

Editor's Introduction

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In 1984 Slavica published *Teaching, Learning, Acquiring Russian* (edited by Donald Jarvis and Sophia Lubensky); since then numerous events have transpired which have changed the world in which Slavic languages and cultures are taught and learned in North America. When the Jarvis and Lubensky volume came out, few people would have predicted the dramatic political events that would follow in the decade to come: the fall of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Communist Bloc in Central Europe, or the disintegration of Yugoslavia. These events led to the rise and then fall of enrollments in Russian classes in North America, not to mention the appearance—in great numbers in some institutions—of heritage learners, students born in Central or Eastern Europe who immigrated to the United States as young children or young adults. At the same time as enrollments in Russian have declined across the nation, interest and enrollments in some of the languages of Central Europe, most notably Polish and Czech, have increased. Due to these changes, we chose to broaden the focus of our volume to include all Slavic languages and cultures, in order to initiate a wider discussion of the issues we all face, whether we teach Bulgarian, Czech, Polish, Russian or Ukrainian. Even though, to our regret, the number of manuscripts submitted focusing on languages other than Russian was not as great as we would have liked, we are pleased to bring to our readers some articles reflecting issues of vital importance for the languages and cultures other than Russian. We include in our volume reviews of materials available for teaching these languages and cultures, as well as Russian, which we believe will be helpful for teachers of Slavic languages and cultures all over the world. The process of assembling this volume was as complex as the volume itself. Most of the papers included here were written in 1998; some have been updated as we came closer to publication.

The last 15 years have seen significant methodological developments in foreign language pedagogy, in general, and more specifically in the teaching of Slavic languages. Most significant were the proficiency movement, in its nascence at the time of the publication of the Jarvis and Lubensky volume, and the maturation of the discipline of second language acquisition. The publication in 1984 of the proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in conjunction with specialists from the federal government (the Interagency Language Roundtable), the publication in 1988 of the provisional guidelines for Russian, the revision of the oral proficiency guidelines and the publication of the new standards for foreign language instruction in 1999 all mark important strides for the field of foreign language pedagogy and for the Slavic field. All of these documents have elicited considerable debate and have led to changes in the way many of us teach or the way we think about our teaching. Whether one endorses the proficiency movement or rejects it, the proficiency guidelines have been an impetus for the rise of the notion that foreign language instructors should have objective criteria according to which we can assess, with some validity and reliability, our learners' abilities to perform tasks in a foreign language, a common measure that can be recognized across institutions and

languages. The movement has also elicited much controversy concerning the value of attending to communicative skills, as opposed to other traditional measurements of language learning success, and this controversy and the ensuing discussion have proven to be productive for the foreign language profession as it continues to work towards improved foreign language instruction. The newly published standards will likely provide the profession with a means to assess the quality of foreign language curricula, but will also likely be as controversial as the proficiency guidelines themselves.

Within the Russian field, in particular, we must note the publication of a study of the infrastructure of the field, Richard Brecht et al.'s *Russian in the United States: A Case Study of America's Language Needs and Capacities* (1995). This landmark study has contributed a great deal to the national discussion of the nature of Russian-language education in the United States. Brecht's elaboration (72—73) in this study of the various missions of Russian-language education (applied language, heritage, language specialist, and general education missions) is of great importance for our understanding of the current state of our field and, particularly, for curricular design on the college level. His discussion of learning outcomes, combined with other studies such as Brecht, Davidson and Ginsberg's 1993 *Predictors of Foreign Language Gain During Study Abroad* based on data collected from participants in study abroad programs sponsored by the American Council of Teachers of Russian or Irene Thompson's 1996 study (reprinted in this volume) help to establish a sense of what students actually can do whether they have had 2 years of high school Russian or 4 years of college Russian.

Research projects, such as those described above, are evidence of the maturation of the field of second language acquisition (SLA), a discipline dedicated to the study of how learners acquire or lose a second or foreign language, with research conducted, in part, to determine how learners acquire Russian or other Slavic languages. Now we can see scholarly works on the acquisition of Russian, as well as other languages, in the academic journals dedicated to second language acquisition (e.g., *Language Learning*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, and others). We hope that the future will see more scholars working in second language acquisition in the Slavic field. Our goal in preparing this volume was to show the gains, as well as the lacunae, in research dealing with the acquisition of Slavic languages. In our attempt to connect the teaching of Slavic languages and cultures with general issues and developments in foreign language acquisition, we invited a non-Slavist well known in the field of foreign language pedagogy and second or foreign language acquisition to write the keynote essay for each section. It is our hope that these essays will provide the reader with an overview of the field and a point of reference as well as a current bibliography of a general (non-Slavic oriented) nature. The other essays in each section are refereed contributions that went through a peer review process; each section closes with an invited response from a Slavist whose charge was to react to all the papers in the section.

