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**THE EFFECT OF IMPLEMENTING AN INTERACTIVE READING
PROJECT ON READING COMPREHENSION IN THE THIRD-
SEMESTER RUSSIAN LANGUAGE CLASS**

Thomas J. Garza, Supervisor

Katherine M. Arens

Min Liu

John S. Kolsti

Hana Pichova

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by

Filip Zachoval, Mgr.

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Filip Zachoval, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Thomas J. Garza

In recent years, a number of empirical and conceptual studies about Project-Based Learning (PBL) have presented consistent arguments rationalizing this approach to language learning and teaching. The most common benefits attributed to project work in the second- and foreign-language settings have been located and described in recent research. However, only a few empirical studies have been conducted to evaluate the effect of project work on language learning, and even fewer on specific language skills. This dissertation presents the results of a quasi-experimental research study that investigates the effect of incorporating a semester-long reading project into a third-semester Russian classroom and reports the measured effects of this experimental

treatment on students' reading comprehension, their reading habits and beliefs, perceived reading skills, and overall language proficiency.

The dissertation provides data on a semester-long project allowing students to research a topic of their interest through a set of readings (which substituted for the textbook texts) with an ultimate goal of reporting their findings in the form of a newsletter article. The project entailed interconnected sets of sequenced tasks during which students are actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery. The context for this project was primarily text-based (extensive readings served as a base for all activities and assignments), task-driven (creating an end-product in written form), collaborative, technology-enhanced (extensive use of the Internet), and individualized (students researched topics they were interested in).

The results of the study demonstrate that students' reading comprehension increased by using an integrated methodology where reading was taught through maximizing students' previous knowledge of a subject matter of their interest and following the procedural model for interactive reading. Additionally, the results suggest that the project implementation had a positive effect on some reading habits and beliefs regarding foreign language (FL) learning, while no significant shifts were found in students' perceived reading skills, or their overall language proficiency.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

In a report from the Modern Language Association Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages published in May 2007, the authors state that “the standard configuration of university foreign language curricula, in which a two- or three-year language sequence feeds into a set of core courses primarily focused on canonical literature [...] represents a narrow model,” (p. 2) and that it “has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve,” (p. 3) suggesting that we give students alternatives for language study beyond the traditional literary track and incorporate opportunities to work on cultural narratives in other forms, not just in literary texts. Furthermore, in the same report, the call was made to “enrich the foreign language major” with interdisciplinary “courses that address a broad range of curricular needs” (p. 5). The suggested curriculum change “should consist of a series of complementary or linked courses that holistically incorporate content and cross-cultural reflection at every level” (p. 5). The implication is that curriculum extension should add opportunities to study foreign languages through historical, sociological, and political perspective, among others.

Regardless of the difficulties that such a complex curriculum reorganization may pose, some colleges and universities have made a successful transition toward the broad understanding of language study by making their language classes more interdisciplinary in nature (for example Georgetown University, Wittenberg University, State University of New York at Binghamton, Portland State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill). The goal of their renovated language curricula remains the same, to teach

language. The means being used to achieve that goal have changed, however, to incorporate interdisciplinary study in various fields, such as ecology, history, or politics.

Expansion of the curricular focus in the field of Slavic languages has been successfully implemented at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Temple University, as reported by Rifkin (2005, 2010). The model Rifkin describes involved an interdisciplinary component in the curriculum, with close cooperation across departmental and program borders. This new model proved to attract more students into the programs. Rifkin summarized the major advantage of cross-disciplinary curriculum design, as a model that can “simultaneously engage students’ interest in interdisciplinary studies and work in language” (Rifkin, 2010).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Acknowledging the MLA Committee’s call for expansion of language study beyond the traditional literary track and interdisciplinary content courses, and taking into consideration the (often successful) attempts for curricular extension and re-focusing applied at the above-mentioned colleges and universities, I suggest yet another curriculum modification: adopting the Project-Based Learning (PBL) theory and practice in the field of Second-Language Acquisition (SLA) and incorporating interdisciplinary projects into foreign language curricula. Moreover, the curricular changes introduced at other colleges and universities are designed for the upper-level and advanced classes only while the proposed PBL instruction can easily be implemented in beginning and lower-level language classrooms.

Project-Based Learning is not new in the educational field and its role and implementation have changed considerably over time. It was introduced and pioneered by John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick in the first half of the twentieth century. Since its inception, PBL has taken many different forms and has been applied in a variety of disciplines and settings. However, it has only recently entered into mainstream practice within the field of Second-Language Acquisition. Researchers and practitioners have located and described numerous positive effects of PBL on students' motivation, language proficiency, higher order thinking skills, and the cultivation of learner autonomy in a wide variety of disciplines (Au and Carroll, 1997; Barrows, 1996; Blumenfeld, Marx, Bass, Fredricks, and Soloway, 1991; Krajcik, 1998; Schmidt, 1994). However, little empirical research has been conducted on PBL in SLA, and even less on the possible effect it may have on specific language skills.

Project-Based Learning has the potential to create a considerable impact on learning. What the impact is or could be is precisely the matter in question. Implementation of various projects may affect the way in which students approach SLA. If reading comprehension is the goal, for example, an assumption may be that students will learn more if they are interested in the reading material. Students will be more interested if they have a choice in selecting both the topic of their reading and specific texts. In PBL, students are encouraged to approach reading as a gateway into fields of their respective individual interests within their language of study and other fields of academic interest. Additionally, students are given an opportunity to reach beyond the traditionally-defined literary track into other fields of their professional interest or

expertise. The implementation of PBL is thus an opportunity for students to understand the importance of language and culture and see language not necessarily as an end unto itself but as a tool of discovery, a way of encountering the world.

Perhaps, the strongest feature of the PBL approach is its flexibility, both in scope and focus. Projects can be implemented as a supplement of or an extension to an already existing curriculum. The application of PBL can vary from occupying a small segment of the language class to being a prevailing or even an exclusive approach for SLA.

Similarly, project focus can vary depending on its designer's goals. Projects can involve extensive portions of a language or focus on specific skills (speaking, reading, writing, or listening.) In any incarnation, PBL can incorporate language-specific cultural emphases or reach into other fields and disciplines. Furthermore, projects can be designed that take advantage of available resources, be they local (speaker's societies; departmental/university resources, or already-existing materials) or distant resources relying on extensive use of technology and the Internet (cooperation with sister schools, taking advantage of social network websites, online newspapers, etc.). Above all, projects can easily accommodate students' individual interests through their interdisciplinary nature and place students at the center of the learning process by giving them both opportunities and responsibility for their own learning.

In summary, researchers and educators involved with SLA are faced with the challenging task of providing instruction and content for all learners that are culturally appropriate, personally relevant, and maximally effective. PBL has the potential of helping them reach these goals by incorporating content- and interdisciplinary-oriented

elements into language courses, and by taking full advantage of students' individual strengths and interests.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Within the movement of student-centered, constructivist pedagogies, the overall purpose of this teacher-researcher dissertation is: (a) to implement and document an interactive reading project into a third-semester university Russian language class and (b) to provide an analysis of some of the linguistic and educational gains made by students in the class. In addition to advocating for curricular innovation and methodological change, this dissertation adds to a growing body of quantitative research devoted to PBL.

This dissertation is based on a research study that investigates the effects of implementing an interactive reading project in the third-semester Russian language class. More specifically, it investigates how a semester-long project designed around reading of topically-related texts affected foreign language (FL) students' reading comprehension, their reading habits and beliefs, perceived reading skills, and overall language proficiency. The research questions addressed by the present study are as follows:

1. How does implementing an interactive reading project affect students' reading comprehension, their reading habits and beliefs regarding FL, perceived reading skills, and overall language proficiency?
2. Do variables such as gender and previous study of other foreign languages influence the measurements stated in the question above?

In order to address the research questions stated above, I set out to test the following null hypotheses:

1. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in reading comprehension (as measured by the pre- and post-test recalls) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.
2. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in reading habits and beliefs regarding FL (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions and on the interviews) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.
3. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in their perceived reading skills (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.
4. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in overall language achievement (as measured by written and oral departmental exams) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

5. Gender and previous study of other foreign languages will have no effect on the above-mentioned measurements.

SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Participants in this study were enrolled in third-semester Russian courses at the University of Texas at Austin. Based on comparable information related to language learning, one intact third-semester class was selected as the treatment group (N=13) and one separate intact class was chosen as the comparison group (N=13). During the semester, the treatment group followed the same standard third-semester syllabus as the comparison group, but incorporated a semester-long reading project.

The project design allowed students to research a topic of their interest through a set of readings (which substituted for the textbook texts) with the ultimate goal of reporting their findings in the form of a newsletter article. The project entailed interconnected sets of sequenced tasks during which students were actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery. The context for this project was primarily text-based (extensive readings serve as a base for all activities and assignments), task-driven (creating an end-product in written form), collaborative, technology-enhanced (extensive use of the Internet), and individualized (students research topics they are interested in).

The effects of the treatment were measured statistically by the two groups' results on three assessment tools: 1) a pre- and post-test consisting of written recall protocols of four texts; 2) six departmentally-produced unit exams (five written exams and one oral exam); and 3) a pre- and post-treatment questionnaire on students' reading habits and

beliefs regarding foreign language learning. Additionally, the data were juxtaposed with qualitative measurements of pre- and post-treatment interviews.

The results of these three measures were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively for significant differences between the two groups. The results of the study demonstrate that students' reading comprehension increased by using an integrated methodology where reading was taught through maximizing students' previous knowledge of a subject matter of their interest and following the procedural model for interactive reading. Additionally, the results suggest that the project implementation had a positive effect on some reading habits and beliefs regarding FL learning, while no significant changes were found in students' perceived reading skills, or their overall language proficiency.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The proposed study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The subjects would perform all tasks to the best of their ability.
2. The recall protocol scores would accurately reflect reading comprehension.
3. Scores on the language test would accurately depict general L2 ability.
4. Most of the extensive reading would be done in class in classroom pairs or as group work under the supervision of the instructor.

And the following limitations were located:

1. Subjects may be unfamiliar with the recall protocol procedure.
2. This study involved only one L2, Russian. Replication using learners of other L2s is recommended.

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation consists of five remaining chapters that review the existing literature, document the project itself, detail the dissertation study, report on the data collected, and summarize the findings. The Second Chapter provides an overview of the current research on the PBL approach and on reading comprehension. Encompassed in this introduction are explorations of materials, techniques, and methods that are currently used in FL reading comprehension, including their shortcomings, and finally an explanation of how that research was accommodated in my PBL approach. The Third Chapter describes an empirical study conducted with the goal of locating possible shifts in students' reading comprehension and habitual behavior upon receiving the treatment. That study collected data using pre- and post-tests of reading comprehension to assess individual students' progress; pre- and post-test questionnaires and oral interviews to assess possible shifts in participants' attitudes and behavior; and departmentally-produced exams to track students' overall language progress throughout the semester. The Fourth Chapter of the dissertation describes specifically how the project was incorporated into intermediate-level language instruction. The Fifth Chapter is devoted to the analysis of the findings. The final section, Chapter Six, concludes the work by assessing the place of reading in the Russian classroom, focusing on issues concerning further integration of the PBL approach into curriculum development.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review comprises two major sections that, together, provide a theoretical background for implementation of an interactive reading project into a second-year Russian classroom. This chapter addresses the gaps within and between the FL practice and research that underlines the implementation of a procedural model incorporating narrow authentic reading in the early stages of FL acquisition. In fact, the specific features of L2 reading that diverge from FL practice and research are the central components of the project design. First, students read a series of texts on single, narrow topics of their choice. Second, students read authentic texts in distinct genres. Third, reading is used as a basis for developing and enhancing students' abilities in other skill areas: speaking, listening, and writing. Fourth, students read to acquire specific information. Fifth, students read texts of their own choice within their particular areas of interest.

The first section is devoted to Project-Based Learning (PBL). More specifically, it provides: a) a brief overview of the project-based approaches in the field of education; b) an explanation of the discrepancy between disparate definitions of PBL in Second Language Acquisition (SLA); c) the theoretical background behind the PBL approach; and d) a review of research studies devoted to PBL in the field of SLA.

The second section focuses on reading comprehension and discusses current theory and practice in SLA. Namely, it addresses: a) reader's background knowledge and topic interest, b) textual characteristics (topic, genre, and authenticity), and c) reading purpose. The comparison of findings in the two bodies of literature suggests a way

research and practice might move forward, namely, by re-conceptualizing the goal of project-based instruction as integrating language and content.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN EDUCATION

The concepts underlying PBL are not new to education. A number of early twentieth-century educators advocated learning approaches that focused on students and emphasized the development of critical thinking skills through complex problem solving. The most frequently named influence and advocate of experimental and action-based learning was John Dewey who continually argued that education and learning are social and interactive processes, and consequently the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can and should take place. In addition, he believed that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and interact with the curriculum, and all students should have the opportunity to take part in their own learning (Dewey, 1897, 1900, 1902, 1916, 1938).

In *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), Dewey argued that in order for education to be most effective, content must be presented in a way that allows the student to relate the information to prior experiences, thus deepening the connection with this new knowledge. Dewey advocated for an educational structure that strikes a balance between delivering knowledge while also taking into account the interests and experiences of the student. It is through this reasoning that Dewey became one of the most famous proponents of hands-on learning and experiential education. His notions influenced William Heard Kilpatrick, who developed and popularized them for teachers, mainly through his pamphlet *The Project Method* (1918). Dewey's ideas went on to

impact many other significant experiential models and many researchers (for example Brubacher, 1947; Henry, 1994; Beckett, 2006) credit him as the influence behind PBL, which places students in the active role of researchers.

Project-Based Learning was introduced into SLA education as a way to reflect the principles of student-centered teaching (Hedge, 1993) in response to perceived inadequacies in Krashen's input hypothesis (Beckett, 1999, p. 2). Krashen argued that second language learners need extensive exposure to the target language, as is the case when children learn their first language, and claimed that "extended comprehensible input was the most significant determiner of whether a language would be acquired or not" (Krashen, 1985).

One of the first advocates of project-based methodology in SLA was Brumfit who claimed that this language-teaching methodology provides students with the opportunity to develop accuracy and fluency through "emphasis on integrated projects" (1984, p. 123). Similar belief in the positive effects of project-based methodology in creating opportunities for second language learners to develop their abilities in the target language was advocated by other SLA researchers and practitioners, most notably by Beckett (1999, 2005, 2006); Fried-Booth (1986); Carter and Thomas (1986), Hilton-Jones, 1988; and Stoller (1997). Stoller (in Beckett, 1996) summarizes the most commonly reported beliefs that result from student engagement with PBL. These positive features of project work include: 1) authenticity of experience and language; 2) intensity of motivation, involvement, engagement, participation, enjoyment, and creativity; 3) enhanced language skills; 4) improved abilities to function in a group; 5) increased content knowledge; 6)

improved confidence, attitude toward learning, and comfort using the language; 7) increased autonomy; and 8) improved ability to make decisions. Despite the number of positive reports on the project-based methodology and an increasing interest in its use in SLA environments, empirical studies have been scarce. The review of empirical research will be given later in this chapter.

DEFINITION OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Although this dissertation focuses on SLA, it is important to mention that PBL is not exclusive to SLA or any other field. On the contrary, PBL is widely employed in K-12 education, educational psychology, instructional technology, mathematics, and the sciences. In disciplines outside of SLA, the terms Project-Based Learning, Project-Based Instruction, Project Work, Project Method, Inquiry-Based Learning, and Problem-Based Learning are used, often interchangeably. The terms Inquiry-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning are most commonly employed in science education. The main difference is that Project-Based Learning results in a student-generated artifact while inquiry and Problem-Based approaches do not necessarily lead to the production of a student-generated artifact.

The definition of PBL varies to a certain degree both among the different fields that incorporate it and within the discipline of SLA. Below are some quotations that capture the principal characteristics of Project-Based Learning:

Project-based learning is a comprehensive approach to classroom teaching and learning that is designed to engage students in investigation of authentic problems. (Blumenfeld, 1991, p. 369)

Project-based learning is a comprehensive perspective focused on teaching by engaging students in investigation. Within this framework, students pursue solutions to nontrivial problems by asking and refining questions, debating ideas, making predictions, designing plans and/or experiments, collecting and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, communicating their ideas and findings to others, asking new questions, and creating artifacts. (Blumenfeld, 1991, p. 371)

Project work usually offers the student some measure of freedom in deciding on the topic. It asks the student to undertake an enquiry process in which the students collect some material and then organize and present the data. Typically this involves an extended piece of work which the student often undertakes independently but in some cases is carried out with a group of fellow students. (Henry, 1994, p.11)

Project-based learning functions as a bridge between using English in class and using English in real life situations outside of class. (Fried-Booth, 1997, p. 19)

In this study project-based learning uses definition, as a series of individual or group activities that involve language/content learning through planning, researching (empirical and/or document), analyzing and synthesizing data, and reflecting on the process and product orally and/or in writing by comparing, contrasting, and justifying alternatives. (Beckett, 1999, p. 4)

Project-based learning (PBL) is one instructional strategy that is becoming used more often in many classrooms. This method of instruction involves students working toward a common solution or goal, utilizing prior knowledge, relating information to real world experiences, and presenting a final student created project representing the solution. (Simkins, 2000, p. 10)

As the versatility of PBL makes it difficult to articulate one single definition,

Stoller specified several conditions that should be present for effective project-based learning to take place:

Project-based learning should (a) have a process and product orientation; (b) be defined, at least in part, by students, to encourage student ownership in the project; (c) extend over a period of time (rather than a single class session); (d) encourage the natural integration of skills; (e) make a dual commitment to language and content learning; (f) oblige students to work in groups and on their

own; (g) require students to take some responsibility for their own learning through the gathering, processing, and reporting of information from target language resources; (h) require teacher and students to assume new roles and responsibilities (Levy, 1997); (i) result in a tangible final product; and (j) conclude with student reflections on both the process and the product. (Stoller in Beckett, 2006, p. 24)

For the purpose of this dissertation, Project-Based Learning will be defined as a methodology that meets the conditions described by Stoller above. It should be noted here that project work is viewed by most of its advocates “not as a replacement for other teaching methods,” but rather as “an approach to learning which complements mainstream methods and which can be used with almost all levels, ages, and abilities of students” (Haines, 1989, p. 1).

The most commonly cited benefit attributed to PBL in L2 settings is authenticity of experience and language (Beckett, 2006, p. 25), which is manifested in four ways. First, in contrast to the traditional classroom where assignments are often completed for the primary purpose of being evaluated by an instructor, the tasks in PBL are geared toward solving real-world issues. Second, PBL incorporates extensive use of authentic materials. In SLA terms, authentic materials are materials created by a target culture for a target culture; they are not altered for instruction (Kramsch, 1999) and they include information, tools, resources and references used by experts or members of a target culture. Third, PBL usually involves outside audiences since learners frequently share their results with their peers, students from other institutions, or experts. This involvement makes the purpose of completing a task more authentic. Instead of producing solely for their teacher, they are required to communicate with a broader

audience. Fourth, projects are created in a variety of “real world” rather than academic formats: design plans, models, presentations, or publications rather than essays, worksheets, or tests. The use of authentic problems, materials, audiences, and artifacts adds value and interest to projects and facilitates transfer of information to future contexts (Blumenfeld et al. 1991).

THEORY BEHIND PBL: CONSTRUCTIVISM

The principles underlying the insertion of the above-mentioned characteristics of the PBL approach are derived from constructivist learning theory. Constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning that stems from the work of Piaget (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) and is the basis for current educational reform (Fosnot, 1996). The vast body of literature on constructivism in education reflects a rigorous ongoing debate between scholars and researchers and proposes various versions or forms of constructivism (see Phillips, 1995). Generally, the literature on educational constructivism can be categorized as either cognitive constructivism, which focuses on the individual learner’s psychological mechanisms involved in knowledge construction (Piaget, 1971), or social constructivism, which views the construction of knowledge as a social practice (Vygotsky, 1978). Regardless of the different approaches, these two concepts are underlined by the same general assumptions. More specifically, they share the following tenets: (1) an active construction of knowledge by the learners; (2) the social nature of learning, which necessitates intensive interaction between the learners; (3) the authenticity of the learning situation, and (4) the ability of the students to determine their own learning goals (Loyens, Rikers and Schmidt, 2007; Phillips, 1995).

According to the constructivist paradigm, learning is an active, creative, learner-generated, social, and collaborative process (Harper, 1996; Piaget, 1977) focusing on learners who play an active role in the construction of their own knowledge. Many constructivists believe that learning occurs when learners connect new knowledge to their background knowledge (Fosnot, 1996). They also believe that learning is a personal process and the learner's developmental level, interests, concerns, personal involvement, and current knowledge directly relate to what he or she learns. Thus, not everyone constructs the same knowledge even when provided with what appears to be the same or very similar learning experiences.

As pointed out by Fosnot (1996), while constructivism is not a description of teaching, certain pedagogical principles can be derived from constructivist theories. First, the perception of knowledge as a collection of discrete facts that can be transferred from teacher to students in the traditional telling-listening relationship must be rejected (Prawat, 1992). Winitzky and Kauchak (1997; cited in Reagan, 1999) suggested, "Constructivist teaching typically involves more student-centered, active learning experiences, more student-student and student-teacher interactions, and more work with concrete materials and in solving realistic problems" (p. 417). Furthermore, constructivist practitioners challenge teachers to create innovative environments in which students are encouraged to think and explore by connecting new learning experiences to students' current knowledge (Gould, 1996). This can be achieved via active student involvement in the learning process, as suggested by Fosnot: "Open-ended investigations in realistic,

meaningful contexts need to be offered, thus allowing learners to explore and generate many possibilities, both affirming and contradictory” (Fosnot 1996, p. 30).

Constructivist approaches, in which the learner is regarded as actively creating knowledge, may be contrasted with traditional approaches in which the learner is seen to passively absorb knowledge transmitted by the teacher. The highlighted focus on learners can be seen both in theoretical attention and practical implications. This shift is mirrored in educational psychology, as the field has moved from the behaviorist and cognitive science perspectives to the social constructivist perspective (Hiebert & Raphael, 1997). And the practical implications can be seen in the fact that districts, schools, and teachers are exploring the shift from teacher-directed, skills-oriented approaches based on textbooks to student-centered, process-oriented approaches based on authentic reading and writing tasks (Bird, 1989; Pace, 1992; Ridley, 1990).

Probably the most salient examples of the constructivist impact on education include cognitive apprenticeship, anchored instruction, case-based learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning (Luke, 2004). Problem-Based and Project-Based Learning are constructivist approaches to teaching and learning that facilitate the acquisition of content knowledge, the development of critical thinking skills, and problem solving and collaboration through the exploration and discussion of questions that are both complex and authentic. In a project-based classroom students seek answers to problems by questioning, discussing, predicting, designing plans and experiments, collecting and analyzing data, making conclusions, sharing their findings with others,

reflecting on their work, and creating artifacts (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991).

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN THE FIELD OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

While some informal research (e.g., Coleman, 1992; Gardner, 1995; Hilton-Jones, 1988) suggests that project-based instruction results in higher student motivation, improved language skills, and teacher/student satisfaction, only a few empirical studies have been conducted to evaluate the effects of project work on language learning. In 1999, Beckett found only one empirical study devoted to PBL in SLA. Since then, there have been a few more studies conducted and described that examine project work in the context of SLA. The majority of these studies have been devoted to English as a Second Language (ESL), and only a few have involved other languages. It is important to notice that these studies include a wide range of student ages and proficiency levels. The following section provides a brief summary of the empirical research of PBL in the field of SLA.

This research includes Eyring's (1989) study on the implementation of project-based instruction in ESL classes including teachers' and students' responses to this instruction; Turnbull's (1999) case study on the effectiveness of multidimensional project-based teaching in French classes; Beckett's (1999) study investigating PBL in four ESL classes focusing on teacher and student evaluations of PBL methodology and on investigation of their goals; Luke's (2004) evaluative case study investigating an implementation of an inquiry-based learning approach for teaching Spanish and

analyzing linguistic and educational gains; Sidman-Taveau's (2005) study on learners' experience and linguistic development with a computer-assisted version of project-based learning in ESL classrooms; Kobayashi's (2006) study of students' meaning-making efforts through oral presentation and other project-related activities such as journal writing; and Tims' (2009) study exploring students' perception of PBL through their own experience of it through in-depth phenomenological interviewing.

Eyring (1989) conducted a case study in an ESL classroom at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research focused on teacher and student evaluations of project work. In particular, the study was designed 1) to document teachers' experiences implementing project-based instruction for the first time, and 2) to report students' attitudinal and proficiency responses to this form of instruction. Participants included two ESL teachers and three ESL classes. The project work method was implemented in one class and compared to two comparison groups where traditional methods were applied. In the project class, the negotiated syllabus involved students working collaboratively throughout one academic quarter on guides to the city of Los Angeles.

Eyring's results are somewhat contradictory to the generally positive accounts in SLA literature. On one hand, students in the project group reported higher satisfaction than students in the comparison group, but there were no significant differences in overall language learning strategy or proficiency gains (listening, reading, grammar, or writing) between the students in the project course and those in the comparison classes. Furthermore, the results of this study show that teachers' evaluations may be mixed, as the implementation of the method proved challenging for them. The teacher found the

creation of a negotiated curriculum in project work to be difficult since it required much more work than traditional instruction. She reports taking on the demanding roles of materials developer, resource distributor, and manager, which led to frustration and overall dissatisfaction with the project.

In contrast, Turnbull (1999), who implemented a study with middle school French students, found PBL to be a viable alternative for second language instruction. Turnbull's case study examined the effectiveness of a teaching approach based on a multidimensional project-based curriculum in four sections of core French language classes (grade nine). With their instructors' guidance, students were supposed to work on a semester-long project that focused on developing their speaking skills. The observation data suggest that the four teacher participants were implementing the multidimensional project-based approach in very different ways. Based on the class observations, the researcher divided the four teachers into two groups: two teachers used a "multidimensional project based" approach (integrating linguistic, cultural, communicative and general education goals with an experiential focus) and two teachers used a "less-multidimensional" approach (focusing primarily on grammar).

To determinate possible effects of the multidimensional project-based approach, all 86 students in four sections completed pre- and post-tests of overall French proficiency, pre- and post-questionnaires, and achievement tests. The scores of these tests were compared across classes (using ANOVA, a Tukey test, and ANCOVA) according to their teacher's pedagogical approach. Students from the multidimensional project-based classes obtained higher test scores than those in the less-multidimensional classes on

some components of the French proficiency and achievement tests. These test results led to the conclusion that the implemented project had a positive effect on students' language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

However, Turnbull points out that "it was not possible to conclude with certainty that project-based multidimensional teaching was the single cause of superior test performance by the students from the multidimensional project-based classes," and that "student involvement in curriculum decisions, a dual form-meaning focus, and teachers' uses of French" are located as possible confounding factors. For example, the difference in use of L2 ranged between 9% and 89%. The researcher's results, thus, suggest a significant gain in students' language performance, but at the same time point out serious bewildering factors that might have affected the linguistic advances.

Beckett (1999) investigated PBL in four Canadian secondary school ESL classes including 73 student participants from China as well as Canadian ESL instructors. Like Eyring, the researcher focused on teacher and student evaluations of PBL but also incorporated investigation of their goals. Students examined English language words, conducted a survey on the issue of child abuse, and wrote reports on these topics. The investigator conducted and analyzed interviews, class observations of the implemented projects, and examined students' written work.

Beckett found positive evaluations from teachers of the project-based instruction, but mixed student responses. A discrepancy was also found between the specific goals that the teachers tried to achieve through project-based instruction and the goals that are mentioned in general PBL literature. In addition to the generally defined goals

(challenging students' activity, fostering independence, decision-making, cooperative learning, critical thinking and learning skills) the teachers set up three new goals, namely: socialization of ESL students into the target school culture, the language socialization of ESL students into the target social cultures, and teaching academic skills in context.

Luke (2004), in his evaluative case study, set up a goal to: a) implement and document an inquiry-based learning approach for teaching Spanish in a fourth-semester university class and b) provide an analysis of some of the linguistic and educational gains realized by students in the class. The teacher-researcher replaced the traditional curriculum of a fourth-semester, university-level Spanish class with an inquiry-based "Star Legacy" curriculum designed by Schwartz et al. (1999). Students in the class were invited to self-select inquiry topics, generate their own research questions, research their topics through various online and offline sources, and create multimedia presentations to share their work with fellow students. Computer activities were supplemented with individual, small group, and whole class activities that fostered the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills by using the materials the students collected.

Data in this study included anecdotal records of the teacher-researcher, field notes recorded by a research assistant, interview transcriptions, and multiple student-generated documents. Based on the analysis of these data, the following results were concluded: 1) student reception of the project-based methodology was mixed; 2) students became more conscientious about using all of their linguistic resources strategically; 3) all of the students exhibited a measure of self-assessment, self-reflection, and self-awareness, and

4) the openness and student-centered nature of the curriculum resulted in an experience that was distinct for each student. Although Luke presents a detailed insight into the project implementation and a thorough description of the students' experience, it should be noted that all linguistic gains are based on the students' self-perception rather than on quantitative data.

In her study, Sidman-Taveau (2005) investigated the learners' experience and linguistic development with a computer-assisted version of PBL in two ESL classes. The study also examined the instructional features of formative assessment and reflection in the PBL methodology and the various challenges the approach may pose within a second language context. Inductive analysis was employed to analyze a combination of data, which included baseline background and final skill level questionnaires, class observations, field notes, regular class recordings, teacher journals, student work, formative assessment, reflection, and actual projects as well as student and teacher interviews.

The researcher reported that the effective outcomes were predominately positive in both classes despite a variety of circumstantial challenges in the teaching context and that the students developed independence, higher order thinking, and electronic literacy skills. They also developed specific English language skills and language learning strategies. The teachers faced challenges similar to those reported in previous literature on PBL and they did not experience challenges exclusive to second language instruction.

To resolve the discrepancies between student/teacher evaluation of PBL, Beckett and Slater introduced a methodological tool called "The Project Framework" and they

describe the research that tested it in an undergraduate university ESL classroom (Beckett & Slater, 2005). The Framework was designed for ESL students as a tool that will enable students to see the value of project-based instruction by making explicit the various components which work together to promote higher level academic literacy: language, thinking skills, and content knowledge. Fifty-seven students, in three content-based, undergraduate classes received the planning framework graphic, the project diary, and an example of a project that could be undertaken on the topic of ecosystems. Over the course of a fourteen-week semester, students worked on their respective projects, and additionally created their own planning framework graphic and kept project diaries.

The teacher's examination of the students' frameworks and project diaries indicated that the students understood their tasks and were able to articulate their project plans and goals. Additionally, researchers analyzed student interviews and teacher data that showed that the majority of the students (79%) clearly acknowledged an understanding of the content-based approach to ESL learning. The researchers concluded that, "The Framework allowed the students to see the value of project-based instruction by making explicit the various components. It also promoted self-motivation by encouraging students to chart their own goals in a simple graphic format, then to use the graphic to navigate their way through the project, and address all the components they had included" (Beckett & Slater, 2005).

The goal of Kobayashi's study (2006) was to better understand L2 students' learning of language and culture/content through their participation in a project presentation. Over the course of a semester, students were involved in a research project

where they were required to make observations about cultural actions and events at chosen sites and to consider how these observations might relate to the subject matter of the course. The project entailed two major end products: an oral group presentation and a research paper.

Kobayashi employed an ethnographic case study approach, triangulating audio-recorded observations of students' project-related activities in and out of class, collections of relevant documents and products (journals, reports), and semi-structured audio-recorded interviews with students and teachers. Kobayashi's analysis revealed that the project had a positive effect on some students' language (use of a variety of verbs, expressions, phrases, etc.) and on making connections between the intercultural communications they were studying in class and their fieldwork experience. At the same time, some students failed to make connections between the theoretical framework of their respective course and practical implications observed during their field experience and made no gains or minimal gains in their language proficiency.

In her study, Tims (2009) explored students' perception regarding the implementation of PBL through in-depth phenomenological interviewing. The six participants in this study were enrolled in level five of a six-level ESL program at a community college, which prepares students to function in English-speaking countries and to pursue an academic degree. The students' proficiency in English ranged from high-intermediate to advanced level.

The study participants took part in a series of seven projects (the career project, the reading seminar project, the interview for a job project, the immigration project, the

book reading project, and the vocabulary and its meaning project) that were implemented as a way for students to practice the grammar topics they studied during the semester and to improve their reading skills. The project resulted in several outcomes, namely, oral presentations, a PowerPoint presentation, a job application, a resume, a job interview, and a handout.

The study results show that the participants enjoyed participating in project activities because these activities: 1) helped them organize their ideas to present to the classroom; 2) allowed the participants to practice for real life situations; 3) let them choose up-to-date topics according to their interests; 4) taught them useful presentation skills that could be applied to any circumstance. Overall, the implementation of project-based methodology in this particular class proved to be successful and positively accepted by the students.

As mentioned earlier, while Project-Based Learning is becoming more popular in the field of SLA, empirical research is very scarce. In summary, the empirical studies focus on student/teacher perception of project-based instruction while neglecting other commonly cited benefits in informal studies, specifically: language skills, motivation, and content knowledge. Overall, these studies tell us little about specific types of students learning through PBL and they demonstrate a need to extend our knowledge of the specific teaching issues that emerge with PBL in second language classroom settings. There is a need for second language research that examines the practice and effects of project-based instruction in SLA education in general and on specific language skills in particular. Additionally, more research should be done in languages other than ESL.

READING COMPREHENSION IN SLA

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that is essential for linguistic system acquisition. In the case of L2 reading comprehension, the reader uses previous knowledge to construct and integrate meaning from text (Carell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988; Koda, 2005; Nassaji, 2002). Reading comprehension involves complex cognitive processing that encompasses lower-level processes (word recognition, syntactic parsing, and semantic-proposition encoding) and higher-level processing (text-model formation, situation-model building, inferencing, executive-comparison processing, and strategic processing). The different types of cognitive processing outlined above interact, often operating simultaneously, and are unique for individual readers. Our current understanding of L2 reading comprehension is further complicated by intervening variables, such as various reading abilities, reading purposes, motivation, reading strategies, and first-language to second second-language interactions that may affect the quantity and quality of comprehension.

The body of literature on reading in a second language setting is far-reaching — drawing on and contributing to a number of distinct disciplines, most notably linguistics, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and education. It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to cover the history or even the most current research on reading comprehension in its entirety. Instead, this chapter presents research about the key issues that were fundamental for the implemented project, which was designed to utilize the full potential of reading materials and students' individuality. In particular, it addresses the following matters: a) reader's background knowledge and interest; b) textual

characteristics (topic, genre, and authenticity); and c) reading purpose (reading for content or reading as a base for other language skills).

READER'S BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE AND TOPIC INTEREST

Acknowledging the rich evidence indicating that language proficiency is a precondition for reading proficiency, researchers and practitioners often emphasize the need for various learner aids that can perhaps outweigh L2 readers' limited competence and allow them to become more successful readers. One of the most frequently mentioned aids is utilizing reader's previous knowledge and topic interest. As Eskey states: "No matter how well a student may know a language, he cannot read in that language with good comprehension if the subject of the text is one he knows absolutely nothing about and therefore can have no real interest in" (Dubin, Eskey, Grabe, 1986, p. 6).

Since the mid-1980s, studies on interest have been conducted in light of the useful distinction between situational and individual interest (Alexander, 1998; Tobias, 1994). Situational interest is generated by certain conditions, such as novelty and intensity that contribute to the attentiveness of a situation. Individual interest is an evaluative orientation toward certain domains. Topic interest is a somewhat ambiguous expression (Hidi, 2000), as it has been used as a specific form of individual interest (e.g., Schiefele, 1996) and considered a form of situational interest by others (e.g., Hidi & McLaren, 1991).

