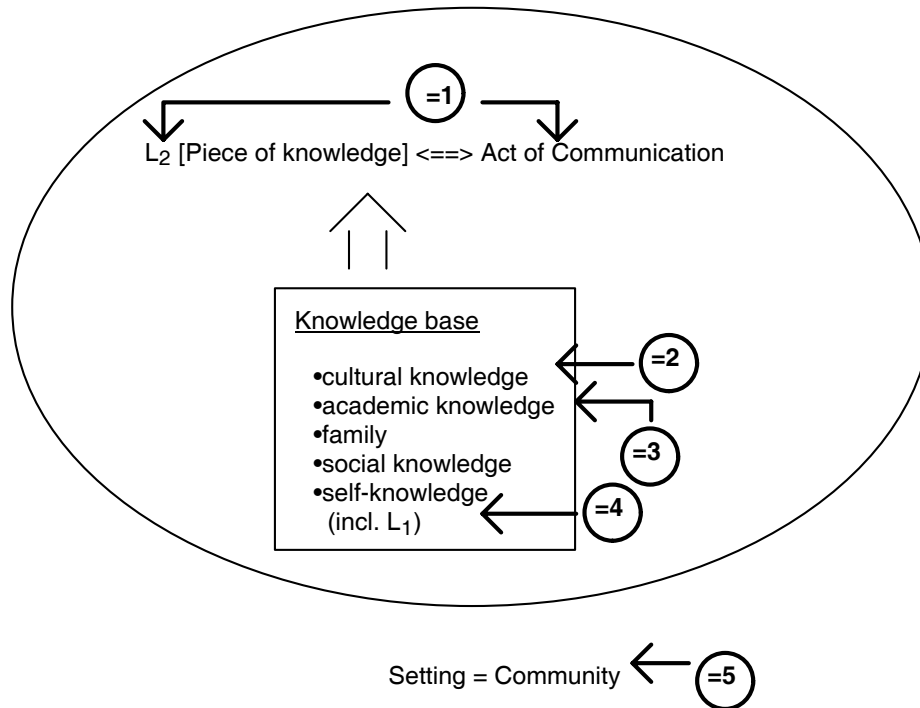


Figure 2.2 *Communication and its setting*

In words, this simplified schema suggests that an act of communication involves some "piece" of knowledge as it is reflected in L₂. This piece of knowledge comes from the context of a large knowledge base which is composed of a wide variety of information, which can only be broken down into the kind of list presented in this figure in the most superficial terms.¹³ In addition to the immediate context of a particular communication act, all communication takes place within broader linguistic communities. The numbers in the figure suggest that the goal areas of the Standards represent the most prominent components of the communication act and its broad setting.

While both the ACTFL documents and this one are couched in strongly non-normative terms, there is a substantial difference in the specificity of the recommendations contained in each. Where ACTFL strives for a level of generality that will allow it address a wide range of languages, this framework is

¹² From *Executive Summary of Standards for Foreign Language Learning*

¹³ We are leaving out issues of encoding and decoding the sake of simplicity, leaving everything couched in generic terms.

intended to address issues in the national language learning system of a single foreign language. Assuming a communicative theoretical base, this framework delineates with precision impossible in the ACTFL standards a description of stages of Russian language knowledge that will allow students maximum freedom of movement in the current school and university environment.

Furthermore, where ACTFL proposes broadly defined benchmarks for grades 4, 8, and 12, the framework presented here defines stages and leaves it up to individual programs to decide what stage to aim for at particular points in their students' Russian careers. By leaving the choice of target up to each individual program, we are able to be much more specific about what knowledge to include at each stage. Better still, the definition of stages is therefore independent of level in school, and the stages can be used in the structuring of both high school and university programs.

Another important publication in 1996 presents the results of the work of the Articulation and Achievement Project in a volume entitled *Articulation and Achievement: Connecting Standards, Performance, and Assessment in Foreign Language*.¹⁴ This document seeks to address the need to develop a unified framework in which the newly developed national standards can be implemented in ways that will reduce articulation problems and build on important national trends in education, especially toward authentic assessment. Arguing against traditional thinking in terms of course levels and seat-time, the authors urge that secondary and post-secondary foreign language programs be designed based on a **language learning continuum**.

Within this continuum the report distinguishes five stages, each defined with respect to five domains: function, context, text type, accuracy, and content. These domains can be understood as addressing the following questions:¹⁵

FUNCTION	What can the student do with the language?
CONTEXT	In what situation can the student perform these functions?
TEXT TYPE	How does the student express himself or herself in terms of discourse
ACCURACY	How closely does the student's performance match the criteria?
CONTENT	What is the student able to communicate about?

Fundamental to framework espoused in the report is the notion that within each domain learners be expected to develop on a continuum. Therefore, program design and the implied articulation practices should both take into account the gradual nature of language acquisition and, ideally, facilitate this process in the ways implied within the stage structure developed in the report.

¹⁴ New York: College Entrance Examination Board

¹⁵ *Articulation and Achievement*, pp. 22-23

The descriptions and proposals put forth in *Articulation and Achievement* are closer to the aims of this document, but are still more general in that they are not aimed at a single language. As a consequence, there are no specific recommendations that address the concerns of specific language fields. While *Articulation and Achievement* is an important document for materials and program developers to read and understand, individual language teachers will probably feel that it does not address their and their students' concrete concerns about the shape of their Russian program and its place in the national landscape.

Four missions of foreign language study. In examining the goals of undergraduate language programs, Brecht & Walton (1994) describe four possible missions. Naturally, these missions are not entirely separable, but they do provide a means for institutions to think through what it is they intend to offer their students. These missions, which are clearly relevant to high school programs as well, can be described as follows:¹⁶

1. The general education mission seeks to develop cultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, global perspective, insights into the workings of language, and systems of logic;
2. The applied language mission supports the acquisition of task specific competencies, i.e., usable language skills for occupational, recreational, or logistical purposes;
3. The specialist mission (i.e., the major) is dedicated to the transmission of high-level, field-based expertise in order to ensure the continuity of the profession and of the field;
4. The heritage preservation mission focuses on the maintenance or acquisition of language for the preservation or enrichment of cultural identity.

The question of which one or more of these missions should lie within the scope of an institution's program needs to be considered in conjunction with the institution's entire curriculum. This choice clearly has consequences for the institution as a whole and not just the foreign language curriculum. Different languages within an institution may even accord different status to the different missions.

While it is neither necessary nor appropriate for a program to focus on only one of these missions, it is important for institutions to have thought through their curricular goals enough to know which goals are primary. A program that chooses to focus on the general education mission will structure itself and allocate resources very differently than a program choosing to focus on the heritage preservation mission. Many programs will reflect a blend of these

¹⁶ Richard D. Brecht and A. Ronald Walton, cited by David Maxwell in *NFLC Perspectives* (Fall 1994, p. 1).

missions, but even in this case, it will be useful to prioritize the missions in order to develop courses appropriately and use resources properly.

What is most important at this point in the discussion is the fact that decisions about program and course design cannot be made intelligently without reference to the larger mission of the institution and the program. Similarly, as will be discussed in more detail below, the framework presented in this document presupposes that providing students the ability to make the transition from high school to college is a defining element of any Russian curriculum in these two educational settings.

Other trends. Perhaps the most important development in foreign language instruction in the past two decades has been the proficiency movement¹⁷. As a reaction against grammar-based instruction, it has engendered a variety of responses in colleges and universities, but has by now become a substantial part of the foundation of foreign language pedagogy. It is now a given that language programs seek to foster proficiency, although the means to this end are still quite varied.

A more recent focus in the profession is content-based instruction¹⁸. Just as the proficiency movement can be understood as a reaction to grammar-based instruction, content-based instruction can be seen as a response to the presupposition that students cannot do anything useful with language until after the basics have been nearly mastered. Perhaps a hybrid result of the profession's interest in proficiency and institutional interest in area and interdisciplinary studies, this development in foreign language pedagogy presents interesting options particularly for the advanced levels of language instruction (although for those committed to the approach, it can be employed in the earliest courses).

Technology has become a watchword in education. Computer-aided instruction has played a growing role in language instruction, and its significance in the coming years can only be expected to increase. Initial over-optimism about the possibilities afforded by the computer have now been scaled back to more appropriate levels as language teachers realize that authoring software is, nonetheless, authoring. Any work on curriculum design will need to recognize the need for CAI as part of the instructional plans. And ultimately, if technology lives up to even some of its promise, the entire nature of teaching and class time may be reconfigured.

¹⁷ Omaggio

¹⁸ Cite Leaver *et al.*

Russian language study in the US: Facing three new revolutions

Since the launching of Sputnik, enrollments in Russian have been subject to cycles little connected with the quality and capacity of the profession to provide instruction. For the duration of the Cold War, federal support for Russian language programs helped maintain the awareness that the learning of Russian corresponded to a real national need, in this case predominantly a security need. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, unfortunately, there has been no focal activity or organization to help underscore the new commercial needs. The effect on enrollments has been devastating. Ironically, the drop in enrollments comes as a time when the generation of teachers is seeing its first surge in non-governmental demand for professionals with knowledge of Russia and Russian.

As a result of radically lower enrollments, high school and university programs (graduate as well as undergraduate) have suffered everything from staff cuts to mergers to complete elimination. Applications for in-country programs have fallen also, and the blow has been compounded by the proliferation of programs of all sorts that have sprung up with the opening up of the Russian economy.

As we head into the twenty-first century, the Russian teaching profession is facing a totally altered landscape from the one in which virtually all of its practitioners were trained. We are faced head on with the political and economic revolution that has attended the opening up of Russia. Where government support insulated many Russian language programs in the US from the realities of the marketplace, there is now much less support for programs that cannot support themselves directly from enrollments. Where teachers and departments could structure their programs in ways that reflected only the historical development of the field, there is now less room for programs that cannot demonstrate direct applicability of their "product" (i.e., the marketable skills of their graduates). Where relatively stable and reasonably high numbers of students (compared to other LCTLs) allowed the field to be rather profligate in its demands on students as they moved from one institution to another, our reduced resources demand that we make better use of our resources—both faculty and student time.