Our volume begins with an essay by Judith Liskin-Gasparro, one of the founding figures of the proficiency movement, a developer of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, and the author of numerous articles, sections, and manuals on proficiency testing and

proficiency-oriented instruction, including "Assessment: From Content Standards to Student Performance," in the 1996 ACTFL annual volume (*National Standards: A Catalyst for Reform*). Liskin-Gasparro has done research on the discourse of oral proficiency interviews and on the acquisition of Spanish by advanced speakers in an immersion setting. In her keynote essay for this volume, Liskin-Gasparro examines the history of the proficiency movement and its prospects for the future. In his response, Richard Robin questions why the proficiency movement, as played out in the teaching of Russian, has not yet yielded significant improvements in learner outcomes in Russian. Robin suggests that foreign language across the curriculum is the solution to what he calls "the proficiency paradox." The lack of refereed essays in this section may be indicative of a loss of interest in the proficiency movement, either due to its presumed success or perhaps to its perceived failure.

The second section examines the place of culture in the language classroom, beginning with a keynote essay by Peter Patrikis. Patrikis is the founding Executive Director of the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning, an assembly of ten private research universities (Brown, Chicago, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, Penn, Princeton, and Yale). Patrikis has written and lectured in the United States and abroad on the role of foreign languages in undergraduate education, on the place of computer technology in foreign language instruction, and on the issues of the governance of language teaching and learning. In his keynote essay in this volume, Patrikis examines the historical relations between language, culture and literacy in the foreign language classroom. Thomas Garza examines ethnographic portraits as a means of introducing contemporary Russian culture, while Sandra Rosengrant discusses ways to teach canonical 19th century Russian literary texts in the context of a Russian-language classroom. Patricia Chaput rounds out the section with a discussion of culture in the language curriculum.

Section 3 takes up affective and cognitive issues in the teaching of Slavic languages. The keynote paper in this section was written by Madeline Ehrman. Ehrman, director of research, evaluation, and development at the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute, has done pioneering research on individual differences in second language learning, especially in the domain of personality. She is the author of two books, *Understanding Second Language Learning Difficulties* and *Interpersonal Dynamics in Second Language Education* (the latter coauthored with Zoltan Dörnyei). She has also published widely in a variety of journals on such topics as tolerance of ambiguity, field independence, unconscious communication between teachers and students. In her keynote paper for this volume, Ehrman provides a summary of the state of the art in research on affective and cognitive issues in second language acquisition and foreign language teaching. Lee Croft and Kira Gor discuss cognitive issues: Croft addresses mnemonotactics and Gor the impact of orthography on pronunciation. Artemi Romanov and Matthew Tittle discuss affective issues in the Slavic languages curriculum: Romanov looks closely at student motivation for studying Russian, while Tittle looks at irrational beliefs, language anxiety and classroom achievement. Betty Lou Leaver provides a response to the essays in this section, reviewing important cognitive and affective issues in the learning and teaching of Slavic languages.

Assessment is the topic of Section 4 that opens with a keynote paper by Carol Klee. Klee is chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Minnesota, where she directed the Spanish and Portuguese language programs from 1985 to 1995. Her research interests include sociolinguistic studies of Spanish, second language acquisition, and foreign language pedagogy. She has edited two volumes: *Sociolinguistics of the Spanish-speaking World: Spain, Latin America and the United States* and *Faces in a Crowd: The Individual Learner in Multisection Courses*. In her keynote essay, Klee reviews foreign language testing in general, bringing us up to date on what is being done in other languages. Zena Moore and Nathan Bond explain the use of the portfolio as an assessment tool. Irene Thompson discusses her findings on the assessment of learner outcomes in Russian in all four modalities (listening, reading, speaking and writing), demonstrating correlations between levels of instruction and proficiency levels attained. Thomas Beyer reviews the state of testing in Slavic languages in general and addresses issues raised by Moore and Bond and Thompson in his response paper.