Topic interest, or whether reading material is sufficiently interesting for readers to focus their attention and make efforts to read for comprehension, has been proven to have

an important role in SLA. The impact of reader interest on comprehension implies the value of allowing readers to select their own texts and as Krashen (1988) suggests: “Self-selected reading should motivate foreign language students as it does first language students, who frequently prove to read more and better when allowed to read what they prefer”.

However, studies devoted to the effect of topic interest on reading comprehension have shown contradicting results. L1 research addressing the question of interest and its relationship to reading comprehension mostly suggests that high interest is associated with superior reading comprehension (Asher, 1980; Stanchfield, 1967) and some researchers have found that interest has a greater effect on readers of lower ability levels (Vaughan, 1975). However, results in the field of L2 are even more contradictory. While some earlier studies report minimal or no correlation between topic interest and reading comprehension (Carrell and Wise, 1998; Jon, 2006), other studies report that topic interest has a significant effect (LeLoup, 1993; Lee, 2009). Contradictory evidence among varying studies suggests the complex nature of topic interest and possible interactions with other variables, such as background knowledge.

Any discussions of background knowledge must necessarily include an explanation of schema theory since much L2 reading research derives from this theory. Essentially, schema theory emphasizes highly organized, generic knowledge structures called schemata that “are a reader’s existing concepts about the world” (Barnett, 1989, p. 42) and “knowledge already stored in memory” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 255). According to Barnett, “[Schemata] constitute the framework into which the reader must

fit what she or he understands from the text. If new textual information does not make sense in terms of reader's schemata, the material is comprehended in a different way or ignored, or the schemata are revised to match the new facts" (Barnett, 1989, p. 42). In other words, schemata allow a reader to make inferences and fill in gaps with information not explicitly stated in a text (Kitao, 1987), instead relying on his or her background knowledge.

SLA theorists viewed background knowledge as prior knowledge of topics presented in the texts (i.e., content schemata). In the 1990s this view was broadened and the concept of background knowledge was expanded by such factors as knowledge of rhetorical features, text structure (i.e., formal schemata), reading strategies, and cultural patterns (Alexander, Schallert, and Hare, 1991). Currently, background knowledge refers to both content and formal schemata.

The role of prior knowledge in what a student understands and how he or she comprehends a text has been highlighted in many studies. Research in SLA has shown that greater levels of background knowledge in a given subject matter contribute to richer analyses and textual interpretations and better reading comprehension (e.g., Bernhardt, 1991; Ellis, 2001; Graesser, Singer, & Trabasso, 1994; Kintsch, 1998; Lee, 1997; Nassaji, 2002; Robinson, 1995, 2003; Rumelhart, 1980; Schank & Abelson, 1977). A prevailing view of the mechanism to account for how background knowledge facilitates comprehension is based upon connectionist principles. Here, knowledge emerges in the course of reading as the reader constructs a textbase (that is a propositional representation of the information expressed in a text) which then "becomes integrated into the reader's

global knowledge, forming a coherent mental representation of what the text is about” (Nassaji, 2002, p. 453).

In addition to the above-mentioned benefits of prior knowledge, research has proven that L2 students with different levels of background knowledge read for different purposes (McNamara & Kintsch, 1996; Voss & Silfies, 1996). Those with low-level background knowledge read with the purpose of gaining comprehension, and students with high-level background knowledge read to build a more elaborative knowledge base and draw more selectively from the text (Grabe, 2009, p.11).

TEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS: AUTHENTICITY, TOPIC, AND GENRE

Reading comprehension is conditioned by a complex interplay of reader and text variables referred to as interactive processing (Barnett, 1989, p. 36). During this processing, the reader interacts with the text and creates meaning as his or her mental processes interact with each other at different levels (e.g., letter, lexical, syntactic, or semantic) to make text meaningful (Carell, 1987b; Rumelhart, 1977). The central role of the reader in the reading process has been predominant in SLA theory and the reading process is considered primarily reader-based. As Barnett points out “[L2 theorists] believe that reader purposes, cognitive skill, language proficiency, strategies, and background knowledge and schemata contribute more to comprehension than do the graphic, syntactic, and semantic symbols of the text itself” (1989, p. 36).

Although, the focus of reading comprehension research has moved from simple text examination to complex interplay of reader and text variables: “the text as the entity to be comprehended must enter into consideration, specialists also study the impact of

text variables: typology, structure, grammar, vocabulary, and cohesion” (Barnett, 1989, 36). Moreover, Pulido and Hambrick (2008) point out that “according to connectionist models (e.g., Koda, 2005, 2007; Nassaji, 2002) the generic knowledge structures, or background knowledge, that are accessed during reading are largely determined by the quality of the textbase that the learner constructs”. However, the focus on textual characteristics has shifted from lower-level textual characteristics to higher-level ones, as summarized by Barnett: “Text selection criteria have become less dependent on readability formulas based on text length, sentence length, or vocabulary/ new-word density; more important are reader interest, type of text, text structure, authenticity, and the match between reader and text schemata” (1989, p. 144).

One of the most common text selection criteria has been text authenticity. Researchers generally define an authentic text as a text originally created to fulfill a social purpose in the language community for which it was intended (e.g., Grellet, 1981; Lee, 1995; Little, Devitt & Singleton, 1989). According to this definition, short stories, novels, poems, newspaper and magazine articles, theater programs, notes, e-mails, advertisements, travel brochures, tickets, timetables, and such written in the target language for the genre-intended target language audience can all be considered authentic texts.

Although the use of authentic reading texts has been favored for all levels of L2 students over the past two decades (e.g., Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Swaffar, 1985; Tomlinson, Bao, Masuhara, & Rubdy, 2001) and their suggestion has been supported by numerous studies providing evidence of positive effects of authentic texts on reading

comprehension (e.g., Oh, 2001; Rott, 2004; Wong, 2003; Young, 1999), the majority of learning texts still depend on simplified input, and as Crossley (2007) states “many material writers and L2 specialists continue to emphasize the practical value of simplified texts, especially for beginning and intermediate L2 learners (e.g., Johnson, 1981, 1982; Shook, 1997; Young, 1999)”.

Another text characteristic that is frequently mentioned as an important textual feature is its topic. Numerous studies, most noticeably Krashen (1989) and M. Lee (1996) have proven and supported the positive role of students’ familiarity with the text’s content on their reading comprehension. Furthermore, Carell (1987) reported that content knowledge is a more significant factor in reading comprehension than knowledge of text structure. Utilizing the potential of a reader’s familiarity with the topic of the text (by positively relating to their background knowledge) can even help students overcome some of their linguistic deficiencies as reported by Hudson (1982), Mohammaed and Swales (1984).

Providing narrow input for reading development in a foreign language has been suggested and advocated by Krashen (1985) and practitioners working on content-based instruction because it offers familiar context, multiple exposures, and reduced cognitive load. First, Krashen (1985) argues that reading in a single topic has the advantage of a familiar context, as reading in one area leads to greater knowledge of that area. Consequently, further reading can rely more heavily on background knowledge, which leads to better comprehension of the reading material. Second, narrow reading provides multiple exposures to new language items to be learned. As each topic operates with its

own vocabulary, the narrow reading on one topic can provide repeated exposure to language items within a meaningful context. Third, narrow reading on a single topic area is more likely to free the reader's working memory allowing them to explore a topic in a more profound way.

Parry (1993) and M. Lee's (1996) investigations of narrow reading, defined as a series of readings that are arranged around a shared topic and overlap in language as well as content, recognize the benefits of being exposed to the semantic redundancy available through extended reading about one topic. These results seem to confirm the hypothesis that "familiarity with textual subject matter seems to compensate for low language proficiency" and that "reading familiar material in beginning classes is that logical reasoning seems to enhance learning" (Swaffar, Arens, Byrnes, 1991, p. 53). Some researchers, however, showed that textual content could negatively affect reading comprehension when students allow background knowledge to interfere extensively or in an erroneous manner (Bernhardt, 1991; Lee, 1986).

In any case, the choice of the text topics is often guided by the textbook or the instructor, as implied in a recent call for more diverse and student driven text selections beyond the traditional scope of L2 readings. Grabe suggests that, "student surveys, appropriately developed, would reveal the value of an instrumentalist orientation to language learning. Students might value a FL ability that allows them to read and apply L2 information to their own disciplinary work, whether the discipline is business, engineering, chemistry, mathematics, psychology, or forestry" (Grabe, 2010, p. 13).

Topical familiarity has been shown to offer benefits similar to genre familiarity on students' reading comprehension. Similar benefits that topical familiarity has proven to have on students' reading comprehension are often attributed to genre familiarity. Genres (or text types) are "text varieties that are readily recognized and 'named' within a culture (e.g., letters, press editorials, sermons, conversations)" (Biber, 1993) and, thus, genres can be characterized by reference to co-occurring linguistic features. Although this definition suggests a broad variety of genres, the vast majority of literature takes into account only a general level of text classification. The extensive amount of possible genres results in a simplified division of text into two genres: narrative and expository texts. Graesser et al. (1991) noted that whether they relate actual or fictitious events, narratives are composed of story-like elements such as characters, temporal and spatial placements, and episodes or sequences of events. Expository texts, on the other hand, are intended to inform and use communication strategies such as orientation and clarification to convey information to the reader (Larson, 1984). However, as Weaver and Kintsch (1991) point out, the distinction between expository and narrative texts is not absolute. Narrative texts such as fables, for example, have a clear didactic purpose. Expository texts may contain some narrative elements and may be entertaining as well as informative.

Text type is the major component of the reading-level definition in the ACTFL *Proficiency Guidelines* (1999). However, as Bernhardt points out: "The genre question at present remains principally one of the use of literary texts" and that "Data collections on how commentaries, editorials, perspectives, cultural essays, and the like are processed

and how meaning is constructed from very dense text fraught with deep cultural, social and historical allusions are virtually non-existent” (Bernhardt, 2010, p. 59). As indicated by Bernhardt, very little research examining the relationship of the text genres to reading comprehension has been conducted with L2 learners. Furthermore, the few L2 studies that have reported comprehension scores for narrative and expository texts have reached divergent conclusions.

The results of Bensoussan's study (1990) show greater difficulty in comprehending narrative texts in comparison to expository texts. This is attributed to reading comprehension of narrative texts showed significantly higher mistranslation rates than the expository text. This effect was found across nearly all discourse categories (prepositional content, vocabulary and expressions, pronoun agreement and communicative function). In contrast with these findings, DuBravac and Dalle (2002) found greater miscomprehension of expository texts. The number of questions indicating that the students had misunderstood parts of the text was significantly higher for expository texts (24%), compared to a 6% miscomprehension rate for narrative texts. These findings were supported by Foss' (2009) study that reports significantly higher recall comprehension scores for narrative texts, as opposed to expository ones. Furthermore, she determined that L2 proficiency contributed significantly less to comprehension of the narrative genre than to the expository genre.

Generally, research has shown that expository and narrative texts impose different demands on readers (Grabe, 2002) and that “Readers adjust reading purposes to account

for different types of texts and perform differently on various postreading measures” (Grabe, 2009, p.11).

READING TO ACQUIRE INFORMATION

Although the issue of reading for different purposes is not of major interest in current reading research, some studies validate a correlation between different reading purposes and reading comprehension (Alderson, 2000; Horiba, 2000), demonstrating how readers approach different tasks and comprehend texts differently based on the purpose of their reading.

As stated by Bernhardt, “reading is often used in instructional settings as practice material. In fact, texts are often used to illustrate particular grammatical features that learners are meant to acquire” (2010, pp. 2-3). Written texts are often used for language purposes or as material for “translation practice, grammatical analysis, vocabulary study and, finally, test questions” (Bergethon & Braun, 1963, p. ix). Less often, reading in instructional settings is used for cultural and/or personal enrichment (Lazar, 2005; Collie, 1990).

There are numerous reasons why people read; for example, Grabe (2009) provides six major purposes for reading within academic settings (searching information, quick understanding, learning, integrating information, evaluating, critiquing, using information, and general comprehension). The issue is not locating all possible purposes for reading but rather determining what reason for reading corresponds best with higher educational goals and what approach to reading has proven to be more beneficial for L2

learners' language acquisition. The next step is finding ways of creating language classes and learning materials that will take full advantage of these purposes.

As has been pointed out by Swaffar et al., "In high school and college, students listen, read and write for purposes other than learning a foreign language" and "... in the United States *the goal of instruction in foreign languages has been to learn the language rather than to use the language to learn*" (Swaffar, Arens, Byrnes, 1991, p. 29). The extensive use of reading to learn the language both contradicts the general reasons for reading (enrichment, entertainment, acquiring information, etc.) and makes transition to higher proficiency levels more difficult. This is because novice- and intermediate-level students often believe that reading is preconditioned by superior language knowledge and thus they seldom attempt to read on their own, missing out on the numerous benefits reading can provide for their second language acquisition. Reading in a foreign language, thus, should be seen and used as a gateway to language acquisition and/or education in general rather than the ultimate goal of L2 instruction.

Additionally, many scholars (Grabe, 2010; Sternfeld, 1989; Swaffar et al, 1991) advocate for an early subject-matter emphasis, where learning a language includes exploring a variety of subjects through the second language. This emphasis should not be limited to fiction, as pointed out by Grabe "the path to a very high proficiency level should not be limited to literature and culture as the sole content-focus for learning" (2010, p. 14) and should take into consideration students' individual interests both within their respective foreign language training and beyond the L2 classroom.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter described the theoretical framework behind this study and the relevant literature. This chapter will delineate the study itself. In particular, it first presents the research questions and hypotheses; then it describes the study participants, treatment, and the experimental procedures; finally, it discusses the measurement tools used to assess the study groups' performances, the data collection and analyses.

As already mentioned in Chapter One, the purpose of this study is to locate possible effects of a reading project on second-year Russian learners' performance in reading comprehension, language proficiency, and their reading habits and beliefs regarding FL. To examine these possible effects the following research questions were selected:

1. How does implementing an interactive reading project affect students' reading comprehension, their reading habits and beliefs regarding FL, perceived reading skills, and overall language proficiency?
2. Do variables such as gender and previous study of other foreign languages influence the measurements stated in the question above?

To answer these questions, this study followed the standard approach to classroom-based research by measuring one group's performance against another's. It also examined each group's performance independently in order to assess how each responded to their respective pedagogical treatment.

In order to answer the research questions stated above, I set out to test the following null hypotheses:

1. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in reading comprehension (as measured by the pre- and post-test recalls) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.
2. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in reading habits and beliefs regarding FL (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions and on the interviews) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.
3. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in their perceived reading skills (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.
4. Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in overall language achievement (as

measured by written and oral departmental exams) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

5. Gender and previous study of other foreign languages will have no effect on the above-mentioned measurements.

To test the hypotheses, the following measures gathered during the semester were used for both between and within group analyses:

1. A pre- and post-test of reading recall
2. An attitudinal survey about reading habits and beliefs regarding foreign language learning taken with both the pre- and post-tests
3. A pre- and post-test interview
4. Five departmentally produced unit written exams
5. A departmental oral language exam

PARTICIPANTS

As outlined in Chapter One, the participants of this quasi-experimental study were enrolled in a third-semester Russian course at the University of Texas at Austin in the fall semester of 2009. During the semester, 26 students were enrolled in two sections of Russian 412K, with an equal number of thirteen students in each section. The class met for fifty minutes four times a week: one section met at 10 a.m., the other at 11 a.m. Both classes were held in the same classroom on the university campus.

Students in these two sections were comparable and homogenous in their language level and in their previous Russian language experience. They were all at the

intermediate level of instruction, received a very similar amount of previous contact hours, and were enrolled at the same university the previous semester. Study participants were recruited from among students in these two sections of the course.

Basic demographic information about the study participants was collected through a pre-test online questionnaire, which consisted of three sections. The first section collected background information about the study participants, the second section was an attitudinal survey, and the third section focused on students' perceived reading skills. The data collected from the online pre-test questionnaire were supplemented by the information from the semi-structured interview that followed the collection of the questionnaire data.

Regarding demographic data on the participants - of the 10 participants, 6 were female (60 percent) and 4 were male (40 percent). The respondents' average age was 19.9 years old, where 18 was the youngest and 24 the oldest. Of the 10 participants, 1 was a freshman (10 percent); 5 were sophomores (50 percent); 1 was a junior (10 percent); and 3 were seniors (30 percent).

Since this study involved prior knowledge and area of interest, it was thought that having some idea of the participants' majors would be useful in characterizing the sample, and in generalizing to a larger population. Pursuing a particular field of study or line of work also implies particular experience. Because the study was conducted with students enrolled in a university program, it was assumed that many of the students would be pursuing an undergraduate degree and perhaps would have some professional experience. Therefore, students were asked to report on these assumptions. Of this group

of 10 students, six reported studying a single major, while four students reported having a double major. Specifically, they reported having studied at the undergraduate level in the fields of government (4), economics (2), history (2), Russian (1), East European Studies (1), Plan II-Liberal Arts Honors Program (1), journalism (1), theatre and dance (1), and mechanical engineering (1).

To find out about participants' linguistic background, four questions were asked and the following results were discovered. Of the 10 participants, all 10 participants had completed two semesters of regular Russian language instruction during the previous academic year. None of the participants had ever participated in a Russian study abroad program, nor did any participant speak Russian at home, nor were native speaker of Russian. Of the 10 respondents, 8 had learned other foreign or second languages and two had not. Most commonly the respondents reported having studied Spanish, German, and/or French in high school. Below is a chart summarizing the basic demographic and linguistic data found in the questionnaire and the follow-up interview.

Table 1 - Participants' Demographic and Linguistic Background Information

	All Participants	Treatment Group	Comparison Group
Gender	Male: 4 Female: 6	Male: 1 Female: 4	Male: 3 Female: 2
Average Age	19.9	20	19.8
Year in College	Freshman: 1 Sophomore: 5 Junior: 1 Senior: 3	Freshman: 0 Sophomore: 2 Junior: 1 Senior: 2	Freshman: 1 Sophomore: 3 Junior: 0 Senior: 1
Length of Russian study (in semesters)	2	2	2
Studied other languages	8	4	4
Native speaker of Russian	0	0	0
Speaks Russian at home	0	0	0
Participated in Russian abroad program	0	0	0

As the chart indicates, the treatment group consisted of 5 students: 4 were female, 1 was male. The average age was 20, with 21 being the oldest and 19 the youngest. Of the 5 participants in the treatment group none were freshman (0 percent); 2 were sophomores (40 percent); 1 was a junior (20 percent); and 2 were seniors (40 percent). All students had completed two semesters of Russian language instruction and of the 5 participants, 4 previously studied other foreign languages.

As the chart indicates, the comparison group consisted of 5 students: 2 were female, 3 were male. The average age was 19.8, with 24 being the oldest and 18 the

youngest. Of the 5 participants in the comparison group 1 was a freshman (20 percent); 3 were sophomores (60 percent); 0 were juniors (0 percent); and 1 was a senior (20 percent). All students had completed two semesters of Russian language instruction and of the 5 participants, 4 previously studied other foreign languages.

TREATMENT

The treatment group was involved in a project entitled “Semester Project: Let's Read” («Курсовой проект: Давайте читаем»). Throughout the semester each student worked with a set of three texts that were related to a topic of his or her own interest. The project entailed interconnected sets of sequenced tasks during which students were actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery. The same general steps, as described below, were followed each reading. First, students searched for a specific reading on the Internet. Second, students worked individually on their readings in class. Third, they shared their findings in class. Even though the texts were used primarily for enhancing reading comprehension, they also provided students with a basis for developing other language skills, specifically speaking, listening, and writing, but also grammar, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural awareness. This was done via numerous and various exercises, which stemmed from the readings, and were employed throughout the semester. The treatment is described in detail in Chapter Four.

MEASUREMENT TOOLS

The following section will discuss in more detail the five measurement tools mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: the pre- and post-reading test, the attitudinal survey, the semi-structured interview, the written departmentally produced unit exams, and the oral departmental exam.

THE PRE- AND POST-TREATMENT READING TEST

The pre- and post-test used in this research study consisted of four short texts and a written recall protocol for each. Both the texts and their accompanying tasks were identical for the pre- and post-test.

Four authentic, unedited, expository texts, each featuring a different topic, were used. All subjects read four texts because research has shown that reliance on performance based on a single text invites spurious results and can result in erroneous conclusions (Bernhardt, 1991). The texts used in this experiment were presented in their original format, they were screen captured by OneNote software from the Internet and copied to the survey.

The texts were chosen from equivalent sources in order to maintain equality in the language difficulty level. Two texts, the newspaper articles, were chosen from the Russian BBC news website. And two texts, the movie reviews, were selected from a movie fan website “InoeKino.” The four texts on the pre- and post-test represented two different genres, newspaper articles and movie reviews, and two kinds of topics, familiar and unfamiliar. In other words, the first text was a newspaper article on a familiar topic,

the second text a newspaper article on an unfamiliar topic, the third text was a review of a familiar movie, and the fourth text was a review of an unfamiliar movie.

All four texts were of a comparable length, with 232.5 words on average and contained visual aids in the form of photographs related to their respective topic. The main characteristics of the four texts are summarized in the table below.

Table 2 - Basic Textual Characteristics of the Reading Test

Text Number	Title	Genre	Topic Familiarity	Length (in words)	Avg. Sentence Length (in words)
1	Америка простилась с Эдвардом Кеннеди	Newspaper article	Familiar	237	15.8
2	Большинство россиян хочет выбирать губернаторов	Newspaper article	Unfamiliar	181	18.1
3	Кинг Конг (1933)	Movie review	Familiar	285	20.3
4	Вор (1997)	Movie review	Unfamiliar	227	20.6

The first text (Appendix A) was a newspaper article from the Russian version of BBC online. The article was entitled “America paid last respects to Edward Kennedy” («Америка простилась с Эдвардом Кеннеди») and described the farewell ceremonies for Senator Kennedy. The article covered a topic that had been in the national and local news in the past couple of weeks and was most likely familiar to the students. The article contained 237 words and two color pictures, one of military men carrying the senator’s coffin, the other of the President during the obituary speech. As is standard for a

newspaper article, it consisted of a headline, the introductory paragraph and three subsections.

The second text (Appendix B) was a newspaper article from the same source entitled “The majority of Russians would prefer to elect governors” («Большинство россиян хочет выбирать губернаторов») and talked about a recent survey revealing that the majority of Russians want a reinstallation of direct governor elections. The article addressed a topic that had not been in the national news nor covered extensively in the international news and most likely students were not familiar with it. The article contained 181 words and a color photograph of an elderly woman casting her vote into an election box. It consisted of the same aspects as the first article: a headline, summary, and body.

The third text (Appendix C) was a film review from the online movie fan site “InoeKino”. The review was of an American classic “King Kong” («Кинг Конг») from 1933. It contained 285 words and a color picture of the DVD cover that shows the character of King Kong against the background of New York City, with the name of the movie in English. The main body of the review contained several parts typical for a movie review: an introduction retelling the story, a few facts about its origin and production, and a closing paragraph about the music and the budget. Apart from the main text, there were a few other texts: a drop down menu for reviews of the movie stating in Russian “Vote,” a tab for buying a DVD with word “Purchase” in Russian, and a list of names of directors and a few actors transliterated into Russian.

The fourth text (Appendix D) was also a film review from the same website. The article reviewed a Russian movie “Thief” («Bop») from 1997. Even though the movie has been released in the US, it has never become widely popular. The review contained 227 words and a color picture of the DVD cover with close-ups of the three main characters. The text retold the main plot, mentioned two versions of the movie, gave the reviewer’s opinion of the film and listed awards the film had received. The page contained the same two extraneous features as the previous text: a review and a purchase tab.

All four readings were coherent texts with distinct, easily identifiable structural characteristics. The texts were comparable in their overall level of difficulty and in the majority of textual features that are usually mentioned when describing expository texts, which are essentially informational and intended to produce new insights. Moreover, the two newspaper articles and two movie reviews contained features typical for their respective genres. Both newspaper articles contained three parts: headline, summary, and the main body. Both movie reviews contained a brief plot summary, a few production facts, and a reviewer’s opinion.

Regarding the grammar and vocabulary, all four texts contained cognates, false cognates, familiar words, familiar stems, and unfamiliar words. The articles also contained certain constructions and grammar that had not been part of classroom instruction, such as verbal adverbs, participles, fixed phrases, and so on. Of course, there were certain vocabulary and grammar that was covered during the semester, so although students were not familiar with it during the pre-test study, they were exposed to it during the semester and would have been familiar with it during the post-test study.

THE PRE- AND POST-TREATMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire (Appendix E) consisted of three sections and was identical for pre- and post-treatment data collection. The first section gathered information on study participants, specifically on their demographic and linguistic background. The second section was an attitudinal survey aimed to find out more about participants' opinions about and attitudes towards reading and their experience with reading acquisition in a foreign language. The third section collected data on students' perception of their reading strategies.

The opening section contained ten questions and students were required either to select an answer or provide short answers. Data were collected to find out demographic and linguistic background of the participants. The questions asked for their initials (Q1), gender (Q2), age (Q3), years in college (Q4), undergraduate major (Q5), length of Russian study (Q6), if they had learned other foreign or second languages (Q7), if Russian was their native language (Q8), if they spoke Russian at home (Q9), and whether or not they had ever participated in a Russian study abroad program (Q10). The linguistic questions (Q5-Q10) aimed to find out about the students' prior experience with Russian and to identify those students with considerable exposure to Russian outside the school settings (those who were native speakers, had regular interaction with family members who were native speakers, or had lived in the target language country).

The second section contained fifteen questions that aimed to find out about students' attitudes towards and experience with L2 reading. More specifically, these questions focused on: 1) the relative importance of L2 reading for language learning (Q1-

3); 2) students' motivation towards reading in Russian (Q4-5); 3) the amount and sources of independent reading in Russian that students undertake outside of class (Q6-9); 4) students' attitudes toward the reading topics in previous classes (Q10-11); 5) types of readings students are mostly interested in (Q12-13); and 6) students' self-assessment of their current reading proficiency (Q14-15). The questions were based on Barnett's "Questionnaire to Elicit Perceived Strategy Use" (1989, pp. 194-8).

The last section contained fifteen questions that focused on the students' perceived reading strategies. More specifically, these questions were designed to find out whether students believe they employ strategies when reading in Russian and if so, which ones. More specifically, the questions focused on finding whether students build up expectations for the material they are about to read, anticipate and predict appropriate schemata, implement bottom-up or top-down strategies, integrate information obtained while reading, anticipate context, recognize text structure, solve vocabulary problems, question information in the text or interpret the text, and persist in attempting to read a text. The questions were adopted from Carrell's "Questionnaire – Reading in Spanish" (1989, pp. 131-2).

INTERVIEW

A semi-structured interview in English was conducted before and after the treatment was implemented, and both times following the questionnaire data collection. The pre- and post-treatment interview consisted of three identical sections that corresponded to the three sections of the questionnaire. The sections collected 1) demographic and linguistic data; 2) attitudinal information; and 3) perceived reading

skills estimates. The post-treatment interview contained an additional section that collected information about 4) students' experience with the project's implementation. The purpose of the interviews was to receive additional information on some of the issues raised in the questionnaire. In general, the focus of the interview was on students' habits and attitudes, which were addressed mainly in section two and section four (only for the post-treatment interview).

Section one of the pre-test questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that aimed at finding out information about participants' demographic and linguistic backgrounds. The data collected from the pre-test questionnaire were supplemented by the information gathered during the follow-up interview during which the participants were asked additional questions whenever they provided certain answers. For example the questionnaire asked, "Have you learned other foreign or second languages?" If they responded "yes" as their answer to this question, they were asked additional questions that aimed at finding additional information during the interview, such as what language or languages they had learned, for how long, etc. If the answer was "no," no follow-up questions were asked during the interview. In general, additional questions were about what other foreign or second languages the participant learned and/or in which Russian study abroad program they participated and for how long.

Section two aimed to find out participants' responses to the role of reading in relation to other language skills; causes of their gratification from and motivation to (or lack thereof) read in Russian; sources, topics, and genres of previous readings; time spent reading; specific favorite readings and readings that reflected personal interest; reading

goals; and sources and reasons for confidence (or lack thereof) and self-evaluation of their reading skills.

As section three of the questionnaire looked into how students perceive their reading skills in detail, during the interviews the subjects were asked to express their overall opinion of how they read Russian differently from how they read their native language.

Section four aimed at finding out more about the treatment group's experience with the project and thus was only a component of the post-treatment interview. The general goal of this part of the interview was to find out how students perceived the project's implementation, what their opinions of and experience with the project were. Thus a few questions about students' overall experience with the project and perceived strengths and weaknesses of it were asked during the post-treatment interview.

Only the treatment group was interviewed, as the purpose of the interview was to provide data for qualitative analysis of possible shifts caused by the project implementation. One of the study's goals was to investigate effects of implementing a reading project and thus the interview was intended to find out about the changes that the study participants who underwent the treatment experienced at the onset of application and after project completion.

DEPARTMENTALLY PRODUCED UNIT WRITTEN EXAMS

As there are no nationally accepted forms for establishing language proficiency in all skills areas, the departmentally produced unit exams (Appendix F) were used to evaluate students' overall language proficiency. Furthermore, it was believed that any

additional study measurement would become a burden on students and regular unit exams were already an integral part of the course. Also, as there were five unit exams throughout the semester, administered at the end of each chapter, regular assessment allowed the researcher to follow participants' gradual progress throughout the whole semester.

The focus of each exam was on the grammar and vocabulary of the unit being assessed, but each exam was cumulative in nature and contained material from previous instruction. Below is a chart that summarizes the main features of the five unit exams.

Table 3 - Characteristics of Departmentally Produced Unit Written Exams

Exam Number	Grammar/vocabulary tested	Number of exercises	Total points available
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- так versus такой- imperative- comparatives- reported statement- married/divorced- family	8	147
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- verbal aspect- verbs- phone etiquette- time prepositions- reported imperatives and wh-questions- health/illnesses	7	171
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- time- unprefixes verbs of motion- unidirectional and multidirectional verbs of motion- traveling	6	173
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- prefixed verbs of motion- verbs of motion and aspect- spatial prepositions- subjunctive mood- getting around- giving directions	5	136
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- possessive pronouns- genitive plural- reported speech- aspect after certain verbs- aspect after нельзя- describing people's character and habits	7	147

Each unit exam assessed material that was explicitly covered in nine 50-minute classes and through instruction and related homework assignments for each respective

unit. Students were familiar with the exam format, as it is used in all previous four semesters of Russian language instruction in the department program.

The structure of all five exams was similar, as they followed the same template. They all contained a listening part, a grammar and vocabulary part, and a composition part. The section on listening comprehension consisted of short recordings (:40 seconds to 1:42 minutes, with an average length of 1:18 minutes) that are played to students twice from a CD player. The listening was accompanied by a set of questions (7 to 8, on average) in English that required short answers in English. The grammar and vocabulary section consisted of 4-5 exercises of various formats (fill-in-the-blanks, rendering direct speech into indirect speech, answering questions, sentence transformations, translations, and multiple-choice exercises). These exercises tested both the grammar and vocabulary from the unit. The last section was a composition that tested the functional use of the grammar and vocabulary covered.

The exam grading is explained later in this chapter.

DEPARTMENTAL ORAL EXAM

A fifteen-minute individual oral interview was given during the final week of classes and consisted of three parts: reading, retelling a short story, and answering questions. The exam was proctored and graded by a section instructor.

During the interview, students first read aloud a passage from the video-script accompanying the textbook. The passage was assigned about two weeks in advance, and students were asked to rehearse their choice with the help of the video. The second part of the exam was a short talk on a topic of their choice that should have been developed in

eight to ten sentences, with all the appropriate vocabulary and grammar covered during the semester. Students were encouraged to write out the projected talk and give it to their instructor for revisions prior to the oral exam. They were asked to memorize the story beforehand, in order to be able to produce it naturally at the interview. Finally the instructor asked a few simple follow-up questions. Usually, these questions were related, topic- and vocabulary-wise, to the story they had just retold, but at the same time the questions were to make students use grammar and constructions that were covered during the semester but which did not appear in their short retells.

Each student's performance was evaluated from the point of view of accuracy of grammar, complexity of sentences, level of vocabulary used, and fluency of delivery. They received their grade immediately. The format and the grading of the oral exam had been used for this course in previous years and both instructors had had experience with conducting the final oral interviews.

PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place over the period of a fifteen-week semester. On the sixth day of class (out of 57), students were told about the study. I chose this particular point in the semester because it seemed a natural break, as the first six days of the semester were spent reviewing the past year's material and the regular instruction started on the seventh day of the semester when the first day of unit one was introduced. Moreover, the students were given an opportunity to finalize their schedules and settle into their new Russian class.

The introduction of the study took place on the same day and was alike in both sections of the course. Students were told about the study briefly and were given the opportunity to ask questions. They all received a Consent form (Appendix G) with detailed information about the study and were given a few days to consider participating in the study, which was to be determined by filling out the consent form and returning it to the instructor.

All students also received an e-mail summarizing the study, which also contained links to the online survey (one to the questionnaire, and one to the reading test) on the same day when the study was described to them in class. Those who decided to participate in the study were asked fill out the questionnaire over the coming weekend, giving students about four days to consider participation and to complete the pre-study online data collection.

The online data collection was administered through the survey software “SurveyMonkey” and consisted of two sections: questionnaire (Appendix E) and reading test (Appendices A-D). In order to follow the individual participant’s progress throughout the semester, each participant was asked to provide his or her initials on the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was introduced with the following note: “Data collected from this questionnaire will be used for completion of a doctoral degree in Russian applied linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin. The information gathered will be used for research on reading comprehension. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of implementing an interactive reading project on reading comprehension in a third-

semester Russian language class. The questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the principal investigator, Filip Zachoval, at “XXXXXX@mail.utexas.edu”. Thank you for your participation!”

The main body of the questionnaire consisted of three sections, each presented on a separate page with its own instructions. Section One contained ten questions, and the instructions read: “Please print or select your responses to the questions below.” Section Two contained fifteen questions and the instructions read: Please answer the following items by selecting the number which most accurately reflects your feelings about the following statements. The numbers corresponded to the following scale:

(“Never,” or “No”) 1-----2-----3-----4 (“Always,” or “Yes”)

Section Three also contained fifteen questions and the instructions read: Please answer the following items by selecting the number which most accurately reflects your feelings about the following statements all starting with "When I read Russian, I...." The numbers correspond to the following scale:

(“Never,” or “No”) 1-----2-----3-----4 (“Always,” or “Yes”)

The questions in the last two sections were presented in the form of a Likert-scale with four possible answers that were represented numerically by four numbers. Number One expressed “No” or “Never,” and number Four expressed “Yes” or “Always.”

The second part of the online data gathering was the reading test, which was introduced by the following note: “Data collected from this reading test will be used for completion of a doctoral degree in Russian applied linguistics at the University of Texas

at Austin. The information gathered will be used for research on reading comprehension. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of implementing an interactive reading project on reading comprehension in a third-semester Russian language class. You will read four Russian texts and then be asked to summarize them in English. The reading test should take approximately 60 minutes to complete. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the principal investigator, Filip Zachoval, at "XXXXXX@mail.utexas.edu." Thank you for your participation!"

The reading test consisted of four texts that were presented in the same way with identical instructions. Each text was presented on a separate page with these instructions preceding it: "Read the text below thoroughly, click "next," and respond to the task following the text. Do not return to the text when completing the task." Having read the text, students clicked the "next" button that directed them to the following screen with these instructions: "Write in English everything you can remember from the text you have just read. Do not return to the text when completing this task." Directly below the instructions, there was a response box. Except for changing the text, the same instructions and procedure were repeated for writing the recall protocol of the other three passages.

During the week following the completion of the online surveys, follow-up interviews were conducted. The interview was conducted in the researcher's office after classes to ensure privacy. Students were interviewed one at a time. They were informed in advance that the interview would be recorded for data analysis, and assured that all the information revealed during the interview would be kept confidential.

On the fiftieth day of class (a week before the end of the semester) study participants were asked to complete the post-treatment questionnaire and were given three days to do so. The procedure of data collection and the collection tools were identical to those in the pre-study.

