

The Russian Language Training Program

Role, Philosophy, Delivery

The Language Department of the National Cryptologic School (NCS) plays a vital and continuing role in the career of the NSA linguist by teaching the language skills needed on the job, by raising the individual's language skills to a certifiable professional level, and by helping the professional maintain language skills. This is done through a series of basic, intermediate and advanced-level courses, with the subject matter, learning objectives, length and design of the courses set by the needs of operational elements.

The Language Department bases its instructional philosophy on the four-skills concept (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Stated simply, this means that while we recognize that speaking and writing are not terminal learning objectives *per se*, instruction and practice in each is considered an enabling objective. That is to say, systematic training in all four skills enables the mastery of any one skill. Moreover, because speaking and writing help one gain an active knowledge of the language, each must be included to prepare a linguist to work J3 (denotes highest level of difficulty) language material on the job.

Consistent with this principle, the Slavic Language Division teaches all four skills in its basic and intermediate grammar and syntax courses and offers special courses in conversation, transcription, reading, and translation at the intermediate and advanced levels. These special courses are dependent parts of a complete learning continuum.

Some of the grammar courses are team-taught, e.g., RS-150, RS-151, and RS-15A. By this we mean that a native American speaker who has learned Russian as an adult teaches the grammar and oversees the translation from Russian to English, and a native Russian speaker teaches conversation and composition

and oversees translation from English to Russian. The advantages of such a system are obvious: each teacher is a master of his specialty. The native American learned Russian in precisely the same fashion that the students will be learning it. He has a knowledge of Russian grammar which is complete, systematized, and rationalized, and hence he can be more responsive to the student than the Russian native generally can. The Russian native, on the other hand, commands a vast, sensitive knowledge of the range of human experience expressed in Russian. Consequently, he is usually a better teacher of conversation and composition than is the American. The same is true of translation: the best, most accurate, and most satisfying translations are those from the foreign into the native language. Another advantage of the team approach is that it inspires more confidence in the teacher. Still another benefit to both teachers and students is the change of pace which team teaching offers.

Some of the courses use tapes or cassettes to augment classroom instruction, e.g., RS-15A, RS-260, RS-360, RS-421 and RS-435. More language labwork is predicted in the future. Indeed, a new course began last fall in the language lab: a full-time, 5-week course in Russian transcription, RS-220.

All of the grammar courses — RS-010, RS-105, RS-150, RS-151, and Phases I and II of RS-15A — use computer-assisted instruction (CAI) for the exercise material. This makes it possible for each student to do *all of the exercise material* (only a small portion of the material can be done in class). The CAI system works in the following way. Each student is assigned a computer-storage work space, which he uses throughout the course and which he accesses by his assigned number. The computer makes the work space available, recognizes the student (by his number), and

automatically displays the exercise material for him to do, beginning with the first exercise on the first day and thereafter beginning where he left off the previous day. The student, following the directions given with each task, practices applying the grammar (mostly morphology) to the exercise material presented. If the student inputs an incorrect answer, the computer tells the student to "try again." If the student doesn't know the answer and needs help, the computer will supply the correct answer and then require the student to repeat it. The system is valuable because it allows the student to do all of the exercises himself, saves expensive instructor time, is always consistent, never makes mistakes, never gets angry or petulant, and is always helpful. The only shortcomings are that it can't explain why something is so (a typical student demand) and that response time can be aggravatingly slow.

In the next few years the Slavic Language Division will make use of television in more of its courses. Television is currently used in RS-421 and RS-435 and in the near future will also be used in RS-150, RS-151

and RS-15A. The Slavic Language Division has purchased a Soviet-produced course of instruction called *My Govorim Po Russki* (We Speak Russian) and has made arrangements with Foreign Broadcast Information Service for a regular supply of cassettes from which a library of TV training materials will be built.

The Language Department and the Crypto-Linguistic Association jointly fund and sponsor the showing of foreign language films. These films are viewed by Russian classes whenever possible and pedagogically appropriate.

Most of the courses offered by the Slavic Language Division may be taken for college undergraduate credit. The amount of credit for each course has been recommended by the American Council on Education, and most of the local colleges accept these recommendations.