Our new reality has numerous implications for the ways in which we carry on the business of teaching. The various missions that foreign language programs can choose to address was discussed above, so without going into specifics again here, it should be clear that the profession is faced with many changes and challenges that we ignore only at our peril. We face challenges not only in the marketplace that we prepare our students to enter—and we delude ourselves if we fail to see that even traditional liberal arts students face a marketplace—but also in the way in which we deploy our field's resources.

As if the supply-and-demand changes accompanying the political and economic revolution weren't enough for the profession to cope with, there are two concomitant revolutions going on. One of these, the technology revolution, has been very much in evidence for the last decade. Computers and telecommunication have the potential to require us to thoroughly reconceptualize and restructure our notions of teaching and learning. Distance learning, long somewhat at the fringe of our ideas about teaching, has the potential to become a crucial tool for the teaching of all LCTLs. Notions about teaching as performance, and the roles in "learning" and "reinforcement" in the classroom versus at home may be stood on their heads. The remoteness of the Soviet Union may melt as the Internet makes possible all kinds of interactions with Russians, in Russia and elsewhere.

A quieter revolution has been going on in the field that has come to be known as cognitive science. Our knowledge of how the brain functions has increased dramatically in the last several decades. As we come to appreciate how deeply behaviorism has influenced the practice of teaching in our country, and as these deeply held and frequently detrimental beliefs are challenged, our activities as teachers may be reshaped in ways as fundamental as the ones that have been prompted by the first two revolutions described above.

The Russian language teaching profession is thus confronted with three major shifts in our conceptual landscape. Any one of these by itself would be a daunting prospect to confront, but taken together, we are faced with such remarkable shifts that we have little choice but to restructure virtually all that we do. For most teachers, especially at the college level, this restructuring will require that we develop skills in "curricular thinking" that have nothing to do with our professional training. This will not be an easy task, nor will its mastery occur overnight. It will represent a learning task not unlike the one that faces our students when we ask that they learn to master complex cognitive juggling tasks.

What all of this means is that the timing of the national standards movement and of the NFLC's Language Learning Framework projects is ideal. With the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that our profession is being pushed by a confluence of several overwhelming forces. In a Darwinian moment, we see the choice may be to adapt or face extinction.

3

A Framework for Russian-Language Curriculum Design: Principles & Stages

Introduction: A sketch of the framework

The shape of the RLLF was dictated both by principles and practical concerns. These are discussed at length in this chapter, but an overview might be helpful. The practical concerns seemed best addressed by a system that defined *stages in language learning careers*. In order to be useful, these stages—units of measure—need to correspond to year-long increments of study. In strong college programs, a stage can be completed in one year. Our conversations with high school teachers suggest that the first stage might require three years in a typical program, two or four in more unusual settings.

The two most pressing practical needs that the framework seeks to address concern articulation across programs and management of learning. The articulation problem has to do with the need for students to be able to move efficiently from high school to college. The learning management problem requires that learners be prepared to manage their own learning effectively in in-country programs. In the case of Russian, semester-long in-country study is usually encouraged after completing three years of college Russian, hence three stages. Learners who begin their study of Russian in high school should expect to move into first or second year Russian in college, hence the need to design the first two stages to facilitate that transition.

The set of principles on which the RLLF is based have to do with the nature of the optimal language learning program: it is a life-long process that is learner centered, learning sensitive, and goal driven. Furthermore, the RLLF is oriented toward communication, meaning that it views language use as performance within a particular cultural setting. In order to meet these goals, the framework must be: 1) sufficiently uniform to allow for easy learner mobility

among programs, but 2) flexible enough to allow for extremely varied local conditions facing high school and college programs.

The puzzle of the articulation problem led to the hypothesis that one solution lay in carefully defining the first two stages of learning. These stages need to be defined as cardinal points along the acquisition path that are widely enough shared among learners and programs to be useful as junctures for transition from one program to another. The stages can be seen as units of measurement that will provide programs in both high schools and colleges with targets at which to aim the levels of their programs.

A significant difficulty here lies in developmental differences between high school and college students. We believe that we have hit upon an approach that makes good cognitive sense for both high school and college programs and is, simultaneously, sufficiently pragmatic so as to be quite workable. The approach of the RLLF hinges on a shift in orientation between elementary and intermediate stages. The elementary stage—which, for resource reasons, we would like to see handled to an ever greater extent prior to college—focuses on procedural knowledge, “doing” knowledge. This approach allots more time in the curriculum precisely to the type of knowledge which is more difficult to acquire. As students move into the intermediate stage, they would be expected to continue to develop their procedural knowledge and also to develop more explicit structural knowledge and with it, analytic ability.

The increasing orientation to structural knowledge (with function still the organizing principle) matches the maturation process that learners follow through adolescence. Furthermore, it also facilitates addressing the second of our practical needs by making it possible gradually to shift the locus of learning management onto the learner. If we want learners to be able to go to Russia after completing the third stage, they must be prepared not only for a new program, but for learning in an entirely different culture. In order for this to be effective, learners need to have been given the tools to do all of the things necessary to manage their own learning, from setting goals and assessing progress to understanding their own repertoire of optimal learning strategies. To make it possible to implement such a framework, it was necessary to develop a system of measurement of language knowledge in order to describe approximately what it is that learners should know at the completion of the various stages. No single form of measurement exists that captures the various types of knowledge that we believe should characterize these stages. We propose three general domains in which to try to describe the knowledge of language learners: 1) skill levels and functional abilities; 2) lexical goals and topical knowledge; and 3) structural knowledge. These domains will be described in substantial detail below.

The Russian Language Learning Framework, then, is comprised of three stages, each of which is defined with respect to progress within three domains of language knowledge. Schools and colleges are free to examine their resources,

goals, and overall curriculum and to choose to integrate the levels of their curriculum with these stages in the ways that best suit their institution's situation. The orientation of the framework is functional, but over the course of the three stages, there is a gradual increase in attention to analytic knowledge that is consistent with adolescent learners development and which facilitates a parallel shift in learning management. This system of stages is presented in figure 3.1.

Stage	Institution	Years (in strong program)	Instructional orientation	Locus of learning management
Elementary	High School	2	Focus on procedural know- ledge to promote functional abilities	Largely teacher- managed
	College	1		
Intermediate	High School	4	Increasing orientation to structural know- ledge within a func- tional framework	Begin transition to self- managed
	College	2		
Advanced	High School	generally N.A.	Functional focus melded with master- ing of structural knowledge	Focus on transition to self- managed
	College	3		

Figure 3.1. *Stages and orientations for high school and college programs*

By focusing on the locus of learning management, transitions of all types can be made smoother. If students take an early role in managing their learning, then programs will not need to be over-designed. That is, we will be able to acknowledge all along the learning path that students are learning in different ways and probably mastering material in very individual patterns. Presumably, we will therefore not design programs where participation at level X+1 is only possible if some particular discrete component from level X has been mastered. We will build in modules for independent learning and review that will allow students to visit, or revisit, earlier portions of the curriculum.

Six principles

We believe that the framework outlined in figure 3.1. can provide the means to develop efficient programs for language learning careers in Russian.

The principles underpinning this framework follow from one to the next and have very clear implications for their implementation. Local conditions also play a large role in the implementation of any principles. Using local conditions to modulate the principles and their implications we can arrive at institution-specific programs that will share characteristics that make it possible for learners to move from one institution to another as their language learning careers progress.

In this section we will examine these principles and a few of their implications. In subsequent chapters of this document, as we propose goals and suggest ways to implement them, there will be discussion of some typical local conditions and the effect they might have on the implementation of goals.

Principle 1: The acquisition of Russian—like any language, native or foreign—is sufficiently difficult that learners need to view it as a life-long learning process.¹⁹ For learners, this means that they are the only ones who can have a long-range view of their careers, and it is thus their responsibility to assess their progress and the extent to which different institutions and learning strategies meet their needs. Part of the learning process should address this principle and seek to operationalize it at all levels of learner behavior, from daily assignments to college and career choices. As we—teachers and administrators—design programs at our various institutions, this principle implies that we must be aware of the fact that articulation is a critical issue. In order to act responsibly, therefore, as we design our curricula, we must look for ways to allow learners to enter and exit with as little disruption to their language learning careers as possible.

Principle 2: If the learning process is life-long and, of necessity therefore managed by the learner, then our programs must be learner centered. By this it is meant that programs should operate for the benefit and at the convenience of the learner, not teachers and institutions. That is, our approaches to teaching must recognize that learners are characterized by different personalities and learning styles, that the extent of learners' motivation will vary, and that human factors—gender, age, socioeconomic backgrounds, and so on—will play a role in determining how an individual learner will respond to the learning environment. As we plan our lessons, teachers need to be aware not just of what is a comfortable style of teaching, but of what the needs of the *different* individual learners are.

Principle 3: Our focus on the learner further implies that our programs must be learning centered. Just as each learner has certain unique characteristics, so do we all possess certain common cognitive processes. Further, general cognitive processes vary in their generalizability at different stages of intellectual develop-

¹⁹ See Coppedge (DATE?); note also opposition to idea that all curricula should be geared to life-long learners. Especially in the case of random HS learner this is a nonsensical presupposition. Opposition to the extreme form does not, however, undermine the need to develop curricula that facilitate movement into college programs.

ment. We must be aware, for instance, of two major types of knowledge: procedural (the ability to perform = “act”) and declarative (the ability to declare, or explain, knowledge = “fact”).²⁰ These two types of knowledge are acquired in very different fashions and at very different times: the latter becomes functional later in adolescence, while the first is something we are ready to master in different spheres from birth on. Our teaching must take these cognitive and developmental factors into account.