There were five written exams throughout the semester scheduled at the end of each unit. Each instructor proctored the test for his respective class.

During the fifteenth week of the semester, between the fifty-third and fifty-seventh class days, students took the oral proficiency exam with their instructor. Students selected a day and time by signing-up for the interview about a week in advance. The interviews were scheduled to last fifteen minutes and took place in the respective instructor's office.

The chart below summarizes the timeline of all measurements used in this study:

Table 4 - Study Measurements Timeline

Day(s) into the semester (of 57)	Treatment Group	Comparison Group
6	Pre-study online survey	
7-10	Pre-study Interview	N/A
17	Written Departmental Exam Unit One	
27	Written Departmental Exam Unit Two	
37	Written Departmental Exam Unit Three	
47	Written Departmental Exam Unit Four	
50	Post-study online survey	
54-57	Post-study Interview	N/A
54-57	Oral Departmental Exam	
57	Written Departmental Exam Unit Five	

DATA ANALYSIS

Each of the measurement tools functioned to investigate a specific aspect of the research questions, and the related null hypothesis. First, to determine the participants' level of reading comprehension, their scores on the written recall protocols from the pre- and post-tests were used. Second, to assess students' reading habits and beliefs regarding foreign language learning, the pre- and post-tests and oral interviews were conducted and the results from the pre- and post-condition were compared. Third, students' scores on the departmental exams and the oral exam were analyzed to assess their overall foreign language competence. Students' interviews were analyzed qualitatively using the content cross-case analysis, and the remaining measurement tools were analyzed quantitatively.

While the questionnaires and the written recall protocols were administered at the beginning and end of the semester, the five written departmental exams were administered during the semester, and the oral departmental exam was conducted during the last week of the semester.

Evaluating the pre- and post-test required scoring three different sections: the attitudinal survey, the perceived reading-skills survey, and the written recall protocols. To score the attitudinal and the perceived reading-skills surveys, each answer was assigned a numerical value. Number One expressed "No" or "Never," Number Two "Not often," Number Three "Sometimes," and number Four expressed "Yes" or "Always." An equal number of options for the Likert-scale was chosen to prevent subjects from consistently choosing the middle option as a way to avoid a clear stand on a topic, as pointed out by McKay (*Researching Second Language Classrooms*, 2006). Totals were grouped by

individual participants as well as by treatment and comparison group. To score the surveys, the investigator made two copies of the original protocols and had them re-coded by a colleague. Both evaluators read and scored the protocols without knowing which protocols belonged to participants in the treatment or comparison group to ensure consistent scoring. The correlation between the two readers was 1.00, at an alpha of .05.

To test students' reading comprehension of the four texts, students wrote recall protocols in English of each text. To score the recall protocols, the number of pausal units in each recall protocol was established and counted. A panel of two evaluators was trained to weight pausal units. They received a brief description of this method and a sample text that had been divided into pausal units. Having familiarized themselves with the method of weighting pausal units, each of them received another text which they individually marked and later discussed. After receiving the training, they read all four texts and marked them for pausal units. The inter-rater reliability across all four texts for establishing pausal units was $r=.92$, at an alpha of .05. The two raters discussed each discrepancy and agreed on the final template for weighting the pausal units in all four texts (Appendix H). The same two raters then scored the 80 written recalls from both the pre- and post-test. They scored 20 of the recalls together and reported an inter-rater reliability of .96, at an alpha of .05. Any discrepancies were solved by discussion. The remaining 60 recalls were scored independently. Following the example set by Lee and Riley (1990), distortions and embellishments of the original text content were not counted; on the one hand, the information was recalled incorrectly and on the other, the

information was not in the text itself. Paraphrases were allowed because the protocols were written in the subjects' native language.

To determine whether there were any differences between groups, the means for each recall score were submitted to Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to determine whether there are differences between groups and whether the independent variables (treatment and pre-test recall scores) effected the results of the recall scores on the post-test. The univariate general model is used to compare differences between group means and estimate the effect of covariates on a single dependent variable. In the case of this study, an ANCOVA was performed to see if there were differences between the groups (treatment and comparison) on their post-test recall scores. Pre-test recall scores served as a covariate, the post-test recall was the dependent variables, and the treatment was a fixed factor, as it contained all of the levels of interest. Of particular interest was whether the groups had equivalent reading ability at the time of the pre-test, and whether there was a significant change between groups from the pre- to post-test.

To further examine the effect of the treatment on the group that underwent the procedural treatments, pair t-test analysis was performed on each text to obtain insight into whether the treatment had the same effect on recall scores of texts with different genres and degree of familiarity. This statistical tool allowed for a straightforward comparison of means within this group. Of particular interest from the t-test analyses were whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-test, and whether there were significant differences in recall scores from the four different texts.

The first portion of the attitude survey consisted of fifteen questions that appeared on both the pre- and the post-condition. These questions focused on six main issues related to L2 reading, and to facilitate the statistical analysis, they were grouped by topic. To test for statistically significant differences between the groups and trials, an ANCOVA was used, as it allows performing a direct comparison of the two groups' mean scores. The independent variable was group affiliation (treatment or comparison) and the dependent variable was the post-test responses. The covariance was the pre-test responses.

The goal of such analyses was twofold. First, these analyses were performed to reveal potential differences in participants' responses between the groups on their pre- and post-tests. Second, the analyses were expected to reveal potential relations between various student background factors (such as gender, experience with learning other foreign languages) and their responses to the questions assessing their reading habits and beliefs regarding FL.

To determine whether any significant differences existed within the treatment group, the means for each question group were submitted to a pair t-test analysis. This statistical tool allowed for a straightforward comparison of means within this group. Of particular interest from the t-test analyses was whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-test. To investigate these possibilities, the pair t-test was used to examine whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-condition in students' reading habits and beliefs regarding FL.

The second portion of the survey consisted of fifteen questions that focused on students' perceived reading skills. To assess any differences in perceived reading skills within and between groups, ANCOVA was performed both for pre- and post-test responses. The independent variable was group affiliation (treatment or comparison) and the dependent variable was the post-test responses. The covariance was the pre-test responses.

To test for statistically significant differences within the treatment group, a paired t-test analysis was employed to examine differences between means on the pre- and post-condition for this group. Thus, this analysis was employed to examine whether there was a significant change within the group from the pre- to post-condition. All qualitative measurements, i.e. ANCOVAs and pair-t tests, performed in this study were computed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using content cross-case analysis. The data were read a variety of times, looking for key ideas or topics and labeling these ideas with marginal notes. Any reoccurring topics raised in the interviews were categorized and juxtaposed.

To investigate possible changes in students' language performance, the two groups' results on the five departmental exams and an oral exam were analyzed. The instructor of each respective group graded the five departmental exams and the course coordinator was available to solve any possible problems. The instructors followed the same procedure for each unit exam: they met, agreed on the grading scale, and corrected together a couple of randomly selected exams. In most cases, each response was worth

two or three points (one point depending on the kind of task). For example, for the fill-in-the-blank exercises, two points per word were awarded, one for lexical unit (knowing the word) and the other for correct grammatical form (such as case ending, tense, etc.). The student-generated composition was then graded based on a grading key that evaluated that student's level of sophistication, syntactic accuracy, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary breadth, content, coherence, and spelling and punctuation. Students typically received their test scores the following day after taking the exam.

Each test focused on the most recently studied material, but, due to the cumulative nature of language learning, included material from earlier chapters. A breakdown of the percentages and point totals for each section on each test is outlined below.

Table 5 - Point Allocation for Departmentally Produced Unit Written Exams

	Exercise Number							
Exam	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Points Total
1	14	16	16	28	24	24	25	147
2	14	36	24	39	12	16	30	171
3	12	15	25	33	58	N/A	30	173
4	14	14	24	54	N/A	N/A	30	136
5	10	24	30	15	20	18	30	147

The instructor who conducted each unit exam graded the oral exams. Both instructors had previously taught this course and thus had prior experience giving and grading these exams. Students were evaluated based on their accuracy of grammar, complexity of sentences, level of vocabulary used, and fluency of delivery. Instructors

had a grading sheet (Appendix I) that helped them record each student's performance, and students received their grade at the end of the exam.

The data obtained from the exams were submitted to independent-sample t-test analysis to test for statistically significant differences between the two groups. This analysis examined differences between the means of the comparison group and treatment group on five written and one oral exam.

In addition, correlation analyses were conducted to ascertain the degree of interaction between each group's performance on the different measurement tools and such variables as gender and previous study of other foreign languages.

PILOT STUDY

A pilot study was conducted in a fourth-semester Russian course during the spring of 2009. The goals of the pilot study were to test the functionality of the pedagogical approach to the project implementation and of the data collection tools. Additionally, it was planned to refine the pedagogical strategies by fine tuning and changing several procedural implementations of the project. The class consisted of 15 students and 13 students participated in the pilot study.

One of the main goals of the pilot study was testing the project implementation. Throughout the semester, students worked on a project, the premise of which was replacing readings on various topics with readings on one single topic chosen by the students themselves. In other words, the five textbook readings, each of which was on a different topic, were replaced by three readings that were of the same topic selected by

students based on their individual interests. The implementation of the project proved to be feasible.

The other main goal of the pilot study was testing the data collection tools. The following data collection tools were employed and tested: pre- and post-study survey (consisting of the questionnaire and the reading test) and pre- and post-study interview. The departmental exams (both written and oral) were administered, as they were part of the course regardless, but no data was gathered. The reason for not analyzing the remaining collection tools was that the standard departmental exams had been used in the course for several years and collecting data during the pilot study was believed to be superfluous.

The pilot study provided valuable information regarding the experiment procedures and revealed certain pitfalls. In particular, a few questions in the questionnaire and the interview proved to be unclear or ambiguous. To avoid that, they were rephrased in the main study. The pilot study confirmed the feasibility of the project implementation and of the study collection tools.

CHAPTER 4 – EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT

In Chapter Two I described the gap between the current research and practices in FL learning and how current practices have neglected reading as a foundation for acquiring language skills at the beginning and intermediate level of instruction. This trend has prevailed in FL instructional practice, despite the fact that research has demonstrated, at least for the past few decades, the positive effects on overall language acquisition of the early use of reading: increasing learners' receptive vocabulary and facilitating transfer to a more active form of knowledge, providing a rich context in which lexical and syntactical items are made more memorable, and helping students to better understand another culture. Emphasis on oral production and the conviction that language competence is a precondition for reading comprehension have pushed away reading to the periphery of elementary L2 instruction. Contributing to this practice is a general belief that reading is a receptive skill, and as such it is separate and independent from the development of other skills.

Despite a number of excellent books that illustrate ways of integrating reading into the FL curricula and show how reading can become the basis for multi-skills classroom activities (Collie and Slater, 1990; Lazar, 1993; Whiteson, 1996), the perception of L2 reading as a marginal constituent of FL learning still predominates. Regardless of the number of studies that investigate skill transfer and show significant benefits of an early introduction of reading into language acquisition, their findings rarely translate into curricular applications.

This study explores implications of a reading project and its effect on students' reading comprehension, overall language proficiency, and their learning habits and beliefs about FL acquisition. More specifically, it investigates whether students at intermediate levels can read authentic texts of their own choosing, if their reading skills improve through narrow reading, if reading promotes their speaking, writing, and listening, and if the project implication affects students' language learning habits and beliefs about FL acquisition.

This chapter addresses the gap between the FL practice and research by introducing a procedural model that enables narrow authentic reading in the early stages of FL acquisition. In fact, the specific features of L2 reading that diverge from FL practice and research are the central components of this research design. First, instead of reading on various broad topics, students read a series of texts on a single narrow topic of their choice. Second, instead of reading semi-authentic texts, students read authentic texts within distinguishable genres. Third, instead of treating the reading skill separately, it is used as a basis for developing and enhancing students' abilities in other skill areas: speaking, listening, and writing. Fourth, instead of reading for the sake of reading only, students read to acquire information. Finally, instead of the whole class reading the same text selected for them by the textbook or instructor, each student reads different texts of their own choosing.

OVERVIEW OF STANDARD THIRD-SEMESTER RUSSIAN SYLLABUS

The third-semester Russian course at the University of Texas at Austin is designed for learners at the intermediate level who have completed approximately 120-

130 hours of elementary-level instruction in the Russian language (normally corresponding to one year of language training). The main course objectives of the intermediate course are described in detail in the course syllabus (Appendix J). In summary, the course is a standard university-level language course focusing on developing functional proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The syllabus also regularizes the textbook chapters, describes the testing and evaluation procedures for the class, provides the course outline, addresses special accommodations, and mentions media resources on campus. The third-semester syllabus follows that of the first-year course. The first two years of Russian are similar in their structure, share common objectives, and use the same series of textbooks. The language coordinator developed both the first- and the second-year Russian courses in 1990, and the same course syllabi have been in use since then with minor modifications made by course coordinators.

Third-semester Russian at the university is a four-credit-hour course that meets for fifty minutes four times a week during a 15-week semester. In the fall semester this amounts to 57 class meetings and contact hours. In addition to the class meetings, students are expected to spend about two hours in preparation for each hour in the classroom. The course covers the first five chapters of the ten-chapter textbook. The first two weeks of classes are devoted to the Introductory Unit that primarily reviews first-year material, but also allows students to become familiar with the new textbook, syllabus, their instructor and each other. Throughout the remainder of the fall semester,

five units are covered. Ten class days are spent on each unit: nine class days on the material and one class day on an hour-long unit exam.

The course is designed for students who either previously completed the first year at the university or were placed into the second year based on their Russian Placement Test. On average, this means that students have completed elementary-level instruction, are familiar with the basic grammar constructions, and their active vocabulary is about 800 to 1000 words.

The syllabus for the third-semester class participating in this study did not contain any changes from the standard syllabus for the course. In other words, both the experimental and the comparison groups followed exactly the same syllabus, which was possible thanks to the study design and the flexible nature of the syllabus that allows individual instructors to incorporate their own materials, exercises and projects, while still following the same syllabus. Of course, certain flexibility is standard for language courses in language departments, as it gives instructors room to adapt the course to their own goals and students. It also allows instructors to accommodate the individual needs of the students in different sections and from year to year. It should be emphasized that the language coordinator, who oversaw all aspects of the study and of the course, approved any modifications to the course instruction.

COURSE INSTRUCTORS

The instructors in both sections of the third-semester Russian class in this study were advanced graduate students and were employed as Assistant Instructors (AIs) by the

department. As such, they represented a relatively homogenous group in regards to their training, educational background and language proficiency.

Both instructors met numerous conditions and qualifications for student employment at both the university and the departmental level. In order to become an Assistant Instructor in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, each graduate student must meet several requirements. First, they must hold a Master's degree or an equivalent level of achievement in graduate school (30 hours including 18 hours of credit in the subject to be taught) and exhibit professional accomplishment. Second, they must complete a one-semester teaching methodology course (398T) taught by the department's Language Coordinator. Departmental policy exempts those students who took a similar course at another institution and can exhibit acceptable knowledge of teaching methods and practices from taking this course. Third, they must have served at least one semester as a Teaching Assistant (TA) under the supervision of an experienced language instructor or completed at least one year of equivalent teaching experience at an accredited college or university. Fourth, during their student employment they must remain in good academic standing (maintaining at least a 3.0 graduate grade-point average and they must not have more than two temporary grades of incomplete or one permanent grade of incomplete) and make satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree. Additionally, international students must have English language certification and attend the International TA/AI Orientation at the university.

In the case of this quasi-experimental study, both instructors met all the requirements: they held a Master's degree, had taken the methodology course (389T), and

had served as TAs prior to their appointment. Throughout the observed semester, they maintained a good academic standing and were making progress towards their degrees.

Apart from the required conditions for employment, both instructors demonstrated numerous additional commonalities. First, they were international students, received their Master's degrees abroad, and had extensive previous teaching experience in their home countries. They both had completed their coursework required for their PhD programs, had been admitted to PhD candidacy at the university, and were working on their dissertations at the time of the study. During the semester, each was assigned to teach one section of this four-credit course and they were otherwise carrying a normal graduate course load.

Although the instructors shared a great deal of similarities, there were differences as well: one was a graduate student in the Comparative Literature Program; the other was a graduate student in the Slavic department who was majoring in Russian Applied Linguistics and Pedagogy. One was a Russian native speaker, the other a native speaker of Czech, and near-native Russian speaker. Although both instructors taught within similar pedagogical paradigms, their teaching styles and classroom personalities varied to some degree.

Another factor contributing to course uniformity is that during the semester all instructors must meet regularly to discuss issues and concerns about the course. Typical discussion topics included upcoming tests, approaches for teaching a specific topic, and sharing particularly successful activities and assignments. In the semester of the study, there were fourteen such meetings, each lasting between ten and forty minutes. The

instructors also regularly met before each unit exam to design it and after the exam to agree on its grading. There were five pairs of exam meetings, two per unit and one meeting for the final exam. Additionally, the language coordinator oversaw the course. In the beginning of the semester, he held a meeting summarizing the course tenets and focusing on the major changes to the course syllabus from the previous year. Throughout the semester he reviewed the exams, made suggestions on their improvement, and made himself available to the instructors in case they had any questions or issues.

TEXTBOOK

The textbook used for the second-year Russian course was *Russian: Stage Two: Welcome Back!* (Dolgova and Martin, 2009). The textbook set comprises the following materials: one basic textbook, two workbooks, two audio CDs, and one DVD. The printed packaged set is supplemented by online resources that contain complementary materials.

The newest edition (2009) of this textbook followed the previous two editions (1990 and 2001). The 2001 edition was used for the second-year Russian course at the department for seven years, prior to the appearance of the current iteration. The 2009 edition matched the previous ones in their overall structure and teaching philosophy, but at the same time exemplified numerous notable changes, which are detailed below. The 2009 edition was used at the University of Texas at Austin Slavic Department for the first time during the semester when this study took place.

The textbook materials are based on a continued video series from the first-year textbook. The video series, divided into twenty episodes (two episodes per unit in the

second-year textbook), follows the lives of young Muscovites and continues their story from the first-year textbook (*Russian Stage One: Live from Russia!*, 2008). The storyline provides the situations upon which the lexical and grammatical materials in each unit are thematically based. Such an approach provides students the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of complex grammatical concepts through real-world contexts and equally importantly, serves as a source for a broader understanding of Russian culture.

The textbook is divided into eleven units, one introductory unit and ten standard units. The overall order of grammar review and presentation of new material is gradual and logical. The Introductory Unit reviews basic constructions needed in everyday conversations and daily activities: declension of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns; degrees of comparison; prepositional expressions; verbs of motion, learning and teaching; and the issues of word order and intonation. Unit One treats adverbs of time; short-form adjectives, comparatives and superlatives; the dative case; time expressions; short-form adjectives; second-person imperatives; and reported speech of statements and questions with interrogative words. Unit Two provides a more comprehensive treatment of verbal aspect, genitive singular, and relative clauses; discusses reported commands, requests, and wishes; comparatives with the prefix *no-*; time expressions; and first-person imperatives. Unit Three expands verbs of motion and introduces the prefix *no-* with unidirectional verbs and transitive verbs of motion. Unit Four treats prefixed verbs of motion, aspect, annulled action, and the subjunctive mood. Unit Five provides a review of genitive plural formation, the possessive pronoun *свой*; it also introduces reported

speech of yes/no questions, the imperfective infinitive after certain verbs, the modal word *нельзя* and verbal aspect.

Units Six to Ten, which are intended for the following semester, review and strengthen grammar points introduced in the first year and a half of instruction and treat new grammar material that typically falls into the intermediate level. Among the major grammar points addressed in the second half of the textbook are: reflexive verbs with the particle *-ся*; indefinite particles *-то* and *-нибудь*; the pronouns *никто* and *ничего*; the emphatic pronoun *сам*; the expression of necessity; active and passive particles; verbs of position; clauses of purpose; use of demonstrative pronouns; verbal adverbs; and assumptive verbs.

Each of the ten lessons in the textbook is designed for 9 class periods (called “Days”) and is structured as follows: Day 1 – Introduction to lexical, grammatical and communicative models; Day 2 – Video day; Days 3 and 4 – Practice days; Days 4-6 – Video days; Days 7 and 8 – Practice days; and Day 9 – Chapter review. Day 10 is devoted to the unit exam.

In correspondence with the underlying pedagogical theory behind this textbook, no grammatical explanations are provided in the units themselves. Each new topic or construction is presented in boxes, followed by a series of exercises that are designed in a way that requires students to formulate the rules of the presented materials on their own. The exercises usually begin with examples of passive understanding and gradually progress to exercises requiring active mastery. In general, the exercises are presented in a sequence in which meaning gradually plays a greater role; exercises with primary focus

on form are presented first and exercises focusing on meaning are presented last. In other words, the exercises in each day start with the most structured (such as fill-in-the-blank or matching) and end with open-ended and interactive activities (such as role-plays or discussions).

Each day contains numerous exercises and activities, which are often centered on the video. On average, there are seven exercises a day, with as few as five and as many as twelve. However, the amount of material covered per day balances out, as some exercises have more subsections or are designed to take more time to complete.

The textbook discourages extensive explanations of the new language features during classroom sessions by providing comprehensive explanations in the “Commentary” sections following each unit. Students study the corresponding sections of the commentary on their own as a part of their daily homework assignments. The commentary is arranged at the end of each unit and provides analyses of the major grammatical, lexical, and communicative topics of the unit. In this way, class time can be spent integrating new material with familiar topics in communicative activities. The unit vocabulary and phrase lists are also included at the end of each unit.

The textbook contains a comprehensive Russian-English and English-Russian dictionary, as well as extensive appendices. For example, these appendices contain summaries of noun, pronoun, and adjective declensions; special spelling rules; lists of various irregular paradigms; and stress patterns in Russian nouns.

There are several additional materials comprising the textbook package set: a DVD, two workbooks, audio CDs, and an online resource website. The DVD contains

twenty video episodes, two per unit. It also contains an introductory video composed of clips from the first-year textbook. Also included on the DVD is a set of clips from the video episodes that are arranged for use as part of the homework assignments. The workbook is split into two volumes, each covering five units. Workbook exercises include writing, listening, reading, and video activities. Many exercises focus on basic grammatical structure, including word formation, to help students build both active and passive vocabulary. The audio CDs include recordings that are incorporated into the homework and are also used in classroom activities.

The online supplementary resources consist of a Students' Online Website and an Online Instructor's Manual. The Students' Online Website is available both to students and instructors. The materials on the site include: audio files supplementing the workbook (the same files as on the CDs), the textbook audio files, student readings (texts thematically related to the unit, accompanied by an audio recording of the text), and additional exercises. The Online Instructor's Manual is password protected and available only to instructors. It contains unit tests (including the exam format, audio recordings of the listening part, and the test key), workbook keys, additional exercises, and the video transcript. It must be noted here that the online materials were being added gradually during the semester when the study took place. The authors of the textbook intend to continue adding and modifying the online materials in the future, including materials added by instructor-users of the text.

IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION

In-class activities, to a large extent, stem from the textbook that is used as a primary source for the course. The textbook discourages clarification of new language features during classroom sessions by providing detailed explanations of each new topic in the grammar section appendix of the textbook and through homework assignments. The class time is thus intended to be spent integrating new material with familiar topics in communicative activities.

The fifty minutes of daily in-class instruction is divided into four parts: a five-minute warm-up activity, a ten-minute review of the previous day's material; a thirty-minute discussion of new material; and a five minute wind-down exercise. The warm-up activity is usually something short and simple to ensure that all students experience success. Typically, warm-up activities include pronunciation drills, vocabulary exercises, or question-answer drills of familiar material. The ten-minute review focuses on checking students' mastery of the previous day's material. This review is often based on the key communicative points from the previous day and/or the most problematic issues that came up in the students' homework. During the review section, the instructor often volunteers to summarize any necessary grammatical rules or main points and calls on students who do not volunteer.

The bulk of each lesson is spent going over the new material of the day. As a rule, the new-material-acquisition phase starts on the previous day as a part of students' homework. Students are regularly expected to read the grammar commentary section in their textbook that explains in detail the grammar and provides a rich amount of

examples. They then complete the workbook exercises that are designed to prepare and familiarize them with new grammar and vocabulary.

The following day in class, the grammar is discussed and practiced. Class usually begins with the analysis of material that contains lexical and grammatical features to be mastered that day. The goal is to elicit new lexical and key grammatical features and for each student to understand the patterns on his or her own. Gradually, exercises become more focused on the meaning (rather than form) and tend to be less structured and more open-ended, creative and interactive. In general, the daily textbook exercises start with the most organized and structured ones and move on to the more creative and communicative ones. Students then further reinforce the new material through additional homework assignments.

The last few minutes of class are typically devoted to a wind-down activity that can encompass a variety of exercises, such as a cultural note, an open-ended question-answer session, or a simple exercise similar to the warm-up exercise. As a rule, the wind-down exercise is intended to end class on a positive note and leave students with a sense of accomplishment.

Corresponding with the course objectives, all of the four language skills are developed in this course. Time spent in the classroom focuses on practicing listening, speaking, and reading, while writing is developed primarily through at-home workbook assignments. Listening and speaking are the two skills that are predominantly developed in this course, as the majority of class time is devoted to these two skills, and students practice these skills via a wide range of exercises. The majority of in-class assignments

are designed to develop communicative skills – students produce a relatively large amount of interlanguage and spend significant time listening to their instructor, classmates, and video recordings.

Students are also exposed daily to written texts in Russian. The textbook is written primarily in Russian and practically all course materials are written in Russian, including the instructions to the majority of textbook and workbook exercises. Moreover, the instructor uses Russian throughout the course. English appears throughout the textbook sporadically in the glossaries and in the commentary section, where it predominates. Apart from exercises and instructions in Russian, each unit contains longer texts that can be characterized as readings. These semi-authentic texts are written in the form of cultural notes by the authors of the textbook and vary in length and topic, ranging between 111 and 171 words. The cultural notes introduce a short text on such topics as how language changes, the role of summerhouses in Russia, international family day, or medicine. All new vocabulary is provided in the form of a glossary at the edge of the page.

HOMEWORK

The course syllabus clearly states that students are expected to spend approximately two hours of preparation for each hour in the classroom. Student homework consists of written workbook assignments, listening to CDs, watching the video and of learning, analyzing, and practicing grammar as well as building vocabulary. Homework is thus an essential component of this language course.

Both the textbook and course are designed to treat the homework in two ways: first, to reinforce and practice the material covered on that day in class, and second, to present material that is to be mastered in order to anticipate new material which is to be covered the next class day. Students' daily homework for the most part consists of workbook assignments. However, there are other, equally important components that students are required to do regularly. These involve studying the grammar in the unit, memorizing new vocabulary, skimming the textbook for the next day, watching the video, and listening to the recordings.

The workbook assignments are geared to correspond to each day of the unit in order to reinforce material covered in class and to allow students to anticipate material to be covered the next day. In general, the workbook homework consists of two types of exercises: a) exercises that practice and fixate material that had been covered in class that day and b) exercises that students are required to complete in order to be ready for the coming class. Since the assignments consist of exercises for both purposes, it is vital that assignments are promptly turned in immediately on the class day after being assigned.

Written homework typically consists of 8-10 exercises that start with listening drills, move on to grammar and vocabulary exercises, and end with composition tasks. Also, there are some exercises that students must complete in order to be ready for the following class. A typical example of this type is an exercise that requires students to learn a few new words, conjugate a verb, or review material covered previously, but is going to be covered the next day.

In addition to in-class activities, students are expected to seek opportunities to practice the language, take part in events organized by the department, and look for additional resources on their own. To give just a few examples: students are encouraged to use online resources developed by the department such as the “Rockin’ Russian” website that offers interactive language and cultural exercises at all levels. They are invited to attend weekly meetings of the “Russian Table” that include conversation practice with native and near-native speakers of Russian. Graduate students organize the hour-long sessions for anyone who wants to practice using the language in informal chats and activities. Students at all levels are encouraged to attend and participate in departmental and university-sponsored events including poetry slams, conversation hours, lectures, films and plays. These learning opportunities are strongly recommended to all students, as they constitute a vital part of successful FL acquisition.

TESTING AND EVALUATION

There are three components of the final course grade. These components and their relative weights are: testing (60%), homework (25%), and participation (15%).

The first testing portion of the final grade consists of three components: in-class tests, the final exam, and an oral proficiency interview. There are five fifty-minute in-class tests which are weighted equally and comprise forty percent of the final course grade. These tests are administered throughout the semester at the end of each unit. They are all drafted by a team of instructors teaching the course and submitted to the language coordinator for possible suggestions and final approval. The in-class tests follow very closely the unit exam templates from the teachers’ manual. The course instructors and the

language coordinator make minor adjustments to the exams in order to better reflect the actual course content.

The second portion of a student's testing grade is the final exam. The final exam is a comprehensive three-hour test that is given during the university exam period. Its format is the same as unit exams, although more extensive. It also consists of a listening section, a grammar and vocabulary section, and a composition.

The third portion of the testing grade is the oral interview. The oral evaluation is given during the last week of classes and accounts for five percent of the total final course grade. It is administered by the students' classroom teacher and consists of questions that target typical and functional goals of the course and follow the format established in the free communication exercises. It lasts for approximately fifteen minutes. Students' oral proficiency is evaluated based on their ability to complete the various communicative tasks, their syntactic and morphological accuracy, their vocabulary richness, their fluency, and their pronunciation (Appendix K).

To promote fairness in grading, all testing (in-class tests, the final exam, and the oral interview) is cross-graded to ensure consistency across the sections and with previous years. More specifically, for each test, the course instructors jointly created the test, as well as the grading scale, making sure all sections were tested in the same manner. The course coordinator supervised the process, giving the final approval to the test and offering guidelines for grading the exams consistently.

After testing, the second component of the final grade is the students' written homework. It comprises twenty-five percent of the final course grade and consists by and

large of the daily workbook assignments. The homework assignments are graded on a credit/no-credit basis, and a no-credit assignment may be resubmitted for credit on the following day. The overall homework grade is the percentage of credit assignments submitted during the term. A strict policy is applied requiring all homework to be submitted on the class day after being assigned. This is done to ensure regularity of students' work and that students are prepared for class (since a substantial part of everyday homework is getting familiar with the material to be presented in class the next day).

The last component of the overall grade for this course is class participation, which counts for fifteen percent of the final course grade. This portion is determined by the class instructor based on his or her reflection of students' overall preparedness and performance in class. Typically it reflects how well the students prepared assigned material in advance for each class and how they responded in class, assessing both accuracy and enthusiasm.

Additionally, attendance can potentially affect students' grades. According to the attendance policy, students are allowed a maximum of five unexcused absences during the semester. More than five unexcused absences results in the lowering of the final course grade by a diacritical (a B+ goes to a B, a B to a B-, etc.); more than eight absences results in a grade lowered by a letter.

BEFORE THE EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT

For the first two weeks of the fall semester 2009, all 26 third-semester Russian students in two sections followed the same standard syllabus and the same in-class

procedures and home assignments. Students spent approximately one and a half to two hours each day outside of class completing exercises in the workbook that reviewed the first year material. Class time was then spent using this material in a series of communicative activities to activate student's knowledge of specific grammar and vocabulary.

During the first two weeks, students reviewed the following grammatical topics: overview of declensions and conjugations, spelling rules, superlatives, expressing possession, verbs of studying and learning, and time periods. In addition, they were asked to learn about 120 vocabulary items. The introductory unit reviewed topics of personal introductions (names, hobbies, professions, age), describing people and places, and talking about students' academic life (majors, subjects, departments).

The introductory unit contained two short semi-authentic readings. The first one was a set of three language school advertisements for English classes in Moscow. The overall length of these ads was 156 words, containing vocabulary and grammar already familiar to students. They were followed by one exercise, which asked students to read all three ads, discuss them with partners, and decide which school they would recommend to people with specific preferences that were provided below the reading (for example "someone who wants to visit Italy"). The other reading was a student's weekly class schedule, containing days of the week, various college subjects, and a headline indicating that it is a sophomore history major's schedule. The reading was not accompanied by any specific tasks or exercises.

On the seventh day of class, after having spent six class meetings reviewing the previous year's material, the procedural treatment started. The 10 a.m. class formed the treatment group; the 11 a.m. class formed the comparison group. Both sections had an equal number of registered students - thirteen. Following the pre-test and continuing until the final week of the semester, both sections used the same syllabus, but the treatment group modified their use of the standard syllabus by replacing readings in the course textbook with a series of readings and assignments following the procedural treatment described below. The amount of time spent on readings was alike in both the treatment and comparison groups, devoting about fifteen minutes a week to reading.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The treatment group of the study was involved in a semester project that lasted for the remaining thirteen weeks of the semester that followed a two-week review of the first-year material. The project was entitled "Semester Project: Let's Read" («Курсовой проект: Давайте читаем») and it was designed as a natural supplement to and an extension of existing curriculum for the second-year Russian course. Throughout the semester each student worked with a set of three readings that were related to a topic of his or her own interest.

Through a series of in-class activities and home assignments, students practiced and developed all-around language skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing), acquired cultural knowledge about contemporary Russia, and explored in-depth a topic of their interest. The project entailed interconnected sets of sequenced tasks during which students were actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with

the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery. The context for this project was primarily text-based (extensive readings served as a base for all activities and assignments), task-driven (creating an end-product), collaborative, technology-enhanced (use of the Internet), and individualized (research topic of one's own interest). The overall project's objectives corresponded with the objectives of the course: development of all-around skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition to practicing all-around language skills, the project was intended to facilitate students gaining further cultural knowledge about contemporary Russia.

Reading played the central role in this project and all related activities stemmed from and utilized three texts that each student read in the course of the treatment. The choice of readings and the work with these texts was designed around the following five tenets:

- 1) each student read a series of three texts on single narrow topics;
- 2) students read a series of texts within the same genre;
- 3) each student read different texts of their own choice;
- 4) students read to acquire information;
- 5) reading served as a basis for developing and enhancing students' abilities in other skill areas: speaking, listening, writing; and culture.

Aside from the main objectives, there were several latent skills that the students learned through the project. Even though these were not explicitly defined as goals of the project, students' mastering of them had a crucial role in the success of the project as well as developing general skills any Russian student should be equipped with. Among these

skills were learning how to type using the Cyrillic keyboard layout, orientation to Russian websites and finding relevant Internet resources. Since it is crucial for all foreign language students to be able to find and start using additional learning resources, a part of the project was deliberately devoted to helping students develop these skills. Students first learned how to install Cyrillic fonts on their computer. Then they familiarized themselves with the different keyboard layout and learned how to type using the Cyrillic keyboard. Throughout the project, students also got to use several online resources that hopefully they would continue to use beyond the Russian language course.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Work on the project followed the steps described below. Topic research constituted the core part of the project and was conducted for each reading. By reading three different articles on one topic, students were able to look at the topic of their choice from three different perspectives.

1. Project Introduction:

- a) Getting familiar with the project.
- b) The individual topics were selected, negotiated and agreed upon.

2. Topic Research:

- a) Students and instructor sought, gathered and checked reading resources.
- b) Students investigated and gathered information.
- c) Findings were shared and documented.

3. Conclusion: Results were compiled and presented in class.

The chart below indicates the timeline of the project in relation to the course timeline.

Table 6 - Project Timeline

Week	Course Timeline	Project Phase
1-2	Introductory Unit	N/A
3-5	Unit One	Introduction
6-8	Unit Two	Topic Research: First Reading
9-11	Unit Three	Topic Research: Second Reading
12-14	Unit Four	Topic Research: Third Reading
14-15	Unit Five	Conclusion

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

One week was devoted to the project introduction and it consisted of in-class activities and homework assignments. First, students read the description of the project (Appendix L) at home and prepared questions that were discussed briefly in English the following day in class. They were asked to make sure they understood what the project involved, what was expected of them, and what the outcome(s) of the project would be. This was done to familiarize students with the project in general, to give them an idea about its main objectives, assignments, and their involvement.