Finally, classes are small. Basic and intermediate courses which use CAI are limited to eight students (the number of CAI consoles). Some intermediate classes have as many as ten students, advanced classes no more than six. All are kept small because language

(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

learning requires greater individual student-teacher interaction than do most other disciplines.

The four-skills concept, team teaching, language labs, CAI films, college credit, small classes — these are the special features of Russian instruction at the National Cryptologic School.

The Staff

The staff of the Slavic Language Division consists of [] administrators, [] administrative technician and [] instructors. Of the instructors, [] are native Russians and [] are native Americans, of which 4 are military.

The four military instructors are operational transcribers who teach a special course, which comprises the last 12 weeks of a 97-week training cycle for Army linguists []

All of the civilian instructors are professional educators who have had from 2 to 20 years experience teaching Russian. Two have PhDs, 3 ABDs, and 18 Master Degrees — all in Russian. All four administrators have Masters degrees, have had considerable teaching experience, and are certified, professional Sigt linguists.

Four of the staff have taught German, two Romanian, two Serbo-Croatian and one Polish.

Several of the staff are polyglots; one speaks Russian, Serbo-Croatian, French, German, and English with ease; one speaks Russian, French and English; two are bilingual in Russian and Romanian, two in Russian and Serbo-Croatian, two in Russian and English.

Two of the instructors have taught in Soviet universities, 26 have taught in American universities, 4 have taught at the Defense Language Institute, and two have taught at Detachment "R."¹

Several of the staff have had articles published in learned journals. One of the staff members enjoyed considerable fame earlier in his career as an international chess master, chess champion of Bavaria, and popular chess columnist.

These people are masters of the craft of teaching. They have an extensive knowledge of the Russian language, they love to teach, and they are lively, outgoing people, possessing a sense of humor and a mature perspective of the world.

The Curriculum

Fifteen Russian courses are regularly taught at the NCS, and these, together with two external training

programs, make up the Russian language curriculum.

The first course, RS-001, is for clerical personnel and others who need to know how to read cyrillic letters, to transliterate into Latin letters and vice versa, and to handle a minimum of grammatical information.

Two basic-level grammar courses — RS-010 and the follow-on course, RS-105 — are offered for beginners who are to become Russian linguists. These courses cover the rudiments of grammar and syntax, together with reading and translation.

The next phase in the development of a Russian linguist is the intermediate-level course, RS-150. Here the student covers the gamut of Russian grammar again and in greater detail, studies some syntax, reads, translates, converses, and composes in Russian. This course is the usual entry point for Russian linguists hired directly from college. The accelerated version of this course, RS-151, can truly be called a refresher course; it serves as the entry point for more advanced students. Both RS-150 and RS-151 are team taught.

Continuing through the curriculum, we come to RS-110 and RS-140. In the former, conversation and composition are taught in Russian; the latter deals with reading comprehension and translation. The study of roots, first introduced in RS-150, is continued here, the difference being that the student is urged to reduce his reliance on the dictionary by deducing meanings of words from roots and affixes on the one hand and context on the other. Some gisting is also done.

RS-160 treats larger units and syntactical problems. Again reading comprehension and translation are practiced.

