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**Slava Paperno with Sophia Lubensky and Irina Odintsova. *Advanced Russian: From Reading to Speaking. An interactive multimedia language course. Ithaca, NY: Lexicon Bridge Publishers, 2009. DVD-ROM.***

The interactive multimedia course *Advanced Russian: From Reading to Speaking*, a collaborative effort, is remarkable in many aspects: the underlying conception in selecting contemporary language material; the variety of the material, its arrangement, and presentation; the system of assignments built around the material; and the one-click-away, nothing-left-unexplained linguistic and cultural information – a tribute to our digital era.

This work, as the subtitle suggests, provides audio and visual teaching material to be used by or with students of Russian at an advanced level. The course assumes their familiarity with Russian grammar and vocabulary acquired after at least two years of college-level study of the language. It is intended to further develop their proficiency in reading and speaking grammatically and stylistically correct Russian.

The complete package includes an interactive multimedia DVD-ROM for use on Windows® and Macintosh® computers and three video DVDs that can be played in any DVD player. The video DVDs are recommended for in-class viewing while the DVD-ROM may be used for individual study. The DVDs include only the videos that are central to the course; the DVD-ROM has well over a hundred additional items.

In the six thematically organized chapters of the course, students and instructors will find ample multimedia language materials: video recordings of short stories, or excerpts, by S. Dovlatov, M. Mishin, A. Gelasimov, V. Pelevin, D. Rubina, L. Ulitskaia, and M. Veller; video and audio recordings of songs and poems by Y. Vizbor, V. Dolina, K. Yarovaia, V. Vysotsky, A. Galich and A. Akhmatova; video excerpts from interviews with some of these authors and their annotated photographs; and almost fifty clips from iconic Russian feature films such as *Moskva slezam ne verit*, *Osennii marafon*, *Sluzhebnyi roman*, and *Dozhivem do ponedel'nika*.

In the introduction, the authors state that it is “easy” for students to use the course and that “interactive multimedia” offers “advantages” for language study. I believe the

authors succeed in creating an interactive multimedia course that is user-friendly, informative, educational, timesaving, and, most importantly, one that does not interfere with processing the content. Whether this work offers “advantages” depends on its use: as an independent language course or as the core language material to accompany the forthcoming book, *Advanced Russian: From Reading to Speaking*, by Sophia Lubensky and Irina Odintsova. This dilemma could be a matter of pedagogical philosophy and methodology for many Russian language instructors, as the authors clearly indicate. They provide extensive introductory information on the structure of the course, its contents, and its applicability. Indeed, the introduction contains so much information (eight pages at least), that virtually no question is left unanswered, and, given the space allotted, this reviewer could not possibly do better than to refer instructors and students to the publisher’s website: <http://www.lexiconbridge.com>.

Still, there are some aspects of the course contents that deserve comment here. The employment of Russian literary texts recorded by native speakers is extremely useful. The contemporary texts are invaluable for Russian instructors and students who strive to follow the latest developments in Russian social and cultural life. To address any pedagogical concerns about students’ transition (sometimes very frustrating) from studying Russian in textbooks to reading authentic texts, Paperno provides video recordings of the readings, complete transcripts, and detailed linguistic/cultural comments, with every word listed in an onscreen Russian-English glossary. This blend of audio and visual cognitive images helps to strengthen the students’ material and to increase their involvement in the process of study. It is especially helpful when working on emotionally colored language units that are usually extremely difficult to understand and memorize outside a meaningful context.

To assist students in the reading comprehension of Russian literary texts, the course includes a section called *Guided Reading*, the purpose of which is “to suggest a strategy and specific techniques for reading complex Russian texts that may be difficult because of their cultural allusions or complicated syntax.” The section offers exercises for practicing these techniques. The text used in this section is “Nika,” a short story by Pelevin.

Yet the actor's reading of the text is always limited to his or her individual stylistic interpretation and the context. Such a reading is a professionally presented sample of prepared speech. To avoid this limitation and to show the students other stylistic variants, most texts are recorded twice, each time by a different actor, and the interviews after the texts provide excellent examples of unprepared speech.

The learning activities of the communicative assignments deserve special attention. They serve to facilitate student comprehension and retention of the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic nuances of Russian. The assignments draw the students' attention to the distinctive features of standard literary, colloquial, and poetic styles. Among some of the specific linguistic topics covered by the assignments are the contextually meaningful prosody of emotionally charged words, phrases, and sentences; the reduction of sounds, words, and sentences; semantically meaningful pauses and violations of word order and sentence structure; and gestures. With everything comprehensively explained, the assignments then instruct students to imitate (or to learn by heart) the actor's readings of the selected language units and to use them in their own or suggested situations. In most cases, students are supposed to use the suggested vocabulary and grammar. The grammar topics are obviously prompted by colloquial Russian. They include the Present Tense of Perfective/Imperfective Verbs, Past Tense, and Direct/Indirect Speech. The assignments provide opportunities to practice vocabulary, grammar and prosody in a range of situations, most of which are associated with a particular text, feature film clip, interview, or photograph.

As mentioned above, *Advanced Russian: From Reading to Speaking* is intended to supplement a forthcoming textbook with the same title. I reviewed the course with this in mind, and I am looking forward to the book. I recommend this DVD-ROM as valuable teaching material for the study of Russian. It is a great collection of contemporary Russian short stories, with numerous insights into modern Russian literature and society. It is also an excellent resource for colloquial vocabulary as well as comprehensive and detailed linguistic information. The course provides students with extensive material and training in quality analytical reading, advanced listening comprehension, speaking, and writing skills.

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