Second, students were asked to think of a field of their interest and come up with an individual topic that each of them would like to research throughout the course of the semester. Students selected a variety of topics: some of them were more related to their college major and/or professional interests, and some were chosen based on their

personal interests. The chart below indicates students' majors, general fields of interest and the specific topics students decided to explore.

Table 7 - Students' Interests and Topics of Their Project Research

Student number	College Major	Field of Interest	Specific Topic of Interest
1	Communication Journalism	Human Rights	Attacks on Journalists
2	Computer Science	Classical Music	Composer Grigory Sokolov
3	History	Russian History	Succession of the Romanov Dynasty
4	Radio-Television-Film	Music	Musician Vladimir Vysotsky
5	History Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies	Health Care	HIV/AIDS Crisis in Russia
6	Economics Government	Economy	The Financial Crisis in Russia
7	Economics	Sports	Winter Olympics: Sochi 2014
8	Communication Theatre and Dance	Television	Globalization in Russian Television
9	Mechanical Engineering	Science	Space Program
10	Economics	Business	Roman Abramovich: a Russian Oligarch
11	Government History	History	Rasputin
12	Humanities Biology	Human Rights	Human Rights Leaders in Chechnya
13	Government	Pop Culture	Comic Books in Russia

Third, students shared their fields of interest and specific topics with their classmates. This was done as a short exercise in class, when each student was asked to create a few questions, interview a classmate using these questions, and report to the rest of the class about what they found out. Four key words (namely “major,” “to be interested in something,” “research,” and “project topic”) were written in Russian on the blackboard and students were instructed to create questions using these words. Students created questions in Russian that were intended to find out about their classmates’ college major, professional and personal interests, general topic of their project research, and the specific topic they decided to explore. They were given about three minutes to prepare these questions and then about two minutes to interview a classmate. After that, they shared their classmate’s responses with the rest of the class.

Finally, students discussed and agreed on the format of the project’s end product. Several possible outcomes were considered, specifically creating a DVD, a website, a newsletter, or holding a conference where they would present their research. They decided to create a newsletter that would compile articles written in English. The class instructor did not interfere in their discussion and the decision was left solely to the students.

TOPIC RESEARCH

Students researched the topic of their interest via three different readings over a period of approximately nine weeks, leaving about three weeks per reading. The same general steps as described below were followed each time. The amount of in-class

reading was about fifteen minutes a week, which corresponded with the amount of time that the comparison group spent reading in class.

First, students searched for specific readings on the Internet. For the first reading, they individually came up with a few key words in Russian that they would combine in a search engine. Usually, these keywords would correspond with the topic of their research. For example, the student who was interested in HIV/AIDS would search for these words. Often, these were combined with Russian/Russia to find articles related to that region. They received a list of several search engines and websites (Russian version of Google, BBC, Wikipedia, and two major Russian search engines: “Rabmler.ru” and “Yandex.ru”) to help them get started. However, they were encouraged not to limit themselves to those and use any other search engines they were used to or familiar with.

Once they found an article they were asked to send a link to their instructor for his comments, suggestions, and approval. Most of the time, their choice was approved right away. Occasionally, students reported uncertainty about their choice or difficulty in finding an appropriate reading. They would receive further suggestions on their choice of key words and/or receive links to specific websites to browse, or specific articles related to their topic. Search for specific articles was done individually as a homework assignment and students reported spending about ten to fifteen minutes on average finding appropriate articles. Once their article choice was approved, they were asked to print them out and keep bringing them to class for about three weeks.

Second, students would spend about twenty minutes reading their articles in class over the course of two weeks, usually split into two ten-minute sessions. This was done

using a method of silent reading where students read their articles individually and the instructor walked around and answered possible questions. The first reading session was usually spent reading the introductory part and then skimming through the entire article and reading the introductory paragraphs. In the second reading session they completed the article. However, no specific instructions on how to approach reading were given by the instructor, who observed that each student went about it individually.

Third, having finished reading an article, students shared their findings in class. Each student had to prepare a short summary of the article in Russian and share it with his or her classmates. Students were given about five minutes to prepare their summaries and then about five minutes to share their findings.

The same procedure was repeated for the second and third readings.

PROJECT OUTCOME: A NEWSLETTER

As determined by the students themselves, the results of their individual research were presented in the form of a newsletter. The students decided that each of them would write an article in English on a topic that they chose to research at the beginning of the semester. To make their endeavor more effective, students decided to divide responsibilities among themselves. One student volunteered to be the editor-in-chief, another became the assistant editor, three students were in charge of proofreading, three wrote contributors' profiles, two helped with design, and the remaining three were in charge of picture collection, marketing, and publishing. The division of the responsibilities, deadlines, and the newsletter specifics were discussed and decided by the students themselves, often via e-mail or briefly before the beginning of class.

The final outcome of the project work was a newsletter (Appendix M) that consisted of thirteen articles written in English on a variety of topics exploring Russian history, politics, arts, sports, economics, and social issues. Each student wrote a 500- to 700-word article. As there were no specific instructions about the format or other attributes of the articles, they varied in style and format. Some of them resembled a short course paper; some had clear features of a newspaper article; others resembled an opinion essay. However, they all shared one commonality – they extensively used the information that each student learned from their respective readings. The newsletter was then presented to the language coordinator and the chair of the department.

READING AS THE BASIS FOR OTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS

Even though the readings were used primarily for enhancing reading comprehension, they also provided students with a basis for developing other language skills, specifically speaking, listening, writing, but also grammar, vocabulary acquisition, and cultural awareness. This was done via numerous and various exercises, which stemmed from the readings, and were employed throughout the semester. These exercises often required practicing several skills at the same time. For example, in one exercise students were enhancing their listening, practiced speaking, and reinforced grammar.

First, the readings served as a basis for grammar covered in the course. The instructor directed students' attention to examples of recently learned grammatical topics. For example, when the relative clauses introduced by “который” were discussed, students were asked to find and highlight sentences using these constructions in their respective readings. Students then shared their findings with their classmates and briefly

discussed the use of “который” in the sentences they had found. As further practice, the instructor asked the students to reexamine a passage to find further examples of the grammar point. The same kind of exercise was done with other basic grammatical topics studied or reviewed throughout the semester, such as long- and short-form adjectives, simple comparatives of adjectives and adverbs, reported speech, subjunctive mood, motion verbs, and an array of endings. These assignments usually took about five minutes and were used to focus student attention on acquiring the fundamentals of the language. The format of grammar instruction varied, but it was always aimed at improving the listening, speaking and writing skills necessary for using the language effectively.

Second, new vocabulary and expressions in the readings were often discussed in class. Each day, students were encouraged to relate vocabulary learned from the readings to the material being covered in class. Most often, they would recognize a familiar stem in the word that appeared in the textbook and link it to the word they had seen in their reading. For example, a textbook exercise contained the word “время” [time]. Students had encountered the calque “современный” [contemporary, modern] in their reading and correctly pointed out the common stem in this word. Often, students would ask about synonyms, their possible interchangeability and correct usage. As students read different texts, they were encouraged to keep a personal vocabulary log, writing down key words and phrases they ran across in their readings.

Lastly, as the entire class read about thirty nine different articles (three per student) in the course of the semester and all articles contained a large amount of cultural

information, students were encouraged to share that information with their classmates whenever they felt it was relevant to the textbook material. For example, one of the sections in the textbook treats the topic of businesswomen in Russia. One of the students who was researching the current economic crisis in Russia had come across information about the ratio of men versus women employed in the largest corporations in the country and shared the information with the rest of the class, thus addressing the vast gender gap in Russian companies. These cultural notes were usually only a sentence or two in English or Russian and were shared several dozen times during the semester.

CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS

The purpose of the present chapter is to report the analysis of the data collected. In order to address the research questions, the data have been subjected to a series of appropriate statistical procedures: ANCOVA, pair-t test, independent-sample t-test, and descriptive statistics. As the key interest of this study is identifying possible effects of implementing a procedural treatment, the main focus of all present analyses is to determine: 1) the possible differences between the treatment and comparison groups after the treatment implementation, and 2) the possible changes from the pre- to post-treatment for the treatment group. To this purpose, both between- and within-group analyses were performed to determine whether the treatment had any effect on students' reading comprehension, reading habits and beliefs regarding FL, perceived reading skills, or overall language proficiency. Both descriptive data and inferential data are reported and discussed.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the participants in this study were particularly homogenous and comparable in their previous Russian language instruction. For statistical purposes, the two groups can be treated as representing samples from the same population. To provide additional proof, the pre-tests for all measurements were compared to make sure that all participants started on equal footing, and the results of these comparisons will be described in detail below for each respective set of measurements.

Each null hypothesis was tested by a different set of measurements: reading comprehension was measured by the participants' scores on written recall protocols;

students' reading habits and beliefs were gauged by attitudinal surveys and follow-up interviews; students' perceived reading skills were measured by attitudinal surveys; and finally, their overall language proficiency was tested by written and oral exams. As all four hypotheses were testing for possible changes caused by the implemented treatment, each set of measurements was conducted twice: prior to the beginning of treatment (pre-tests) and following the treatment (post-tests). Moreover, both the pre- and post-treatment results were collected from the two groups, treatment and comparison, allowing between-group comparison of the respective measurements in both pre- and post-treatment conditions.

Although each hypothesis was tested using a different set of measurements and statistical procedures, the following general proceedings were used for testing the hypotheses. First, correlation analyses were conducted to ascertain the degree of interaction between each group's performance on the different measurement tools as well as to verify the influence of such variables as gender and previous study of another foreign language. Correlation analyses were conducted to determine whether there were linear relations between the variables, namely among group affiliation (treatment versus comparison group), pre-treatment scores, post-treatment scores, gender, and previous study of other FLs. It should be noted that prior to the study analysis, two additional variables were considered: being a native/non-native speaker of Russian and study abroad experience. However, as none of the participants were of Russian heritage nor had participated in a study abroad program, these two variables were discarded in the final analyses.

Second, to test for the between-group differences, Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted to explore the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent measures. ANCOVA is a statistical technique that can be used to test the effects of several categorical variables (or treatments) on one dependent variable (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992). In each case, it is used to determine whether there are differences between groups on the basis of one or more independent variable or if a continuous variable is a good predictor of one or more dependent variables. In this study, the univariate general linear model of the ANCOVA was used to compare differences between group means and to estimate the effect of covariates (pre-treatment results, gender, other FL) on a single dependent variable (post-treatment results).

Third, within-group analyses, which were performed to analyze possible changes from pre- to post-treatment conditions, were done only for the treatment group using the pair-t test to compare the two measurement occasions: before and after the experimental treatment. This was done in order to locate possible effects of the experiment on the treatment group.

The following section presents the results of the recall measurements. It then deals with the analysis of the attitudinal questionnaires and the follow-up interviews. Finally, it presents the findings in regard to the overall language acquisition assessed by means of departmental exams.

STUDENTS READING COMPREHENSION

Hypothesis 1: Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in reading comprehension (as measured by the pre- and post-test recalls) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

As described in Chapter Four, students wrote a recall protocol immediately after reading each of the four texts on the pre-and post-tests. Table 8 provides descriptive statistics about variables in the dataset used in this study to obtain a clear idea about the averages and variances of the variables. More specifically, this table presents the mean and standard deviation of the number of pausal units recalled by the two groups for each of the four texts and for the total number of pausal units on the pre- and post-tests.

Table 8 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-Test Recall Scores

Text	Test	Group	N	Mean	SD
1	Pre-test	Treatment	5	12.80	4.087
		Comparison	5	10.40	6.427
	Post-test	Treatment	5	13.00	3.536
		Comparison	5	9.00	4.416
2	Pre-test	Treatment	5	5.20	2.588
		Comparison	5	5.60	3.209
	Post-test	Treatment	5	8.80	1.483
		Comparison	5	5.00	1.871
3	Pre-test	Treatment	5	9.00	4.062
		Comparison	5	8.40	4.775
	Post-test	Treatment	5	17.40	7.436
		Comparison	5	6.80	4.207
4	Pre-test	Treatment	5	5.80	4.494
		Comparison	5	4.80	3.114
	Post-test	Treatment	5	13.80	2.864
		Comparison	5	9.00	4.472
Total	Pre-test	Treatment	5	8.20	3.491
		Comparison	5	7.20	2.579
	Post-test	Treatment	5	13.25	3.530
		Comparison	5	7.45	1.934

As indicated in the table, both groups made gains in their overall recall scores from the pre- to post-test. However, the treatment group made more substantial overall gains compared to the comparison group. The treatment group made gains in all four recall scores, with significant gains on texts two, three, and four and insignificant gains on the first text recall score. The comparison group made significant gains only on the fourth recall score, and no gains on the first three recall scores.

Furthermore, the pre-test mean scores presented in Table 8 indicate that the discrepancies in the recalled pausal units between the two groups on their reading recall tests prior to the treatment implementation were so small that they could be safely disregarded in the statistical analyses. As a result, it was assumed that students from the two groups had comparable reading comprehension before the administration of the experimental treatments. Because the pre-test scores for both groups were not significantly different from each other, it was concluded that all participants started on equal footing in terms of their reading comprehension.

To examine the linear relationship between the variables (namely treatment, gender, other FL, scores on pre- and post-test) used in this study, the variables were submitted to a correlation analysis. A correlation coefficient has a value ranging from -1 to 1. Values that are closer to the absolute value of 1 indicate that there is a strong relationship between the variables being correlated, whereas, values closer to 0 indicate that there is little or no linear relationship. The sign of a correlation coefficient describes the type of relationship between the variables being correlated. A positive correlation coefficient indicates that there is a positive linear relationship between the variables: as one variable increases in value, so does the other. A negative value indicates a negative linear relationship: as one variable increases in value, the other variable decreases in value.

A correlation analysis was performed to investigate whether specific background factors (such as gender and other FL studied) and the treatment had any effects on the post-test recall scores. The following correlation matrix displays the interaction among

the different background factors as well as between the background factors and the dependent variable (post-test recall scores.)

Table 9 - Correlations Among Variables of Pre- and Post-Test Recall Scores

		Treatment	Gender	Other FL	Pre	Post
Treatment	Pearson Correlation	1	.408	.000	.189	.684*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.242	1.000	.601	.029
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.408	1	-.612	.129	.224
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.242		.060	.723	.534
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Other FL	Pearson Correlation	.000	-.612	1	-.236	-.189
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.060		.511	.602
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Pre	Pearson Correlation	.189	.129	-.236	1	.726*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.601	.723	.511		.017
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Post	Pearson Correlation	.684*	.224	-.189	.726*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.534	.602	.017	
	N	10	10	10	10	10
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

As the results of the correlation analysis reveal, significant correlations were found among three variables: the recall scores on the pre-test, the recall scores on post-tests, and treatment. More specifically, there are two statistically significant ($p < .05$) linear relationships found by the correlation analysis. First, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the treatment and post-test, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.684). Second, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the pre- and post-test, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.726). No correlations were found for gender or other FL.

Having established existing correlations among the three variables (pre-test, post-test, and treatment), these variables were submitted to a univariate analysis of variance (ANCOVA) to determine whether there were differences between groups and whether the independent variables (treatment and pre-test recall scores) affected the results of the recall scores on the post-test. The univariate general model is used to compare differences between group means and estimating the effect of covariates on a single dependent variable. In the case of this study, an ANCOVA was performed to see if there were differences between the groups (treatment and comparison) on their post-test recall scores. Pre-test recall scores served as a covariate; the post-test recall was the dependent variable, and the treatment was a fixed factor, as it contains all the levels of interest. The ANCOVA adjusted the post-test means on the basis of the pre-test means and then compared these adjusted means to see whether they were significantly different.

Table 10 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Recall Scores

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2496.691 ^a	4	624.173	8.219	.020
Intercept	122.989	1	122.989	1.620	.259
Pre	865.382	1	865.382	11.395	.020
Gender	83.610	1	83.610	1.101	.342
Other FL	62.761	1	62.761	.826	.405
Treatment	913.483	1	913.483	12.029	.018
Error	379.709	5	75.942		
Total	20016.000	10			
Corrected Total	2876.400	9			

a. R Squared = .868 (Adjusted R Squared = .762)

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model on each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level were considered. The first covariate, pre (pre-test recall scores), the F statistic (11.395) and its associated significance level (.020) indicate that it had a significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. The second covariate, gender, had a non-significant F statistic (1.101) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.342). The third covariate, other FL, also had a non-significant F statistic (.826) and associated significance level (.405). The fourth covariate, treatment, had a significant F statistic (12.029) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.018). The non-significant levels for gender

and other FL confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analysis showing that these variables had no effect on the dependent variable, i.e. post-test recall scores.

To interpret this effect further, the estimated means were calculated, taking into account the covariate pre-test scores. The results of estimated marginal means shown below indicate that the treatment group's means of the post-test recall units were much higher (52.897) than the means for the comparison group (29.903).

Table 11 - Estimated Marginal Means of Pre- and Post-Test Recall Scores

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comparison	29.903 ^a	4.311	18.822	40.984
Treatment	52.897 ^a	4.311	41.816	63.978
a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pre = 31.0000, gender = .60, other FL = .20.				

Thus, based on the statistical tools used to assess the pre-and post-test recall scores, the first null hypothesis can be rejected, as a significant difference in reading comprehension was demonstrated between the treatment group and the comparison group. The significant linear relationship between the treatment and the post-test recall scores suggests that the treatment had a positive effect on the number of recalled pausal units on the post-test recall measurement, while other variables (gender, other FL) did not demonstrate significant effect on the post-test recall scores.

ANALYSIS OF THE READING COMPREHENSION RECALLS FOR THE TREATMENT GROUP

To examine further the effect of the treatment on the group that underwent the procedural treatment, pair-t test analysis was performed on each text to obtain insight into whether the treatment had the same effect on recall scores of texts with different genres and degrees of familiarity. As mentioned above, there were four different passages used for recall; two newspaper articles and two film reviews; two of these passages were on a familiar topic and two unfamiliar. To determine whether any significant differences existed within the treatment group, the means for each recall score were submitted to a t-test analysis. This statistical tool allowed for a straightforward comparison of means within this group. Of particular interest from the t-test analyses were whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-test, and whether there were significant differences in recall scores for the four different texts.

To investigate these possibilities, it was necessary to look at the following factors:

- 1) differences between the means of the treatment group on the pre-test and post-tests for each text and
- 2) differences between the means of the treatment group on the pre- and post-test in total number of pausal units (all four texts combined).

Table 12 - Paired Sample T-Test of Pre- and Post-Test Recall Scores for Treatment Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	text1_pre - text1_post	-.20	3.421	1.530	-4.447	4.047	-.131	4	.902
Pair 2	text2_pre - text2_post	-3.60	3.715	1.661	-8.213	1.013	-2.167	4	.096
Pair 3	text3_pre - text3_post	-8.40	6.066	2.713	-15.932	-.868	-3.096	4	.036
Pair 4	text4_pre - text4_post	-8.00	4.416	1.975	-13.483	-2.517	-4.051	4	.015
Pair 5	pre - post	-20.2	9.576	4.282	-32.09019	-8.30981	-4.717	4	.009

As Table 12 shows, although the treatment group recalled more pausal units for each of the four passages on the post-test (compared with the number of pausal units recalled on the pre-test), the t-test analyses reveal no significant gains on the first two texts as indicated by the 0.902 significance level for the first text, and the 0.096 significance level for the second. However, the same analysis reveals that the students made significant gains on the third and fourth texts, as indicated by the significant number 0.036 for the third text, and 0.015 for the fourth.

Additionally, a t-test analysis of the total number of pausal units recalled both on the pre- and post-test was also conducted. Here, a significant result ($p=0.009$) was observed, indicating that the treatment group made a significant gain in their reading

ability on the post-test for all the texts. The group recalled 76.8 % more of the pausal units (pre-test total mean = 32.8; post-test total mean = 58) on the post-test. This analysis indicates that the treatment group experienced a statistically significant change in recall scores from pre- to post-test.

A further assessment of the recalled pausal units in the pre- and post-test revealed that, on average, participants' reading comprehension differed on their performance on recalled pausal units on four different readings. These descriptive data suggest that students performed better on familiar topics versus unfamiliar ones and on newspaper articles versus movie reviews. The following chart indicated the relation between topic and genre familiarity and unfamiliarity in respect to the pausal units recalled.

Table 13 - Gains in Recall Scores in Relevance to Text Genre and Familiarity for Treatment Group

Text number	Text characteristics	Pausal recalls on Pre-test	Pausal recalls on Post-test	Gain in pausal recalls
1	Familiar topic Newspaper article	12.80	13.00	0.2
2	Unfamiliar topic Newspaper article	5.20	8.80	3.6
3	Familiar topic Film review	9.00	17.40	8.4
4	Unfamiliar topic Film review	5.80	13.80	8

The mean scores shown in Table 13 reveal that gains in the recalled units for the reading on an unfamiliar topic (11.6) had higher means than reading a familiar topic (8.6). In other words, students who read topically unfamiliar texts made more significant

gains in pausal units than those who read texts topically familiar. Also, in terms of genre the comparison of the recalled units of the four texts reveals that the gains in the mean scores were significantly higher for the film reviews (16.4) than for the newspaper articles (3.8). The possible interpretation of these results will be dealt with in the next chapter.

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD L2 READING

Hypothesis 2: Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in reading habits and beliefs regarding FL (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey and on the interviews) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

To assess possible changes in students' reading habits and beliefs regarding FL, their responses to the first part of the attitudinal survey and a follow-up interview from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. As described in Chapter Four, the attitudinal survey (Appendix E) appeared in the form of Likert scales designed to measure participants' perception of their reading habits, L2 reading in general, and L2 reading's role in their language learning. Students responded to each item, answering either "never," "sometimes," "often," or "always." Their responses to each question were assigned a value from 1 (Never or No) to 4 (Always or Yes).

The first section of the attitudinal survey consisted of fifteen questions that appeared on and were identical for both the pre- and the post-condition. These questions

focused on six main issues related to L2 reading and were grouped by topics to facilitate the statistical analysis. Questions 1 through 3 assessed students' perception of the importance of L2 reading for developing other language skills. Questions 4 and 5 examined students' motivation for reading in Russian. Questions 6 through 9 determined the amount and sources of independent reading in Russian that students undertake outside of class. Questions 10 and 11 assessed students' attitudes toward the reading topics in previous classes. Questions 12 and 13 examined types of readings students are most interested in. Questions 14 and 15 determined students' self-assessment of their current reading proficiency.

To investigate these issues, the data obtained from the attitudinal survey were submitted to 1) ANCOVA analysis to test for statistically significant differences between the groups and to explore the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent measures, and 2) a paired t-test to search for statistically significant differences between the two trials for the treatment group. In other words, these analyses examined two different comparisons: 1) the difference between the means of the comparison group and treatment group on both pre- and post-condition; and 2) the difference between the means of the treatment group on the pre- and post-test.

The data collected from the oral interviews were examined qualitatively by using descriptive statistics, quotations, and examples discovered during the interview. As the main focus of the interviews was to investigate how the students from the treatment group perceived the experimental treatment, the measurement was collected only from students who underwent the treatment procedure (i.e., treatment group). Consequently,

the data collected from this measurement from the pre-test was compared with the data collected from the post-test for the treatment group only.

BETWEEN GROUP ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDINAL SURVEYS FROM THE PRE- AND POST-CONDITION

As described in Chapter Four, students answered the questionnaires both before and after the project implementation. Table 14 provides descriptive statistics concerning the variables in the data set used in this study to obtain a clear idea about the averages and variances of variables. More specifically, the chart presents the means and standard deviations for the scores of six question groups from the treatment and comparison groups on both pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions.

Table 14 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL

Set (questions)	Test	Group	N	Mean	SD
1 (1-3) Students' perception of the importance of L2 reading for developing other language skills	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	9.4000 9.2000	1.14018 2.58844
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	10.4000 8.4000	1.14018 3.04959
2 (4- 5) Students' motivation for reading in Russian	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	5.8000 5.4000	1.09545 1.94936
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	5.8000 5.4000	1.09545 1.94936
3 (6-9) The amount and sources of independent reading in Russian that students undertake outside of class	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	9.6000 9.2000	1.67332 3.11448
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	9.6000 9.2000	1.67332 3.11448
4 (10-11) Students' attitudes toward the reading topics in previous classes	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	4.2000 4.2000	.83666 1.30384
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	7.4000 3.0000	.89443 1.00000
5 (12-13) Types of readings students are most interested in	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	5.8000 5.6000	1.30384 2.30217
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	7.8000 6.8000	.44721 1.64317
6 (14-15) Students' self-assessment of their current reading proficiency	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	4.0000 3.4000	1.58114 .54772
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	5.8000 3.0000	1.48324 .70711

Table 14 reveals three major tendencies. First, two question groups (2 and 3) show no changes from pre- to post-treatment for both groups. Second, the treatment group showed positive changes on all remaining question groups (1, 4, 5, and 6) and the

comparison group made positive changes in one question group (5) and negative changes in the remaining ones (1, 5, 6). Third, the similarity of means and the relatively small difference in standard deviation indicates comparable attitudes between the groups on the pre-treatment answers. As a result, it was assumed that students from the two groups had comparable attitudes and beliefs before the administration of the experimental treatments. Because the pretest scores for both groups were not significantly different from each other, it was concluded that all participants started on equal footing in terms of reading habits and beliefs regarding FL.

To examine the linear relationship between the variables (namely treatment, gender, other FL, scores on pre- and post-test) used in this study, the variables were submitted to a correlation analysis. The following correlation matrix displays the interactions between the different variables as well as with the dependent variable (PC=Pearson Correlation, SG= Significance (2-tailed), N=number).

Table 15 - Correlations Among Variables of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL

		Treatment	Gender	Other FL	Set1_pre	Set2_pre	Set3_pre	Set4_pre	Set5_pre	Set6_pre	Set1_post	Set2_post	Set3_post	Set4_post	Set5_post	Set6_post
Treat- ment	PC	1	.408	.000	.056	.140	.089	.000	.060	.273	.437	.140	.089	.933**	.421	.803**
	S		.242	1.000	.878	.700	.807	1.00	.870	.446	.207	.700	.807	.000	.226	.005
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Gender	PC	.408	1	-.612	.023	.200	.600	-.042	.463	.148	-.214	.200	.600	.416	.378	.187
	S	.242		.060	.950	.579	.067	.909	.178	.682	.553	.579	.067	.232	.281	.604
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Other FL	PC	.000	-.612	1	-.642*	-.385	-.757*	-.357	-.656*	-.318	-.197	-.385	-.757*	-.254	-.547	.029
	S	1.00	.060		.045	.272	.011	.311	.039	.370	.586	.272	.011	.478	.101	.937
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set1_pre	PC	.056	.023	-.642*	1	.477	.343	.422	.330	.401	.751*	.477	.343	.270	.522	.250
	S	.878	.950	.045		.164	.332	.225	.352	.251	.012	.164	.332	.451	.122	.487
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set2_pre	PC	.140	.200	-.385	.477	1	.487	.272	.785**	-.013	.416	1.00**	.487	.202	.601	.104
	S	.700	.579	.272	.164		.154	.448	.007	.972	.232	.000	.154	.576	.066	.774
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set3_pre	PC	.089	.600	-.757*	.343	.487	1	.464	.882**	.292	.163	.487	1.000**	.249	.630	.112
	S	.807	.067	.011	.332	.154		.177	.001	.414	.652	.154	.000	.487	.051	.757
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set4_pre	PC	.000	-.042	-.357	.422	.272	.464	1	.402	.148	.589	.272	.464	.113	.808**	-.047
	S	1.000	.909	.311	.225	.448	.177		.250	.682	.073	.448	.177	.757	.005	.898
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Table 15 Continued																
		Treatment	Gender	Other FL	Set1_pre	Set2_pre	Set3_pre	Set4_pre	Set5_pre	Set6_pre	Set1_post	Set2_post	Set3_post	Set4_post	Set5_post	Set6_post
Set5_pre	PC	.060	.463	-.656*	.330	.785**	.882**	.402	1	.168	.188	.785**	.882**	.218	.648*	.041
	S	.870	.178	.039	.352	.007	.001	.250		.642	.604	.007	.001	.546	.043	.910
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set6_pre	PC	.273	.148	-.318	.401	-.013	.292	.148	.168	1	.365	-.013	.292	.486	.222	.636*
	S	.446	.682	.370	.251	.972	.414	.682	.642		.299	.972	.414	.155	.538	.048
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set1_post	PC	.437	-.214	-.197	.751*	.416	.163	.589	.188	.365	1	.416	.163	.541	.655*	.536
	S	.207	.553	.586	.012	.232	.652	.073	.604	.299		.232	.652	.106	.040	.110
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set2_post	PC	.140	.200	-.385	.477	1.00**	.487	.272	.785**	-.013	.416	1	.487	.202	.601	.104
	S	.700	.579	.272	.164	.000	.154	.448	.007	.972	.232		.154	.576	.066	.774
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set3_post	PC	.089	.600	-.757*	.343	.487	1.00**	.464	.882**	.292	.163	.487	1	.249	.630	.112
	S	.807	.067	.011	.332	.154	.000	.177	.001	.414	.652	.154		.487	.051	.757
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set4_post	PC	.933**	.416	-.254	.270	.202	.249	.113	.218	.486	.541	.202	.249	1	.514	.808**
	S	.000	.232	.478	.451	.576	.487	.757	.546	.155	.106	.576	.487		.128	.005
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Set5_post	PC	.421	.378	-.547	.522	.601	.630	.808**	.648*	.222	.655*	.601	.630	.514	1	.280
	S	.226	.281	.101	.122	.066	.051	.005	.043	.538	.040	.066	.051	.128		.433
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Table 15 Continued																
		Treatment	Gender	Other FL	Set1_pre	Set2_pre	Set3_pre	Set4_pre	Set5_pre	Set6_pre	Set1_post	Set2_post	Set3_post	Set4_post	Set5_post	Set6_post
Set6_post	PC	.803**	.187	.029	.250	.104	.112	-.047	.041	.636*	.536	.104	.112	.808**	.280	1
	S	.005	.604	.937	.487	.774	.757	.898	.910	.048	.110	.774	.757	.005	.433	
	N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).																
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).																

Table 15 delineates the correlations between the scores for all quantitative variables for all subjects. Significant correlations were found among several variables: the scores on pre-tests, the scores on post-tests, other FL, and treatment. For the sake of this study, only the relevant correlations will be addressed below. Those correlations are: the treatment and post-test scores, pre- and post-test scores, and other FL and post-test scores.

Firstly, there are two statistically significant ($p < .05$) linear relationships between the treatment and scores on some post-treatment question groups found by the correlation analysis. First, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the treatment and post-test Question Set Four, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.933). Second, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the treatment and post-test Question Set Six, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.803). Additionally, there are two significant linear relationships between the treatment and post-test Question Set One (as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient .437) and Set Five (as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient .421). No correlations were found for the treatment and Question Sets Two or Three.

Secondly, the analysis revealed three statistically significant ($p < .05$) linear relationships between the pre-test scores and post-test scores. First, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the pre- and post-test Question Set One, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.751). Second, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the pre- and post-test Question Set Five, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.648). Third, there is a statistically

significant linear relationship between the pre- and post-test Question Set Six, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.636).

Thirdly, the analysis revealed one statistically significant ($p < .05$) linear relationship between the other FL and post-test scores. Specifically, there is a statistically significant linear relationship between the other FL and post-test Question Set Three, as indicated by a positive correlation coefficient (.757). There were no correlations found for gender or other variables.

Having established existing correlations among the three variables (other FL, pre-test, post-test, and treatment), these variables were submitted to a univariate analysis of variance (ANCOVA) to determine whether there were differences between groups and whether the independent variables (treatment, other FL, and pre-test scores) affected the results of the scores on the post-test. The univariate general model is used to compare differences between group means and estimate the effect of covariates on a single dependent variable. In the case of this study, an ANCOVA was performed to see if there were differences between the groups (treatment and comparison) on their post-test scores. Pre-test scores, gender, and other FL served as covariates, the post-test was the dependent variables and the treatment was a fixed factor, as it contains all levels of interest. The ANCOVA adjusted the post-test means on the basis of the pre-test means and then compared these adjusted means to see whether they were significantly different on post-tests. Below are the results of the ANCOVA analysis for each question set.

Question Set One: Students' perception of the importance of L2 reading for developing other language skills.

Table 16 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL - Question Set One

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	47.543 ^a	4	11.886	12.235	.009
Intercept	.600	1	.600	.618	.468
Set1_pre	5.461	1	5.461	5.622	.064
Gender	3.220	1	3.220	3.315	.128
Other FL	.112	1	.112	.115	.748
Treatment	10.263	1	10.263	10.564	.023
Error	4.857	5	.971		
Total	936.000	10			
Corrected Total	52.400	9			
a. R Squared = .907 (Adjusted R Squared = .833)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model on each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level were examined. The first covariate, pre (pre-test scores), the F statistic (5.622) and its associated significance level (.064) indicate that it has a non-significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. The second covariate, gender, had a non-significant F statistic (3.315) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.128). The third covariate, other FL, also had a non-significant F statistic (.115) and associated significance level (.748). The fourth

covariate, treatment, has a significant F statistic (10.564), as can be seen from its associated significance level (.023). The non-significant levels for gender and other FL confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analyses that these variables had no effect on the dependent variable, i.e., post-test scores.

Question Set Two: Students' motivation for reading in Russian.

Table 17 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL - Question Set Two

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	20.400 ^a	4	5.100	.	.
Intercept	.000	1	.000	.	.
Set2_pre	16.591	1	16.591	.	.
Gender	.000	1	.000	.	.
Other FL	.000	1	.000	.	.
Treatment	.000	1	.000	.	.
Error	.000	5	.000		
Total	334.000	10			
Corrected Total	20.400	9			
a. R Squared = 1.000 (Adjusted R Squared = 1.000)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model for each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level were examined. The non-significant levels for all covariates confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analysis that none of these variables had any effect on the dependent variable, i.e., post-test scores.

Question Set Three: The amount and sources of independent reading in Russian that students undertake outside of class.

Table 18 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL - Question Set Three

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	50.400 ^a	4	12.600	.	.
Intercept	.000	1	.000	.	.
Set3_pre	20.000	1	20.000	.	.
Gender	.000	1	.000	.	.
Other FL	.000	1	.000	.	.
Treatment	.000	1	.000	.	.
Error	.000	5	.000		
Total	934.000	10			
Corrected Total	50.400	9			
a. R Squared = 1.000 (Adjusted R Squared = 1.000)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model on each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level were examined. The non-significant levels for all covariates confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analysis that none of these variables had any effect on the dependent variable, i.e. post-test scores.

Question Set Four: Students' attitudes toward the reading topics in previous classes.

Table 19 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL - Question Set Four

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	53.953 ^a	4	13.488	40.946	.001
Intercept	11.591	1	11.591	35.188	.002
Set4_pre	.171	1	.171	.519	.503
Gender	1.923	1	1.923	5.838	.060
Other FL	4.745	1	4.745	14.406	.013
Treatment	43.126	1	43.126	130.917	.000
Error	1.647	5	.329		
Total	326.000	10			
Corrected Total	55.600	9			
a. R Squared = .970 (Adjusted R Squared = .947)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model on each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level were considered. The first covariate, pre (pre-test scores), the F statistic (.622) and its associated significance level (.503) indicate that it had a non-significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. The second covariate, gender, had a non-significant F statistic (5.838) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.060). The third covariate, other FL, had a significant F statistic (14.406) and associated significance level (.013). The fourth covariate, treatment, had a significant F statistic (130.917) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.000). The non-significant levels for gender confirm the

result of previously conducted correlation analyses that this variable had no effect on the dependent variable, i.e., post-test scores.

Question Set Five: Types of readings students are most interested in.