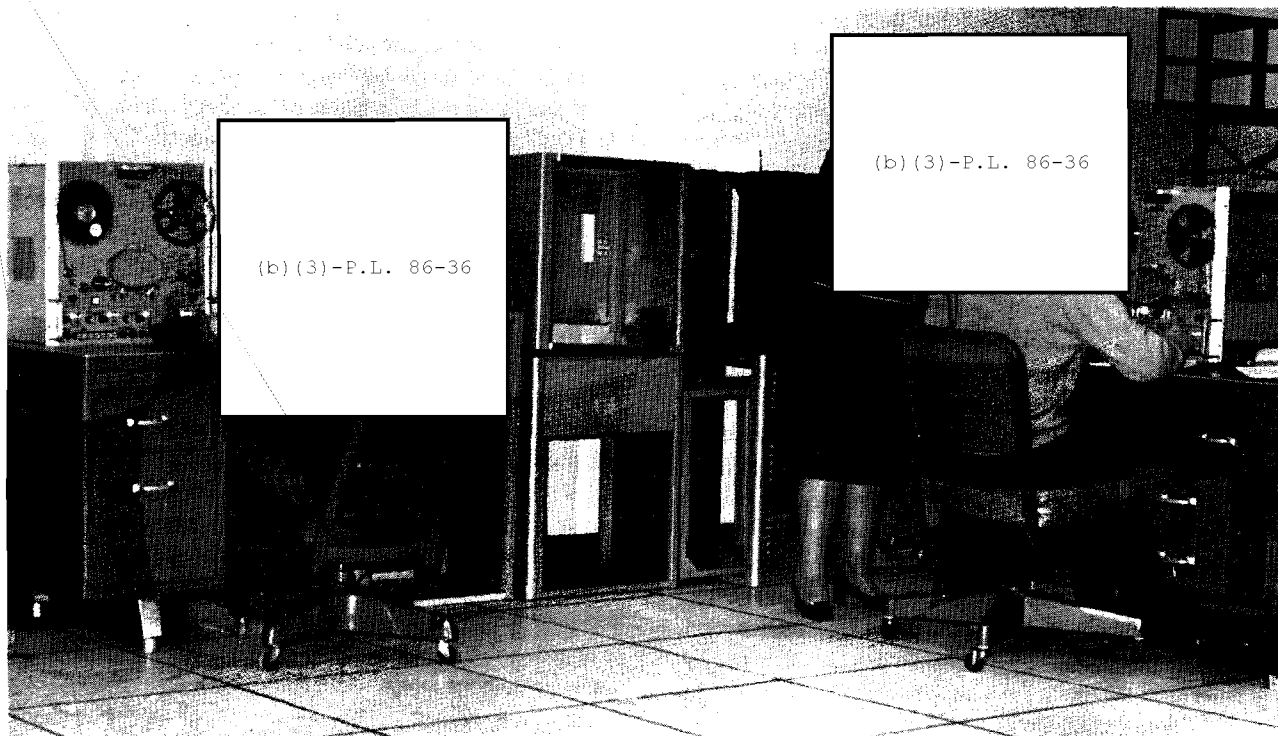
The next course is one in translation as an art. This is RS-200, an intermediate-level course which concentrates on technical and engineering texts.

After that comes RS-210, one of four courses taught entirely in Russian. This course draws attention to little-known features of the language, e.g., particles, which are not systematically covered in other courses.

Finally, RS-260 and RS-360, also taught in Russian, are advanced-level courses in which contemporary fiction, read with a native instructor, serves as the basis for practice in conversation and composition. The emphasis here is on expanding active knowledge of the language.

Several courses in the Russian language curriculum are not mentioned above. One is RS-130 — an intermediate-level course on Russian linguistics. Not in the line of progression, it could be taken profitably

¹ Detachment "R" is the popular name for the United States Army Russian Institute (USARI) in Garmisch, Germany.



Practical exercises in transcription.

any time after RS-150. Another is RS-125 — a special course in [redacted] usually taught by operational elements in NCS spaces. It, too, is not in the normal progression of courses leading to Russian language proficiency. A third is a full-time course, RS-15A, which is a composite of all the basic and some of the intermediate full-time courses. An article describing this course appeared in the Summer 1979 *Cryptologic Spectrum*.

The two external training courses deserve detailed comment. RS-350 was conceived in the mid-1960s as a way to immerse the student in Russian language using Soviet area studies as the subject matter — a junior Detachment “R.” A pilot course was presented by Georgetown University, but the program was soon switched to George Washington University (GWU), where the course has been given twice a year for the past eleven years.

The program consists of four courses taken full-time in one 15-week semester on the GWU campus. Equal attention is paid to language and subject matter. The language of instruction is Russian, and all questions, discussions, papers and examinations — and even conversations during breaks — are in Russian. For the past several years the course has been used primarily to raise language skill quickly to the L3 level. Graduate

or undergraduate credit can be applied to the transcript of students who have matriculated in the university.

