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FOREWORD

This is the first volume of the coursebook for Russian as a foreign language. Two further ones will follow. «As Spoken: Russian for Everyday Usage». The main objective of this book is not simply to create a lexico-grammatical basis of the language study but to present this material within the real life communicative situations.

«As Spoken: Russian for Everyday Usage» in brief

1. The book can be used both in class and individually.
2. The book is created on the basis of the practical experience of teaching Russian as a foreign language and thus covers the most often asked questions and considers difficulties that Russian language learners usually face.
3. A detailed grammatical commentary is written in a clear language, which makes it comprehensible not only for linguists but for a wide range of audience of all ages.
4. The commentary is accompanied by a considerable number of examples that show how lexico-grammatical forms are used in everyday speech.
5. The book contains a big number of exercises to practice the studied material (2/3 of the book volume).
6. The book is accompanied by a detailed phonetic course. A special attention is devoted to phonetic phenomena that can help students to understand grammar topics.
7. Each of three volumes contains 10 units and is aimed at 50-60 academic hours. The phonetic course is presented separately.

Specificity of the Russian language learning at the elementary level:

WHY DO NOT TRADITIONAL APPROACHES WORK?

In the English language learning its grammar basis gradually becomes more complicated at each level of studies (the higher the level the more complicated is its grammar). In the Russian language it is vice versa.

The main grammar material (approximately 70% of the grammar) is studied at the elementary level. The further development of the language is realized through enriching of vocabulary and syntax. For instance, exercises to train motion verbs without prefixes at A2 and B2 (even C2) levels will differ in relation to a big amount of accompanying vocabulary but not in their grammar components.

If you managed to learn types of Russian verbs at A1+/A2 level, you will not have any difficulties with this topic at B2 level. On the contrary, if at a high level of studies you suffer problems with the use of aspects, you have to return to the elementary level and revise the material.

In accordance with CEFR, at the elementary level a student can talk about himself/herself, a family, friends, a workplace and hobbies. However, while in the English language such topics require a relatively small number of grammar constructions and vocabulary units in the Russian language their amount increases to approximately 70% of the grammar¹.

Such concentration of grammar topics at the elementary level makes traditional approaches to language learning ineffective when coming to the Russian language. For instance, an attempt to study grammar in the context of particular speaking topics (an approach widely used in English language coursebooks) will look unnatural and will not help to achieve set goals. In such a situation a question arises how to tackle the problem. An answer can be found in understanding the logic of language under question.

A language is a living body whose skeleton is made by grammar. Without the knowledge of grammar it is impossible to make a sentence whatever topic you want to touch (politics, economics, family, sport etc.). In any case, the “grammar skeleton” will remain unchangeable while “growing muscles” of vocabulary can be done later and more easily after acquiring basic grammar skills.

Finally last but not least, starting from the first lesson even basic lexicogrammatical models are introduced into the real speech and real communicative situations.

About the structure of the coursebook material

Any foreign language is perceived by people as alien, strange and not always logical. This foreignness of a new language becomes the main obstacle on the way of achieving the goal of language learning. Our aim is to help you to transfer the Russian language from a category of “alien and strange” to that of “mine and clear”. This aim is achieved through 3 stages, each of them being connected with one of the levels of a human perception (conscious, subconscious and unconscious).

¹ The information that you can share in English after 2 or 3 lessons you will manage to present in Russian only after 2 or 3 months of studying. Certainly, while studying you will acquire necessary skills to talk on the above-mentioned topics more widely. To get the impression of your potential development study the last pages of Unit 10 where you can find Russian texts with translation into English. These are examples of what you can say after 2 or 3 weeks of studying this coursebook.

At the first stage a detailed commentary is provided. This commentary explains in a clear language the logic of this or that lexico-grammatical construction. Here the process of comprehension is fulfilled through a logical understanding of the material (i.e. I understand why something works this way).

The second stage is connected with our subconsciousness. Here an associative link between a lexico-grammatical construction and a real communicative situation is created. Moreover, it is this stage which helps to solve the problem of a word-for-word translation (or loan translation from one's native language). This is necessary because as a rule one communicative situation in different languages require different language resources, which means that a word-for-word translation is inadequate in this case.

Lack of practice at this stage usually leads to the situation when a student can complete a grammar test but is unable to speak fluently or uses a loan translation from his/her native language in a real communicative situation.

Thus, to create an associative link between a lexico-grammatical construction and a real communicative situation the book supplies each grammatical commentary with a big number of examples from real discourses. Most of the examples are provided with a translation. On the one hand, this approach guarantees better comprehension of the situation, on the other hand, it enables a student to see the language difference which makes a word-for-word translation impossible.

The last and the most important stage is connected with our unconscious. This is the most mysterious level of a human perception which has not been yet enough studied. It is on this level that spontaneous language reactions are formed.

Unconscious perception is extremely developed at early years of life. Children easily deal with gigabytes of new information, which they process unconsciously, and learn to speak quickly. But an adult cannot do the same².

Here an assistance in a form of a big number of exercises to practice and review the material is necessary.

To sum up, the material of the coursebook is structured in accordance with three stages of language acquisition: a commentary, an introduction to the real discourse through examples and revision exercises.

² A forming brain of a child and a brain of an adult person are completely different. When a child starts to perceive the information he has nothing to compare it with and, thus, nothing blocks his perception (i.e. the conscious level is practically not involved in the process). To achieve the same state of perception an adult person has to literally lose his memory, forget everything he knew before, including his native language.