

APPLICATIONS OF INTERACTIVE VIDEO TAPES IN TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

The author teaches German and Russian languages, as well as Russian culture, literature and history in English at Marist College. The Russian culture course, taught in English, became very popular right from the outset of its introduction into the curriculum several years ago. Its popularity was and is due to the extensive use of multimedia materials, including interactive video tapes, in presenting the distinctive and unique features of Russian culture. In this manner, the course creates a vicarious "travel" experience to Russia and the Soviet Union.

NEED TO CREATE AND PRODUCE INTERACTIVE VIDEOTAPES FOR THE STUDY OF RUSSIAN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

There are several important reasons why I am developing my own videotape software. For one, very little commercial CAI or CALI software exists for the teaching of Russian culture and language. Nothing at all is currently available in the interactive videotape software mode. In fact, my own personal research in interactive videotape is a pioneering venture for the Russian area. Most significantly, my own interactive videotape productions answer a very specific need, namely to deal with ideas and concept of Russian culture that are rather difficult for a student to grasp. It is for the purpose of clarification and explanation that I created the videotape entitled "Siberia: Land of Exile"; it emphatically illustrates the long history of terror imposed on the Russian people by an absolute state. The sharp contrast in Russian and American cultures can be brought home to students via videotapes supplementing my lectures and required texts.

REPURPOSING RUSSIAN CULTURE VIDEOTAPES FOR TEACHING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

The same videotapes used by English-speaking students to learn Russian culture are repurposed, i.e. redesigned to teach the Russian language. The narrative, the oral text, for each unit is bilingual. It is in English for the English-speaking and in Russian for students studying the language. By this arrangement, we assign a dual function to the interactive videotape as an educational tool.

For the Russian language component, videotape lessons can be annotated, i.e. the Russian narrative may be programmed for multiple purposes in teaching the language:

- (A) to sharpen the skill of listening comprehension;
 - Oral part of the narrative can be purposed for three graded levels of comprehension: elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels.
- (B) to develop an understanding of idiomatic expressions;
- (C) to build vocabulary;
- (D) to study the culture in original Russian;

All of the above tasks can be programmed into the computer and used in the interactive mode as units of computer-assisted Russian language instruction or remediation. In teaching Russian language, we aim at the acquisition of the four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but with an emphasis on listening and speaking. The CALI videotapes are invaluable as reinforcement to the listening comprehension skill and the study of idioms and vocabulary building. Used this way, the repurposed Russian culture videotapes become very versatile, as well cost-effective.