Principle 4: The particular type of proficiency that we choose to facilitate is procedural.²¹ Further, the “act” knowledge that learners must acquire is the ability to perform in a cultural setting. In the case of Russian, our goal is to help learners acquire the ability to behave appropriately in the presence of native speakers of Russian, to move from C1 to C2 (‘C’ = a culture). This principle is a clear reflection of a belief that one of the most important goals of education is to prepare learners to participate in an increasingly international and multicultural world.

Principle 5: A principle of any effective system of planning is that it be goal-driven. The structure of each course within a program should be determined by its place within the curriculum as a whole, which in turn should be established with reference to a particular set of goals, among them the goal of articulation. If we do exercises in class that do not address the established goals, then we are not furthering the progress of learners in their language-learning careers. If our curricula do not facilitate the natural entry and exit of learners, then we are failing to meet our responsibilities.

Principle 6: If we are to achieve the goals of this framework, then assessment and feedback must be sought and utilized by everyone involved in the process and at all levels of the system. Learners must assess and seek feedback on their progress, and teachers and institutions must do the same for their daily lessons, courses and programs as a whole. Teachers are well aware of the role of tests in assessing the work of students, but need to be equally aware that learners use tests to assess what they take to be the *real* goals of the course (in opposition, perhaps, to the goals the teacher has stated).

These principles are very general, but they carry with them sets of implications for each of the participants in the learning process (see figure 2.1.). The participants include: learners, teachers, parents, department chairs, non-specialist administrators (principals, deans...), teacher trainers (T.A. trainers,

²⁰ This is a central distinction in cognitive psychology; see, for example, chapter 8 of Anderson 1985.

²¹ This choice is the one that we believe to be appropriate for the vast majority of Russian language learners in the U.S. It explicitly excludes, then, for example, learners who are interested principally—or only—in the linguistic analysis of Russian. For them, declarative knowledge will be the principal goal.

workshop directors), and members and leaders of professional organizations. Some of the clear implications for learners and teachers have already been mentioned in the preceding discussion of the principles, but there are others that are of great importance. The chairs of graduate programs in Russian/Slavic language and literature departments and T.A. trainers must be aware of the fact that virtually *every one* of their graduate students who goes on to college teaching will be, at some point, a language teacher. Our professional organizations need to take an active role in serving as links among different types of programs.

To accept these principles is to accept the values that underlie them. Russianists—linguists and literature and area-study specialists alike—must all come to accept that language teaching constitutes a significant portion of their professional responsibility.²²

Naturally, all of the ideals expressed in these principles and their implications are subject to local conditions, real-world constraints. Good textbooks may or may not be available. Learning may have to take place in classes with thirty-five students, or with third and fourth year classes meeting simultaneously (so-called "stacked classes"). The principal or dean may be supportive, ignorant about, or hostile to Russian.

As programs are developed following the stated principles, it is vital to assess and compensate continuously. This "implementation algorithm" is, in fact, a planning mechanism. We must, first of all, assess the significance of the constraints imposed by all of the special local conditions that face any program. For example, stacked classes may be shown to be significantly less effective learning environments than single-level classes. In this case, the preferred compensatory response would be for an administrator to divide the section. If that does not occur, then the teacher and administrator should work to develop the best possible learning environment and support should be found to implement these strategies (in this case, perhaps, a Montessori-style approach might work in the classroom, which, in turn, might require some additional training for the teacher). Programs should regularly evaluate their performance both as a program and at the level of day-to-day instruction. Assessment may or may not lead to ideas for changes that are feasible, but the process must be an ongoing one.

²² Anecdotal evidence that language teaching is not a valued activity in graduate programs (except as a means of supporting graduate students) can be seen in the attendance at the *Vision 2020* portion of the 1991 AATSEEL meeting in San Francisco. While we have no official records of attendance, we are aware of only two or three people in the audience who were tenured faculty members at major East-coast, mid-West or West-coast graduate programs in Slavic languages and literatures.

For this model to be effective, it must be followed by everyone involved in the process of teaching and learning Russian, from the highest planning levels of our profession to the daily work of learners. As teachers, administrators and members of professional organizations, much of the responsibility for making this possible lies with us.

From principles to stages: Why we need a language learning framework for Russian

Between the generality of the six principles and the specificity of the local conditions that were discussed in the preceding sections lies the domain that is the concern of this document, what we might call the national situation. That is, there are issues of national need and of language learning careers that extend far beyond the local level and require that the Russian language teaching profession be involved in setting up a framework that is useful at the national level. This framework, thus, needs to address concerns that are much too broad for individual programs and, in the United States, at least, not in the purview of the government.

The two critical issues actually both fall under the heading of articulation, and require a solution at the national professional level precisely because they involve movement between programs. The first such moment is the step from high school to college, and it is this that we have referred to as the “articulation problem”. The second moment comes when students participate in in-country programs. This, too, has to do with articulation, but most salient issue is learning management because it is in such programs that learners must have the tools to manage their own learning, typically to a greater degree than they have had to do before in their lives.

As we address these issues below, it will be clear that they are, in fact, outgrowths of three of the principles discussed above. The issue of articulation arises because we are dealing with language learning careers (principle 1). Since the learning of Russian (like other less commonly taught languages) necessarily takes place across at least two programs, our profession is obliged to recognize that we need to design programs that promote such progress. The first of the boundaries that is crossed (high school to college) is one that is complicated by significant developmental changes in the learners. This means that if we are to facilitate movement across this boundary, we must be aware of what it means to be learning centered (principle 3). Finally, the belief that a general goal of our profession—whether in linguistics or literature—has to involve language use: performing in a cultural setting (principle 4). This functional orientation is crucial to the elaboration of the staged framework that we are proposing.

As mentioned above, we take the definition of stages to be a critical step in coming to grips with the articulation problem. If we take the two-for-one rule as

a beginning point, we need to define two stages for some idealized high school program whose students will feed into equally idealized college programs. These ideals may turn out to be inaccurate, but this is the approach that we believe must be followed and subsequently refined by the profession to minimize the articulation problem. **Important:** this assumption does not mean that all high school programs must complete the intermediate stage in order to be judged successful. Each program will examine its setting ("local conditions," in the terms of the six principles), and its designers will determine how to integrate their program into the stages. We have chosen the two-for-one rule because this is generally the most aggressive that high schools can be in their goal setting.

Assuming that the framework outlined at the beginning of this chapter is appropriate, we need to open a national discussion about the specifics of stages. We need to define these stages in a way that acknowledges the fact that the elementary stage will be covered more and more frequently at the high school level. The intermediate stage should be viewed as transitional to college.

Therefore, the elementary stage (years one and two in our exemplary high school)—for the cognitive and practical reasons discussed above—should emphasize procedural knowledge, somewhat “at the expense of” factual knowledge. At the intermediate stage (years three and four in this high school), however, it becomes both necessary and more possible to rectify this slight bias. The articulation goal that follows from the above assumptions is that students who have completed four years of high school Russian (or perhaps three years and a summer of language immersion) will be able to place into third-year college Russian.

Further, it is a proposal—to be debated—of this document that a general, national goal be that by the conclusion of the intermediate stage, whether in high school or college, the major structural/declarative knowledge of Russian grammar be in place (see below in the definition of stages for a discussion of what this knowledge is taken to be and what is meant by "in place").

There are two important consequences of this framework for college programs. First, colleges and universities need to be encouraged to be flexible in their programs and placement decisions. We would like to argue for the need to create compensatory mechanisms in college programs to facilitate higher placements of incoming students, rather than routinely requiring such students to begin from the beginning²³.

²³ Imagine, for example, a college program which utilizes the one-stem system for verbs in its first year course. Students who enter this program with a level of proficiency which supports placement in second year should not be sent into a first year course simply to learn the one-stem system.

The second implication in the discussion above is that college programs would also benefit from the framework described here. Although college students are generally more mature and are better able to handle the abstractions of declarative knowledge, it is nevertheless still the case that the discussion of procedural knowledge applies to them in much the same way. Thus the proposal here is not simply that colleges continue (if this has been their approach) to focus on the deductive presentation of declarative knowledge and then wave incoming high school students into a higher level than they might have before. Rather, we believe that most college learners also learn more effectively in the long run if their program begins with an elementary course that has a greater emphasis on procedural knowledge.

Instructional orientation. This aspect of the RLLF derives its support from principle 3: programs must be learning centered. This may seem as though it ought to be so obvious as to be trivial. As we set about defining stages, however, we soon realized that the articulation problem existed for very clear developmental reasons. That is, while it might appear that high school and college programs do, independently meet the requirements of this principle, the boundaries create substantial hurdles for students attempting to negotiate the transition. Students fall through the articulation crack not simply for *what* they *don't* know, but also for *how* they know what they *do* know. High school programs typically spend a great deal of time, relative to college programs, working on functional skills. College programs, on the other hand, typically spend a great deal of time, relative to high school programs, on grammar. A further challenge, then, was to address the differences in approaches in order to allow students to move between programs effectively.

The solution at which we arrived derives from the emphasis in the principles of the language learning framework (LLF) of section 1 on proficiency (understood in the broad sense) and functional ability rather than on factual knowledge. The principal cognitive reason for the difference in high school and college programs just mentioned stems from the general level of cognitive maturity of high school students. At this age²⁴ there is a general cognitive preference for *doing* rather than *analyzing*; in Piagetian terms, high school students are often still in the concrete operational stage and not yet in the formal operational stage of development.²⁵

It turns out that there are also strong cognitive reasons for preferring to focus heavily on procedural knowledge even in the first years of college Russian:

²⁴ Generalizations about high school students are particularly difficult. Developmental stages are, at best, only rough approximations, and the middle teens are especially fluid times.

²⁵ See, for example: "The Mental Development of the Child" in Piaget 1968.

procedural knowledge, the ability to perform a skill and not merely to recite forms or translate vocabulary items, takes a great deal longer to develop.