Detachment “R” is the popular name of the institution which trains Russian linguists in language and in Soviet area studies in a full-time program of study lasting two academic years. The present title of the institution is the United States Army Russian Institute (USARI). It is the capstone of Russian language training. The Agency sends professional (level 3) Russian linguists to Detachment “R” in the hope of producing the “complete analyst”. As with RS-350 at GWU, Russian is the language of instruction, but because of the length of the program, Soviet area studies can be pursued in greater detail. Detachment “R” has been functioning for 22 years and the Agency has trained over [redacted] analysts there.

The Slavic Language Division is very pleased with the language training aspect of RS-350. Ideally classes are made up of students on the same level. The course is intensive — a great amount of material is read, analyzed and discussed — and as a result students return with a much greater facility in the language. The same is true of Detachment “R”, but to a greater degree. Candidates for selection to Detachment “R” must meet high standards and undergo a rigorous selection process in which only the best linguists are

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chosen. Graduates of the program have a mastery of the language and can handle Russian in a wide variety of contexts. Moreover, they have a highly developed, active knowledge of the language as a result of daily exercise in discussions and compositions both within and outside the classroom.

This is the progression from RS-010 to Detachment "R" — from courses for beginners and journeyman linguists to those for certified professionals.

Requirements and Student Selection

How does the Language Department know what courses to teach, how many courses to teach, how many instructors to acquire, how many classrooms and labs are needed, how many texts to purchase, how much course material to select and reproduce? The answer to all these questions is provided by a requirements system which operates in the following manner. Every summer operating elements forward requirements to the school, expressed in terms of course and numbers of students. The school then responds by scheduling classes to meet these requirements within the resources permitted. The schedule, made available through (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 to training advisors in operations, states precisely how many students may be nominated from each office-level organization for each course being offered.

If the Language Department does not have a course prepared to fill the requirement, the appropriate course may have to be developed from scratch. If there are funding problems, priorities can be altered to free resources for this course development. If the priority of such a requirement does not justify dropping other instruction — the prioritization of training is the business of operations, not the NCS — or if the training cannot be accomplished by the Language Department because the expertise is lacking, this training will have to be effected by some means outside the NCS or not be provided at all.³

Let us assume that requirements have been received and accepted,⁴ schedules of classes have been drawn up, instructors assigned, classrooms acquired, etc., for the coming academic year. The next step is assigning students to the classes. Corresponding to the number of spaces allocated, approximately one month prior to

the class start, student nominations are received from each office in operations. Records of nominees are checked to determine eligibility and selections are then made. A unique feature of the Russian training program is that each potential student is rigorously pre-tested for each course he takes with the pre-test results largely determining his suitability for a course.

The whole series of pre-tests is given annually to potential students *en masse*. After analyzing the results, the Slavic Language Division personally informs the training advisors of the course(s) for which each student qualifies. Through a training test profile, the Division can counsel the operational training advisors on the needs of a particular student. Thus, through the training advisers, the operational elements know in advance which courses to select for each prospective student. To the extent pre-tests are predictable students are assigned to the right course.

Selections are made for external training courses as follows: by the Slavic Language Division and the Registrar for RS-350 and by the External Training Selection Board and the Registrar for Detachment "R".⁵

This is the process by which training requirements are met. By this process, operational elements constantly improve and maintain language skill levels required on the job. And generally it is by this process that the linguist-analyst achieves professionalization.

New Directions

Now that we have covered the Russian language curriculum and the requirements system, let us look briefly at some upcoming changes.

The catalog. In the FY81 Course Catalog the Russian curriculum will look different because Russian courses will be redesignated to correspond to level of difficulty and type of training. The digraph in the designator of all Russian courses will be changed from RS to RU.

The first digit of course numbers will be keyed to the skill levels of students *at the beginning* of the course; i.e., the input, not the output, will determine the course level. Thus, courses for beginners will be basic-level courses in the 100-series. Courses for journeyman linguists will be intermediate-level courses in the 200-series. Courses for professionals will be advanced-level courses in the 300-series. Levels 200 and

(b) (3)-P.L. 86-36, a system of automated records maintained and accessed on the M204 system. See (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 "An Automated Registration System," *Cryptologic Spectrum*, Vol. 7, Winter 1977.

