

Title: Taking Russian out of the Classroom: Exploiting the Advantages of Online
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Abstract:

This presentation will address Russian Online, a new three-semester course, offered entirely online through the University of Texas at Austin. We have created entirely new instructional materials, designed specifically to accommodate the learning environment and the online student audience. Our multi-media grammar text and interactive courses grant students the ability to take rigorous language courses outside of the traditional face-to-face classroom setting. The general course goals align with those described by ACTFL guidelines to achieve intermediate low-mid in the four major categories: speaking, writing, listening, and reading by the end of the three-semester sequence.

Online learning affords obvious advantages to both instructor and student, namely flexibility. Students are largely able to set their own work schedules, insofar as completing asynchronous assignments goes. As convenient as that is, online language learning presents a host of challenges, not least of which is how to foster student interaction and community.

I will present a snap-shot of the courses themselves and demonstrate the various applications of these new multi-media instructional materials. I will also address the special challenge of establishing and maintaining student interaction in a largely asynchronous environment. I will show that the primary goal in the development of these courses has not been an attempt to recreate the face-to-face classroom in an online environment, but to do something entirely new – to meet the demands of the online learning experience head-on by exploiting the many advantages of being online in order to bring Russian language students a rigorous and dynamic learning experience.