Whereas declarative knowledge or factual information may be acquired quickly, procedural knowledge such as language acquisition is acquired gradually and only with extensive opportunities for practice. (O'Malley & Chamot 1990)

Procedural knowledge initially requires controlled processing (that is, we have to pay attention to performing a task we have not mastered) and the development of automaticity takes longer the more complicated the task. As the above quote suggests, learning to use a second language is one of the most complicated tasks that learners can tackle, and thus the time required to reach the stage of automatic processing for a range of functional skills across a range of topics is extremely long.

A corollary of this fact about the acquisition of procedural knowledge is that if we can choose the area in which a student will be deficient, functional abilities or structural knowledge, we should choose the latter. This is because the time it will take to remedy the deficiency will be much greater if the teacher must develop procedural knowledge rather than declarative. That is not to say that either domain should be ignored, but simply that it is much more expensive to ignore procedural knowledge.

Perhaps the most convincing reason for beginning early with skills that are functional derives from this cognitive phenomenon. The logic is this: if it takes a great deal of time to develop procedural knowledge, why would one spend a substantial amount of time developing mastery, or automatic processing, of material in a format that is not functional? Obviously it makes no sense to spend precious classroom contact hours on activities that do not feed directly into skills that are both time consuming to acquire and critical to proficiency.

A further reason for focusing on “act” rather than “fact” is that this type of knowledge is less textbook-specific. The goal of textbooks has traditionally been to organize the factual knowledge of students, and the differences among textbooks are most keenly felt in the choice of vocabulary and depth of training in particular areas of topical knowledge and functional abilities.

Over the course of the first two stages, then, we are advocating a gradual increase in the extent of structural knowledge that we build into our programs. As noted above, we are proposing as a goal for the end of the intermediate stage that learners have been exposed to and have achieved a certain level of competence in the manipulation of the grammatical structures of Russian. The accuracy of knowledge for even the best student will, of course, vary tremendously according to the nature of the task they are performing. We have found the ACTFL proficiency guidelines to be the best way to indicate acceptable ranges of accuracy at particular stages. However, as will be described in more

detail below, these guidelines do not help much in addressing the kinds of recognition knowledge that necessarily precede the strong type of recall that counts as accuracy in proficiency testing.

This developmental approach to instruction (both as it applies in particular ways to developing maturity in our principal populations of learners and to the ways in which learners acquire skills) leads to an advanced stage at which learners have acquired substantial functional skills and are prepared, both in their level of maturity and in the strength of their knowledge base, to move on to refining their accuracy and to improving their ability to analyze their own language use. They will be able to do this most effectively if they possess the analytic tools that make it possible to understand the structures they are seeking to manipulate effectively. We are recommending, therefore, that a significant goal of the advanced stage be that students have sufficient control of analytic vocabulary to allow them to diagnose their own mistakes, describe them, and know how to correct them.

Management of learning. Our recommendations concerning the shifting locus of learning management across the stages follow directly from principles 1 and 2. If we are to allow for the possibility that the learning of Russian will be a life-long endeavor for some of the students who begin with us each year, we must not ask that they undertake this task in programs that do not facilitate long-term learning.²⁶ A necessary consequence of this fact is that, since the learners themselves are the only constants in this long-term project, they must be provided with the skills to manage the process. Clearly this need is especially acute at moments of transition, but the training cannot be put off until immediately before the transition is attempted. As with functional skills, the ability and the willingness to manage one's own learning can be acquired effectively only over time.

Learning a language is itself a very complex process, and the management of this process is a task encompassing a very large domain. Language teachers take for granted when we habitually speak of four modes of language use: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. In traditional approaches, each of these modes is cross-cut by lexical and grammatical issues. At different moments, phonology, semantics(including pragmatics) pose their own difficulties. As we come at the question from a functional perspective,

²⁶ A common reaction to this Framework has been that we should not assume the principle of life-long learning since, in fact, the vast majority of students of any foreign language, do not continue their study beyond one or two years. This is a misreading of the intent of these principles. Life-long study is not to be required, it is to be facilitated. Our programs should work for, not against, the learners who do choose to go on for extended study. The fact that most students do not choose to do so needs to be recognized as well; for instance, in making sure that discussions are integrated into courses from the start, and not left until the third or fourth years.

functions and proficiency enter the picture as well. Furthermore, there is also the range of questions from day-to-day learning management, covering such topics as what we might call "study skills," to the more long-range issues concerning the learner's overall path and goals. This bewildering weave of analysis cannot be transmitted quickly, yet at the same time, we have argued throughout this document that things analytic should take a back seat to function.

A reasonable question at this point might be: *If there is too much to do, how do we decide what to give up?* The answer to this seeming dilemma falls out from the developmental cognitive approach that we are advocating. In this case, the answer is to train learners to do the part of the task on their own that is most appropriate. For all of the reasons we have been discussing, the functional approach early on in the learning process makes sense for adolescent and late adolescent learners. As they reach the stage where it is appropriate for them to be studying more independently, we gradually hand off more of the most discrete learning tasks.

By the time students reach the advanced stage, they are typically at least in their late teens. We are claiming that this is a time when their intellectual development has, in theory at least, reached a level that allows them to operate much more independently. This is also the time in the language acquisition process when in-country study is most useful. Therefore, this is also the point at learners are most in need of largely taking over the management of the learning process. This is not to say that they can manage the particulars of the process, but they certainly can and need to be aware of their general needs and how to go about getting them met.

Measuring language knowledge. To bridge the articulation gap, it was necessary first to develop a *system to measure language knowledge* in order to be able to describe what it is that learners should know at given points in their careers. None of the existing measurement tools was adequate. The ACTFL proficiency guidelines measure only what a speaker is actually able to perform, and does not measure structural knowledge in any systematic fashion. Traditional written tests, on the other hand, are notoriously inadequate to the task of telling what functional tasks students can actually perform. Thus, the assessment system for describing a student's knowledge of Russian that is presented below was designed to measure along more than one axis of this complex domain, just as the battery of medical tests that accompany a physical exam are designed to provide a snapshot of the physical status of one's body. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, this measurement system looks at: 1) skill levels and functional abilities; 2) lexical goals and topical knowledge; and 3) structural knowledge.

The next step in developing these guidelines required us to define *units of measure* that would provide programs in both high schools and colleges a target at which to aim each level of their programs. The principle difficulty here lies in

developmental differences between high school and college students. The primary goal of this framework was always to develop a pragmatic approach to managing Russian language learning careers, but in the end, believe that we have hit upon an approach that simultaneously makes good cognitive sense for both high school and college programs.

The intent of this framework being pragmatic, we began with the belief that a semester of in-country study was an ideal "capstone" experience for the study of a foreign language in a general setting. Following this experience, course work will tend to be for special purposes. In recognition of the fact that semester-length in-country programs in Russian typically require three years of study, we took as a long-range goal the definition of **three stages**—which we call elementary, intermediate, and advanced—in the study of Russian leading up to a semester of in-country study.²⁷ By defining the content of the first two of these stages we felt that we would be able to facilitate the process of articulation in the vast majority of cases.

In addressing the articulation problem, we started with the general rule of thumb that two years of high school experience translates into one year of college experience as an example of how articulation has traditionally been practiced. This rule reflects both a great deal of practical experience with college placement and general cognitive maturational differences in high school and college students. Furthermore, experience with the ETS Comprehensive Russian Proficiency Test confirms this correspondence. In listening proficiency, after two years of high school Russian 64% typically reach at least the Novice-High level, and after one year of college Russian 69% reach this level. In reading proficiency, after two years of high school Russian 54% typically reach at least the Novice-High level, and after one year of college Russian 64% reach this level.²⁸

As we have presented this proposal in a variety of forums over the last several years, this two-to-one correspondence has caused more misunderstanding than perhaps any other topic in the framework. It is worth pausing to explain our focus on this correlation in the development of this approach to articulation. First, it is important to note that we are not asserting that all high school programs must adopt this goal. Rather, we chose it because it is at this point that the curriculum design challenge is relatively acute. If, for whatever reasons, the designers of a particular high school program decide that their four-year program will aim to place its students into the intermediate level (second-year) in college, then the issues that this framework addresses are

²⁷ Our use of the term "stage" creates the possibility of confusion with the same term in the report *Articulation and Achievement*. Unfortunately, there is a limited number of words from which to choose; ironically, we rejected the use of the term "level" precisely to avoid confusion with the terminology of the proficiency guidelines.

²⁸ Statistics cited by ETS in the 1990-1991 version of the teachers' test booklet for the Russian proficiency test.

much less problematic. There are many fewer possible gaps and conflicts that will arise when college freshmen are placed into intermediate Russian than into advanced. The high school program that we have been discussing in this paragraph would simply take as its four year goal completion of the elementary stage.

The two-for-one rule presented a starting point, an articulation tactic rather than a goal (although we believe that it is achievable given appropriate circumstances). We sought to develop a characterization of what a typical college student knows after each of the first two years in a challenging Russian program. Our reasoning was that this would provide useful information with which high school programs could develop rational targets. In a maximally efficient system, high school teachers would know what goes on in each year of college programs and could aim their courses to mesh with these units in one-year increments. Whether a particular high school program reaches these targets in two, three, or even four years is irrelevant to the general goal that articulation be made smoother. Thus, the most important task at the level of specific goals is to specify the elementary and intermediate stages in such a way that they correspond to large numbers of college programs. If we can define such stages, then high schools can set their program goals accordingly, and colleges can define programs that will be accessible to students from a broad range of other programs.

In order to define each of the stages, we suggest below that this be done by specifying goals in three domains of knowledge: skill levels and functional abilities, lexical/topical knowledge, structural knowledge. In principle, this ought to be redundant; one could argue that the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, if they were properly calibrated for Russian, would serve precisely the purpose we are addressing. There are, in fact, two problems with relying on proficiency levels. One problem is that, while very useful for a broad range of purposes, they are simply too gross to make the necessary distinctions at the program stages we are seeking to define.