Table 20 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL - Question Set Five

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	9.117 ^a	4	2.279	2.287	.194
Intercept	12.428	1	12.428	12.471	.017
Set5_pre	1.881	1	1.881	1.887	.228
Gender	.659	1	.659	.661	.453
Other FL	1.025	1	1.025	1.028	.357
Treatment	2.823	1	2.823	2.832	.153
Error	4.983	5	.997		
Total	547.000	10			
Corrected Total	14.100	9			
a. R Squared = .647 (Adjusted R Squared = .364)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model on each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level are seen. The first covariate, pre (pre-test scores), the F statistic (1.887) and its associated significance level (.228) indicate that it had a non-significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. The second covariate, gender, had a non-significant F statistic (.661), as can be seen from its associated significance level (.453). The third covariate, other FL, also had a non-significant F statistic (1.028) and associated significance level (.357). The fourth

covariate, treatment, had a non-significant F statistic (2.832) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.153). The non-significant levels for gender and other FL confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analysis that these variables had no effect on the dependent variable, i.e., post-test scores.

Question Set Six: Students' self-assessment of their current reading proficiency.

Table 21 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subject Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL - Question Set Six

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	26.446 ^a	4	6.612	8.361	.019
Intercept	.892	1	.892	1.128	.337
Set6_pre	5.819	1	5.819	7.359	.042
Gender	.122	1	.122	.154	.711
Other FL	.229	1	.229	.289	.614
Treatment	9.569	1	9.569	12.102	.018
Error	3.954	5	.791		
Total	224.000	10			
Corrected Total	30.400	9			
a. R Squared = .870 (Adjusted R Squared = .766)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model on each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level were inspected. The first covariate, pre (pre-test scores), the F statistic (7.359) and its associated significance level (.042) indicate that it had a significant linear relationship with the dependent variable.

The second covariate, gender, had a non-significant F statistic (.154) as can be seen from

its associated significance level (.711). The third covariate, other FL, also had a non-significant F statistic (.289) and associated significance level (.614). The fourth covariate, treatment, had a significant F statistic (12.102) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.018). The non-significant levels for gender and other FL confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analyses that these variables had no effect on the dependent variable, i.e., post-test scores.

Based on the statistical analyses performed on the two groups' responses to the first part of the attitudinal questionnaire, the second null hypothesis can be rejected: second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment demonstrated a measurable change in reading habits and beliefs regarding FL (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions and in the interviews) when compared to students who read topically-unrelated texts. However, it should be noted here that changes were measured only in some habits and beliefs regarding FL, not in others. In addition, gender and other FL did not seem to affect the results of the scores on the post-test. A more detailed discussion of these results follows in the next chapter.

ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDINAL SURVEY FOR THE TREATMENT GROUP

To determine whether any significant differences existed within the treatment group, the means for each question set were submitted to a pair t-test analysis. This statistical tool allowed for a straightforward comparison of means within this group. Of particular interest from the t-test analyses were whether or not there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-test, and whether there were

significant differences in the scores of the six different question sets. To investigate these possibilities, it was necessary to look at the differences between the means of the treatment group on the pre-test and post-test for each question set. In other words, the pair t-test was used to examine whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-condition in students' reading habits and beliefs regarding FL.

Table 22 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL for Treatment Group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Set1_pre	9.4000	5	1.14018	.50990
	Set1_post	10.4000	5	1.14018	.50990
Pair 2	Set2_pre	5.8000 ^a	5	1.09545	.48990
	Set2_post	5.8000 ^a	5	1.09545	.48990
Pair 3	Set3_pre	9.6000 ^a	5	1.67332	.74833
	Set3_post	9.6000 ^a	5	1.67332	.74833
Pair 4	Set4_pre	4.2000	5	.83666	.37417
	Set4_post	7.4000	5	.89443	.40000
Pair 5	Set5_pre	5.8000	5	1.30384	.58310
	Set5_post	7.8000	5	.44721	.20000
Pair 6	Set6_pre	4.0000	5	1.58114	.70711
	Set6_post	5.8000	5	1.48324	.66332
a. The correlation and t cannot be computed because the standard error of the difference is 0.					

Two general conclusions may be drawn from Table 22. First, there were changes in students' responses in four question sets (namely question sets 1, 4, 5, and 6), and there were no changes in students' responses for two question sets (namely question sets 2 and 3), thus excluding the two question sets without any changes from further analysis. Second, on the four question sets with some changes in students' responses, all changes had a positive value; i.e., students reported higher scores on the post-treatment test in comparison to the pre-treatment test.

Table 23 - Paired Samples T-Test of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Reading Habits and Beliefs Regarding FL for Treatment Group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Set1_pre - Set1_post	-1.000	1.73205	.77460	-3.15063 -	1.15063	-1.291	4	.266
Pair 4 Set4_pre - Set4_post	-3.200	1.48324	.66332	-5.04169 -	-1.35831	-4.824	4	.008
Pair 5 Set5_pre - Set5_post	-2.000	1.73205	.77460	-4.15063 -	.15063	-2.582	4	.061
Pair 6 Set6_pre - Set6_post	-1.800	1.09545	.48990	-3.16017 -	-.43983	-3.674	4	.021

As Table 23 shows, the treatment group's answers differed in four question sets on the post-test compared with the scores on the pre-test. However, the paired t-test suggests that the changes in the responses were statistically significant for only two question sets and were non-significant for the remaining two. In particular, the paired t-test analysis reveals no significant changes on Question Sets One (students' perception of the importance of L2 reading for developing other language skills) and Five (types of readings students are most interested in) as indicated by the 0.266 significance level for Question Set One, and the 0.061 significance level for the Question Set Five. However, the same analysis reveals that the students reported significant change in Question Sets

Four (students' attitudes toward the reading topics in previous classes) and Six (students' self-assessment of their current reading proficiency), as indicated by the significant number 0.008 for Question Set Four, and 0.021 for Question Set Six.

ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDINAL INTERVIEWS FROM THE PRE- AND POST-CONDITION

Although the previous qualitative results helped to determine the causal relationship between the experimental treatment and the dependent measures, they did not provide any insight into students' affective responses toward the treatment, their perception of the role of reading in FL acquisition, the sources of enjoyment and motivation (or lack thereof) in reading Russian, the types and sources of independent reading, students' attitudes toward the previous reading topics in relation to their interest, their individual reading goals, or the self-assessment of their current reading skills. The aforementioned issues are addressed in the present section, which describes the qualitative analysis of the interview responses collected both at the onset and after completion of the experimental treatment.

The oral interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher for data analysis. The analysis adopted a qualitative approach by using descriptive statistics, quotations, and examples mentioned during the interviews. Based on the six question sets established for the qualitative analysis, the following section presents the major findings in relation to each question set. Additionally, students' responses toward the project are presented at the end of this section.

Question Set One: perception of the role of reading in FL acquisition.

To define students' perception of the role of reading in FL acquisition, the first interview question asked *What is, in your opinion, the role of reading in Russian language courses?* All students interviewed deemed reading to have an important role in FL acquisition. The respondents stated possible effects that reading can have on language acquisition. Most often mentioned was a positive effect on vocabulary development, followed by an effect on grammar in general. One of the respondents recognized the role of reading as a base for other language skills. The following examples represent typical responses from students on the pre-treatment interview.

Example 1: I personally feel it's essential, in not only figuring out how to construct the language, cleanly, grammatically, but it's interesting to look at words, how other people use them.

Example 2: Well, I think that reading is the first thing you learn to do in Russian. I think I'm much more comfortable in reading than doing anything else. And I think that when I see the words a lot when reading, I will be able to understand them better. I think that it's my springboard for learning other skills.

In the post-treatment interview, the same question was asked to find out how students perceived the role of reading in FL acquisition. As in the pre-treatment interview, students acknowledged the valuable role of reading in FL acquisition. However, when addressing specific areas that reading could possibly affect, there were three major changes. First, the previous connection between reading and vocabulary development was less present, while the recognition of reading as a base for other language skills remained. Second, students were more specific-when addressing the positive effect that reading can have on grammar, and repeatedly mentioned a relationship between reading and syntax. Third, one respondent cited a positive relation

between reading and creating affirmative individual motivation in FL acquisition. The following examples represent typical responses from students in the post-treatment interview.

Example 3: For me, it's basically to understand the grammar and how the language goes together. And, hopefully, make it easier to learn how to speak.

Example 4: I think it is important in establishing good grammatical foundation. And perhaps, it depends on the reading material and whether you are being exposed to what Russian people would read - it kind of sets up your ambitions for the future in terms of learning language.

Question Set Two: the sources of enjoyment and motivation (or lack thereof) in reading Russian.

To determine bases for students' enjoyment and motivation to read in Russian, the following two questions were asked in both the pre- and post-treatment interviews:

Why/why not do you enjoy reading in Russian? Why/why not are you motivated to read in Russian? Students most often reported a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment when overcoming challenges associated with reading as the main source of their enjoyment and motivation. At the same time, they also stated that difficulties in overcoming challenges when reading in Russian could lead to frustration. A couple of respondents reported that their motivation came from previous long-term goals of being able to read Russian literature in the original.

Example 5: I guess, I kind of find it more difficult than the other skills in Russian and I like to figure it out, although I get frustrated very easily.

Example 6: I really like Russian writers and I'd like to be able to read them in the original language. So I guess I'm very motivated, because eventually I want to be able to do that.

In the post-treatment interview, the majority of the students reported a sense of satisfaction in overcoming challenges associated with reading in the FL. None of the respondents expressed frustration associated with reading, which was reported repeatedly in the pre-treatment interviews. Two students also remarked that they were motivated to read in Russian, because they think it will help them with other skills, namely speaking. One student noticed her motivation coming from expanding her viewpoint in Russian when reading. Below are some of the examples from the post-treatment interview.

Example 7: It's pretty inherent in me. When I'm learning foreign languages, I want to take on the challenges. That's probably where the motivation comes from, more than anything else.

Example 8: I think it'll help me with my conversational language and by reading here and there I can get better.

Question Set Three: the types and sources of independent reading.

In order to determine what reading students undertake outside of class, they were asked these two questions: *What have you read that was not required as a part of your Russian language course? Where did you find those readings?* Respondents reported having read mostly newspaper articles, short stories, and song lyrics. The majority of these readings were found on the Internet, although one respondent reported checking out a book of short stories from a university library. The responses on the post-treatment interview were almost identical to those on the pre-treatment interview, with the exception of being more specific about the Internet resources, as some students

mentioned specific websites they read, namely the Russian version of BBC and

Wikipedia. Here are a few typical responses:

Example 9: The Russian news websites, I go to those and I try to read some of the stories.

Example 10: I've read quite a few articles online and now I have starting reading Russian song lyrics online, just a few really random things. They have amusing Russian websites and those are typically in Russian.

Question Set Four: students' attitudes toward previous reading topics in relation to their interests.

In order to find out about students' attitudes toward the reading topics in their previous language classes and whether these reflected students' personal interests, the respondents were asked to elaborate on the following two statements: *I liked the reading topics in my previous Russian classes. The reading topics in my previous Russian classes reflected my personal interests.* The majority of students reported that they had a favorite reading in their previous language class. The specific favorite readings recalled varied among all respondents, as each mentioned a different favorite text. These included song lyrics, fairy-tales, children's poems, and short stories. One student stated that she did not enjoy any previous readings. In terms of the relationship between the previous texts and students' interest, two respondents reported their desire for being able to choose readings of their own interest.

Example 11: Honestly, I didn't enjoy any readings we did in class. When I was little I read some Russian fairy tales in English and I wish we could read those.

Example 12: We read Pushkin's poems in the original and I was able to understand them, so I liked that a lot. It's not really that I enjoyed the story itself; it was more the fact that I could read it and understand. Also, we read some song lyrics. Those were fun.

In contrast with the pre-treatment interview, in the post-treatment interviews students unanimously reported that they liked the reading topics in their previous language classes and that those topics reflected their personal interests. All the respondents stated that they enjoyed the readings done in the current language class. In addition to their positive attitudes toward their readings, students also stated the reasons for enjoying them. The most common reason was that they liked the freedom of choosing their own texts that reflected their interests, followed by being given an opportunity to work with materials outside of the textbook. The examples below illustrate typical responses.

Example 13: It would definitely be the articles for the project. The reading topics, in general, in the book are very limited. I mean it's nice from a learning perspective, but I do really well when I'm thrown into just a pool of language, so allowing us to find our own articles and read them was really useful.

Example 14: I like the project reading topics, because we got to choose our own, something we really wanted to read. It was cool to go and be able to research topics we wanted to, because in the book it's limited to the vocabulary that's in the unit. So it was great to be able to read our own texts outside of the textbook materials.

Question Set Five: students' individual reading goals.

To get an insight into students' individual reading goals, they were asked: *What are you interested in being able to read in Russian, and in what fields?* The respondents' answers revealed a great diversity in their interests both in the fields and types of

readings they would like to read. Five students reported interest in about sixteen different fields, ranging from science to history to law. Only three fields (classic literature, history, and political science) were mentioned repeatedly. The majority of students mentioned interest in readings related to their respective career interests. The respondents' answers were replicated in the post-treatment interviews.

Question Set Six: students' self-assessment of their current reading skills.

To determine students' self-evaluations and the possible factors affecting their confidence in reading Russian, the following two questions were asked: *Why/why not do you feel confident about the ability to read authentic Russian texts? How do you perceive your Russian reading skills?* The respondents reported confidence in reading textbook texts, especially in getting the main ideas of their readings, but noted being much less confident about reading other texts. The most common disappointment reported was in vocabulary, which students seemed to attribute to their lack of confidence and their perception of weak reading skills. A few respondents linked their weaker reading skills with insufficient amount of exposure and practice. The following two examples illustrate students' self-assessment of their reading skills prior to the treatment.

Example 15: I think I don't practice enough on my own and I know I should do that. I can get the gist of what I'm reading, except occasionally I need to look up a word I don't understand. Because of my frustration, I sometimes try to figure out every word, what it means, which is not necessarily what I need to do in order to understand the overall concept.

Example 16: Stuff we do in class I feel 100%, but not the stuff that's meant for the native speakers. Whenever I pick up a newspaper article, I understand maybe 5% of it.

In their post-treatment interviews, all respondents reported being more confident compared to the pre-treatment. The degree of their confidence varied, from “a little bit more” and “more” to “pretty” and “strongly” confident. Students also stated feeling an improvement in their reading skills, namely an increased ability to understand the main points of their readings, better orientation within a text, and focus on the overall meaning of a text. At the same time, some of the respondents mentioned a lack of vocabulary knowledge to be a shortcoming in their reading skills and to negatively affect their confidence. Typical comments by students sampled are presented in the following examples.

Example 17: I feel strongly confident now, because I take time to sit down and struggle with it instead of just looking it up, but I still don't feel 100% confident. I get very excited when I do know some things. I mean when I'm able to pick things up and kind of clue something together. That makes me feel better about my ability. I feel for the level I'm at, it's good. But it could be stronger, obviously.

Example 18: Even though I can't necessarily understand everything that's going on, I'm starting to be able to put things together. I'm a little bit more confident, but still I feel it's mostly the vocabulary I need to work on. It's easier for me to get an overall picture of what I read now. I feel I'm better now than I was before.

Students' evaluation of the project:

As mentioned earlier, students from the treatment group were asked to evaluate the procedural treatment they underwent during the post-treatment interview. They were asked these three questions: *What did you think about the project? What were the biggest strengths of the project? What were the biggest weaknesses of the project?*

Students unanimously reported that they liked the project. The most commonly reported reason for the positive project evaluation was the freedom of choice in both their

reading topics and specific texts. They stated that this allowed them to work with materials that they were both interested in and that were related to their respective careers. Respondents also mentioned enjoying the use of authentic materials as a supplementary component to their textbook, as they found choosing their own texts both stimulating and novel. Several students also reported enjoying working on the newsletter. As for the biggest weakness, respondents mentioned a few diverse reasons: difficulty in working together with other classmates and time constraints. Below are typical responses:

Example 19: I thought it was excellent. It really let us get out there and do what we wanted to do in topics we were interested in. And the fact we could pull out the information from the Russian sites was just great. I think it was a little time consuming. I wish it was a little more like a grade project. Otherwise, I really liked the project.

Example 20: I liked it, I really did. I mean, I got really fired up when I heard that I would get to do something on my own choosing, I tried to pick up something related to my own career. It didn't take that much work, as I thought it would and I just really enjoyed it. I was impressed with what people produced from what they had been reading all semester and researching. I'm really proud of what we came out with.

In sum, students' comments suggest that the experimental treatment created a new reading experience for the participants. The experimental readings, based on student evaluations, were much more comprehensible and interesting when compared to the textbook readings. Furthermore, the students seemed to modify their old reading habits and were able to read focused more on macro-processing rather than on micro-processing of textual details. As a result, the experimental input encouraged the active interaction between students and the texts leading to students' increased beliefs about the importance of reading in FL acquisition.

STUDENTS' PERCEIVED READING SKILLS

Hypothesis 3: Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in their perceived reading skills (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

To assess possible changes in students' perceived reading skills, their responses to the attitudinal survey from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. The second section of the attitudinal survey consisted of fifteen questions that appeared on and were identical for both the pre- and the post-condition surveys. As described in Chapter Four, the attitudinal survey appeared in the form of Likert scales designed to measure how participants perceived their reading skills. Students responded to each item, answering either "never," "sometimes," "often," or "always." Their responses to each question were assigned a value from 1 (Never or No) to 4 (Always or Yes). These questions focused on various reading skills students perceived implementing when reading in Russian. Students' scores across all the questions were averaged together.

To investigate these issues, the data obtained from the attitudinal surveys were submitted to 1) ANCOVA analysis to test for statistically significant differences between the groups and to explore the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent measures, and 2) paired t-test to examine for statistically significant differences between the two trials for the treatment group. In other words, these analyses examined two different comparisons: 1) differences between the means of the

comparison group and treatment group on both pre- and post-condition; and 2) differences between the means of the treatment group on the pre- and post-condition.

BETWEEN-GROUP ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDINAL SURVEYS FROM THE PRE- AND POST-CONDITION

As described in Chapter Four, students answered the questionnaires both before and after the project implementation. Table 24 provides descriptive statistics about variables in the dataset used in this study to obtain a clearer idea about the averages and variances of variables. More specifically, this table presents the mean and standard deviation for the scores of fifteen questions from the treatment and comparison groups on both pre- and post-test.

Table 24 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Perceived Reading Skills

Question	Test	Group	N	Mean	SD
1	Pre-test	Treatment	5	3.20	.837
		Comparison	5	2.60	.894
	Post-test	Treatment	5	3.80	.447
		Comparison	5	2.80	.837
2	Pre-test	Treatment	5	3.40	.548
		Comparison	5	3.20	.837
	Post-test	Treatment	5	3.80	.447
		Comparison	5	3.00	1.000
3	Pre-test	Treatment	5	2.80	.837
		Comparison	5	1.60	.894
	Post-test	Treatment	5	3.00	1.000
		Comparison	5	2.40	1.342
4	Pre-test	Treatment	5	3.20	.837
		Comparison	5	2.80	.837
	Post-test	Treatment	5	3.60	.548
		Comparison	5	3.00	.707
5	Pre-test	Treatment	5	3.40	.894
		Comparison	5	2.20	1.095
	Post-test	Treatment	5	2.40	.548
		Comparison	5	3.20	.837
6	Pre-test	Treatment	5	3.20	.837
		Comparison	5	2.40	.548
	Post-test	Treatment	5	2.80	.837
		Comparison	5	2.40	.548
7	Pre-test	Treatment	5	2.80	.837
		Comparison	5	2.00	1.000
	Post-test	Treatment	5	2.80	.837
		Comparison	5	2.20	1.095
8	Pre-test	Treatment	5	2.60	.894
		Comparison	5	2.40	1.140
	Post-test	Treatment	5	3.40	.548
		Comparison	5	2.20	1.304

Table 24 Continued					
Question	Test	Group	N	Mean	SD
9	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.00 2.20	1.000 .837
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.40 2.40	.548 1.140
10	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	2.60 2.60	1.140 1.140
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	2.60 3.80	1.342 .447
11	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	4.00 3.20	.000 1.095
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.80 3.40	.447 .548
12	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.20 3.60	1.095 .894
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.40 3.60	.894 .548
13	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	2.40 2.00	.894 1.225
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	2.80 2.00	1.095 1.000
14	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.00 2.60	.707 .548
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.00 2.60	.707 .894
15	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	2.80 3.00	.837 1.414
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	3.20 3.00	.447 1.225
Total	Pre-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	45.60 38.40	5.77062 7.82943
	Post-test	Treatment Comparison	5 5	47.80 42.00	6.97854 5.78792

Table 24 reveals two important findings. First, the responses of the two groups on the pre-test questions were significantly different, which leads to the conclusion that participants did not start on an equal footing in terms of perceived reading skills. Thus, further analysis was not carried out, as the study design required comparable covariates on the pre-test between the groups. Second, of the fifteen questions asked, the treatment group showed changes from the pre-treatment to the post-treatment measures on twelve questions.

A correlation analysis was performed to investigate whether specific background factors (such as gender and other FL studied) and/or the treatment had any effects on the post-test recall scores. The following correlation matrix displays the interaction among the different background factors as well as between the background factors and the dependent variable (post-test scores.)

Table 25 - Correlations Among Variables of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Perceived Reading Skills

		Treatment	Gender	Other FL	Pre-test	Post-test
Treatment	Pearson Correlation	1	.408	.000	.505	.451
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.242	1.000	.136	.190
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.408	1	-.612	.172	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.242		.060	.635	.687
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Other FL	Pearson Correlation	.000	-.612	1	-.386	-.381
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.060		.271	.277
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Pretest	Pearson Correlation	.505	.172	-.386	1	.631
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.136	.635	.271		.050
	N	10	10	10	10	10
Posttest	Pearson Correlation	.451	.146	-.381	.631	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.190	.687	.277	.050	
	N	10	10	10	10	10

The results of the correlation analysis reveal that no significant correlations were found among any of the variables. More specifically, there were no statistically significant ($p < .05$) linear relationships found by the correlation analysis.

To further analyze the results of the correlation analysis, the variables were submitted to an univariate analysis of variance (ANCOVA) to determine whether there were differences between groups and whether the independent variables (treatment and pre-test scores) affected the results of the scores on the post-test.

Table 26 - Univariate Analysis of Variance: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey on Perceived Reading Skills

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	219.229 ^a	4	54.807	1.415	.351
Intercept	149.837	1	149.837	3.868	.106
Pretest	8.647	1	8.647	.223	.656
Gender	29.718	1	29.718	.767	.421
Other FL	44.883	1	44.883	1.159	.331
Treatment	43.891	1	43.891	1.133	.336
Error	193.671	5	38.734		
Total	20573.000	10			
Corrected Total	412.900	9			
a. R Squared = .531 (Adjusted R Squared = .156)					

Examining the output for the univariate general linear model of each factor, the results of the F statistic and its associated significance level are shown. The first covariate, pre (pre-test scores), the F statistic (.223) and its associated significance level (.656) indicate that it had a non-significant linear relationship with the dependent variable. The second covariate, gender, had a non-significant F statistic (.767) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.421). The third covariate, other FL, also had a non-significant F statistic (1.159) and associated significance level (.331). The fourth

covariate, treatment, had a non-significant F statistic (1.133) as can be seen from its associated significance level (.336). The non-significant levels for treatment, gender and other FL confirm the result of previously conducted correlation analyses that these variables had no effect on the dependent variable, i.e. post-test scores.

Thus, based on the statistical tools used to assess the students' pre- and post-treatment perception of their reading skills, the third null hypothesis cannot be rejected, as no linear relationship between the variables (namely treatment, gender, other FL, scores on pre- and post-test) was established. In other words, second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment did not demonstrate a measurable change in their perceived reading skills (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDINAL SURVEY FOR THE TREATMENT GROUP

To determine whether any significant differences existed within the treatment group, the means for both individual questions and for all the questions combined were submitted to a pair t-test analysis. This statistical tool allowed for a straightforward comparison of means within this group. Of particular interest from the t-test analyses were whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-test, and whether there were significant differences in question scores. To investigate these possibilities, it was necessary to look at the differences between the means of the treatment group on the pre- and post-test. In other words, the pair t-test was

used to examine whether there was a significant change within the treatment group from the pre- to post-condition in perceived reading skills.

Table 27 - Paired Samples T-Test of Pre- and Post-Test Attitudinal Survey Questions on Perceived Reading Skills for Treatment Group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Q1_pre - Q1_post	-.600	.548	.245	-1.280	.080	-2.449	4	.070
Pair 2	Q2_pre - Q2_post	-.400	.548	.245	-1.080	.280	-1.633	4	.178
Pair 3	Q3_pre - Q3_post	-.200	.447	.200	-.755	.355	-1.000	4	.374
Pair 4	Q4_pre - Q4_post	-.400	.894	.400	-1.511	.711	-1.000	4	.374
Pair 5	Q5_pre - Q5_post	1.000	1.000	.447	-.242	2.242	2.236	4	.089
Pair 6	Q6_pre - Q6_post	.400	.548	.245	-.280	1.080	1.633	4	.178
Pair 7	Q6_pre – Q7_post	.000	.707	.316	-.878	.878	.000	4	1.000
Pair 8	Q8_pre - Q8_post	-.800	.837	.374	-1.839	.239	-2.138	4	.099
Pair 9	Q9_pre - Q9_post	-.400	.548	.245	-1.080	.280	-1.633	4	.178

Table 27 Continued

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 10				.548	-1.521				1.000
Pair 11	Q11_pre - Q11_post	.200	.447	.200	-.355				.374
Pair 12	Q12_pre - Q12_post	-.200	1.095	.490	-1.560	1.160	-.408	4	.704
Pair 13	Q13_pre - Q13_post	-.400	1.342	.600	-2.066	1.266	-.667	4	.541
Pair 14	Q14_pre - Q14_post	.000	.707	.316	-.878	.878	.000	4	1.000
Pair 15	Q15_pre - Q15_post	-.400	.548	.245	-1.080	.280	-1.633	4	.178
Pair 16	pretest - posttest	-2.20000	5.80517	2.59615	-9.40807	5.00807	-.847	4	.444

As Table 27 shows, the treatment group's answers differed in twelve question sets on the post-test compared with the scores on the pre-test. However, the paired t-test suggests that the changes in the responses were statistically non-significant as indicated by the low significance levels for all the questions. The specific implementations of these results will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

STUDENTS' OVERALL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Hypothesis 4: Second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment will not demonstrate a measurable change in overall language achievement (as measured by written and oral departmental exams) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

To investigate possible changes in students' language proficiency, the groups' results on five written unit exams and one oral exam were analyzed. As described in Chapter Four, each written exam lasted fifty minutes, was cumulative in nature, and focused on recently learned material from the course textbook. Since each of the five exams had a different format, the univariate general linear model of the ANCOVA that was used to test the previous hypotheses was replaced by a different statistical method. The data obtained from the exams were submitted to independent-sample t-test analysis to test for statistically significant differences between the two groups. This analysis examined differences between the means of the comparison group and treatment group on five written and one oral exam.

As described in Chapter Four, students took each exam at the conclusion of each of the five units, and the oral exam during the last week of classes. Table 21 provides descriptive statistics about variables in the dataset used in this study to obtain a clear idea about the averages and variances of variables. More specifically, it presents the mean and standard deviations of the number of test scores for both groups for all five written unit exams and the final oral exam.

Table 28 - Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviations of Departmental Test Scores

Exam	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Unit 1	Treatment	5	85.20	4.817
	Comparison	5	82.20	7.190
Unit 2	Treatment	5	88.00	4.743
	Comparison	5	86.40	7.436
Unit 3	Treatment	5	92.40	3.507
	Comparison	5	90.40	7.021
Unit 4	Treatment	5	94.40	1.140
	Comparison	5	90.00	4.528
Unit 5	Treatment	5	95.60	2.074
	Comparison	5	90.80	2.950
Oral	Treatment	5	97.000	4.1079
	Comparison	5	96.800	4.3243

As Table 28 indicates, the scores on the five written and one oral exam are comparable between the groups on all six measurement occasions, as shown by the small differences between the mean scores and the standard deviations. The similarity of exam scores indicates an equivalent level of language ability between groups over the course of

the semester. The treatment group, however, showed slightly higher scores on all but the oral exams. To determine whether these differences were significant, the means for each exam score were submitted to a t-test analysis.

Table 29 - Independent Samples T-Test of Departmental Test Scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Exam 1	Equal variances assumed	.291	.604	.775	8	.461	3.000	3.870	-5.925	11.925
	Equal variances not assumed			.775	6.988	.464	3.000	3.870	-6.155	12.155
Exam 2	Equal variances assumed	3.419	.102	.406	8	.696	1.600	3.945	-7.496	10.696
	Equal variances not assumed			.406	6.793	.697	1.600	3.945	-7.786	10.986
Exam 3	Equal variances assumed	1.648	.235	.570	8	.584	2.000	3.510	-6.094	10.094
	Equal variances not assumed			.570	5.879	.590	2.000	3.510	-6.632	10.632
Exam 4	Equal variances assumed	3.351	.105	2.107	8	.068	4.400	2.088	-.415	9.215
	Equal variances not assumed			2.107	4.505	.095	4.400	2.088	-1.150	9.950

Table 29 Continued

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Exam 5	Equal variances assumed								1.082	8.518
	Equal variances not assumed			2.977	7.178	.020	4.800	1.612	1.006	8.594
Oral	Equal variances assumed	.186	.677	.075	8	.942	.2000	2.6674	-5.9510	6.3510
	Equal variances not assumed			.075	7.979	.942	.2000	2.6674	-5.9538	6.3538

The result of the independent-sample t-test analysis reveals no statistically significant differences between the means of the comparison group and the treatment group on any of the five written or the one oral exam, as can be seen from the significance numbers ($p < .05$): .604 for the first exam, .102 for the second exam, .235 for the third exam, .105 for the fourth exam, .814 for the fifth exam, and .186 for the oral exam.

In summary, there was no interaction between group affiliation and test scores. Based on the t-test analyses performed on the group scores on the written and oral exams, the fourth null hypothesis regarding the language proficiency of the two groups cannot be rejected; second-year adult L2 students who read a series of narrow texts (single topic and genre) based on their individual interests following a guided procedural treatment did not demonstrate a measurable change in overall language proficiency (as measured by written and oral exams) when compared to students who read topically unrelated texts.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION

This dissertation employed quasi-experimental methodology to investigate the implementation of an interactive reading project in a third-semester Russian language class. More specifically, the study examined possible effects of a project-based experimental treatment on students' reading comprehension, their reading habits and beliefs, perceived reading skills, and overall language proficiency. The previous chapter presented data regarding the resulting measurable changes following the treatment. The central findings from the data analysis are threefold:

- 1) The students following a guided procedural treatment that involved researching topics of individual choice and interest through a set of readings had positive and statistically significant effects on their reading comprehension (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test reading recall scores);
- 2) The implementation of the guided procedural treatment revealed a measurable change in some of the students' reading habits and beliefs regarding FL (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions and in the interviews), while other reading habits and beliefs remained intact;
- 3) Second-year L2 students who followed the guided procedural treatment did not demonstrate measurable changes in their perceived reading skills (as measured by the scores on the pre- and post-test attitudinal survey questions), nor did they demonstrate dissimilarity in their overall language achievement

over the course of one semester (as measured by the scores on departmentally-produced unit exams) in contrast to the comparison group.

The present chapter includes three sections. First, a brief summary of the study and central findings are presented, including its limitations. Second is a discussion of the implications of this study for the field of second language acquisition. Third, suggestions for future research are given.

STUDY SUMMARY AND CENTRAL FINDINGS

Students of a third- semester Russian language course in a university-based program were recruited as participants in this study. Ten students volunteered to participate in the study, five of them were enlisted in a section of the language class that underwent an experimental treatment and five students were from a group that served as a comparison. During the semester, the treatment group followed the same third-semester syllabus as the comparison group, but incorporated a semester-long reading project. The project design allowed students to research a topic of their interest through a set of readings with an ultimate goal of reporting their findings in the form of a newsletter article. The project entailed interconnected sets of tasks during which students were actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery. The context for this project was primarily text-based (extensive readings served as a base for all activities and assignments) and task-driven (creating an end-product). The comparison group read a variety of short semi-authentic readings in the textbook that were topically unrelated to one another. These texts contained grammar that had been covered in the textbook,

presented new vocabulary, and provided cultural information on Russian realia in a variety of topics.

All of the research participants in the treatment and comparison groups completed pre- and post-treatment sets of measures. Namely, they completed pre- and post-reading tests, attitudinal surveys, semi-structured interviews, written departmental exams, and one oral departmental exam. Data collection took place over the period of a fifteen-week semester. Each of the measurement tools investigated a specific aspect of the research questions and the related null hypotheses. First, to determine the participants' level of reading comprehension, their scores on the written recall protocols from the pre- and post-tests were examined. Second, to assess students' reading habits and beliefs regarding foreign language learning, pre- and post-tests and oral interviews were conducted and the results from the pre- and post-condition were compared. Third, their scores on the departmentally produced unit exams and the final oral exam were analyzed to assess their overall foreign language competence. Students' interviews were analyzed qualitatively using content cross-case analysis and the remaining measurement tools were analyzed quantitatively.

READING COMPREHENSION

According to the data, the project implementation appears to be a significant factor in L2 reading comprehension. The dependent variable, L2 reading comprehension, was measured using the scores of the recall protocols generated by each subject on four different texts. The data was subjected to a number of statistical analyses. The univariate analysis of variance revealed a significant linear relationship between the treatment and

the post-test recall scores suggesting that the treatment had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension. Additionally, a t-test analysis revealed a significant gain in the treatment group's reading ability from pre- to post-test conditions. In summary, the treatment seems to have had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension while other factors (gender, other FL) did not seem to be significant.

Furthermore, several interesting findings emerged from an analysis of the means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum scores (see Chapter Five, Tables 1 and 4). First, the treatment group made gains on all four recall scores and more substantial overall gains compared to the comparison group. Second, the comparison group made insignificant overall gains, showing improvement in only one out of the four texts and declines in the remaining three texts. Third, dichotomizing the analysis between text genres and familiarity suggests that both textual genre and topical familiarity played an important role in the students' reading comprehension. The treatment group's gains on recall scores of all texts suggest students' ability to transfer their reading skills across genres and content areas.

READING HABITS AND BELIEFS REGARDING FL

To assess possible changes in students' FL reading habits and beliefs, their responses to the first part of the attitudinal survey and a follow-up interview were analyzed. More specifically the following FL reading habits and beliefs were investigated: students' perception of the importance of L2 reading for developing other language skills, students' motivation for reading in Russian, the number and sources of independent reading in Russian that students undertake outside of class, students'

attitudes toward the reading topics in previous classes, the types of readings students are most interested in, and students' self-assessment of their current reading proficiency. The quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed similar tendencies; however, two major findings should be pointed out. First, the treatment implementation had a positive effect on some reading habits and beliefs regarding FL learning while some habits and beliefs remained intact. Second, the qualitative analyses revealed changes in some students' reading habits and beliefs regarding FL learning that were statistically insignificant or entirely absent in the quantitative analysis. The following section discusses both qualitative and quantitative results of specific reading habits and students' beliefs.

First, both quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that the study had a significant impact on the students' perception of the importance of L2 reading for developing other language skills. The quantitative analyses revealed positive measureable progress and the qualitative analysis exposed shifts in how students perceived reading within L2 acquisition. The interviews showed that students viewed reading as a base for other language skills and pointed out its positive effect on vocabulary development and grammar in general. After the project implementation, their views of the benefits of reading extended to higher linguistic levels, such as syntax, and they realized the positive impact reading could have on motivation. In summary, the procedural treatment seemed to affect students' perception of the importance of L2 reading both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Second, students' motivation for reading in Russian did not record any quantitatively measured changes between the pre- and post-treatment conditions, nor

between the groups. This result could have been due to strong and firmly established motivations that existed in both groups prior to the treatment. Another hypothesis is that the period between the two measures was relatively short (about twelve weeks) and a longitudinal study might show different results. However, the qualitative analysis revealed shifts in participants' responses that were reflected by the disappearance of reported frustration associated with reading that was present prior to the treatment implementation.

