

To: UCITE
From: Tatiana Zilotina, DMLL
Re: NORD Grant Application

October, 2012

RUSN 210: Russian for Heritage Speakers

Dear Nord Grant Committee Members:

I am writing to apply for the Nord Grant to support teaching of the new course in the Russian program at Case – *Russian for Heritage Speakers*. This course will satisfy the demand of the growing number of Case students who belong to the so-called “heritage speakers”. These students have learning requirements that differ significantly from the traditional non-heritage speakers’ needs.

The best-known definition of heritage language speakers characterizes them as “individuals raised in homes where a language other than English is spoken and who are to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language” (Valdes). In relation to Russian heritage speakers at Case, this definition can be modified to identify those speakers as children of the immigration of the 1990s and later, whose level of competency in Russian depends on the amount of education they received in the former Soviet Union.

Every year, heritage speakers of Russian request to enroll in the regular Russian language classes at Case. They express interest in improving their Russian in specific areas, namely grammar, writing, and reading. Their presence in the regular classroom often results in their dissatisfaction with the learning process. Heritage speakers find themselves in the learning environment that is too rudimentary for their needs. While non-heritage learners need intensive work on pronunciation and vocabulary, the heritage speakers need instruction in spelling, punctuation, and more complex sentence structure. They tend to dominate classroom discussions, quite often “intimidating” non-heritage speakers in class. Therefore, it is preferable to teach Russian heritage speakers within the framework of a language course that will specifically address their literacy problem areas. Such a course will aim at compensating, in part, for the lack of those students’ academic education in their mother tongue.

Many of the Russian heritage speakers at Case are motivated to develop their literacy in Russian because they want to understand the rich literary legacy of their parents. I take this kind of motivation into account in designing RUSN 210. In addition, it is important to consider the different levels of language skills that usually exist among heritage speakers. I structure this course with heterogeneity of the student group in mind.

To facilitate the design of RUSN 210 in accordance with the Nord grant goal of providing direct benefits to student learning, I am requesting funding for the following:

1. Purchase of **books and DVDs** to create the initial collection of resources, which specifically targets the Russian heritage speakers at Case. These materials will cover a variety of areas, such as History, Art, Film, Literature, etc. - **\$200**;
2. Purchase of a dedicated **DELL computer** that will host a server for the course website. The website will allow students to interact with one another and the instructor. Students will have direct access to the materials that I will choose for the particular tasks. I will create the assessment tools to measure the improvement of students reading and writing skills and test these skills more effectively. The website will be designed to provide a most comprehensive way of enhancing students' learning process. - **\$1,500**;
3. Hiring a **student assistant** who will create the website. I plan to hire a student with the appropriate technical skills to work on the course website for 50 hours at \$12 per hour. The student will receive my instructions about the content of the website and implement them. - **\$600**;
4. **Participation in a workshop** organized by the National Heritage Language Resource Center in Chicago in June 2013. I hope to benefit from the workshop's preparation of heritage language instructors in the development of innovative heritage curricula and teaching practices. I will learn about the use of differentiated instruction, content-based instruction, and task/experiential-community-based language learning. This is a five-day workshop. The expenses to be covered include travel, lodging, and meals. - **\$1,000**.

I will propose teaching RUSN 210 in the fall of 2013. If funded, I will start working on the course design during the spring semester of 2013 and make it final after attending the NHLR workshop in the summer of 2013.

BUDGET

Course materials	\$200
Hardware	\$1,500
Student Assistant	\$600
NHRC Workshop	\$1,000
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Total:	\$3,300

T. Zilotina

Tatiana Zilotina

Antonio Candau

Antonio Candau, Chair, DMLL