The second problem is, as noted above, the proficiency guidelines measure only procedural knowledge. While that fact coincides with the principles of the LLF, it fails to account for an important aspect of acquisition that is extremely relevant to the articulation problem. The path to acquiring procedural knowledge can be quite long and does not consist solely of subsets of procedural knowledge. Rather, an important part of the process—especially as mastery of a second language increases for a post-pubertal learner—concerns the integration of declarative knowledge (i.e., grammatical structure) into procedural abilities. Thus, for learners to move effectively from one program to another, it is also necessary for us to have a measure of their declarative knowledge. Even though the emphasis at the elementary stage might be on procedural knowledge and functional abilities, we cannot ignore the status of their declarative knowledge.

This problem can be restated in sharper terms by noting that proficiency measurements, by definition based on performance, can only be said to measure knowledge if one is a behaviorist. That is, such assessment approaches fail to take into account the very real learning that goes on before performance is possible. In the end, of course, we are primarily interested in performance, but in a system of measurement that is as gross as the system of stages we propose it is important not to make the mistake of assuming that the path to a particular level of performance can only be defined by naming subsets of lower-level performances. The underlying cognitive structures that will, at some point, produce the performances that teachers are interested in promoting need to be developed in a wide variety of ways, and our assessment processes must try to tease out the status of these less tangible forms of knowledge.

Furthermore, even declarative knowledge is not fully acquired in discrete chunks. Psychologists refer, for example, to the difference between recognition and recall.²⁹ In defining stages it was useful to be able to distinguish among: no knowledge of, e.g., a particular case form, the ability to recognize the form, and the ability to produce the form in isolation—none of which represents true functional ability.

In accord with both principles and practicality, what we have attempted to do, therefore, is to calculate goals that we feel could be reached in challenging college programs in one-year increments. Readers should bear in mind two critical questions as they continue: 1) Do these goals for these stages make sense as wholes, both within each stage and across stages? 2) Where does my program fit in this metric? We envision that question 1 will be answered democratically. We can set whatever goals the profession deems appropriate. Question 2 will be answered statistically. If the majority—or at least some large plurality—of programs do not fit or, more importantly, do not want to fit relatively neatly into the stages as they are defined, then the articulation problem will remain, because no one will know what to aim for.

Following are the three general domains in which we propose to try to describe the knowledge of language learners.³⁰

²⁹ Find a reference for RECOGNITION/RECALL.

³⁰ For readers who wish to compare the three domains of the stages delineated in this document with the five "continuum categories" delineated in *Articulation and Achievement*, the following brief comments might be of interest. In essence, the first four continuum categories in *Articulation and Achievement* (function, context, text type, accuracy) are addressed within the first domain of this framework (skill levels and functional abilities). The fifth category (content) corresponds to our second domain (lexical goals and topical knowledge). This framework introduces the domain of structural knowledge as a way to try to assess declarative knowledge as a foundation,—combining notions of declarative, passive, and recognition knowledge—for further proficiency and functional development.

- SKILL LEVELS AND FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES: concerned with procedural knowledge associated with proficiency levels and particular functions. Skill levels are expressed in terms specified by ACTFL proficiency guidelines. In principle, those guidelines do not specify particular functions, so the list of functional abilities here is intended to provide some degree of uniformity at each stage across programs. The list of functions is expressed to the extent possible in topic-neutral terms.
- LEXICAL GOALS AND TOPICAL KNOWLEDGE: refers to the learner's lexicon and groupings within it. Lexical goals are expressed in terms of lexical minimums; specifically, the approximate numbers of items that learners should know both for production and reception. It is an important step that learners be conscious of their ability to address particular topics, and not simply of the words they know.
- STRUCTURAL KNOWLEDGE: covers the grammatical (morphological and syntactic) and associated semantic information that learners should be working on. In contrast to the first domain, this knowledge is primarily declarative. Measurement of acquisition in this domain is therefore very different than in the first, and is often framed in terms of recognition and recall.

These three domains represent three different types of knowledge, but we do not propose that these be addressed in any Russian language program as discrete domains. Rather, we are urging that, e.g., structural knowledge be developed within a function-based approach.

It is crucial to keep in mind that the goals in each of these domains are to be interpreted in domain-specific ways. That is, knowledge in the structural domain should be measured differently than are proficiency levels. Furthermore, it will be necessary to recycle much of the material that occurs at the elementary stage at subsequent stages. The ability to perform a particular function at the elementary level needs to be broadened at the intermediate stage. Part of the expectation problem, mentioned in the introduction to this document, has to do with teachers and learners being aware of what is possible and appropriate knowledge at each level of proficiency, at each stage of a language learning career.

In summary, we are proposing that the early phases of Russian language programs in American high schools and colleges be organized internally according to the stages defined below. The orientation of these stages is intended to facilitate articulation while at the same time providing an optimal base for continued learning. The stages are defined over three knowledge domains, which vary according to the type of knowledge (declarative vs. procedural) they embody.

Three stages: The path to in-country study

Whether in high school or college, the beginners in our programs are typically relatively young learners. The first stage, therefore, is designed to be more teacher-directed than will be later stages. At this point in their language learning career, the majority of students are still in need of a great deal of assistance with the process of language learning in general, with Russian-specific problems, and in some cases with overall study skills. The design of the elementary stage is also driven by the need to get as early a start as possible on the development of procedural knowledge, and in what should be a non-controversial step, we are urging that the procedural knowledge that we foster be based in appropriately sequenced functional abilities.

From this beginning point, language programs should strive to develop in learners an increasing ability to function independently. We take as the target of this sequence of course work, whether in one program or several, the ability to participate effectively in an in-country study program, where much of the learning that needs to take place relies on the student's abilities to manage the acquisition process largely independently.

The previous section of this chapter explains the assumptions underlying the RLLF with respect to the issues of instructional orientation, locus of learning management, and the domains of knowledge of the stages. This section focuses on the elaboration of the content of these stages. In this document, the elementary and intermediate stages are fleshed out the most fully as an example of ways in which the framework might be applied to help the profession deal with the articulation problem faced by students moving from high school to college programs. Those details can be found in chapter 4.

In this section, the concern is the generic definition of the stages. When these generic definitions have been hammered out by the profession, it will then be appropriate to move on to careful definition of the stages across the various domains. A preliminary presentation summarizing the content of the stages within each of the three domains is contained in figure 3.2.

Domain → ↓ Stage	Skill levels & Functional abilities	Lexical goals & Topical knowledge	Structural knowledge
ELEMENTARY (Focus on doing)	Novice-High proficiency; basic functions	Focus on concrete topics about self	Exposure to all major structures
INTERMEDIATE (Deepen analysis, still with functional approach)	Int.-Low to Int.-Mid proficiency; additional functions & alternative ways to fulfill elementary functions	Increase repertoire to talk about others & more abstract topics	Recall most and recognize all major structures
ADVANCED (Goal: self-guided functional ability & analysis)	Intermediate-High proficiency; all common functions & awareness of repertoire	Repertoire of factual & abstract topics and awareness of same	Readily able to analyze and learn new structures, and to assess own learning

Figure 3.2. *Specification of knowledge domains
in three stages*

Readers should recall that these stages and their definitions are presented as a proposal to the profession. The goal is to delineate a path that reflects the learning processes of a sufficiently wide range of learners in a sufficiently wide range of Russian programs in such a way that learners can move from one program to another and expect to have their acquisition path mesh reasonably well the one followed by both their old and new programs.

Elementary stage.

Since at the elementary stage students function primarily at the skill level³¹ called “Novice” in the terms of ACTFL proficiency guidelines, this means that they deal most often in unanalyzed chunks of material. Words and phrases are “recycled”, that is, repeated from memory rather than created in and tailored for a particular context. Although a learner might be able to say *Vtyz piden Gfif*, he may well have no idea of the syntactic structure of this phrase. Clearly it makes sense for the chunks being learned to be functionally useful ones.

³¹ Although the terminology is tedious, we try to use *stage* when referring to gradations with language programs, and *level* when referring to degrees of proficiency as defined by the ACTFL.

As learners begin to move gradually into the intermediate level of proficiency (still at the elementary stage), sentence-length utterances become more common, and the range of topics extends into survival skills. The expectation described in the goals for this stage (in the range of Novice-High) of a learner's career is only that he be beginning to function at this level of proficiency. This move toward sentence-level processing means that language ability has become more generative, although at Intermediate-Low there is no expectation of competence, merely the beginning of the sentence formation abilities.

Topics at this stage are typically about self, but in the process of learning one or two examples of nouns, adjectives, and verbs, learners are beginning to acquire the structural framework that will allow for more rapid learning of similar types of words and structures as they move along. Similarly, topics will be nearly universally concrete in nature. As they acquire, for example, prepositions and cases that describe location, they are becoming familiar with types of structures that will later allow them to express more abstract ideas.

Structural knowledge is largely inchoate, meaning that, at best, much of it will be at the level of recognition, not recall. Especially at first in a functional approach, much of the material will be essentially unparsable for beginning learners. It is important to note, however, that this framework does propose a strong stand that the elementary stage include *exposure to all major structures*. By this we mean, for example, all six cases, singular and plural, with nouns, adjectives, and pronouns; and for verbs, the categories of tense, aspect, and mood, and conjugation of all major verb types (in whatever system of analysis is used). A full description can be found in chapter 4.

This proposal is consistent with our belief that we will not be able to facilitate smooth articulation if we specify only levels of performance. At any given point in the language learning continuum, to use a phrase from the study *Articulation and Achievement*, there is too much knowledge in a state of partial formation to leave unspecified how this significant portion of the process should be managed. The proposal that the elementary stage be characterized by completion of the process of exposure to these major structures stems from the belief that the acquisition process is too complex to leave this structural knowledge to chance.

Intermediate stage.