Third, the amount, types, and sources of independent reading in Russian that students undertake outside of class were examined. An interesting finding is that students read outside of class and sought other sources of reading on their own, often on the Internet. The absence of change from pre- to post-treatment and very similar reports on the amount of reading outside of class between the two groups suggest that students in general are interested in reading outside of the required curriculum, are aware of available sources, and seek out reading on their own.

Fourth, students' attitudes toward reading topics in previous classes were examined. While the quantitative analysis revealed that the comparison group's attitudes became more negative from the pre- to post-treatment condition in regard to the topics read in class, the treatment group reported a more positive attitude. A possible explanation for the negative attitudes of the comparison group toward the readings can be the divergence of student interests and those of the textbook authors. The treatment group's positive response can be explained by one of the fundamental tenets underlying the project implementation: the students choose their own topics and texts to work with

during the semester. Naturally, students positively valued the ability to choose their own texts and this is reflected in their attitudes toward the reading topics. Additionally, the qualitative analyses disclosed the reasons behind the attitudinal shifts: the freedom to choose texts and the opportunity to work with materials outside of the textbook.

Fifth, the types of readings students are most interested in were investigated. Although the quantitative results did not demonstrate statistically significant changes in either group's opinions on what texts they are most interested in, the diversity of responses showed some interesting tendencies. The most remarkable were the variety of fields, types of texts, and specific texts that students in both groups reported being interested in with only a small amount of overlap. Students' responses demonstrated an incredible diversity in their interests and additionally showed that students are often attracted to readings in their respective fields of study.

Sixth, students' self-assessments of their current reading proficiency were scrutinized. The quantitative analysis disclosed significant gains in the treatment group's self-assessment of their current reading proficiency from the pre- to post-treatment condition and a slight decrease in the same category for the comparison group. Students' perception, moreover, confirms their actual level of reading comprehension as measured by the recall protocols as described earlier. In other words, students' correctly and closely perceived their actual reading proficiency, which was measured by the recall scores. In a more detailed analysis of their reading proficiency, students indicated that their reading comprehension had improved due to their improved reading skills. Their improved reading skills were namely an increased ability to understand the main points of their

readings, better orientation within a text, and ability to better focus on the overall meaning of a text.

PERCEIVED READING SKILLS

To assess possible changes in students' perceived reading skills, their responses to the attitudinal surveys in the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. The second section of the attitudinal survey consisted of fifteen questions that appeared on and were identical for both the pre- and the post-condition. As described in Chapter Three, these questions were designed to determine if students believed they employed strategies when reading in Russian and if so, what reading strategies. More specifically, the questions focused on determining if students built up expectations for the material they are about to read, anticipated and predicted appropriate schemata, implemented bottom-up or top-down strategies, integrated information obtained while reading, anticipated context, recognized text structure, solved vocabulary problems, questioned or interpreted information in the text, and persisted in attempting. It is important to note that this measurement focused on perceived, not actual, reading skills.

Analysis of descriptive statistics for variables in the data set led to the conclusion that participants did not start on an equal footing in terms of perceived reading skills, which excluded further analysis of the treatment's possible effect. Furthermore, the treatment group analysis did not show any statistically significant changes in students' perceived reading skills from pre- to post-treatment condition, leading to a conclusion that the treatment did not statistically change students' reading behavior. At the same time, the mean and standard deviation for the scores of students' perceived reading skills

unveiled changes and shifts in a majority of specific reading skills (twelve out of fifteen), suggesting that the treatment might have some effect (positive or negative) on students' perceived skills. Further analysis of possible effects of the procedural treatment on students' perceived reading skills is desirable.

OVERALL LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT

Grades on the departmentally produced unit written exams and final oral exam indicated striking similarities between the treatment and comparison groups. Very little variance emerged on all measures. Each group made significant gains during the semester and neither appeared to be at a disadvantage at any point during the semester. It is important to point out that the departmental exams primarily measured textbook material. Close similarities in skill level and overall language progress throughout the semester verify that treatment did not interfere with the course syllabus or students' performance. This fact endorses a possible project implementation into a language classroom, as its presence does not seem to interfere with the course goals or students' language development.

GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study is one of a few empirical studies that provide an in-depth examination of the linguistic and learning experiences of L2 students who were involved in a semester-long project as a part of their foreign language class. Unlike previous empirical studies in SLA which have focused primarily on the instructional experience and on evaluations of Project-Based Learning (Beckett, 1999; Eyring, 1989; Kobayashi, 2006;

Luke, 2004; Sidman-Taveau, 2005; Tims, 2009; and Turnbull, 1999), this study focuses on the learners' linguistic (reading comprehension, overall language achievement) and overall learning advancement (reading habits and beliefs regarding FL and perceived reading skills). This study is also distinct because it explores application of PBL in a commonly less taught language, namely Russian, whereas previous studies were conducted predominantly with ESL students, and on occasion with other L2 learners (Spanish and French).

In addition, this study expands the question of what language skills students develop in a Project-Based Learning classroom focusing on an examination of their attitudes, beliefs, and perceived reading skills. This study found evidence that the implementation of an interactive reading project in a third-semester Russian language class helped improve students' overall reading comprehension. Evidence was also found that the project implementation positively affected students' attitudes, beliefs, and reading skills. The type of activities the treatment group completed in conjunction with their reading no doubt contributed to their improved reading comprehension.

Equally importantly, the PBL framework for reading a series of texts of the students' own choosing proved to be an enjoyable experience for the treatment group. Based on their responses to the attitudinal survey, the treatment group not only enjoyed the reading, but also expressed interest in being able to read texts of their own choosing in subsequent semesters. Interestingly, despite their reported enthusiasm for the increased role of reading in SLA, the treatment group did not distinguish themselves from the comparison group in the amount of reading they did in their free time outside of class.

That result is possibly due in part to the fact that the instructor in the treatment group was conscious of not giving or even encouraging any additional work outside of class that might bias the study.

In addition, although the reading component of the experimental treatment was unique to the treatment group, the two groups shared the remaining key instructional components. Also, the project comprised only a small portion of in-class instruction during the semester, which was the same amount of time that the comparison group spent on reading activities.

Furthermore, students' individual research results were presented in the form of a newsletter. Each student wrote an article in English (500 to 700 words in length) on a topic that he or she had chosen to research at the beginning of the semester. Once students completed their individual articles, they collaboratively worked on creating the newsletter. The students themselves decided on the division of responsibilities, deadlines, and other newsletter specifics, often via e-mail or briefly before class. At the end of the semester, students presented the instructor with the final outcome of their work. The newsletter contained thirteen different articles based on the information the students learned from their respective readings. When they were working on the newsletter, the instructor observed the students' enthusiasm and increased motivation both in and outside of the classroom.

In summary, at this early stage of research into implementing PBL in the language classroom, a central finding from the treatment group is the fact that the students were able to successfully read on their own a series of authentic texts of their own choosing.

Furthermore, this implementation of PBL had the effect of improving reading skills, positively affecting some beliefs and habits related to FL, and maintaining overall language performance in the treatment group. The results outlined in previous chapters indicate that the treatment group attained similar levels of language achievement as the comparison group throughout the semester.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The current experiment does have certain limitations. First, the current findings may not be generalizable to all FL learners. The participants used in this study came from a particular group of intermediate university students. Whether other categories of FL learners such as novice or advanced students would respond to the experimental treatment in a similar way is not clear. Additionally, the study was conducted with learners of Russian. Whether students of other foreign languages would respond to the treatment differently is unclear and studies with other L2 are desirable, especially those with different scripts or alphabets.

Second, the current study also exhibits a number of limitations in regard to its design, some of which were unavoidable due to curriculum and pragmatic requirements. They include the sample size and the number of instructors. A study of this type might generate more meaningful results with larger samples of both students and instructors. Furthermore, with different instructor variables other outcomes and results might be observed. In this study, two instructors participated, one teaching a comparison group, and the other teaching the treatment group. A better solution might have been to employ a replication study with two instructors, each teaching two different sections - one

comparison and one treatment. This procedure could reduce the impact of the instructor variable.

Third, in retrospect, several ways in which this study could be improved have been identified. The data collection process could be improved by eliciting more data on the questionnaires about participants, notably: 1) student attitudinal information with respect to the readings in the comparison group, 2) more information pertaining to students' work on the project's outcome, the newsletter. For example, obtaining information on how they used the texts for newsletter article creation would shed light on how they worked with the texts. An additional measure to consider would be to randomly sample students with whom to conduct oral interviews. Furthermore, classroom observation could record interactions and dynamics, which would offer a fuller picture of student and teacher behaviors, comments, and attitudes. This procedure would facilitate an insight into study participants' patterns in each class under different instructions.

Fourth, the reading comprehension recall test incorporated four texts. Each text was unique and examined a different topic. Two were of the same genre (newspaper article and movie review); two were of a different degree of familiarity (one familiar and one unfamiliar). Unfortunately, there were no surveys of either group's familiarity with or prior knowledge of the topics presented in each text. The results from such surveys would have been helpful in determining which students were predisposed toward comprehending which text(s). Thus the exact role of textual genre and topical familiarity requires further and more detailed analysis, as it is not clear how and why these factors

influenced reading comprehension, especially in the relationship between textual genre and the familiarity with the readings.

Fifth, PBL is a wide-ranging concept and specific projects, as described by language instructors in available literature, vary greatly. Whether different forms of projects would produce similar results is not clear. Also, if a similar project were to be integrated into a curriculum, it could be utilized more fully as a learning tool. Discussion of students' individual topics could be held during regular class hours and their findings shared with their classmates. Another important difference would be that work on the final product could take place in the classroom. Also, students read three, relatively short texts during the semester and it is unclear whether the choice of one longer text would have altered the results.

Finally, students' reading comprehension in their first language was not measured. Whether or not the level of reading comprehension in students' native language affected their L2 reading comprehension is not clear.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Bearing in mind the limitations of this experiment, I propose the following pedagogical modifications to improve the way foreign language reading is taught in Russian classes in particular and potentially in other languages as well.

First, language educators should incorporate projects into the FL classroom. With closer integration of PBL into FL instruction through the procedural approach to reading outlined in Chapter Four, there appears to be a possibility that L2 learners develop more efficient reading skills. The fact that the experimental treatment could be implemented

into the standard curriculum suggests that increasing the flexibility of reading does not necessarily involve any major curricular changes and so the standard curriculum and pedagogy of existing L2 courses can remain in place. Given the strong impact of the implemented project on reading comprehension scores of subjects in the present study, it seems appropriate to advocate that L2 reading activities be structured to include Project-Based Learning activities.

Second, language educators should provide narrow input as an option for developing intermediate learners' reading ability. As implied by this study's findings, broad reading in conjunction with grammar-oriented teaching methods seems to be positively correlated with participants' grammatical competence. However, the impact on reading comprehension may be significantly less pronounced than the effect of narrow reading. After reading a series of topically related passages, participants greatly increased their reading comprehension. Based on the current findings, I argue that FL learners may develop their reading skills faster and better if reading input is appropriately related in language and content.

Third, language educators should provide FL learners with a choice of their own reading texts, based on students' background knowledge and/or interests. Reading in one's own fields of interest may help FL learners in more successfully building cultural competence than reading a single de-contextualized article written for sophisticated readers who belong to the target culture. At the same time, and perhaps most significantly, the findings in the current study can be used to argue that the FL profession needs to encourage instructors to step away from selecting all materials used in the

classroom. Instead of FL instructors deciding what texts students should read, I believe our goal should be to enable students to choose particular topics or even specific readings.

It is incumbent upon foreign language teachers to employ individual student interests as often as possible in the selection of reading topics. This can be done by simple personal surveys in class or by permitting students to choose their own readings. Instructors could obtain information on student interests through a short survey conducted during the first class session and the data obtained could allow instructors to monitor or choose texts that address each student's interests and reading level. Students do not always need to work on the same material, and individualized readings could promote maximum learning in each student.

Fourth, language educators should modify intermediate learners' reading habits with differentiated reading tasks and reading goals. In my opinion, teachers should have students practice a wide range of reading skills by setting explicit goals such as reading to prepare an oral report, to write a summary, or to complete a task.

Finally, this study points toward the potential of PBL instruction and the importance of incorporating opportunities to work on cultural narratives in other forms (not just in literary texts) in students' respective fields of interest. My findings support the tenet that language courses primarily focused on canonical literature represent a narrow model that has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve. Thus, FL program designers and coordinators should be encouraged to draw on various genres of cultural narratives to incorporate in their FL curriculums. Many programs currently include

project work and exposure to various forms of authentic linguistic and cultural input. However, considering the effectiveness of this project, similar methodology should be included in the FL classroom more frequently and exploited to the fullest as a teaching tool. This inclusion can be done if PBL is contextualized within any curriculum and course syllabus. Instructors should modify assignments, invite students to choose their topics and outcome products, and should closely monitor individualized tasks. Although the project work in this study included open-ended in class time, that time was neither chaotic nor unproductive due to off-task behavior.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It goes without saying that more studies are needed to provide more data and confirm or disprove the findings and implications of this dissertational study. Longitudinal studies could establish whether the gains achieved in a single semester continue to develop over an extended period of time. Longitudinal studies should be undertaken that investigate the effect of PBL over several semesters. This type of study would help to determine whether the two groups would continue to score differently on the measures, or if an extended treatment has effects that were not evident after one semester.

Studies of elementary and advanced learners could establish whether PBL instruction has an impact on students at other learning levels as well. It would be especially interesting if the project design from this study were used with no significant modification on populations of students at distinctly different levels of FL education. This type of research would help answer interesting questions brought forth by this study.

Determining how the same project design affects foreign language learners' perceived reading skills at all levels of learning (essentially a "vertical" study) would provide interesting and valuable data.

More studies should engage students in interdisciplinary work and examine its possible effect on their L2 learning. The results of this study indicate that incorporating interdisciplinary study in various fields (such as ecology, history, or politics) has a positive effect on students' incentive for language acquisition. Further studies on similar cross-disciplinary curriculum design -- as a model that can simultaneously engage students' interest in interdisciplinary studies and work in language -- should be undertaken.

Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of the individual sections of exams that test for linguistic competence should be conducted. To determine if reading can serve as the basis of language learning there must obviously be an assessment of how reading influences all aspects of language learning.

Although students responded positively to the way this project was implemented (as indicated by interviews), there is a need for a more thorough examination of other varieties of project implementation. Since the reading treatment in this study occupied only a small portion of the entire semester's class time, additional studies should be conducted that compare the effects of varying amounts of project work. Also, the project design allowed students to choose topics, specific texts, and an outcome product. Naturally, a different group of students would most likely decide on different topics, texts, and outcome product. Thus, more studies on input materials and projects' outcomes

will reveal what reading input and output as well as what amount of project work provide maximum benefits.

APPENDIX A: READING COMPREHENSION RECALL TEXT 1

Америка простилась с Эдвардом Кеннеди

В субботу вечером сенатор Эдвард Кеннеди был с военными почестями похоронен на Арлингтонском кладбище в Вашингтоне, рядом с могилами его братьев Роберта и Джона, погибших в результате покушений в 1960-е годы.



Похороны прошли с военными почестями

Вдоль всего маршрута траурной процессии стояли тысячи желающих проститься с последним из легендарных братьев Кеннеди.

Одной из остановок процессии стал Капитолийский холм, где члены семьи Кеннеди в знак благодарности пожали руки всем сотрудникам аппарата сенатора, проработавшего в верхней палате Конгресса США 47 лет.

Гроб с телом Эдварда Кеннеди был доставлен в Вашингтон из Бостона, где прошла церемония прощания с сенатором.

"Лев американского сената"

Присутствовавший на мемориальной службе президент США Барак Обама назвал Кеннеди "величайшим законодателем своего времени".

"Он был душой Демократической партии и львом американского сената", - сказал американский президент.



Обама был не единственным из американских президентов, присутствовавших на церемонии

Среди других гостей были бывшие президенты США: Джордж Буш-младший, Билл Клинтон, Джимми Картер, а также около 80 действующих и бывших сенаторов.

Ветеран американской политики и влиятельный сенатор-демократ умер в возрасте 77 лет от злокачественной опухоли мозга.

APPENDIX B: READING COMPREHENSION RECALL TEXT 2

Большинство россиян хочет выбирать губернаторов

По данным социологов, более половины россиян желает возвращения прямых выборов глав регионов. По поводу снижения барьера для прохождения партий в Думу мнения расходятся.

За всенародное избрание губернаторов высказались 57% участников опроса, проведенного в середине июня 2009 года "Левада-Центром", против - 20%, затруднились ответить - 23%.

Губернаторские выборы проводились в России с 1994 по 2004 год, и были отменены по инициативе тогдашнего президента Владимира Путина после захвата школы в Беслане.

В настоящее время главы республик, краев и областей назначаются местными законодательными собраниями по представлению президента, однако совет, дважды отклонивший предложенную кандидатуру, может быть распущен. Случаев отказа местных законодателей утвердить кадровые предложения Кремля до сих пор не было.

Кроме того, в ходе опроса 42% россиян высказались за то, чтобы хотя бы часть депутатов Госдумы избиралась по одномандатным округам, несогласных с этим значительно меньше - 18%.

Однако 40% респондентов в этом вопросе не смогли занять определенную позицию.

Между тем, исследование "Левада-Центра" показало, что единого мнения по вопросу снижения для партий проходного "барьера" в Госдуму у россиян нет: 36% - за, 30% - против, 34% - не знают, что лучше.



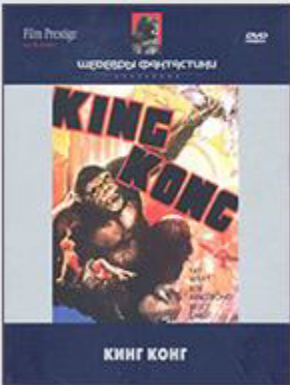
Социологи говорят, что россияне хотят выбирать своих губернаторов

APPENDIX C: READING COMPREHENSION RECALL TEXT 3

Кинг Конг (1933)

King Kong

☆☆☆☆☆ 1



200 руб.

1933 - США

Режиссер: Мериан Си Купер, Эрнест Б. Шэдсак

Актеры: Роберт Армстронг, Брюс Кэбот, Фэй Рэй

Маловероятно, чтобы современный зритель никогда не слышал этого словосочетания - КИНГ КОНГ. Оно стало именем нарицательным, и знакомо даже грудному младенцу. Поэтому так интересно смотреть на эту ленту с высоты прошедших лет, и с удивлением отмечать высокое мастерство спецэффектов, грамотную режиссуру и добротный сценарий. Начинаются приключения с того, что на отдаленном, диком острове научная экспедиция захватывает громадную человекообразную обезьяну и, не мудрствуя лукаво, привозит ее в Нью-Йорк для показа праздной публике. Кто бы мог подумать, что этот жуткий монстр, способен на такое тонкое чувство, как любовь - эта чертова обезьяна, жить не может без миниатюрной и нежной главной героини...

В начале 1930-х годов было предпринято несколько попыток повторить успех немого фильма «Затерянный мир» по роману Артура Конан Дойла и объединить в одном фильме людей и доисторических чудовищ. Мериан Купер и Эдгар Уоллес предложили экранизировать сюжет о путешествии на далекий остров, населенный динозаврами, с которого удастся привезти в Нью-Йорк гигантскую обезьяну (в экранизации «Затерянного мира» была аналогичная сцена — профессор Челленджер привез в Лондон живого диплодока). Эдгар Уоллес должен был писать сценарий, но внезапно скончался, успев сделать лишь общие сюжетные наброски. Окончательно сценарий доводили Джеймс Крилман и Рут Роуз (жена Мериана Купера). Существенной частью фильма должны были стать анимационные спецэффекты, к созданию которых был привлечен Уиллис О'Брайен, работавший и на съемках «Затерянного мира». Впервые в истории кинематографа он использовал технику наложения игровых и анимационных фрагментов, что позволило ему показать в одном кадре и живых актеров, и изображаемых куклами монстров. Другой особенностью фильма был революционный подход к музыкальному оформлению — музыка Макса Стайнера постоянно сопровождает и эмоционально окрашивает экранное действие, что в те времена не было еще обычной практикой (например, в «Дракуле» 1931 года музыка звучала только на начальных и конечных титрах). Производство фильма обошлось в 670 тысяч долларов.

APPENDIX D: READING COMPREHENSION RECALL TEXT 4

Вор (1997)

★★★★★

1 ▼

Голосовать



1997 - Россия

Режиссер: [Павел Григорьевич Чухрай](#)

Актеры: [Юрий Беляев](#), [Владимир Машков](#), [Амалия Мордвинова](#), [Ольга Пашкова](#), [Екатерина Редникова](#), [М. Филиппук](#)

История одной семьи, притча о послевоенной жизни при Сталине. 1952 год, профессиональный вор Толян, представившись демобилизовавшимся офицером, знакомится в поезде с шестилетним Санькой и его мамой. Сильный и чуткий ухажер восхищает не только Катерину, но и смекалистого мальчугана, для которого он становится другом, кумиром и отцом...После первых просмотров финал фильма (встреча взрослого сына и непутевого отца) был «отрезан», и на «Оскар» претендовал уже новый вариант. "Как нормальный зритель, сформированный триумфами кино, я втягиваюсь в действие и волнуюсь: поймут ли вора? Как истинный соучастник уголовной интриги, я разрываюсь между сочувствием красавцу, которому так идет форма капитана Советской Армии, и негодованием, что форма надета для прикрытия и что перед нами негодяй. Как человек, принимающий законы жанра, я проникаюсь духом мелодрамы и впадаю в сентиментальное сочувствие простой душевной женщине, которая влюбляется в уголовника, не говоря уже о ее маленьком сыне, которому как-никак этот тип заменил погибшего фронтовика-отца..."Вор" — манифестация нашей непрошеной ностальгии. Мучается душа и от нее, и от стыда за нее, а сделать с собой ничего не может. Не может погасить тревогу, которая охватывает человека, когда он понимает, что обворован, но не может объяснить, кем, почему и за что». — Лев Аннинский («Искусство кино», 1—1998).

Фильм был номинирован на премию "Оскар", "Золотой глобус" в категории "Лучший фильм на иностранном языке", "Феликс" в категории "Лучший европейский фильм", завоевал специальный приз жюри МКФ в Венеции и премии по 5 номинациям на фестивале "Ника-97".

руб.

Купить

182

APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-test Questionnaire

2. Section One

Please print or select your responses to the questions below.

*** 1. Initials**

2. Gender

☐ male

☐ female

3. Age

4. Year in college

☐ freshman

☐ sophomore

☐ junior

☐ senior

☐ graduate

☐ other

5. Undegraduate major

6. How long have you been studying Russian?

☐ one semester

☐ two semesters

☐ three semesters

☐ four semesters

☐ more

7. Have you learned other foreign or second languages?

☐ yes

☐ no

8. Is Russian your native language?

☐ yes

☐ no

9. Do you speak Russian at home?

☐ yes

☐ no

10. Have you ever participated in a Russian abroad program?

☐ yes

☐ no

Pre-test Questionnaire

3. Section Two

Please answer the following items by selecting the number which most accurately reflects your feelings about the following statements. The numbers correspond to the following scale:

(Not often, or No) 1-----2-----3-----4 (Often, or Yes)

1. Practice reading Russian will enable me to understand spoken Russian.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

2. Practice reading Russian will enable me to participate in Russian conversation.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

3. Practice reading Russian will enable me to write in Russian.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

4. I enjoy reading in Russian.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

5. I am motivated to read in Russian.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

6. I only read the readings that my Russian language instructor(s) require me to read.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

7. If I come across a Russian text (e.g. magazine, website), I make an effort to read it.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

8. I read Russian during my free time.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

9. I browse Russian websites on the Internet.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

10. I liked the reading topics in my previous Russian language classes.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

Pre-test Questionnaire

11. The reading topics in my previous Russian language classes reflected my personal interests.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

12. I am interested in being able to read Russian texts for study in other fields (e.g. History, Philosophy).

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

13. I am interested in being able to read Russian texts of my own choosing.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

14. I feel confident about my ability to read authentic texts written for native speakers of Russian.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

15. I perceive my Russian reading skills to be strong.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

Pre-test Questionnaire

4. Section Three

Please answer the following items by selecting the number which most accurately reflects your feelings about the following statements all starting with "When I read Russian, I ...". The numbers correspond to the following scale:

(Not often, or No) 1-----2-----3-----4 (Often, or Yes)

1. ... read the title first and imagine what the passage might be about.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

2. ... imagine what the reading passage might be about, considering what the illustrations are.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

3. ... think about what I know about the topic or source of the passage, before I start reading.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

4. ... pay most attention to what the reading passage means.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

5. ... pay most attention to what individual words mean.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

6. ... read the whole passage once and then re-read it.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

7. ... hypothesize about what might come next.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

8. ... look for a logical structure of the passage.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

9. ... expect certain things because of the reading passage structure.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

10. ... skip unknown words.

☐ 1☐ 2☐ 3☐ 4

Pre-test Questionnaire

11. ... use context in preceding and/or succeeding sentences and paragraphs to guess unknown words.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

12. ... read to identify overall meaning rather than individual words.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

13. ... use glossary as last resort.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

14. ... find that what I'm reading makes sense.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

15. ... continue if unsuccessful.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF THE DEPARTMENTALLY PRODUCED UNIT EXAMS

_____, _____
Имя, фамилия

Число

Урок 1

Контрольная работа

1. Listen to the audio clip and answer the questions in English:

1. What happened in 2004?

2. How old was Lena when she met Anton?

3. Do Lena and Anton share the same interests? What do they like to do?

4. What did their parents think about their plans?

5. When did they get married?

6. How many children do they now have?

7. Where do Lena and Anton work?

2. Insert the correct form of так or такой (in the correct case!)

a. Оля: Я _____ люблю Москву! Как здорово, что я родилась и выросла в
_____ замечательном городе! Здесь _____ красиво осенью!

b. Анна Борисовна: Ах! У меня _____ талантливые дочери! Старшая, Оля,
_____ хорошо училась в университете! Я рада, что она выбрала _____

интересную специальность. Вы знаете, её программа стала _____ популярной!

Я только волнуюсь, что Оля _____ много работает.

3. Compose sentences from the following words:

a. Кевин / влюбиться / этот город / и / симпатичная журналистка. (*past tense*)

b. Студенты часто / дарить / книги / свои американские друзья. (*present tense*)

c. Прошлый год / мой друг / сделать предложение / моя младшая сестра. (*past tense*)

d. Таня / опоздать / занятие / 10 минут. (*past tense*)

4. Compose request or advice using provided words; pay attention to the aspect.

a. Call more often / этот симпатичный американец.

b. Send me пожалуйста / твоя новая статья.

c. Don't tell / это / наши родители.

d. Смотри не / to be late / завтра / лекция!

e. Help us / сегодня приготовить ужин.

f. Recall / как зовут её сестру.

g. Prepare (cook) / завтра на обед курицу.

5. State your opinion about the following, like in the model, using comparatives.

For example: difficult

- Химия– трудная.
- А, по-моему, история труднее, чем химия.
- a. easy
 - Русский - _____ .
 - А, по-моему, испанский _____ .
- b. tasty
 - Блины - _____ .
 - А, по-моему, борщ _____ .
- c. close
 - Петербург очень _____ .
 - По-моему, Тверь _____ .
- d. strong
 - Наша футбольная команда очень _____ .
 - По-моему, наша команда _____ .
- e. loud
 - Таня очень _____ говорит.
 - По-моему, Оля говорит _____ .

6. Render the following statements into reported speech.

- a. Оля: «Я работаю на телевидении».

- b. Анна Борисовна: «Мы устроим свадьбу дома».

- c. Оля: «Кевин, где ты родился?»

7. Translate the following into Russian:

Natasha is married.

When she was 23, she married a quiet scholar.

Алексей is married.

Last year he married a famous actress.

They married in Siberia.

His parents are divorced.

They divorced on August 12th. (spell out the date)

8. You are studying in Moscow and your teacher assigned as homework that you write an essay about your host family. Assume that you are living with the Володи́ны! Write about 12 sentences about them. You will not be graded on truthfulness (i.e., the actual ages of someone, birthday, etc.), but only on your comprehensibility (grammatical accuracy, use of vocabulary from Unit 1, etc.). Don't forget to tell everyone about Tanya's news!

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Title The Effect of Implementing an Interactive Reading Project on Reading Comprehension
 in the Third-Semester Russian Language Class

IRB PROTOCOL # 2009010046

Conducted By: Filip Zachoval
Of The University of Texas at Austin: *Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies*
Telephone: XXX-XXX XXXX
E-mail: XXXX@mail.utexas.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Thomas J. Garza
Of The University of Texas at Austin: *Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies*
Telephone: XXX-XXX XXXX
E-mail: XXXX@mail.utexas.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of implementing an interactive reading project on reading comprehension in a third-semester Russian language class.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- fill in a pre- and post-study questionnaire
- conduct a pre- and post-study reading test
- conduct a pre- and post-study interview

Total estimated time to participate in study is 3 hours

Risks of being in the study:

- The study does not present any potential risks for physical injuries. Minor psychological discomfort may be experienced by participants in the study due to the disclosure of personal information.
- This procedure may involve risks that are currently unforeseeable. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

Benefits of being in the study include possible better understanding of various factors that influence reading comprehension. Insights gained from the research may result in better familiarity with diverse approaches to reading, which may improve participants' foreign language reading performance.

Compensation:

- N/A

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at XXX-XXX XXXX or the Office of Research Support at XXX-XXX XXXX or email: XXXX@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Name printed or typed: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H: TEMPLATE FOR WEIGHTING THE PAUSAL UNITS

Text #	Number of pausal units
1	48
2	46
3	52
4	54
Total	200

APPENDIX I: ORAL EXAM GRADING SHEET

Oral Examination Grading Sheet RUS 412K / Fall 2009

Name _____

Additional Comments _____

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Pass
Grammar accuracy	5	4	3	2	1
Vocabulary used	5	4	3	2	1
Complexity of sentences	5	4	3	2	1
Fluency of delivery	5	4	3	2	1

Final Grade =

APPENDIX J: COURSE SYLLABUS

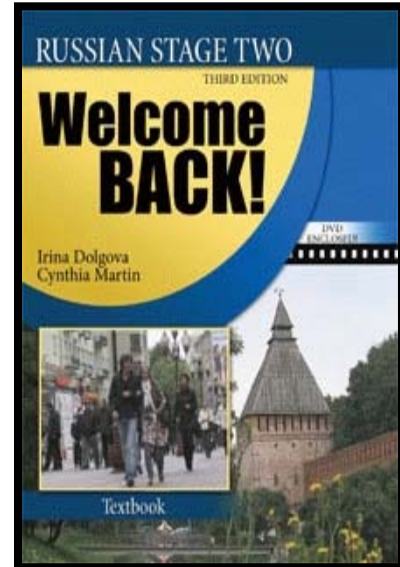
The University of Texas at Austin
Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies
<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/slavic/>
Fall Semester 2009

Second-Year Russian I

RUS 412K

COURSE SYLLABUS

Class Time: M-Th 10-11 am
Place: CAL 419
Instructor: Filip Zachoval
Office: Calhoun 429
Phone: 471-3607 (Slavic Department)
E-mail: XXXX@mail.utexas.edu



Required Textbook: • Irina Dolgova and Cynthia Martin. *Russian: Stage Two: Welcome Back!*, (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. 2009). This packaged set comprises one basic textbook, two workbooks, two audio CDs, and one DVD. Available at the University Co-op.

Recommended: All available at the University Co-op:

- Wade, Terrence. *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
- Gerhart, Geneva. *The Russian's World*. (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2000).
- Katzner, Kenneth, ed. *English Russian/Russian English Dictionary*, (New York: Wiley Publishers, 1994).

Welcome to the Russian 412! You are entering into the intermediate level of language and culture instruction in one of the world's most spoken and influential languages. Russian is spoken by 150 million in the former Soviet Union and by another 50 million Russians living all over the world – including New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. This is the year of Russian study that will best prepare you to read the brilliant works of

Russian literature, to undertake a longer term of study abroad, to watch Russian films and television in the original, and of course to major in Slavic Studies here at UT! Russian is not only one of the official languages of diplomacy at the U.N., and a member language of the G-8, it is a language for which your prospects in business, engineering, teaching, law, and medicine are greatly enhanced with a reasonable functional proficiency. So whatever your goal, we hope that your second year of study of Russian will bring you many rewards! А сейчас, давайте начнём!

I. GENERAL

Course Content: This course is the third semester of Russian language instruction developing functional proficiency in listening, speaking, and reading. Writing will be developed primarily through workbook home assignments. We will cover the Introductory Unit during the first week of classes, and then continue with Units 1 through 5 in the *Textbook*, spending ten class days on each unit.

Course Requirements: You are expected to attend classes regularly, participate actively in class, do all assigned coursework, and take all exams. A description of each unit's work, listing video episodes (found on the DVD), communicative goals, lexical fields, and grammatical topics, is found on pp. vii - xvii in your *Textbook*. The homework assignments are found in the *Workbook* and, for aural work, on the CDs. You will be allowed a maximum of five (5) unexcused absences during the semester. More than 5 (five) unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade by a diacritical (a B+ goes to a B, a B to a B-, etc.); more than eight (8) absences will result in a grade lowered by a letter. **PREPARING AND HANDING IN DAILY HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS IS ESSENTIAL TO PASS THE COURSE!** This means that, using the Course Syllabus, you should go over and be familiar with this material (or prepare relevant questions) in advance of class.

You are also responsible for learning actively all of the words and expressions contained in the texts and exercises covered in the Course Syllabus that appear in **non-italic** type in the vocabulary lists at the end of each unit in the *Textbook*. **You should plan to spend about two hours of preparation for each hour in the classroom.** If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor or another student and find out what was covered and make up the missed work. Excused absences shall be for illness and family emergency only. Your instructor will need to see documentation.

All cell-phones and pagers must be turned off during class. No laptops or hand-held devices are to be used in class, please.

Special Accommodations: If you have extenuating physical circumstances, all instructors in the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies will make themselves available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Before course accommodations will be made, students may be required to provide documentation to the Office of the Dean of Students -- Services for Students with Disabilities.

Testing: There will be five (5) in-class one-hour tests and a final examination for this course. The in-class tests, each covering one unit, will be given on **September 23, October 12, October 28, November 16, and December 3**. A fifteen-minute individual oral proficiency exam given during the final week of classes, and a comprehensive three-hour final exam will be given during the University's exam period between December 10 and 16, 2009. The final exam for *this* section of RUS 412K will be given on **Friday, December 12, 2-5 pm.**

II. GRADING

There are three components of your final course grade. These components and their relative weights are:

1. Testing: 60%

In-class tests: 40%

Final exam: 15%

Oral Proficiency Interview: 5%

Because of the time constraints and pace of this course, make-ups on any of the tests will be given only in unusual cases with extenuating circumstances.

2. Homework: 25%

Written homework or in-class quizzes (e.g., vocabulary, grammar checks, etc.) will be graded on a credit (4) / no credit (7) basis. All assignments from the *Workbook* must be turned in on the class day after being assigned; a "no credit" assignment may be resubmitted for credit on the following day after being returned to the student. Your homework grade will be the percentage of "credit" assignments you submit during the term.

3. Participation: 15%

Your instructor determines this component as a reflection of your overall preparedness and performance in class; it is NOT merely an attendance grade.

You are expected to a) attend class daily, b) prepare assigned material in advance for each class, and c) respond in class with reasonable accuracy and, of course, *enthusiasm*.