³ Sometimes colleges and universities have courses available which would suffice; sometimes individuals can be found to teach the required material on contract.

⁴ "Accepted" means the requirement is considered valid and an attempt will be made to provide the training.

⁵ The Registrar also selects a limited number of linguists who have applied to attend summer language programs at colleges and universities, e.g., Middlebury, on administrative leave status whereby they pay all costs themselves. This is not part of the Russian language program.

300 equate to *input* skill levels L2 (intermediate) and L3 (professional). For our purposes, an L2 linguist is one who receives a qualifying score or slightly lower on the Russian Language Placement Test. A trainee may be accepted for a 200-level course, especially for the intermediate-level, grammar-translation-conversation-composition course (RU-201, formerly RS-150), if the pre-test scores for this course predict success. Likewise, a non-professionalized linguist may be accepted for 300-level courses if he has passed Part I of the Professional Qualification Examination and if his pre-test scores indicate professional-level ability.

These changes are necessary to restore congruity between the course designator and the level of difficulty of the courses as determined empirically by the Language Department staff and theoretically by the American Council on Education, which recommended a specific amount of credit for each course appropriate to its challenge, difficulty and duration.

The second digit of course numbers will be keyed to type of instruction or goal of instruction according to the following scheme: 0=grammar/syntax, 1=conversation and composition, 2=transcription, 3=linguistics, 4=reading comprehension, 5=refresher, 6=seminar, 7=translation, 8=special workshop. The second digit of several Russian courses will be changed for the sake of orderliness and consistency, e.g., RS-150 will become RU-201, but RS-151 will become RU-250.

The curriculum will be the same, only the course designators will be different.

The curriculum. The Slavic Language Division has been aware for some time that the present Russian curriculum doesn't fully meet the needs of operations nor does it ultimately produce the desired level of excellence. Nor does it provide necessary post-professional language maintenance. The NCS is working with major users, represented by the A Language Advisory Council, to determine how operational requirements for Russian language instruction might better be met.

As an example, last year the NCS found that it could satisfy a requirement for an advanced technical translation course. The Language Department, in concert with the Analysis, Design and Development staff, developed and documented a special course. The Language Department conducted the course with Mr. Arthur Salemme as the instructor, through the good

offices of the Office of Techniques and Standards. The course was of great benefit to operations. Should the need arise to repeat this course in the future, it will be added to the curriculum. Similarly, in response to Agency needs, an intermediate transcription course was developed and it has been offered four times to date. This course, which has proven to be extremely useful, has been added to the curriculum in FY80.

The Slavic Language Division has begun to acquire video cassettes of Moscow television broadcasts. For the first time the Slavic Division has at its disposal a television display and playback system which will play back broadcasts using foreign standard scanning rates. A library of cassettes by subject will be assembled. The purpose of collecting selected video cassettes is to augment ongoing courses with additional instructional material for language reinforcement. It is quite possible, even likely, that short, target-directed technical (but unclassified) courses may emerge as a natural use of this medium.

Other Slavic languages. There are urgent requirements for instruction in Czechoslovakian, Polish and Serbo-Croatian. A Polish course was taught in FY79 with excellent results. A Serbo-Croatian course will be taught in FY80. A Czech course may well be offered in late FY80. These requirements are urgent, but not taxing because the resource demand is minimal. Thus the Russian program will not suffer.

The military transcription shop was not mentioned because this training function will soon be transferred to Keesler AFB, one of the actions of the program for consolidation of cryptologic training.

The Language Department's reason for being is to serve operations by providing training to meet requirements. Its sole aim is to accomplish this mission with a quality product. It will continue to work toward that end.

(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 served the Agency in various language-related capacities since 1953 when he entered on duty as a German cryptolinguist. He has also served on the Director's Secretariat and as an Assistant Inspector General. At present, he is Chief of the Slavic Language Division. Mr. (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 is BA and MA degrees in German Languages and Literature from the University of Michigan. He is professionalized as a linguist and special research analyst.