Much of a student's tenure at the intermediate stage should occur at intermediate level of proficiency. A general goal, therefore, is to help the student move from processing strictly at the level of words and unanalyzed chunks to the sentence level, with its greater generative capacity.

The goals for the intermediate stage are, as with the elementary stage, specified across three domains. A significant task for this stage involves recycling—of topics, functions—in order that some of the idiosyncrasies that are so characteristic of the elementary stage be reduced. In general, much of the recycling has to do with the transition from talking about self to talking about others. This will mean that topical vocabulary will be richer as the students learn a wider range of words within a topic.

Finally, as noted above, we are proposing that a hallmark of the intermediate stage be that all of the major structural knowledge be available on a recall basis. This can perhaps best be specified by relating accuracy to the intermediate level of proficiency. What this means is that we cannot hope for 100% accurate recall, but at the intermediate level it is developmentally appropriate for learners to be aware that accuracy is important and to be striving to make constant improvement. Assessment processes can also be used to help make students aware that different contexts call for different degrees of attention to accuracy.

Advanced stage.

The overarching concern at this stage is independence of learning. If we begin with this issue, many of the other concerns fall into place relatively neatly. At the Intermediate-High level of proficiency in speaking, the expectation is to "sustain a general conversation on factual topics."³² We leave it to our successors to define "common functions," although we believe that there is a "common sense" in the profession as to what these are. Furthermore, we urge that no such list ever be taken too seriously. We may decide that knowing how to send a fax is a common function, but the inability to do so should hardly be a criterion for requiring a learner to return to the intermediate level. It is an important characteristic of the advanced stage is that much of what lies ahead for the learner is, to some degree, fragmentary, and thus much more amenable to independent learning than is true at the elementary stage.

As suggested by the proficiency description of the Intermediate-High level, the principal venue for comfortable speaking will be factual topics. Always implied by a proficiency rating, however, is the demonstration of some ability at the next level of proficiency. In this case, we see that some comfort at the advanced level of proficiency means the beginning of ability to function in a wider range of settings, and hence over a wider range of topics.

For a variety of reasons content-based instruction is especially valuable at this stage. Learners have acquired enough structural and lexical knowledge that they find authentic texts less daunting. Furthermore, as learners progress there

³² ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Russian

is more need to modularize their learning. That is, as they move to learn about different topics and settings in more depth, it is almost inevitable that they achieve the levels of mastery that are a natural consequence of content-based learning.

The criterion of independent functioning is again useful in attempting to define the domain of structural knowledge at the advanced stage. A significant part of independent learning derives from analytic abilities. At this stage, therefore, it is vital that learners have acquired all of the major structures and that they be able to monitor their own production (at least under non-stressful conditions!). Learners whose acquisition path has largely ignored this domain can be expected to find that they do not have the tools to improve their command of the language without direct intervention. That is, they will be unable to profit fully in an in-country setting outside the classroom.

An aside: In-country study

By defining in detail the advanced stage within such a framework, the profession will simultaneously be taking the next step in the process of developing programs that allow students to move from one program to another. In this case, that movement will be from whatever stateside institution or institutions have launched learners on their Russian language learning career to the host institution of their in-country study program.

In order to produce such a definition, it will be necessary to have clearly in mind what the general characteristics are of such in-country programs. The next step will be to come to a consensus as to how best to prepare learners to move into an environment that requires cultural and learning-style adaptations far beyond what most students have experienced. The more firmly we as teachers keep these issues in mind, the more likely we will be to do effective job of preparing our students for this monumentally challenging and rewarding transition.

A further benefit of this endeavor can be that the profession will be better equipped to talk with hosting institutions in Russia about what the needs and expectations are of and for the students who come to them from American institutions. The clearer we are about these needs and expectations as a profession, and the more uniformly (and uniformly well, we hope) we prepare our students for in-country study programs, the more effective the hosting institutions can be in designing and implementing programs that target our learners.

4

An Application of the Framework: A Common Curriculum to Facilitate Articulation

The articulation problem

The discussion of articulation—the fitting together of programs across levels—always needs to consider the question of how different programs parcel out knowledge and abilities. At the high school-university boundary, we must acknowledge also that we are dealing with adolescent learners, which requires that we also take into account the evolving intellectual development of these students. That is, we must consider not only how to segment the acquisition process, but we must do so in a way that conforms to our learners' development.

It has long been a common complaint among high school Russian teachers that their students' transition from high school to college Russian programs in the US is fraught with difficulties for all parties involved. This document proposes the establishment of uniform national system of measurement, focusing initially on the early stages of language learning careers, in order to help overcome the articulation problem among Russian programs. It is our intent that these goals be achievable in both high school and college programs in order that transitions be made more smoothly. We assume that a uniform set of goals will improve the likelihood that students can move into college programs with less difficulty than seems to occur with great regularity in the current situation. We frame these goals in terms of a common curriculum: a portion of the overall curriculum of any particular program that would be shared across institutions.

The development of the goal statements in this document has been guided by a set of principles within a language learning framework (LLF) developed by the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught

Languages³³. While our initial goal was to find a way to overcome the articulation problem, the adoption of the LLF has resulted in a document which has, we believe, wider applicability. We believe, therefore, that this document offers a useful curriculum planning guide for any program concerned with the early stages of a language learning career in Russian, whether or not articulation with other programs is a goal.

The particulars of the goals that we suggest have been discussed at some length with both high school and college teachers of Russian, but are still to be viewed as thoughtful suggestions. Readers of this document should keep in mind as they proceed that the framework and the fact of national guidelines are what we aim to argue for most forcefully as the starting point for further discussions. That any or all of the particular goals should seem objectionable is of secondary importance to us, and, in fact, to be expected. As is the case with any attempt at educational change, we do not expect that all of the particulars are or ever will be entirely accurate or appropriate. In the first place, we have tried to define a range of goals acceptable and feasible for both high school and college programs at the present moment. It is an empirical question as to whether or not we have succeeded. In the second place, we hope—indeed it is an important working hypothesis—that the adoption of these guidelines will soon render obsolete the particulars described here.

In order to promote maximally efficient use of the time spent by learners in formal learning environments, it is imperative that transitions from one institution to another be made as seamless as possible. This follows from the principle of life-long learning. A national goal, then, ought to be to establish a framework that allows students to move efficiently from high school to college Russian programs, for example. The productivity of our language training system will be greatly enhanced if substantial work done in high school is regularly acknowledged by placement above the introductory stage in college.

It is not just learners who stand to benefit from improved articulation. In principle, college programs will also benefit in two ways. First, we would expect that more students who enter college with a high school Russian background would continue with Russian if they were treated in ways that indicated appreciation for their prior work. Second, if more students enter the pipeline at a more advanced level and then stay in the system, colleges would benefit from the increased enrollments at upper levels and by the possibility of developing programs beyond the current limits. As more students reach advanced stages in college programs, small institutions should find that they are able to offer advanced courses more often, and large institutions should find increased demand for a wider variety of advanced courses.³⁴

³³ HOW TO FOOTNOTE THIS??

³⁴ Like all other statements of what might happen in principle, this one is subject to the

The initial motivation and principal rationale for this proposal is, thus, the need to address the articulation problem. However, a substantial corollary benefit to be derived from the adoption of the approach to program development described in this document would be that many programs would have a coherent definition for the first time. Only a very small percentage of the college level Russian teachers in this country have any training in program design of any kind. Thus, most programs are developed principally on the basis of one or two teachers own learning experience. The principled examination and redesign of any of these programs would, therefore, improve the current situation, whether or not the articulation problem is actually "solved."

The common curriculum: At the intersection of different programs

In the following section of this document are proposed goals described in a variety of domains of knowledge and abilities that seem reasonable, both in the sense that they are achievable and that they correspond in many ways to what is typical of college programs. The goals represent our attempt to find a way to describe the knowledge that might be acquired by learners across relevant domains. The sets of goals intersect in ways that sometimes result in difficulties in interpretation. Unfortunately, the very nature of the knowledge we have attempted to describe makes these intersections unavoidable.

These goals are not to be interpreted as minimal goals for each student to achieve in order to be placed into any second-year college Russian. These are, instead, a general set of cumulative goals, intended as guidelines for curriculum development both in high schools and colleges. Programs that adopt them will be able to tell their students that, for example, they have completed the elementary stage of Russian, and that in their new institution they should be able to move into the intermediate stage, whatever year in the new program that may correspond to.

The development of these goals has been guided by the intent to make them implementable irrespective of the choice of textbooks. It is assumed that within the great variety of types of textbooks there is a core of common grammatical knowledge, and that attention to functional skills is under the control of the teacher who can use the textbook as background in a variety of ways. This puts a great deal of responsibility on the teacher to follow the principle that language

local condition (real or feared) that such advanced courses will never materialize (due, e.g., to lack of administrative support) and that these students will simply be lost to college programs earlier in their careers. One hope may be that technology will provide a means for students in small programs to continue at higher levels through more independent work. This possibility suggests yet another reason for the overriding goal of the advanced level be for students to acquire largely to manage their language learning independently.

instruction needs to be goal-driven and not textbook-driven. It is important that these goals inform not only the program, but also the each day's lesson plan.

There has always been a strong demand from students to be prepared in precisely this type of knowledge. We are accustomed to hearing from our students that one of their primary reasons for learning Russian was to spend time in Moscow, Leningrad/St. Petersburg, or even Siberia. Thus, for both practical and theoretical reasons there is strong motivation for focusing heavily on functional abilities. Given the cognitive maturity of ninth and tenth graders, there is particularly good reason in the earliest courses.

A note on placement

We noted above the principled reason for colleges to be flexible in making placement decisions. Having outlined the notion of stages above, a further, important, word on interpretation of these stages is in order. It is our intent that the goals for the stages *not* be taken to be minimal ones. We have chosen to specify the goals as a range in order to make the guidelines as useful as possible as a curriculum development tool. Were we to specify only the minimal goals for a given stage, there would be no information about what material might be covered in a program if all of the minimal goals were achieved a month before the end of the school year. In the current format, we leave some flexibility to individual programs, and at the same time, provide direction where it might be useful. Thus, by providing a range, we hope to suggest ways that articulation can be further facilitated.