The result of these calculations will be on a number on a scale of 0-100. This numerical grade will be converted to a letter grade as follows:

98 – 100	=	A+
94 – 97	=	A
90 – 93	=	A-
88 – 89	=	B+
84 – 87	=	B
80 – 83	=	B-
78 – 79	=	C+
74 – 77	=	C
70 – 73	=	C-
68 – 69	=	D+
64 – 67	=	D
60 – 63	=	D-
59 and below	=	F

III. MEDIA RESOURCES

Your *Textbook* comes with two audio CDs and a DVD that correspond to many of the exercises in each unit, indicated by a "disk" and "camera" symbol, respectively. You will **greatly** enhance your own listening comprehension of Russian by downloading and using to these media in your iPod or home/car stereo as often as possible. If you prefer to use the media on campus, there are facilities available in several locations, such as the Perry Castañeda Library and Flawn Academic Center. In addition, the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies also has in Calhoun 422 a collection of both classic and very recent DVDs with movies, music, speeches and documentaries from and about Russia and the former Soviet states. These DVDs are interesting from both a cultural and purely entertainment point of view. Many of the DVDs have both English subtitles (which can help you build your confidence and facility in hearing spoken Russian and deriving meaning), and some also have Russian subtitles, which are a real benefit to building listening comprehension as you gain a larger vocabulary and fluency. These may be checked out for home viewing; see your instructor for suggestions.

RUS 412K COURSE OUTLINE

ПЕРВЫЙ ДЕНЬ ЗАНЯТИЙ

- Среда, 26 августа**
- Introduction to the course RUS 412K and how to use the materials with *Russian: Stage Two: Welcome Back!*
 - “Вводный урок” День 1

ВВОДНЫЙ УРОК: *WELCOME BACK!*

Четверг, 27 августа - Четверг, 3 сентября

••• Понедельник, 7 сентября День трудящихся – праздник! •••

ПЕРВЫЙ УРОК: *WELCOME BACK!*

Пятница, 8 сентября - вторник, 22

Первая контрольная работа: Среда, 23 сентября

ВТОРОЙ УРОК: *WELCOME BACK!*

Четверг, 24 сентября - четверг, 8 октября

Вторая контрольная работа: понедельник, 12 октября

ТРЕТИЙ УРОК: *WELCOME BACK!*

Вторник, 13 октября - вторник, 27 октября

Третья контрольная работа: Вторник, 28 октября

ЧЕТВЁРТЫЙ УРОК: *WELCOME BACK!*

Среда, 29 октября - четверг, 12 ноября

Четвёртая контрольная работа: Понедельник, 16 ноября

ПЯТЫЙ УРОК: *WELCOME BACK!*

Вторник, 17 ноября - среда, 2 декабря

Пятая контрольная работа: Четверг, 3 декабря

APPENDIX K: ORAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR ORAL INTERVIEW

The topic that you choose to speak about should be developed in eight to ten sentences, with all the appropriate vocabulary and grammar covered this semester. You should write out your projected talk and give it to your instructor (no later than the date he or she sets). You will use the text you get back to study. You may memorize it but should try to produce it naturally at the interview.

During the interview, you will first read a passage from the video-script out loud. Passages will be indicated in advance, and you should rehearse your choice with the help of video. Then you will speak on the topic you have chosen. Finally the instructor will ask you a few simple follow-up questions. Your performance will be evaluated from the point of view of accuracy of grammar, complexity of sentences, level of vocabulary used, and fluency of delivery. You will receive your grade immediately.

TOPICS

Зимние каникулы. Describe where you would like to go and what you would like to do there during the winter break. Imaginary or real, your trip description should include the following:

- ❖ where and when you will go
- ❖ for how long you will go
- ❖ whether you are traveling alone or with somebody
- ❖ reason for going there
- ❖ what you will do there

Болезни и лечение. Talk about the last time you had the flu, a cold, or food poisoning. Please provide the following details:

- ❖ your symptoms
- ❖ your doctor's (mom's, friend's) advice
- ❖ what you actually did to alleviate your state
- ❖ how long it lasted
- ❖ what you could not do while you were sick

Брак: традиции и ваша семья. Were weddings in your family traditional? Choose one couple (relatives or friends) and tell their story. Mention the following:

- ❖ how old they were when he proposed
- ❖ when and where they got married
- ❖ where they celebrated the occasion (restaurant, home, etc)
- ❖ whether anybody was against it (they were too young, etc)
- ❖ where they went for their honeymoon (медовый месяц)

Свободная тема. A topic (story) of your choice.

APPENDIX L: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Semester Project “Let's read” Курсовой проект «Давайте прочитаем»

General Description of the Project

The Semester Project “Let's read” is designed for the 10 o'clock section of RUS 412K Second-Year Russian class of fall 2009 at the University of Texas at Austin as a natural supplement to and an extension of the existing curriculum for this course. Through a series of in-class activities and home assignments, you will practice and develop all-around language skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing), acquire cultural knowledge about contemporary Russia, and explore in-depth a topic of your interest. The project entails interconnected sets of sequenced tasks during which you will be actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery. The context for this project will be primarily text-based (extensive readings serve as a base for all activities and assignments), task-driven (creating an end-product), collaborative, technology-enhanced (extensive use of the Internet), and individualized (research topic of your own interest).

Schematic Outline

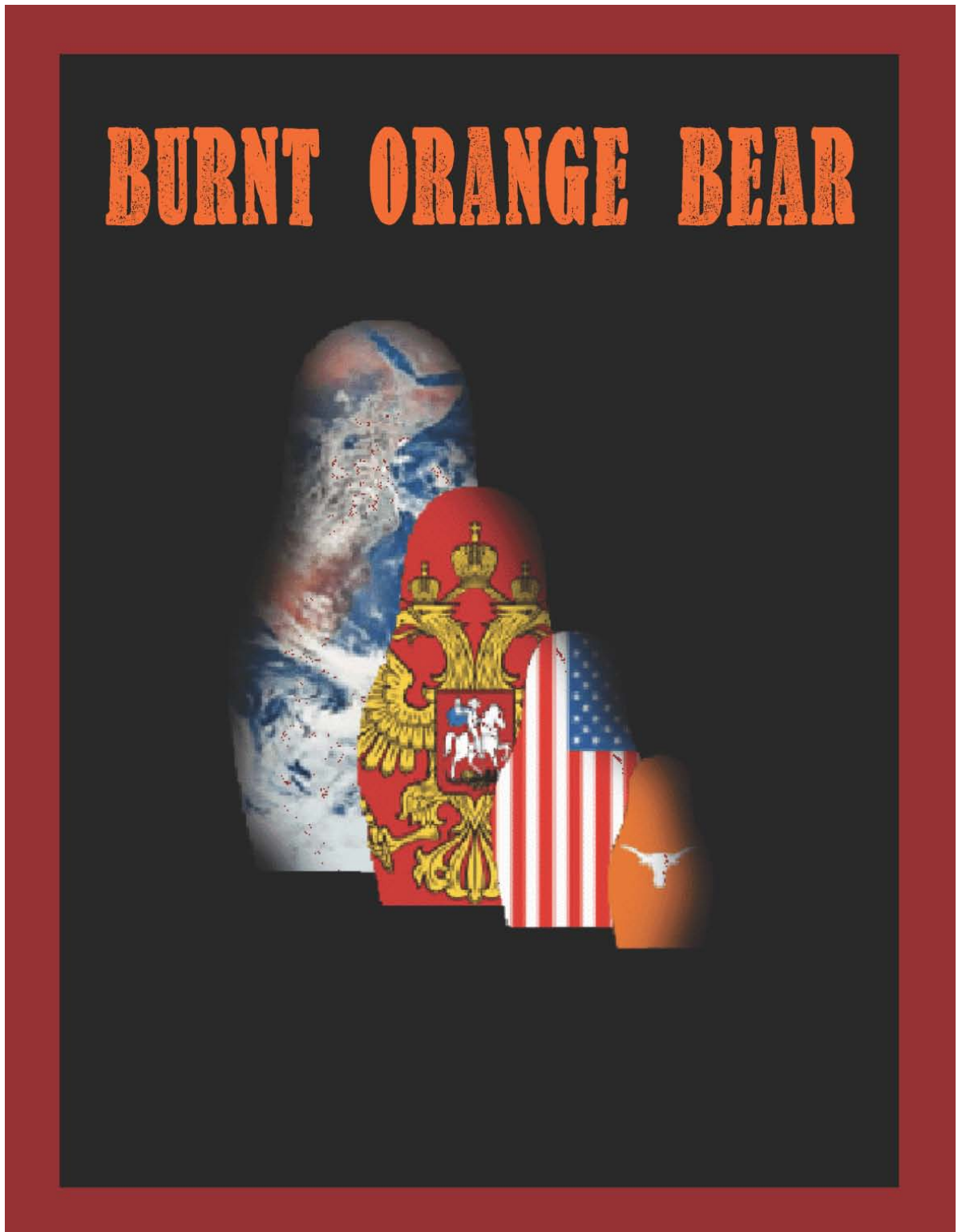
Work on the project will follow the steps described below. Step #2 (topic research) constitutes the core part of the project and will be conducted several times, as each subject will be looked at from different perspectives.

1. Introduction:
 - a) Getting familiar with the project.
 - b) The individual topics are selected, negotiated and agreed upon.
2. Topic research:
 - c) Students and instructor seek, gather, and check reading resources.
 - d) Students investigate and gather information.
 - e) Findings are shared and documented.
3. Conclusion: results are represented and presented in class.

Instructions and Communication

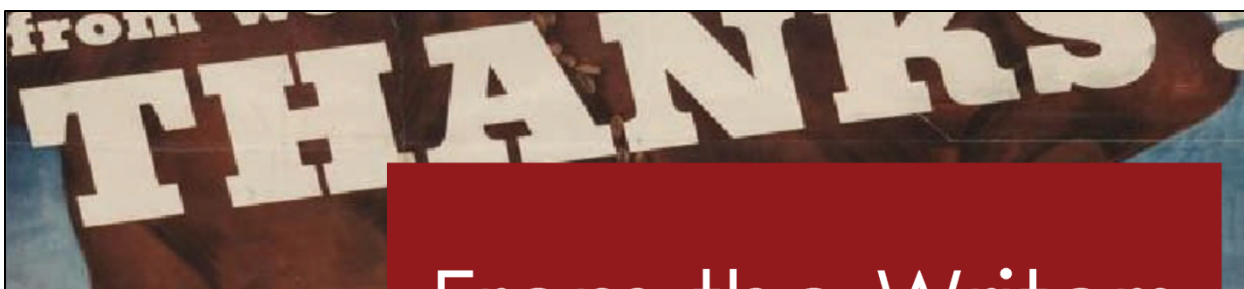
Throughout the semester we will do specific activities in class and you will be given home assignments (you'll receive detailed instructions every week). These assignments will have both an individual and collaborative nature, so it is extremely important that all participants effectively communicate with their classmates and the instructor. Due to the sequential nature of the project, it is also important that all the assignments are completed by the determined deadline.

APPENDIX M: NEWSLETTER





Russia



From the Writers

Dear Readers,

It all started out as a simple idea, an opportunity to learn something new about a country we love. A few articles and a few deadlines later we have created something that we want to share with fellow Russian enthusiasts, such as ourselves. We'd like to invite you on a journey through Russia. Explore its rich history and the challenges that Russia is facing today.

This publication is brought to you by Filip Zachoval's second year Russian class. Through the stories we've written and the work put into this, we hope to share the love and enthusiasm that we have for the language and the culture. We hope that you enjoy this just as much as we enjoyed creating it.

Thank you,

The students from Filip Zachoval's RUS 412K

BURNT ORANGE BEAR

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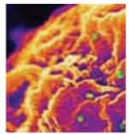
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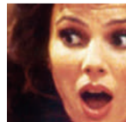
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Roman Abramovich

XXX XXX

My third semester Russian language class and I were invited by our teacher, near the beginning of the semester, to choose and read three articles in Russian about a topic of our choice. I chose to read about the famous Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich. He is known as a shrewd businessman and is one of the richest people in the world according to Forbes.com; number 51 to be exact. He is the owner of the English soccer club Chelsea and has invested one and a half billion dollars of his own money with the hope of making the club more of a contender.

After reading about Roman Abramovich's purchases, most notably an estate on the island of Saint Bart's, I have come to the conclusion that every single person has a desire to be considered important. Roman Abramovich is not only one of the richest people in the world, but also one of the youngest with extreme wealth. Additionally, he is one of the youngest to be self-made. He wasn't a trust fund baby and his parents didn't elevate him in society. In actuality, he dropped out of college.

"He wasn't a trust fund baby...In actuality, he was an orphan who dropped out of college."

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Roman Abramovich turned it into a profit. He was not deterred by the fall of a communist government. He looked at this as a great opportunity to make money. In the early 1990s he and a friend made a lot of money on some controversial oil deals. He would sell anything to anybody during the time of the fall of the Soviet Union. His bravado and general opportunistic style helped pave the way for him to be a fixture in the Russian economy for years to come.

Some do not like Roman Abramovich and how he made his enormous fortune. People call him an exploiter, a user, or a manipulator. I do not agree with these people. If they were put in the same situation as

Roman they would have done the same, and perhaps even more. What Roman did and how he accumulated his vast fortune was not immoral. It might not have been ideal from an ethical perspective, but given the situation he had to do it. People were going to be making money off of the collapse of the Soviet Union, why should he hesitate and lose out on the opportunity of a lifetime? I do not and most likely will not understand the position that he should not have taken advantage of the fall of the Soviet Union. Again, given the type of people who lived in the country at the time and the type of "survival of the fittest" mentality that they had in the country, and most likely still have today, he had to do it. Although what Roman



Marketing Editor

XXX XXX

is a Junior at UT.
He chose to study
Russian because it
was always pre-
sented to him as a
difficult language
to learn and he
wanted to take a
challenging lan-
guage.

considered self preservation, it had to be done.

If that didn't help persuade people to my belief then let me try and help you see the light. Everybody knows the old ethical question of whether or not we should punish someone for stealing bread to feed his family. Most would say that they don't think the man should be punished and I agree. I feel as though Roman Abramovich was in a similar mindset at the time of his alleged exploitation. Although he in no way needed bread to feed his family, or himself for that matter, he still had to do it as a preemptive strike against those contemplating the same thing. He went after scarce resources and made a fortune. That is a business strategy that is employed by many and is a very respectable business strategy. He did not, however, go after a resource that was abundant and control the supply so that it became a scarce resource. If he did that then I would agree with everybody else and concede that what he did was wrong.



Into the World of Comics

XXX XXX



If you've been to the movies in the past few years, you are probably more familiar with comic books than you might think! *Hellboy*, *Sin City*, *Wanted*, *Watchmen*, *Iron Man*, *Hulk*, *The Dark Knight*: these box office toppers have come back in style in the past few years, and they're all based on comics or graphic novels.

In the United States, the audiences of these movies have the chance to read most of these comics before they are adapted to the big screen. In fact, the *Watchmen* graphic novel increased in sales by over a million copies in the few months before the movie's release. Here in the US we can safely say we have a "comic culture" with events like the San Diego Comic Con, an annual meeting of comic fans from around the world.

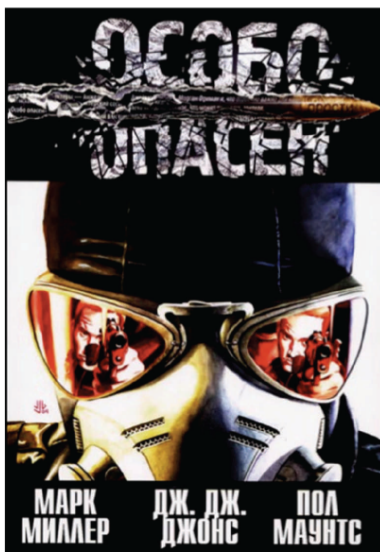
For Americans, our comic book heroes represent a part of our culture. Captain America, Spiderman, Superman! These superheroes are household names, yet comics can be anything from expansive graphic novels to those little "funnies" in newspapers. There are even webcomics, free comics published on the internet for all to enjoy.

Recently, in response to the growing comic book culture all over the world, Russian "Comic Cons" have sprouted, and have been open to the public annually in places like Moscow and St. Petersburg. Every year, more and more people attend these conventions and are exposed to comics and graphic novels from all over the world.

There has also been a huge impact on Russian comic culture by the internet. International connectivity has given people the ability to read comics online, scanned and translated (called "scanlations") by fans and posted on websites for anyone to read! Often, this is the only way some people will ever get to read comic books that aren't sold in their country or even in their language. This way people in Russia get to enjoy comics from all over the world, not just from the United States!



Most scanlations in America are actually Japanese comics translated to English, similar to Russia where they are translated to Russian! It seems that Japanese comics are in demand in both countries. Some still think that comics are not a valid form of literature, and that the term "graphic novel" is just a way of trying to get comics to be taken seriously in society. However, there are several different genres of comics, just like there are several genres of movies, books, and music.

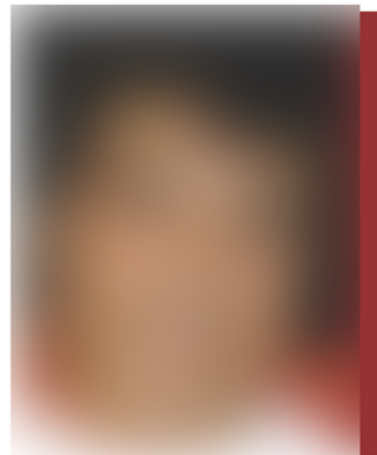


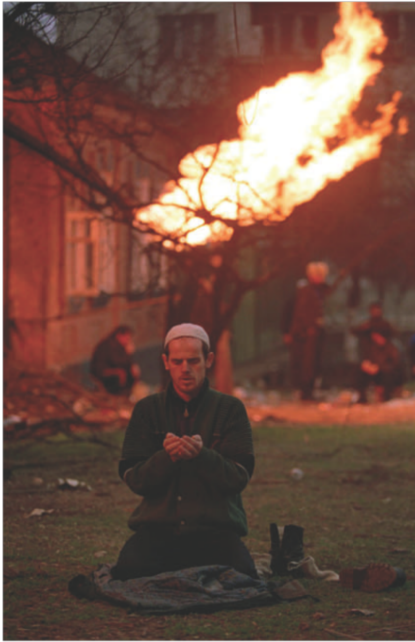
There are comics that are horrifying, explicit, and thrilling. There are also comics that are intellectually stimulating, historical, or revolutionary. For example, Watchmen is a graphical novel that was published in 1986 as a critique on the concept of superheroes, and dealt with issues like the Cold War, international politics, and justice. The graphic novel is commonly regarded as revolutionary, and is an important read for anyone wishing to truly understand how one can use the comic book medium to tell a story in a way that no other medium can.

In Russian culture we are seeing a steady increase of popularity of comics due to the growing curiosity some Russian citizens have about where so many of their movies are coming from. Movies about superheroes usually do not explain the entire original story, only the story for the plot at hand. As more people watch the movies more people want to know about the characters in them, leading to a growth in comic book fans. Russian comic culture is finally starting to catch up thanks to things like the internet and comic book movies, which serve to garner curiosity and open new doors to forms of media that were previously inaccessible.

Designer

XXX XXX is a sophomore at UT. He is a Liberal Arts Honors student, double-majoring in Government and Russian, and minoring in Philosophy and Russian, European, and Eurasian studies. He hope to use my degrees later to start a career in international law.





Human Rights Leaders in Chechnya

Working Towards a Future Without War

xxx xxx

Since the fifteenth century A.D., the regions of Chechnya and Ingushetia in the Caucasus have been in conflict with foreign powers. The Chechens struggled against the Ottoman Turks for centuries until the majority of the inhabitants began to convert to Islam. Later, the Chechens faced a series of conflicts with their Christian neighbors the Cossacks and the Georgians, as well as with the Buddhist Kalmyks. In the 18th century, the Russian empire began to expand into the Caucasus region. In response, the Chechens united with other mountain tribes in the eastern Caucasus and fiercely resisted the imperial expansion, until they were overtaken by Russian forces in 1859. At the end of the 19th century, the region settled into relative peace and prosperity, after major oil deposits were found in the region.

During the Soviet era, the Chechen and Ingush population was exiled from the Caucasus and deported to Kazakhstan, where the ethnic Chechens and Ingushes resided until they were allowed to reenter their homeland in 1957. After the fall of the USSR, the people of Chechnya continue to struggle for democracy, political autonomy and human rights in the region. Similar to the Jewish and African Diaspora, a large number of Chechens have left their homeland during the 19th century for Israel, Azerbaijan,

Turkey and Kazakhstan. In Agency's Nansen Refugee Award, for advocacy on behalf of displaced peoples. In 2007, the organization contributed to the documentary film *The Crying Sun*, which shed light on the plight of the peoples of the mountainous region of Chechnya and their struggle to preserve their cultural identity in spite of military raids and violence.

Located on Russia's southern border with Georgia and Azerbaijan, the mountainous region of Chechnya stands at a cultural crossroad between Europe and Asia. The majority of Chechens are Sunni Muslims, while a large minority of the population belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church. Most inhabitants of the region speak both Russian and the native Chechen.

In addition to the prominent human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the regional human rights organization Memorial has gained influence. The organization's mission is "to promote civil society and democracy based on the rule of law and to prevent the return of totalitarianism." In 2004, the organization won the UN Refugee

Award, for advocacy on behalf of displaced peoples. In 2007, the organization contributed to the documentary film *The Crying Sun*, which shed light on the plight of the peoples of the mountainous region of Chechnya and their struggle to preserve their cultural identity in spite of military raids and violence.

But while this advocacy for human rights has been met with praise, it has also been met with violent opposition. In July of this year, a prominent Chechen journalist and human rights activist, Natalya Estemirova, who has won numerous awards for her lifelong work to document human rights abuses,

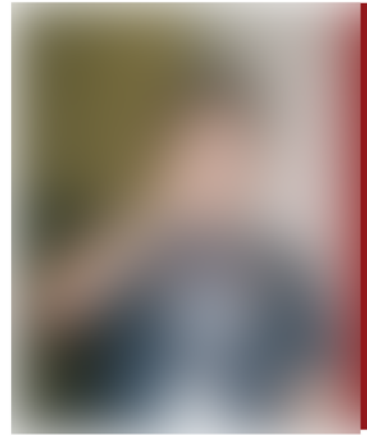
was kidnapped from her home in Grozny and later assassinated. The international community (including Russian president Dmitri Medvedev, German President Angela Merkel, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon) quickly condemned the murder and pushed for an immediate investigation into the crime. Oleg Orlov, president of Memorial, released a controversial statement claiming that the pro-Moscow president of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov was personally responsible for Estemirova's murder.



The Russian government has accused Orlov of the severity of the human rights crisis in Chechnya. Orlov has been in prison for several months. Despite a long history of oppression, the conflict in Chechnya and violent resistance in Chechnya receives almost daily coverage in Russian TV broadcasts and human rights leaders in Chechnya and the international community are organizing to end military operations, gain political autonomy in Chechnya, and to work towards a future without war and violence.

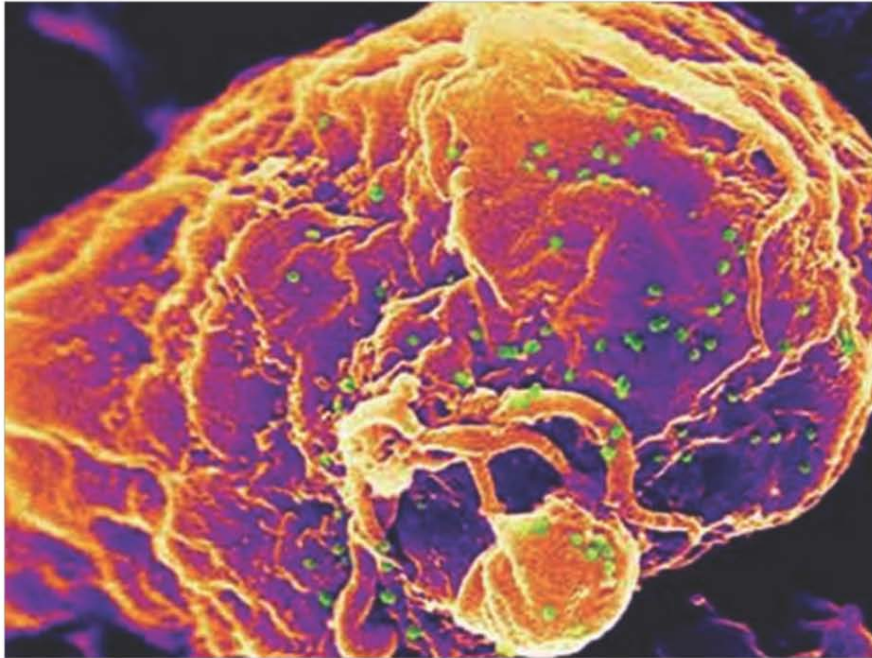
While the news of history of oppression in Chechnya, human rights leaders in Chechnya and the international community are organizing to end military operations, gain political autonomy in Chechnya, and to work towards a future without war and violence.

2004. While regions such as Darfur, the Congo, and Palestine are frequently covered as places of human rights crises, relatively



Biographical Coordinator

XXX XXX is studying Russian because it seemed like an interesting language to be able to speak. Russian is a major international language and one of the official languages of the World Health Organization, which is useful as he hopes to pursue a career in global medicine.



HIV/AIDS in Russia

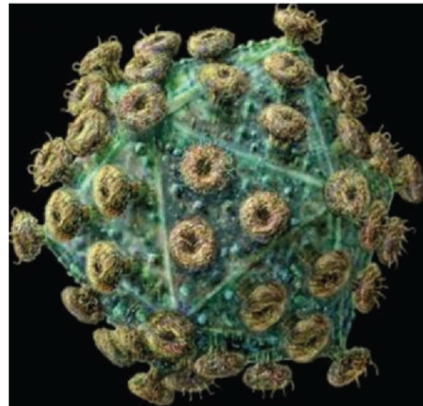
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Russia committed itself to the fight against HIV/AIDS in 2001 by signing a declaration that would promise universal access to prevention as well as treatment and support for people with HIV/AIDS. Since then, however, Russia, along with Eastern Europe and Central Asia, has become the region with the most rapidly expanding HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV prevalence rates among the population have doubled since 2001. At the beginning of 2009, 35,000 new cases of HIV were registered in Russia alone. Further, this is an official figure and HIV is often underreported due to stigma surrounding the disease.

The information on AIDS in Russia largely focuses on "at-risk populations", namely, sex workers and injecting drug users (IDUs). These populations were at the core of the epidemic in the 1990s; however, they receive very little support from the government for prevention programs such as needle exchange and substitution therapy. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria extended its funding for needle exchange programs until 2011. Ordinarily, it would not fund programs in Russia, which has now reached a level of economic stability to disqualify it from support. However, the government has not committed to funding a vast number of needle exchange programs.

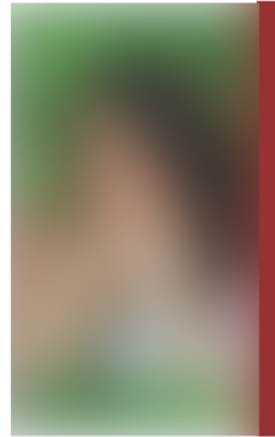
Confining the disease to the at-risk populations creates more stigma surrounding the disease and could establish a false view among the general population. It does not address the necessary preventative behaviors that everyone needs to undertake. Instead, it makes HIV/AIDS the disease of the devious. The spread of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa started among at-risk groups: sex workers and the migrant workers who use their services. HIV/AIDS very quickly was introduced into the general population. Despite this pattern, the United Nations Joint Program on HIV/AIDS says of Russia that

"it is unlikely the regional epidemic will spread independently of transmission among injecting drug users and sex workers. Similarly, another study states that even in countries that have prevalence rates of 1% or more, the virus is still concentrated among injecting drug users and their sexual partners, and has not 'bridged' into the general population." This position simplifies the disease as a product of a distinct set of behaviors. Prevention programs certainly need to be extended and funded in order to curb the spread of the disease among the at-risk groups and their partners. These programs should not substitute for prevention programs and education among the general population.



Another pattern from sub-Saharan Africa is the bridge into a general population through migration. The legacy of colonialism concentrated job opportunities around valuable resources. Thus, many regions were forced to send their men away from home to find work. The opportunities that one region has over another, due to resources and infrastructure, directs the migration of the labor force and the ability to benefit from social services. The migration of the young, productive labor force from regions such as Central Asia to Russia further intensifies the AIDS crisis by removing young men from the home and disrupting the economy of the household. The household thereby loses the primary wage earner and the ability to remain economically stable. Any illness can then take an already precarious situation and further sink the household into poverty. A lack of infrastructure also makes the availability of prevention education, hospitals, and other social institutions limited. Migrating workers in Central Asia go to Russia, a region with a much higher HIV prevalence, and then spread the disease to their families back home. Additionally, many workers returning from Russia do not receive medical examinations in their home countries. Prevention programs among IDUs and sex workers would prevent the initial spread of the disease. However, it does not address the problems of migration.

The extent of the AIDS crisis directly reflects the nature of its many causes. The problem does not depend on one factor alone. Instead, the crisis resulted from the entangled relationship of years of underdevelopment, inheritance of a neglected infrastructure, educational system, gender inequality, and cultural stigma surrounding the disease, as well as poverty. Ultimately, these factors constrain the decision making power of people due to their situation, which further perpetuates the AIDS crisis.



Editor-In-Chief

XXX is a Senior in Russian, East European, Eurasian Studies, History as well as a pre-Med student. She chose to study Russian because of her interests about the spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia and the former Soviet Union. She plans on attending graduate school for her Russian and after that perhaps, medical school.

Rasputin: Defining a Russian Persona XXX XXX



I rolled my eyes at the YouTube link my friend sent me.

"There lived a certain man in Russia long ago
He was big and strong, in his eyes a flaming glow
Most people looked at him with terror and with fear
But to Moscow chicks he was such a lovely dear"

"Really?" I thought while listening to 70's West-Germany-based disco group Boney M's "Rasputin". "A lanky religious pilgrim from Siberia who advised Czar Nicholas II is suddenly "the kind of teacher women would desire" and "Russia's greatest love machine"? While I'm not the biggest Boney M fan (which is understandable for a number of reasons, historically inaccurate lyrics aside), I was still disappointed in them. It would probably behoove them to bone up on their facts:

Widely hailed as the "Mad Monk," this wild-eyed mystic was well-known for the influence he had over Czar Nicholas and his family, his curious ability to cure

Czarevich Alexei's hemophilia, his less-than-conservative religious beliefs, a private life almost definitely filled with debauchery and sex, and his gruesome murder in 1916. His murderer Felix Yusupov spared no expense in letting everyone know that he had killed Rasputin through various publications and announcements that also served to demonize his victim. Later, Rasputin's daughter Maria would try to salvage her father's reputation by insisting in her memoirs that the rumors spread about him were largely untrue, further clouding the reality surrounding his life and public perception.



It is understandable why people continue to be fascinated with the incredibly multi-faceted character that is Rasputin. Political scientists and historians alike wonder about his role in bringing about the Russian Revolution of 1917; forensic scientists and modern doctors examine his murder and techniques of hypnosis. All the while, average Joes

across the world are treated to a bevy of academically-accurate bookstore-worthy biographies that definitely help to demystify the legends surrounding his life.

Much less understandable, however, is why this fascination has turned into a sort of pseudo-glorification. "Rasputin" by Boney M (and its 2007 remake by the music group Turisas) is just one small example. Ever since the 1932 film *Rasputin and the Empress*, Rasputin has been portrayed in pop culture as an incredibly powerful sorcerer with a voracious sexual appetite who, apparently according to the 2004 film *Hellboy*, survives his homicide to collaborate with the Nazis.

And ridiculously enough, outside the realm of pop culture is where one finds the most overemphasized tales. It should come as no surprise here when I mention Rasputin's penis and the unabashed obsession over it that has taken Russians and the world alike by storm. As if at Madame Tussaud's, tourists at the St. Petersburg Erotica Museum now pose next to what is arguably a historically relevant phallus with their eyes widened in feigned comical surprise.

I'm willing to grant that it is slightly hilarious that St. Petersburg's Erotica Museum is crowing over their most famous acquisition and that tourists taking funny pictures next to it is simply one of the many understandable things that tourists do, like sight-seeing sensationalistic

places or wearing fanny packs. Americans are hardly innocent of exploiting urban legends, as demonstrated by the Borden House (the site of two axe murders now converted into a bed-and-breakfast in Massachusetts) and a number of other sites centered on killers and ghosts and the what-have-you of the underbelly of any country's culture.



But when Boney M remarks at the end of their song "Oh, those Russians..." one truly has to question the role of such personalities as Rasputin in defining a people. While traveling abroad in 2004, just when international ire against the United States and George W. Bush was reaching its peak, I saw first-hand the treatment of and presumptions made about Americans simply because of our President's mistakes. Maybe it is because of that experience that this naïve student believes it possible for certain persons to go through the most slanderous channels and come to define an entire population to those outside of it.

So now, zoom out and look at what the world has created from a monk in the Imperial Court: a prodigious lover whose sexual organ continues to be near-worshipped today by throngs of tourists and a powerful magician who has been immortalized in films as a man of God and a collaborator with the Nazis. Sadly, such stories have come to define a decidedly and uniquely Russian icon. In the way outsiders hear exaggeratedly of the multi-armed deities of the Hindu religion or the Middle Eastern terrorist "war cry", such is the way we hear of Rasputin. The impacts of this are clearly not positive.

Recently, a museum to Rasputin was opened near his hometown in Siberia. Hopefully, it'll be a far cry from the fictionalizations of this man's life that have come to reify a number of myths. I'm sure that much like the academic books and papers published about this mysterious "mad monk," it'll serve to elucidate certain aspects of his life that many would be interested to know about.

And then, of course, there's Boney M:

*"In all affairs of state he was the man to please
But he was real great when he had a girl to squeeze"*

Just try to remember the facts about Rasputin. And maybe change your taste in music.



Designer

XXX XXX is a sophomore at the University of Texas at Austin. Currently majoring in Government and hoping to minor in French and/or Russian, she hopes to go into International Diplomacy. Her decision to take Russian was made on a complete whim during freshman orientation, but she has yet to regret studying this beautiful language and loves her classes and friends in the Slavic department dearly.

"Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice"





Sokolov
on
YouTube
XXX XXX

YouTube is increasingly becoming the major force in the dissemination of classical music. The website's stock of classical videos contributed by a wide range of dedicated viewers ranges from, in diverse multiplicity, the bulk of the compositional outputs of major composers such as Mozart and Bach, to a still respectable showing of videos and recordings of obscure composers, like the post-Scriabinite Nikolai Roslavets, whom it would have appeared history had completely forgotten if not for a small group of devoted users who have posted the composer's music. On YouTube one can find what is surely every recorded minute of the life of Vladimir Horowitz; videos of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Kapustin at the piano; and oddities such as a video, viewed over a hundred thousand times, of Glenn Gould first professing partiality to animals over humans and then singing Mahler to a captive audience of elephants. YouTube has become the mediator of classical discoveries and revivals, and it has abetted no discovery quite so profound as that of the Russian pianist Grigory Lipmanovich Sokolov, a musician of exceptional abilities who for the first time is gaining a significant following in America.