Section 5 focuses on technology in the classroom. Mary Ann Lyman-Hager, Professor of French and Director of the National Language Resource Center at California State University at San Diego, author of over 30 refereed articles and book sections, as well as CD-ROMs for language learning, presents us with an introduction to technology-enhanced foreign language learning, explaining what some of the new trends are and what potential they hold for foreign language instructors. William Comer and Leann Keefe describe the results of an experiment in reading comprehension in Russian in a multimedia learning context. David Danaher and Christopher Ott present a warning to all of us regarding the willy nilly implementation of unmotivated technology in the foreign language curriculum. Petr Bílek, Masako Ueda Fidler and David Kanig discuss a web-based project in reading comprehension in Czech at Brown University. George Mitrevski reviews the state of the art in the use of technology in the teaching of Slavic languages and cultures in his response to the other essays in this section.

Heritage learners, a relatively new phenomenon in Slavic languages, but a phenomenon long of great importance to teachers of Chinese, Korean and Spanish, is the focus of Section 6. Guadalupe Valdés, of Stanford University, the author of the keynote paper in this section, has worked for years on the issue of English-Spanish bilingualism in the United States. Some of her more recent articles have appeared in the *Harvard Educational Review*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, and *The Modern Language Journal*. In her keynote essay in this section, Valdés discusses the situation in a number of languages that have significant heritage populations and draws on her data in Spanish in her conclusions. Neil Bermel and Olga Kagan assess typical mistakes made by heritage speakers in written Russian, while Maria Polinsky presents a composite linguistic profile of heritage learners of Russian in the United States based on oral interviews. Olga Yokoyama responds by proposing strategies to solve some of the problems faced by heritage speakers of Russian and other Slavic languages and their instructors.

Section 7 focuses on teacher training and education, beginning with a keynote paper by Heidi Byrnes. Byrnes' interest in the performance of the second language learner and the need to shift the focus of instruction from grammar to a performance orientation led to her extensive involvement in the proficiency movement in the eighties. Currently, her research focus is the advanced instructed learner of German, particularly the learners' acquisition of academic literacy in a second language. Her most recent publication is an edited volume entitled *Learning Second and Foreign Languages: Perspectives in Research and Scholarship*, (MLA, 1998) which provides an overview of the field, including curricular recommendations regarding content-based approaches to second language learning. In her keynote essay in this volume, Byrnes describes the history and the current state of foreign language teacher training and education. Mark Lauersdorf describes problems and prospects in the training of teachers of the less commonly taught Slavic languages, focusing on Czech and Polish as examples in his project. Benjamin Rifkin proposes a model for teacher training and education in the Slavic languages. William Comer closes the section with a review of the issues in the area of teacher education for Slavic languages and cultures.

In Section 8, taking the cue from Lubensky and Jarvis, we have brought a series of essays dedicated to cataloguing textbooks and reference works for the teaching of Slavic languages. Susan Kresin provides the review of resources and references for the teaching of Czech; Leonard Polakiewicz—textbooks for Polish; Timothy G. Riley—reference works for Polish; Benjamin Rifkin—textbooks, readers, CD-ROMs, instructional videos, internet broadcasts, satellite broadcasts and other instructional materials for Russian; Olga Dedova—the most popular textbooks published in Russia; Karen Robblee—reference works for Russian; Margaret Beissinger—textbooks and reference works for the South Slavic languages; and Robert DeLossa—textbooks and reference works for Ukrainian. Together, these essays represent, to the best of our knowledge, the most comprehensive review of the materials available to support the teaching of Slavic languages and cultures. The essays of Section 8 will be posted to the Slavica web site where their authors will, it is hoped, update them regularly with fresh titles of interest to scholars and teachers in the field.

We hope that this collection of essays will be a useful tool not only for scholars beginning their professional careers, but also for those continuing to teach and conduct research in the learning and teaching of Slavic languages and cultures. We also hope that our volume will help the Slavic field by: (1) illuminating for all Slavists the state of the art for foreign languages in general in the keynote papers; (2) showcasing current research in the Slavic field in the refereed papers; and (3) raising important questions for consideration for the years to come in the response papers. As we said earlier, the last 15 years have seen enormous changes in Central and Eastern Europe, in the administrative realities on our campuses, and in the scholarly disciplines that are critical to the teaching of foreign languages. We hope this volume will help the Slavic profession prepare for the next 15 years. While many of our readers may disagree with one or another proposition found in this volume, we believe that this will only lead to a more vigorous discussion of the issues so important to the Slavic field. We hope that by 2015 our future colleagues—our current students—will publish another volume on issues

of critical importance for the pedagogy of Slavic languages and cultures. Until that time, we invite readers to enter into the discussion of the professional issues that define our field now, at the beginning of the 21st century.

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