A crucial consequence of this approach is, therefore, that placement decisions should not be made on the basis of a small number of deficiencies for a given stage. Placement decisions, even if based on the definitions of stages given below, should include: testing (directed to these guidelines), a personal interview, and a letter from the student's previous teacher. Facts about the individual's history should be interpreted in light of all of this information in order to arrive a placement that best suits the needs of the learner without making impossible demands on the program.

Finally, the obvious point needs to be made that Russian never has had and may well never have sufficient enrollments that placement in college can pretend to be a fine-grained affair. The truth is that few if any college programs can afford to run off-sequence courses, so in-coming students must be assessed for placement with respect to a very limited number of options. The severity of this system, we believe, provides further support for any unanimity that might be achieved across the profession if a framework like the one proposed here were to be adopted.

Elementary stage

The portion of figure 3.2 relevant to the elementary stage is repeated here for convenience.

Domain → ↓ Stage	Skill levels & Functional abilities	Lexical goals & Topical knowledge	Structural knowledge
ELEMENTARY (Focus on doing)	Novice-High proficiency; basic functions	Focus on concrete topics about self	Exposure to all major structures

In presentations to colleagues, we have found it necessary to return repeatedly to the question of what is meant by "exposure to all major structures" in the domain of structural knowledge. First, recall that in proficiency terms, the expectation is only that learners be at the Novice-High level. That means that when learners are speaking, for example, the notion of grammatical mistakes is almost irrelevant, since they will largely be reciting, and the expectation is that learners at this stage cannot both recite and analyze, and while a certain amount of self-monitoring can go, to expect very much self-correcting is to fail to understand the cognitive complexities of language production.

Rather than being production oriented, the specification of knowledge in the structural domain is intended to help high school and college programs understand what sort of analytic tools will be presented to learners. Thus, it cannot be expected that a college freshman hoping to be placed into a course representing the equivalent of the intermediate stage of this framework will use the instrumental case correctly with great regularity. However, this framework is stating that such a student will need to have been exposed to it and, by implication, have begun the process of assimilating it into his or her analytic and, maybe, productive repertoire.

1. SKILL LEVELS & FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES.

Levels of proficiency are specified first because the principles of the LLF hold proficiency to be the ultimate goal of career language learners. Figure 4.1 contains goals for all four skills for each of the first two years of our idealized high school program. Again, for college programs, we are hypothesizing that these goals are achievable in one year. The levels are expressed in terms specified by ACTFL guidelines.

\ years \ of HS skill \Russian	1	2
writing	Novice-Mid to Novice-High	Novice-High to Int.-Low
speaking	Novice-Low to Novice-Mid	Novice-Mid to Novice-High
listening	Novice-Low to Novice-Mid	Novice-Mid to Novice-High
reading	Novice-Mid	Novice-High

Figure 4.1. *Skill-level goals for the elementary stage*

The goals described here reflect a combination of current results in ETS testing (of both high school and college students), and the desire to try to work toward improved results by strengthening high school and college curricula. The fact that the goals in all four skills consistently include Novice-High in their range reflects a belief that all four skills can and should be addressed within each stage. There is still latitude for teachers to decide whether, for example, reading should be done from the beginning, or perhaps put off for awhile. Nevertheless, it will be necessary for teachers to be aware of the time it will take to develop these skills and to allocate appropriate time and practice to these skills at logically appropriate points in their programs.

These recommendations are in some cases more optimistic than current results might seem to justify. In the case of reading, for example, we suspect that this skill is simply frequently not addressed at this stage in high schools. We hypothesize that the time it would take to reach the Novice-High level in this skill is, in fact, manageable. We also suspect more generally that the results of proficiency testing are low in part because programs currently do not focus on function. Thus we are hypothesizing (we are not trying to cast these goals in concrete) that functionally oriented programs will be able to reach these levels. If the results prove otherwise, then, obviously, the goals will have to be modified.

Proficiency implies functions; one is proficient at something or in particular contexts. Thus it is natural for each of the stages to enumerate some of the functions in which students should have developed to their appropriate level of proficiency. Proficiency and functions are discussed first in this framework because they reflect the functional orientation that we believe is appropriate to language learning at the high school and college levels.

It is important to recall that functions and grammatical categories do not overlap precisely, and therefore it is incumbent on the curriculum to make students aware of how to use the structures that they are learning. Knowing the negative particle, *yt*, does not guarantee that students will understand that *Ds yt crf;tnt...* is a request for information, not a negative prediction about the future (as the words on their own would suggest). On the one hand, it may seem trivial to go down the list of functions and say, "Oh, that's just the imperative," but there is a great deal of pedagogical significance to making functionality a cornerstone of language learning. It does not imply that the learning of forms be ignored or learned in a haphazard fashion. It does mean that forms always be learned in a functional context, and that students be well aware that how these forms are used is at least as important as, for example, how they are spelled.

The list that follows indicates the range of basic functions for the elementary stage. There is not a rigid division of functions within particular skills; we expect the functions to be addressed across all four skills as appropriate. Note also that functional abilities may be met by knowing a single lexical item but only if it is used in correct circumstances. In this domain, the principal concern is to tie linguistic knowledge to particular real-life situations.

Recall that in terms of proficiency, even by the end of the second year of high school, learners will just be beginning to perform at the intermediate level. All of these same functional areas will continue to reappear in subsequent stages, together with some new ones; at higher stages the aim will be to expand the learner's repertoire. At the elementary stage, for example, the function *ask permission* may be satisfied simply by knowing how to use the word *vj;yj*. At the intermediate stage, this same function might be satisfied with vocabulary appropriate to specific situations: e.g., *Pltcm cdj,jlyj** if the context is finding a seat in a restaurant; or, *Vj;yj gjpdjybnm jn dfc** if there is a need to borrow a telephone.

The following list is offered with a great deal of tentativeness. As Russian textbooks are coming increasingly to focus on function, there should likewise come to exist a consensus as to what the range of the elementary stage functions should be.

- Make acquaintance
- Greetings/leave taking
- Express gratitude
- Ask/Answer simple questions
- Ask permission
- Apologize
- Request a favor
- Give commands
- Receive directions
- Make a purchase (store, street vendor, post office...)
- Express likes/dislikes (*k/,bnm> yhfdbnmcz*)

Express needs/desires (ye;yj> [jntnm)
Know elementary norms of behavior as a guest
Read signs (on the street, in buildings and vehicles)
Make telephone calls
Simple descriptions
Write simple notes, messages

All language use is tied to culture, but that is particularly true in this section. We debated about functions like "read signs," where the functional component of this knowledge has as much to do with knowing where to look (for street signs, for instance) as it does with language knowledge. Similarly, knowing that it is essentially mandatory to bring a gift when one goes visiting is hardly linguistic. As ACTFL before us, we spent some time trying to concoct ways to deal with cultural knowledge, but decided that we could only urge that such knowledge be included whenever appropriate throughout the language program. Rather than attempt to create a separate section, we have opted to slip cultural items in where appropriate and remind teachers of the importance of raising student awareness and beginning the process of familiarizing them with learning how to understand what they observe and the reactions they engender.

2. LEXICAL GOALS & TOPICAL KNOWLEDGE.

The number of lexical items listed here represents a rough average of the number of words in typical introductory college textbooks. This estimate exceeds some textbooks, but we felt that as extra topical knowledge is introduced, the number of lexical items may increase as well.

Productive: approx. 750 words
Receptive: approx. 1000 words

In a typical school setting, the suggested minimum for productive knowledge works out to approximately four words per day.

The interpretation of this goal requires two caveats. First, just as no college learner actually knows all of the words in the textbook, our expectations for learners entering our programs should not exceed what we expect of our "own" students. Second, following from principle 2 in the LLF that our programs be learner centered, we must expect that each learner's lexicon will be idiosyncratic. There really is no reason to expect at the elementary level of proficiency, for example, that a learner will be able to rattle off a list of ten professions. A learner may know two or three professions relatively well at this stage (those of parents and one of personal interest, for example), but may know others only passively.

We hesitate to specify this domain too precisely, however, because lexical knowledge is perhaps the easiest domain of all in which to do remedial work (even independently). This is not to say that learning vocabulary is either trivial or easy. We would argue, however, that it makes almost no pedagogical sense to hold back a learner solely for perceived deficiencies in lexical knowledge. There may, of course, be extreme cases, but in the vast majority of cases, we would urge that the inclination be to remediate rather than to retreat.

As with functional abilities, the list of topics here should be viewed neither as minimal nor exhaustive, but as an indication of the range of topics appropriate for the elementary stage. Given the Novice level of proficiency at this stage, in most domains productive knowledge is restricted to self. Learners will do best knowing their own pets, hobbies, sports, etc., and probably will have a harder time managing more exhaustive knowledge at this stage—that is for the next stage.

There are some recommendations that go beyond many standard textbooks. The objects and descriptors listed are all either directly accessible or easy to make accessible through pictures.

Further, the list requires two interpretations—for production and reception. Production will focus primarily on self; reception can be expected to be a little broader, but still far from exhaustive. However, unlike the functional abilities, at

least for reception, we would expect knowledge of more than a single lexical item. Unlike functional abilities, knowledge is only truly topical if the learner knows a range of items in each category.

To anticipate the section below on learning strategies, we would encourage that students be made aware of the fact that vocabulary can be organized topically. It is quite helpful for them to be reminded of other words related to a given topic as new words are introduced. Furthermore, by helping them group words we assist them in organizing their memories in ways that match conversational needs; it is important that knowledge be stored in such a way that there are strong associations.