Sokolov burst onto the international music scene in 1966 when he won the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow. At 16, he was, and still is, the youngest pianist to ever win the competition. He tours mainly in Western Europe, performing in his native Russia only twice a year, and reviewers there write ecstatic reviews about him in which he is frequently compared to the great dead pianists of the last century (he frequently draws comparison to Richter, Michelangeli, and Gould) and without hesitation crowned our greatest living pianist. That he could maintain such acclaim in Europe while remaining largely unknown in America is

attributable in part to his re- and mastery, and the rest of able nowhere else) were re- refusal to cross the Atlantic, as the DVD was posted with moved. The most vexing ex- he complains of jet lag, but haste. The performance of ample of our dearth of Soko- also to his idiosyncratic this sonata has been re- lovia material is his perform- avoidance of the classical moved from YouTube and ances of the Three Move- music marketing machine. replaced time and time ments from Petrushka, Stra- Aside from a small set of stu- again, and to date its various vinsky's pianistic showpiece dio recordings he made at incarnations have garnered with material drawn from his the beginning of his career, many thousands of views famous 1911 ballet. An early his recordings have only and has fundamentally re- studio recording by Sokolov been of his live perform- structured the YouTube dis- (originally from an LP, and no ances, and as of 1995 he has course on the sonata. His longer in print) can be found discontinued making even YouTube presence has not in complete form on You- these. been relegated to this single Tube, alongside a video of a

Sokolov's YouTube de- piece, of course. For in- live performance which is but was a highly rhythmic stance, his dazzling encore tantalizing in what it leaves performance of the third performances of Couperin's out: the video begins with movement of Prokofiev's sev- Le Tic-Toc-Choc and Sœur the final chords of the first enth piano sonata, ex- Monique from the same DVD movement and contains the cerpted from a 2002 DVD reveal him to be a remarka- entire second movement, made of one of his live per- bly dexterous performer with but the remainder of the first formances. It was immedi- a particular affinity for Ba- movement and the whole ately recognized as a per- roque ornamentation, which third movement are no- formance of singular identity is further evinced by a pair of where to be found. In spite



live recordings of his of the video's distorted Rameau, and YouTubers sound, it is simultaneously the have taken note. most virtuosic and nuanced

Sokolov's YouTube performance on YouTube, presence is always ex- no mean feat considering tremely variable and ex- the site contains essentially tremely variable and ex- every famous performance tremely small. It was once of the piece ever larger than its present size, made. Somewhere, the full but many of the live re- video must exist, but not on cordings (which were avail- YouTube,



Copy Editor

XXX XXX is a senior. He is involved in the Dean's Scholars and Turing Scholars honors programs. He is a computer scientist, and is studying Russian because he'd like to read Russian literature in the original language.

no mean feat considering the site contains essentially every famous performance of the piece ever made. Somewhere, the full video must exist, but not on YouTube.

For the time being, Sokolov refuses to cross the Atlantic, and it is doubtful that this will ever change. YouTube has stepped into this role, taking his music where he won't go. Even then, it's been said of Sokolov, as of many performers, that no recording does justice to his live performances, and so the situation is still not ideal. But it is infinitely superior to the situation several years ago, when he was a complete unknown. YouTube has given us our modern pianistic giant,



The Romanov Dynasty in Russia was the second and last of the Tsarist Dynasties. The Romanov's ruled Russia from 1613 until the February Revolution of 1917 when the Bolshevik party took control of the Russian empire. The first Romanov prince to take the throne in 1613 was Mikhail I Fyodorovich Romanov (Михаил Фёдорович Романов). Mikhail ended the "Time of Troubles" in Russia and returned peace and unity to the empire.

The "Time of Troubles" (Смутное время) in Russia were the years between the death of the last Tsar of the Rurik Dynasty, Tsar Feodor Ivanovich (Фёдор I Иванович), in 1598 and the establishment of the Romanov Dynasty in 1613. During the fifteen year interim between dynasties Russia suffered from civil uprisings, usurpers and imposters, and the country was occupied by Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Dymytriads.

After the death of the Tsar in 1598 his brother-in-law, a boyar Boris Godunov, was elected as successor by the National Assembly. His reign lasted a short eight years, but during that time Russia fell into great despair.

Devastation in Russia Rurik to Romanov XXX XXX





"His reign lasted a short eight years, but during that time Russia fell into great despair."



25

Due to poor harvests in 1601-1603 a great famine ensued causing mass crisis throughout the country. A government program to give out foodstuffs caused chaos in the capitol as people from the countryside flocked to Moscow seeking refuge from the deteriorating conditions. The populations' discontent with Godunov became hostile and rumors emerged that the late Tsar's younger brother Dmitri was still alive and in hiding.

The emergence of the false Dmitri lead to the Dymitriad wars in which Polish forces crossed the frontier with a small force of 4,000 Poles, Lithuanians, Russian exiles, German mercenaries and Cossacks from the Dnieper and the Don. Some powerful Russian magnates supported False Dmitri expecting rich rewards and aided his entry into Moscow in 1605 after the death of Godunov. Dmitri was married to Marina Mniszech to solidify his assent to the throne. Fortunately the reign of Dmitri was short and conspiracies had formed with in the year. Dmitri was murdered shortly after his marriage to Mniszech. A Rurikid Prince, Vasily Shuisky, massacred Dmitri and his supporters in the Kremlin along with an estimated 2,000 Poles. In Poland, the reaction to the massacre was strong and would motivate further action against Russia in the future.

Shuisky took power and was elected tsar by an assembly composed of his own supporters. None of the nobility were satisfied by

his change and rumors of a new Dmitri emerged. To combat this Shuisky allied himself with Sweden, which allowed Shuisky took power and was elected tsar by an assembly composed of his own supporters. None of the nobility were satisfied by his change and rumors of a new Dmitri emerged. To combat this Shuisky allied himself with Sweden, which allowed Swedish influences to take over and resolve the internal affairs of the Russian Empire. This alliance with Sweden angered Polish and Russian nobles and the Polish-Lithuanian march began. Polish troops sieged the fortress of Smolensk (Смоленская оборона), Russo-Swedish forces were beaten in the Battle of Klushino, and Shuisky was forced to abdicate the throne to the Poles False Dmitri II. The Polish King, however, betrayed the Russian nobles and attempted to declare himself king in order to convert the Russians to Roman Catholicism. This move roused great anti-Catholic and anti-Polish sentiments across the nation. Swedes declared war on Polish run Russia and supported a third False Dmitri in Ivangorod.

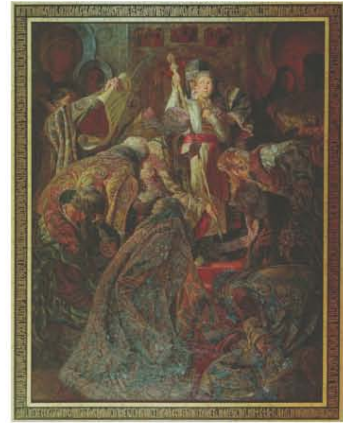
Russia was now in extremely critical condition. There was no Tsar, the nobles fought among themselves, and Catholic Poles occupied the Kremlin and Smolensk; Protestant Swedes were fighting to remove the Poles in Novgorod, Tartars were raiding the south leaving the countryside completely devastated. In March of 1611 Polish and German merce-

naries attempting to suppress riots in Moscow massacred 7,000 Muscovites and set the city on fire, many other cities and villages were devastated in this way. Russia was seeking peace, and a Russian king.

On November 1, 1612 Kusma Minin and Prince Posharsky formed a leadership to fight to end the occupation in Moscow. Moscow was successfully surrendered back to the Russian people on November 4th. This day is still celebrated each year as a day of National Unity, a day when the Russian people banded together to end foreign occupation and rule. A Grand National Assembly elected as Tsar Mikhail I Fyodorovich Romanov (Михаил Фёдорович Романов) and Peace for Russia

began. This peace was achieved with the Treaty of Stolbovo in 1617 which ended the Ingrian Wars against Sweden, and with the Peace of Deulino in 1619 which ended the Dymitriad wars.

This crisis of the empire united the Russian people. It unified all the classes of Russian society around the Romanov tsars for years to come and laid the foundations for the Russian Empire. Mikhail was the first of the Romanov tsars. He ruled from February 21, 1613 to his death 32 years later. The Romanov Dynasty was successful in keeping the support of the Russian people until the communist revolution in 1917.



Publisher

XXX XXX Junior/Senior in History. Married with a 7 year old son. I chose to study Russian because my grandmother was Russian and I find the language and culture interesting.

Pursuing Justice for Slain Russian Journalists XXX XXX

Journalist and author Anna Politkovskaya made a name for herself reporting from Chechnya and was well-known for her opposition to the Kremlin and Vladimir Putin. In 2001, she received the Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. Politkovskaya was also the victim of an unsolved assassination in 2006, having been shot dead in the elevator of her apartment building.

Since the year 2000, 18 journalists have been murdered in Russia and countless others have been subjected to beatings, assaults and tortures. At Russia's leading investi-

gative newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, four journalists have been killed in the past eight years. In all of the recent cases having to do with the killings of Russian journalists, only one case has been solved.

The Kremlin has been sharply criticized in recent years for not doing enough to solve these cases. Then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last year that the Russian suppression of the media and dissidents was part of "clearly authoritarian trends." Current Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that the inability of Russian authorities to bring justice to the killers of jour-



**Since the year 2000,
18 journalists have
been murdered in
Russia..."**

nalists discredits appeals against corruption. She also said that the unsolved murders may complicate the process of normalizing relations between Russian and the United States.



“[T]he unsolved murders may complicate the process of normalizing relations between Russia and the United States.”

Even the first Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has been reported saying that the current Russian authorities are not doing enough to solve the murders of journalists and human rights activists. While Gorbachev states that he still supports Putin and realizes how hard it can be to lead the country, he also says he doubts everything possible is being done to solve the murders.

On October 30, 2009, the U.N. Human Rights Committee said that Russia fails to protect journalists, activists and others that are at odds with authorities from a wide range of abuses. A report issued by an 18-member panel of independent reviewers urged the Kremlin to implement a number of legal reforms, according to the Associated Press. While the panel doesn't have any power for enforcement, they do issue regular reports that draw attention to human rights

violations around the world. The committee gave Moscow one year to report back on how it is investigating abuses in the North Caucasus and South Ossetia.

In the 2008 annual report issued by the international organization Reports Without Borders, Russia was included in the list of high-risk countries for journalists. The report, which listed countries in which journalists may face harassment and beatings while covering elections, had Russia listed with Pakistan, Iran and Zimbabwe, according to BBC Russian. The BBC director of the Center for Journalism in Extreme said that the average number of Russian journalists assaulted each year is around 80 to 90.

Besides that of Politkovskaya, some prominent unsolved cases that are often highlighted by those speaking out against the Kremlin's policies include Paul Klebinov, editor of

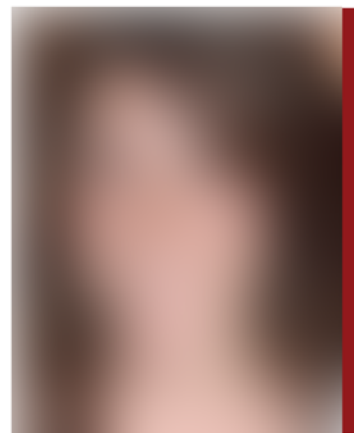
the Russian edition of Forbes, and human rights activist and journalist Natalya Estemirova. Klebinov was an American journalist of Russian descent who was attacked on a Moscow street late at night. According to Wikipedia, it is speculated that the attacked was linked to a list of the 100 wealthiest Russians that Klebinov wrote.

The murder of Natalya Estemirova occurred in July of 2009, making it the most recent Russian journalist murder to date. Estemirova was an award-winning human-rights activist and she served on the board of the Russian human rights organization Memorial. On July 15, Estemirova was abducted from her home in Chechnya and her body was found with bullet wounds later that day.

Since Klebinov was an American citizen and Politkovskaya held dual Russian and American citizenship, it is sur-

prising that these crimes are not covered more extensively in the United States. In order to keep freedom alive in Russia, Nina Ognianova, a program coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists, told the Washington Times that "Western journalists must cover these stories more extensively than they have; Russian journalists need to feel the solidarity and support of their international journalist community."

If America were to stand in solidarity with the families of slain victims and put pursuing correction for the human rights abuses in Russia at the top of our political agenda, perhaps the United States could help right the wrongs of another world power's government and bring peace to those suffering for uncovering the truth.



Managing Editor

XXX XXX is a senior magazine journalism major. She is on the executive boards for both Texas Spirits and the campus chapter of UNICEF. She is also involved in Water for Schools, SHARE Athletics, student government and Dance Marathon, and is an intern for Congressman Lloyd Doggett. She studies Russian because she wants to go to law school to be an international lawyer, and she plans to specifically focus on Russian law.

Once in a Lifetime

XXX XXX



I remember the first time I heard of him. I was sitting in my first year Russian class, packing up and about to leave, when I decided to ask my venerable professor, Dr. Thomas J. Garza, about a book I noticed him carrying around. He turned to me and brandished the book in the air exuberantly. Pointing to the black and white picture on the front cover, he explained, "This is Vladimir Vysotsky, one of the most famous Russians ever. He did everything: movies, theater, music. He was the Russian Elvis, Bob Dylan, and Steve McQueen all combined into one." He went on to state, "He was into everything. Sex, drugs, rock & roll...he's my idol." At this I was impressed. Anyone that got Dr. Garza envious was definitely the real deal, someone that deserved to be looked up. I am very glad that I did.

As Americans, especially before the internet, we are known for our terrible obliviousness to non-English speaking cultures. Besides a few highly regarded foreign stars, there is not much American market recognition. So, it might be hard for some readers to imagine the popularity Vysotsky was able to achieve in his life within the Soviet Union while still to this day being relatively unknown in America. The son of a female German translator and a Jewish army colonel (Vysotsky would later famously refer to himself as a "dirty yid" due to the anti-Semitism of the Soviet Union), Vladimir was born in 1938 and was raised mainly by his father and Armenian stepmother after his parents divorced. After a very brief stint in the Moscow Institute of Civil Engineering, he dropped out to pursue his artistic goals. It is here where the legacy begins. A workaholic by nature, Vladimir invested himself in music and acting. Giving many open performances to anyone that would hear him, often illegally, Vladimir quickly

gained the reputation of an energetic, heartfelt poet. Accompanying himself with a traditional Russian seven string guitar, Vladimir would throughout his lifetime write over 600 songs.



These songs were renowned for their depictions of lowly Soviet life in the city, mountains, prisons, and wars, often using the common language of the Soviet people. When portraying prisoners, soldiers or even inanimate objects, Vysotsky would not just sing the characters that he had created, he would become them. And he would do this to such an extent that less-informed fans would actually be convinced that he was the character he had created. What makes this

important, you ask? The fact that Vysotsky did this all underground. You see, Vysotsky was never officially considered a musician for the majority of his life by the Soviet Union government, which owned the one sole record label of the country. Vysotsky's relatively open jabs and criticism of the state were never going to get him love from the officials in charge. Thus, helped extraordinarily by his massive popularity in films and theater and the advent of the portable recorder, Vysotsky's music spread in the form of lo-fi bootlegged reel-to-reels and cassette tapes.

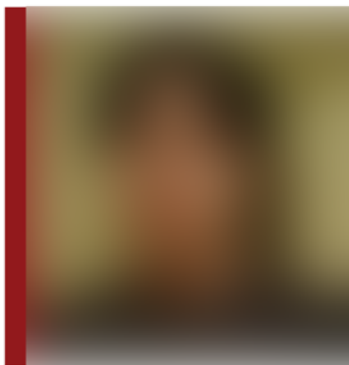
It was a massive underground movement, capped in the late seventies by widespread European popularity, large profitable concerts, and limited recognition by the Soviet establishment. But the brightest stars flame out the quickest, and the heavy acting and touring schedule as well as a tumultuous love life led Vysotsky to an increasing dependence on drugs, and on July 25, 1980 he died at the young

age of 42. The resulting funeral was attended by what was later estimated to be around one million people.

At this point, I could talk about various facts about his life, his marriages, scandalous stories and such, but that is not what is important here. What is important is that this one man created a legacy that is still to this day the benchmark for any celebrity or artist in Russia. Whether it is his famous turn as a World War 2 police officer dealing justice in the popular television show "The Meeting Place Can Not Be Changed," his brilliant take on Hamlet, or just him with a guitar playing songs about ordinary people, finding Vladimir Vysotsky is entering a dream. Everything is old and familiar, yet at the same time frighteningly new and intimate. This is the album you would stay up at night, barricaded in your room as a teenager, and listen to with a pair of headphones until the break of day, floating on every nuance of the guitar and every held breath of the singer. What is important is that he find an audience here in the states and continue to live. I'll leave with a verse from a song of his, Я не люблю, in the original Russian. The song can be found on YouTube, because unfortunately the link is too long to post here.

Я не люблю себя, когда я трушу,
Обидно мне, когда невинных бьют,
Я не люблю, когда мне лезут в душу,
Тем более, когда в нее плюют.

Я не люблю манежи и арены,
На них миллион меняют по рублю,
Пусть впереди большие перемены,
Я это никогда не полюблю.



Copy Editor

XXX XXX is a junior Radio-Television-Film student. He is involved with many student organizations including the student radio station here on campus, KVRX Austin 91.7 FM. He chose to study Russian because of the fascinating history and literature and because he wanted to gain a deeper appreciation for the culture.

Sochi 2014

The Struggle for the Winter Olympics

XXX XXX



Any country that has ever hosted an Olympic Games knows that it is no easy task.

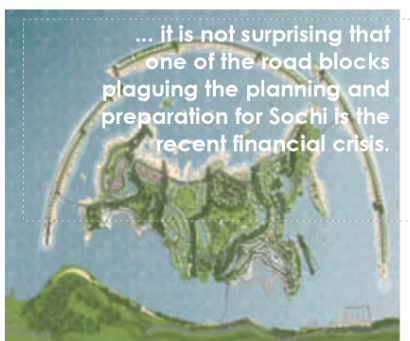
Years of planning, preparation and construction are put into every aspect of the games. In 2014 Sochi will be holding the Winter games and even now, 5 years before game time, the gears have been set into motion.

Russia has hosted an Olympic games before back in 1980 when it was still known as the Soviet Union. After winning the bid to host the games, beating out Los Angeles, Russia began preparing for the big event. This Olympic Games had a fair share of problems from the beginning. The biggest was a boycott on these Olympic Games by over 60 countries, led by



the United States. The Soviet Union's war involving Afghanistan caused many nations be part of the boycott and to participate in the "Liberty Bell Classic" which was held in Philadelphia instead. After the final nation count, only 81 nations participated. It seems that Russia's bad luck with Olympic Games could continue with Sochi 2014.

It is no secret that the Olympics are a global phenomena and so it is not surprising that one of the road blocks plaguing the planning and preparation for Sochi is the recent financial crisis. Russia has had its share of financial problems in the past such as the Russian Default in 1998, where huge drops in petroleum prices led to Russia's defaulting on its debt. The recent crisis has been putting massive amounts of pressure on the Sochi planning team. The Russian government cannot be liberal with its funding for the Olympic Games, so it has decreased the budget, hoping to promote planning that is both economical and prudent. The fear of a workers' strike is always on their minds as well. A delay in payment to construction workers has made the mood tense around the building site. Waiting any longer could ultimately lead to halt on construction altogether.



... it is not surprising that one of the road blocks plaguing the planning and preparation for Sochi is the recent financial crisis.

It has been divulged that Simeon Weinstock has resigned from his position as head of the Russian state corporation named "Олимпстрой". The latest released information has Weinstock and other members of the corporation claiming that his resignation was not only known before hand but was planned since his appointment in November. This may be true but many suspect that there is something under the surface that is not being told. The most widely believed reason for his resignation is the magnitude of responsibility his position entails. Sochi's mountainous and wild geography makes

it a very difficult place for construction. To prepare the land for building and then actually build upon it would require huge sums of money that may be out of the budget. There were also the problems with acquiring enough land for building. Right now land is being bought from the people who currently home the land, but not everyone is selling willingly. Some do not want to sell because of the fear that the government won't pay a fair price. Either way, this sudden resignation of a leader can only have a negative effect on progress on the Olympic front. With shifting leadership there are always problems. Though the new appointee, Victor Zubkov may be great leader, there may have been some lost time and motivation during the transition.

As if Sochi did not already have its share of problems with financial hardship and shaky leadership, an environmental organization by the name of "Гринпис России" or "Green Peace of Russia" is trying deliberately to stop construction of the Olympic Games in Sochi. The group is alleging that the building of Olympic objects will destroy a region of natural beauty that is unique to Sochi. An expert vouching for the group is Michael Kredlin has openly stated that the construction of the games will encroach on over 52,000 hectare of land belonging to the Sochi national park and the Caucasian state biosphere reserve. Already the group has appealed to the Supreme Court to try and stop all construction. What is now happening is the examination of all plans and current work being done on the Olympic Games. Three of the contractors are already in the process of showing that all their work is up to environmental code. If all goes well construction can continue, but it is almost certain that "Green Peace" will not just stop there.

Russia promises to have everything done no matter what. They believe that the tourism from the games will boost the Russian economy and make up for the huge expenses they are making. They also assure that everything is being done to not destroy Sochi's environment and that the resignation of Weinstock will not slow them down. Everyone is waiting for Sochi 2014 to see if Russia can overcome its obstacles.

Biographical Coordinator

XXX XXX is a senior majoring in Economics. He is studying Russian because he considers Russia one of the most powerful countries in the world. He plans to work and maybe do research in economics.

The Sitcom Revolution

XXX XXX



It's a cold day in Moscow and you come back to your hotel room after a long day of sightseeing.

You plop yourself on the bed and reach for the remote. You turn on the TV and you find yourself watching "The Nanny", only the characters look different and are speaking in Russian. They burst out into a chorus of "happy birthday", but in English, and then they continue speaking in that cryptic language. Amused, you switch to the next channel and find yourself watching the latest episode of Ugly Betty, only everyone looks completely different and they're speaking in Russian. You are now witnessing Russia's television evolution.



“Glocalization, borrowing foreign genres and adapting them, has allowed popular American TV shows to be adapted into something that a Russian audience would watch.”

Russian television has made progress in leaps and bounds compared to the Soviet controlled television from days past. Western influence has left its mark on Russian television. Reality TV, comedies, game shows, and soap operas, all adapted from foreign formats, now dominate the channels. The Russian audience has evolved into a younger generation, resulting in the success of these shows. *Glocalization*, borrowing foreign genres and adapting them, has allowed popular American TV shows to be adapted into something that a Russian audience would watch. Due to the rise of the middle class in Russia, shows like *The Nanny* and *Married with Children* have been a success. Despite the shows being produced in another language and culture, there are still several parallels between the American and Russian versions.

There was some tension between the scriptwriters and those sent to represent Sony Pictures. Russian reality was often misunderstood by the Sony Pictures consultants. Chicken tortaccho, a Russian dish, and the word “стыня”, meaning either morgue or in this case, a nickname for Vika’s car, are examples of the lack of awareness that Editor Mary Julian had during the observations. Although the writers had to follow the script so closely that they lost some of the Russian jokes, they managed to make some choices that would be left untouched by the Americans. Marriage is not to be thought of lightly, so their Russian audience wouldn’t take the marriage between Vika and Shatalin (the Russian Sheffield) seriously. There was a point when the script was moving towards the idea that Shatalin had lost all his money and would be forced to work at McDonald’s to feed his children. Under no circumstance would you find a man of Shatalin’s position and wealth to be working at McDonald’s. It’s simply Russian pride.

“Моя прекрасная няня” (*My Wonderful Nanny*) is the Russian adaptation of *The Nanny*. A while back, the Russian company, Amedia, bought the Sony International Picture rights for *The Nanny*. There are several similarities between the two formats: the protagonist becomes the nanny by coincidence, the butler and financial consultant bicker continually, and the nanny brings warmth to the affluent family. Throughout the series, the master and nanny develop their relationship until eventually, they get married. The Russian adaptation follows the original American script closely. During the time the Russian scripts were being developed Sony Pictures sent their consultants to oversee the changes being

Another show that went through a similar process is “Счастливы Вместе” (*Happy Together*). This is the Russian version of *Married with Children*. This show follows closely with original American storyline. The characters are very similar to their American counterparts, only with tweaks

that gave them that Russian "spirit". In fact, the Americans were very specific that the characters be similar in personality and appearance. As you can imagine, this made casting a difficult and drawn out process. After finally having selected the perfect cast, the Americans were also insistent on keeping the two story house. They believed this particular set was essential to the story. It was difficult for the Russian writers to explain why the Bukin family had a two story house in the outskirts of Yekaterinburg, something that is unheard of. The story is that they simply built an attic over their house.

Not much creative control was given to the writers of the script. During the American run of Married with Children, the actress playing Peg got pregnant during filming, so the writer's wrote her pregnancy into the script. Coincidentally, the Russian actress playing Dasha got pregnant during the run of the show as well. There was no problem writing that into the script. However, there have been incidents which one of the American actors got in a quarrel with the director, resulting in his character being written out. Unfortunately, the Russian actor playing this character had to be written out as well because of the incident.

There have been instances in which the Americans have had to concede to the Russian way. There would be no audience if

they were to keep everything intact. "Не родись красивой" (Ugly Betty), "Кто в доме хозяин?" (Who's the Boss?), and "Законы и порядке" (Law & Order) are other shows that have been through the same process of globalization. Why are these shows becoming so popular in Russia? These shows are intended for younger audiences. Today there is a presumption of young people to be more globalized. Also the popularity of these sitcoms suggests that there is a higher standard of life than before. During the period of time after the fall of the Soviet Union, the audience wasn't able to relate to the happy-go-lucky life that the characters on these sitcoms led. It was during that time when Latin American soap operas gained popularity.

So what about the globalization of these sitcoms? Despite the amount of success that these shows are receiving, there have been some voiced concerns. Daniil B. Dondurei, editor in chief of Cinema Art magazine states that "Today, people are becoming accustomed to not thinking about life... People have become accustomed to living like children, in the family of a very strong powerful father. Everything is decided for them." It's almost as if these sitcoms were created to distract the audience from real events that are happening in their country and around the world. On the flip side, the success in the media serves as a testament to the progress made in the rapidly changing country of Russia.



Creative Director

XXX XXX is currently a sophomore double majoring in Theatre and Dance and Communications. Her love of the language has grown over the past two years. She hopes to one day study Theatre in Russia and hopes that wherever her life leads her will give her the opportunity to perfect her Russian.

Russian Financial Crisis

XXX XXX

The relationship between the government and business has been strained by the collapse. The government has been more aggressive asserting its input in companies' affairs in return for the protection the government provides for them. The large oil, natural gas, steel, and mineral industries have long been protected from competition, creating large inefficiencies and boosting the profits of the oligarchs.

The collapse of natural resource prices that resulted from the collapse of credit markets and

The global financial crisis landed in Russia in the fall of 2008, as the sub-prime mortgage bubble in the United States burst, and crucial commodity and export prices tumbled. The price of crude oil plummeted from the 2008 high of \$147 per barrel to around \$50 today, shocking the Russian economies most valuable export, which had been instrumental to years of economic growth. Russia's super rich- the "oligarchs"- suffered tremendous losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars, and many of their over-leveraged assets were dependent on government aid. The stabilization funds amassed during the prosperous years in the middle of the decade have been used to help capitalize Russia's largest industries, resulting in a "soft nationalization" similar to programs in other countries.



banks curbing lending has resulted in rising unemployment. Concentrated in the financial and metal export industries, many firms have taken up measures to reduce labor costs through layoffs, wage cuts, and reduced labor hours. Unemployment passed 10% in early summer and is expected to reach 12% by the end of the year. The resulting drop in overall demand has been the most direct cause of the economic slowdown through the beginning of 2009, as retail sales fell 5.3% through April this year.



The biggest concerns are about what Russia must do to regain its previous growth levels. Russia's dependence on oil and natural resource wealth has been central to ensuring financial independence and attracting foreign investment during the Putin-Medvedev years. Experts have recommended increasing competition and diversification in resource production and processing to improve Russia's energy business to stimulate new growth.

After the crisis of 1998, Russia focused on exporting its plentiful and valuable natural resources to spur growth and bring unemployment down from double-digits. That might not be possible a decade later as those record unemployment highs are being challenged. International trade has collapsed, so it is unlikely that Russia can use exports to stimulate new growth, while the devaluation of the ruble against the dollar and euro means imports are getting more expensive, and prices for basic consumption goods are rapidly increasing. The ruble has lost nearly 20% of its value against the dollar since the beginning of the financial crisis.

Inflation has been most damaging to the poor, as the costs for household goods such as food, clothes, and shoes are up 4.6%. Overall inflation is projected to reach 14% in 2009, compared to less than 2% in the United States. The shift to domestic goods rather than imports has been slowed due to heavy reliance on imports to make up for Russia's inefficient agriculture and food production. The government has considered starting a welfare program similar to food stamps in the US to offset the burden on the poor.



The Kremlin has grown nervous about the political backlash that could come as rising prices and unemployment provoke the usually apathetic middle class to voice its disapproval for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev. Putin remains one of Russia's most popular political figure, as his Presidency from 1999-2008 was a prosperous time for Russia. In those years, inflation was only restricted by the projected ceiling twice.



Biographical Coordinator

XXX XXX, 21, is an Economics and Government senior. He chose to study Russian because of his interest in Russian history and Cold War politics. He plans on pursuing his Ph.D in Economics after graduation.

Will Russia be the First to Discover Life Outside of Earth?

XXX XXX

Among the many things Russia is known for is the country's involvement with space exploration.

The competition between the United States and the Soviet Union during the cold war produced incredible technological advances, and much of the equipment developed in the 60s is still in use today. In modern times, the advancement of the exploration of our solar system has taken a backseat to what most people would consider more pressing issues – particularly in dealing with the financial rut that most

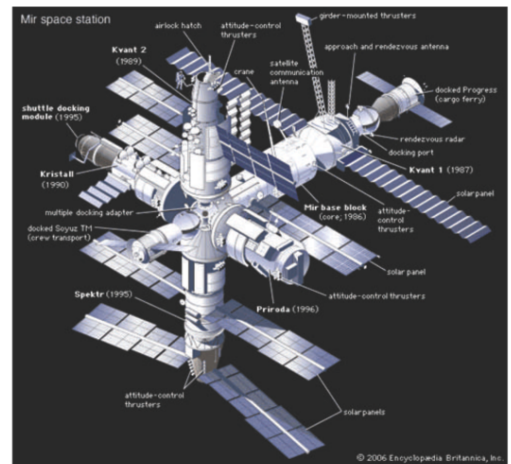
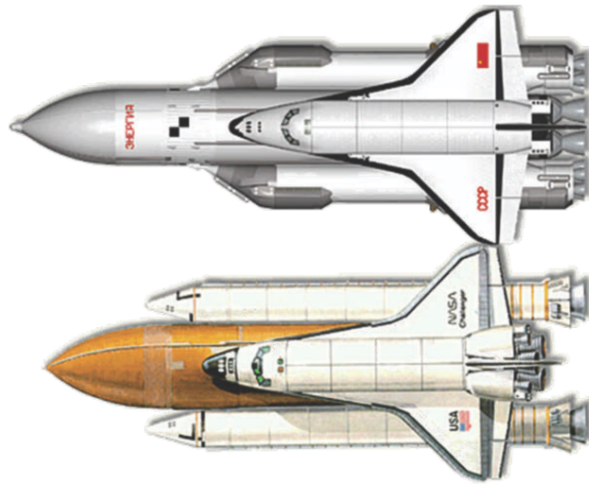
developed countries are currently experiencing.

It is easy to forget the seemingly impossible tasks already carried out by great scientists in a time when cassette players were considered state of the art. The Soviet Union was indeed the first to put probes on Venus, Mars, the Moon, and to construct an orbiting space station. Of course, with the fall of the Soviet Union two decades ago, the Soviet Space Program was inherited by the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

While no more deep space exploration missions are planned to happen for at least the next five years, Russia's



“[T]he advancement of the exploration of our solar system has taken a backseat to what most people would consider more pressing issues...”

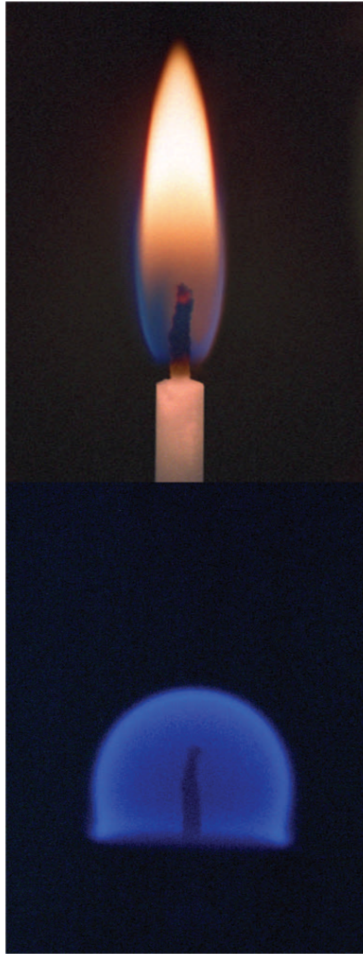


biggest current project is the continuing development of the international space station. The massive structure is too big to be launched directly into space, and thus each component must be launched separately, to be assembled once in orbit. The station, upon completion is 2011, will serve as a research laboratory conducting various low gravity experiments – and it will also be used to test out space systems and technologies that will eventually be used in longer-range missions, like flights to Mars. The entire endeavor is sponsored by the Brazil, Canada, several western European countries, with the biggest contributors being Russia, the USA, and Japan.

In this feat of international engineering, Russia has the advantage of possessing the cheapest means to actually put people into space, the Soyuz rocket, which has been in service for over 40 years. The space shuttle currently used by the USA has only 5 remaining flights before its retirement, meaning Russia is able to charge a fee to the tune of \$20 million US dollars for a round trip to the space station.

Now, with both China and India working on their own respective space programs (neither is involved with the ISS), both the United States and Russia are slowly beginning to put together plans for the next twenty years of reaching into the cosmos.

Perhaps the most impressive long term goal of both NASA and the RSA is to send humans to Mars. Not only would this be another giant and symbolic leap for mankind, but researchers aim for the astronauts on such a mission to explore the planet in a way that automated robots cannot. Of course, the ultimate goal would be to find liquid water under the surface of the red planet, which scientists believe could provide the means for the most primitive life forms to exist.

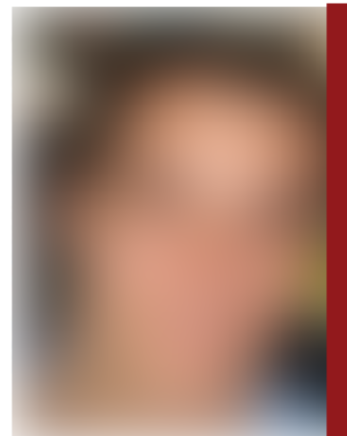


Since this is such a huge technological challenge, plans for such a mission are still on the drawing board. President Medvedev recently urged the Russian government to find the funding to support the development of a new space shuttle that would eventually be used to fly humans across the vast distance from Earth to Mars (which would take about 65 years to cross driving at 60 mph when the two planets are at their closest). The Russian space chief Anatoly Perminov proposed a nuclear powered space shuttle for such a task, saying that such a vessel would be the most efficient way for "a manned mission to Mars, interplanetary travel, [and] the creation and operation of planetary outposts."

Since the theoretical missions to Mars still have not left the drawing board phase, any sort of cooperation between countries has yet to be announced. It would seem logical for the two most experienced nations, Russia and the USA, to work together on what may become the most important endeavor in scientific history.

Image Coordinator

XXX XXX is a junior majoring in mechanical engineering, with a minor in Russian. He chose to study Russian as a foreign language both because of a desire to travel/work abroad in the future, and because Russia has a strong industry in all types of engineering. Knowledge of the language could also make finding domestic work easier, as many governmental agencies - the military, NASA, etc. - usually are looking for people with foreign language skills other than the typical spanish/french/german.



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Change



Hope



For reading!

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VITA

Filip Zachoval was born in Boskovice, the Czech Republic on June 1, 1976, the son of Alžběta Zachovalová and Adolf Zachoval. After completing his work at Gymnásium Boskovice, the Czech Republic, he entered Charles University in Prague in 1996. While working on his master's degree there he spent the fall 2009 semester abroad at St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, Russia and the spring 2002 semester at the University of Texas at Austin. He received the degree of Magistr in East European Studies honors of Russian Philology in 2003. In August 2003, he entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin. During his stay at UT, he was a Russian language Teaching Assistant for two years, and taught first- and second-year Russian, in both semester-long and intensive summer formats, for five years. While at UT-Austin, he also designed and implemented several collaborative, technology-enhanced and individualized semester projects.

Permanent Address: 1009 Rocky Spring Rd., Austin, TX, 78753

This manuscript was typed by the author.