- Daily routine
- Family members
- Home (minimally)
- Pets
- Hobbies
- Sports
- Leisure activities
- Musical instruments
- Age
- School: subjects, activities, classroom objects
- Past year/past summer
- Means of transportation
- Colors
- Clothing
- Days of the week, months, seasons, own birthday (incl. year)
- Nationalities
- Weather
- Geography
- Health (and the body)
- Food
- City & town
- Money

3. STRUCTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Coverage of material in this goal domain is intended to be understood somewhat more normatively than in the other domains. There should be little problem in this, however, since this type of knowledge is the one that is best supported by standard textbooks. Nevertheless, the intent remains that in making placement decisions, it is better to err on the side of higher placement and to provide any necessary compensation outside of class than to insist that absolutely every item be in place in order to be placed at the intermediate stage.

While we are urging that coverage of these goals be more uniform than in the preceding three domains, it is important to recall that the goals are still to be interpreted relative to the level of proficiency. Perhaps it is useful here again to think in terms of production and reception. A Novice-level learner is not generally able to produce grammatically correct utterances, so we should expect production to be very inaccurate. We envision, however, that a learner who has completed the elementary stage will have been exposed in a relatively systematic fashion to the knowledge listed below. Their receptive abilities should, therefore, be somewhat more sophisticated: we would expect a learner at the beginning of the intermediate stage not to panic at the mention of the instrumental case, for example; or, upon reading, e.g., *jn yfib[lheptq*, might recognize that *jn* requires the genitive case and then be able to figure out that this must be the plural form—even though this might require several "mental" steps.

- Recognize and use all cases, singular and plural, of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and ordinal numbers with accuracy appropriate for the level of proficiency
- Forms of basic verbs (regular and high-frequency irregular): three tense forms, imperative, infinitive; not participles, gerunds
- Numbers from zero to one thousand
- Knowledge of unprefixated "verbs of motion" as lexical items: e.g., *Relf ds bl=nt#tlnt* Z k/,k/ [jlbnm yf ks;f]. Z yt gkfdf/.*
- Verbal prefixes: *gj-> d-> ds-> ghb-> e-*
- Simple and basic complex sentences: *yj> f> bkb> tckb> rjulf> xnj> rjnhsq> xnj,s> kb*
- Tense, mood and aspect (forms and basic meanings; only minimal competence expected, especially with aspect)
- Modality: *vj;yj> yflj> ytkmpz> ljk;ty*
- Elementary knowledge of comparative forms and syntax
- Familiarity with a system of telling time
- Discourse management particles: *xnj> b> ;t> ye*
- Terminology (in English or Russian): know what is meant by case names, verb forms names, parts of speech and sentence components

The aim of section 2.3.1. has been to describe a knowledge state that would be desirable for learners ready to move on to the intermediate stage in

their Russian language learning career. This knowledge state will be imperfect and will be highly idiosyncratic.

Intermediate stage³⁵

The portion of figure 3.2 relevant to the elementary stage is repeated here for convenience.

Domain → ↓Stage	Skill levels & Functional abilities	Lexical goals & Topical knowledge	Structural knowledge
INTERMEDIATE (Deepen analysis, still with functional approach)	Int.-Low to Int.-Mid proficiency; additional functions & alternative ways to fulfill elementary functions	Increase repertoire to talk about others & more abstract topics	Recall most and recognize all major structures

Intermediate-level courses in foreign languages, and perhaps in any discipline, tend to replicate the problems of adolescence. In the case of language learning, much of that has to do with one of the theoretical underpinnings of this framework: the move towards independence. At the elementary stage learners often revel in the wonderful generality and accompanying sense of power that comes when they are seeing the grammatical system for the first time. At the intermediate level, students often find out that, like the rule systems of their parents and society, there are lots of irregularities. Where good learners felt that they could accomplish a lot of learning quickly at the elementary stage, they now discover that much of what lies ahead of them is word-by-word, context-by-context learning.

The intermediate stage, then, is about transitions. Learners need to solidify their learning from the elementary stage, but also move beyond that in ways that require that they take on much more responsibility for their own learning. This process of deepening knowledge is challenging because on a day-to-day basis it is very easy for even conscientious learners to fall back on older, safer knowledge. Aside from the overt goals for this stage, spelled out below, there is also a covert operation which teachers much undertake to help students move through this challenging transition.

³⁵ We have received much less feedback from teachers regarding the feasibility of the goals that we suggest for the intermediate. We would be especially grateful, therefore, for comments concerning the goals for this stage.

1. SKILL LEVELS & FUNCTIONAL ABILITIES.

The two columns in figure 2.4., below, reflect a *possible*, not a necessary time line for the intermediate stage. The ultimate goals of the intermediate stage are those in the rightmost column, and may, in fact, be beyond the grasp of many high school programs. The middle column is offered as an example of possible midpoints. Similarly, many colleges may find it impossible to reach this stage after only two years; local conditions (fewer contact hours than is the norm, for example) might mean that three years are required rather than two.

\ years \ of HS skill \Russian	3	4
writing	Int.-Low	Int.-Mid
speaking	Novice-High to Int.-Low	Int.-Low
listening	Int.-Low to Int.-Mid	Int.-Mid
reading	Int.-Low	Int.-Mid

Figure 4.2. *Skill-level goals for the intermediate stage*

The goals stated here may generally be perceived as being too high, and should not be taken to describe the current state of affairs either in high schools or colleges. They are presented as goals to be striven for, and reflect the *hypothesis* that a genuine four-skill, proficiency-motivated curriculum, designed following the principles described in this document can achieve such goals. This hypothesis may, in fact, be incorrect, but these goals are offered in the belief that it is preferable to aim a little too high and retreat, if necessary, than not to challenge our teachers and students.

The functional abilities listed at the elementary stage should be revisited and broadened. As students move from the novice level to the intermediate, much of their improved proficiency will be the result of having more options at their disposal—both receptive and productive. A novice speaker may only be able to express gratitude with *cgfcb,j>* while an intermediate will be more likely to be able to recognize and use—if not with appropriate awareness of degrees of formality—*,jkmijt cgfcb,j> cgfcb,j pf 'nj> yt pf xnj> ,kfujlfh/ dfc>* but still will perhaps not even have heard, e.g., *yt cnjbn ,kfujlfhyjcnb*.

Beyond the list of functions listed for the elementary stage are several, below, which require more complicated grammatical constructions (e.g., the imperative as one way to give directions).

- Express a wish *!z [jntk ,s> ,skj ,s [jhjj...@*
- Express congratulations
- Give directions
- Make and respond to invitations
- Express counterproposals *!Ldfqnt kexit...@*

2. LEXICAL GOALS & TOPICAL KNOWLEDGE.

Our initial inclination for specifying lexical knowledge at the intermediate stage was simply to double the number of words suggested for the elementary stage. This was based on a perception that after the basic grammar is "in place", the principal problem facing the learner is vocabulary building. As we talked with colleagues, however, it became apparent that the requirement that all of the "old" vocabulary be kept active and that both the old and the new vocabulary be integrated across a wider range of functions and verb forms, made it more likely that, in fact, fewer new vocabulary items might be added at this stage.

Productive: approx. 1350 words

Receptive: approx. 1800 words

Both of these totals reflect total lexical knowledge, not knowledge new to the intermediate stage. Again, these totals represents statements subject to empirical confirmation; we expect there to be a wide variety of experience.

As with functional knowledge, the topical knowledge of the elementary stage should be recycled. Growth in topical knowledge will be apparent in two ways: breadth of knowledge; and ability to talk about others, not just self. Students should be encouraged to discuss a broader spectrum of, e.g., interests—hobbies, animals, sports, professions—and not simply their own.

As students move to the intermediate skill level, their utterances should become recognizably more sentential and not simply unstructured lexical strings. The ideal conversational format at this level is question-and-answer because it requires only sentence-length utterances. Narration will, typically, remain largely beyond the grasp of intermediate-level speakers.

School-verbs of studying

Emotions !hfl> cthlbn> ljdkty> gtxfky> dtc=ksq> pfdbljdfnm...@

Film/Theater

Music

Art

New areas of topical knowledge, listed above, differ from the ones at the elementary stage in being more abstract or complex. While some of the topics may be represented by one or two lexical items at the elementary stage, the broader range of words needed to make the topical knowledge reasonably useful probably will not be in place until the intermediate stage.

3. STRUCTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Students will continue to improve their command of the structures listed for the elementary stage, as appropriate to their rising skill level.

Recognition of verbal adjectives and adverbs (participles and gerunds)
Comparatives and superlatives
Tell time: familiarity with more than one system
Complex sentences
Verbs of motion—more systematic knowledge of unprefixes verbs
More prefixes of verbs of motion: e.g., pf-> gtht-
Voice (here: -cz, as it is used with verbs like rjyxfnmcz> gbcfnmcz> vsnmcz)
Increased knowledge of forms of "irregular" nouns, verbs
Increased knowledge preposition and case requirements of verbs (e.g.,
jndtxfnm yf djghjc> ;tkfnm rjve xtuj)
Expand discourse-management devices (esp. particles)

5

Conclusion

It is hoped that the conclusion of this document will mark the beginning of a tradition within our field to maintain and move beyond this language learning framework for Russian. We believe that for fields like the Russian language teaching profession, with very limited personnel and resources, it is imperative that we deploy ourselves effectively. There are too few Russian language programs, too few Russian language teachers, and too few Russian language students for us to misuse or misdirect very much of our collective effort.

The framework for Russian language learning put forth in this document represents an initial attempt to define a series of language learning stages that reflect the best wisdom of the language teaching profession. We have tried to take into account developmental and cognitive issues that affect learning and articulation, and at the same time have attempted to produce a system that is feasible within the current broad outlines of our profession.

Finally, we hope that readers of this document will be willing to participate in its upkeep and ongoing revision. We expect this to provide the cornerstone for materials development, but that can only happen if teachers and materials developers take it to heart and apprise us of areas that need elaboration and revision. Look for us on the Web soon. To find out how, send e-mail after January 1, 1997 to **pmerrill@andover.edu**.

