



Vlogging Culture: Teaching cultural literacy with streaming pop- music videos in intensive beginning Russian

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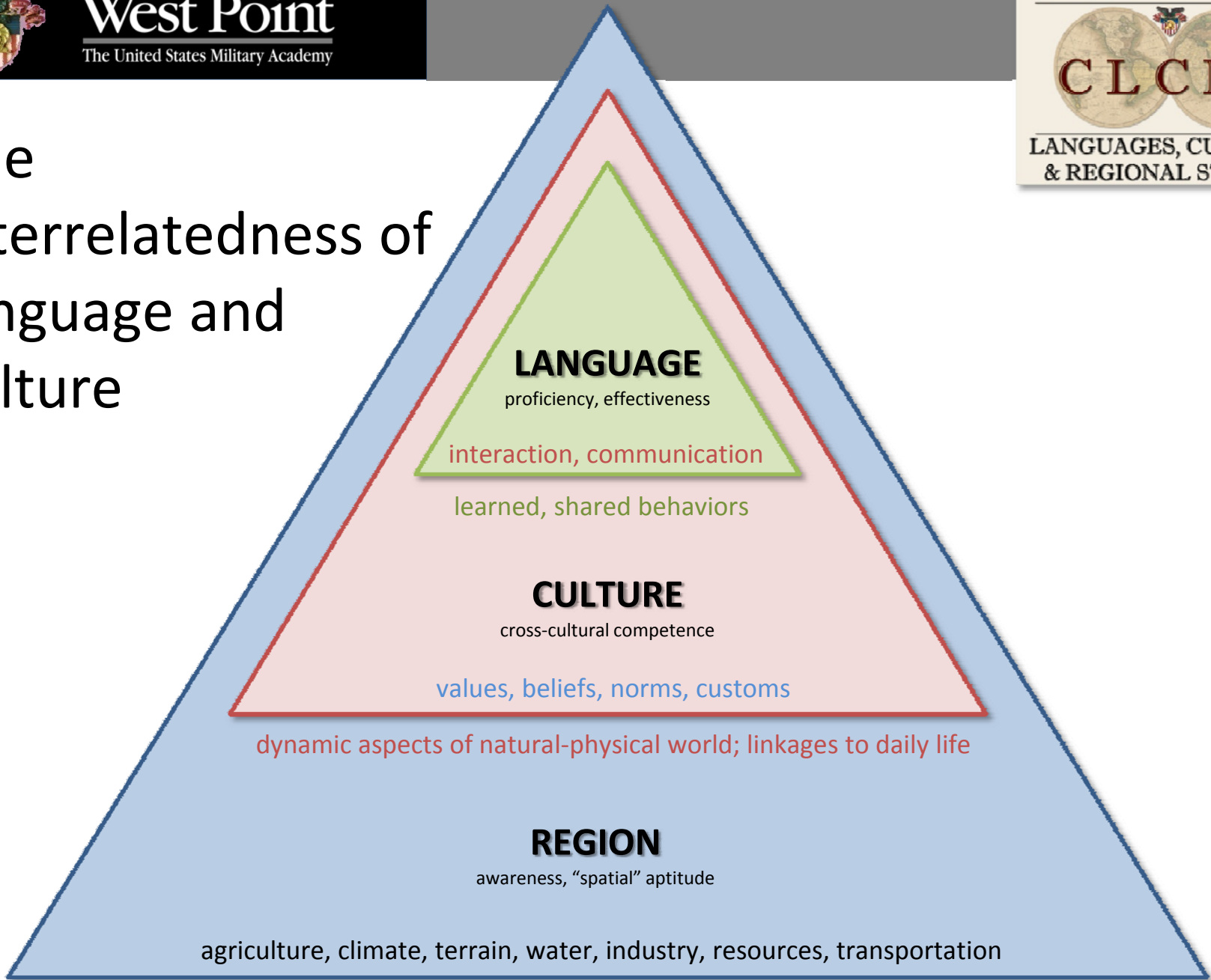
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AGENDA

- 1. The Challenge**
- 2. The Project**
 - Why music videos?
 - Culture & Cultural Memetics
- 3. The Technology**
- 4. Implementation, Observations, & Student Feedback**
- 5. Implications for the future**



The interrelatedness of language and culture





Difficulty of teaching cultural literacy in beginning intensive Russian

- Linguistic demands of 1st-year Russian
- Intensive course schedule
- Lack of instructor experience
- Lack of learner proficiency
- Inaccessibility of high-culture elements

Russians recite Pushkin!



Russian Language Day – June 6 – in Orsk, Russia



The video blog project

- **Stage One (current study):**
 - creation and implementation of video blog for streaming captioned pop-music videos in beginning Russian
 - assessment of initial perceptions and usefulness for teaching cultural awareness
- **Stage Two:**
 - indexing of cultural literacy topics available with expected learning outcomes
 - inclusion of topics in formal classroom assessments
 - implementation of social media elements of blog environment
- **Stage Three:**
 - analysis of learner outcomes in cultural literacy
 - blog enhancement for self-study



Cultural value of popular music videos

- Pop music and attitudes toward self and place
- Collectively created discourses of everyday life
- Expressions of consumer-driven economy and pop-culture environment
- Language is culturally authentic, contextually situated, and designed specifically for memorability and reciteability
 - The 5Cs: ACTFL's *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*
 - *Communication, Connections, Comparisons, Communities*
- Culture and cultural memetics



Cultural Memetics

- Culture can be transmitted:
 - vertically (from generation to generation)
 - horizontally (within one generation)
- Memes are cultural patterns that are replicated (passed) from person to person
 - melody, image, chorus, lyric, phrase
 - the catchier, the better
- Attractive, relatable, memorable, memorizable
- Consumerism – purposeful or collectively created



Poetry, advertising, and pop-music

- “Не тормози, _____”
- “Русское радио. Всё _____”
- “Ваша киска купила бы _____”
- “Есть идея...есть ____.”



Contemporary music videos

- “potent music/lyric/image combination” (Garza, 2009)



Mitya Fomin
(2011)



Cultural literacy topics

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Zhanna Friske (2009)



Ligalize (2008)

- stereotypes – caricatures and self-caricatures, parodies
- social and political commentary
- nationalism, military themes
- folk vs. contemporary themes
- gender issues, songs «о главном» (“about what’s most important”)



Benefits of glossed/captioned text

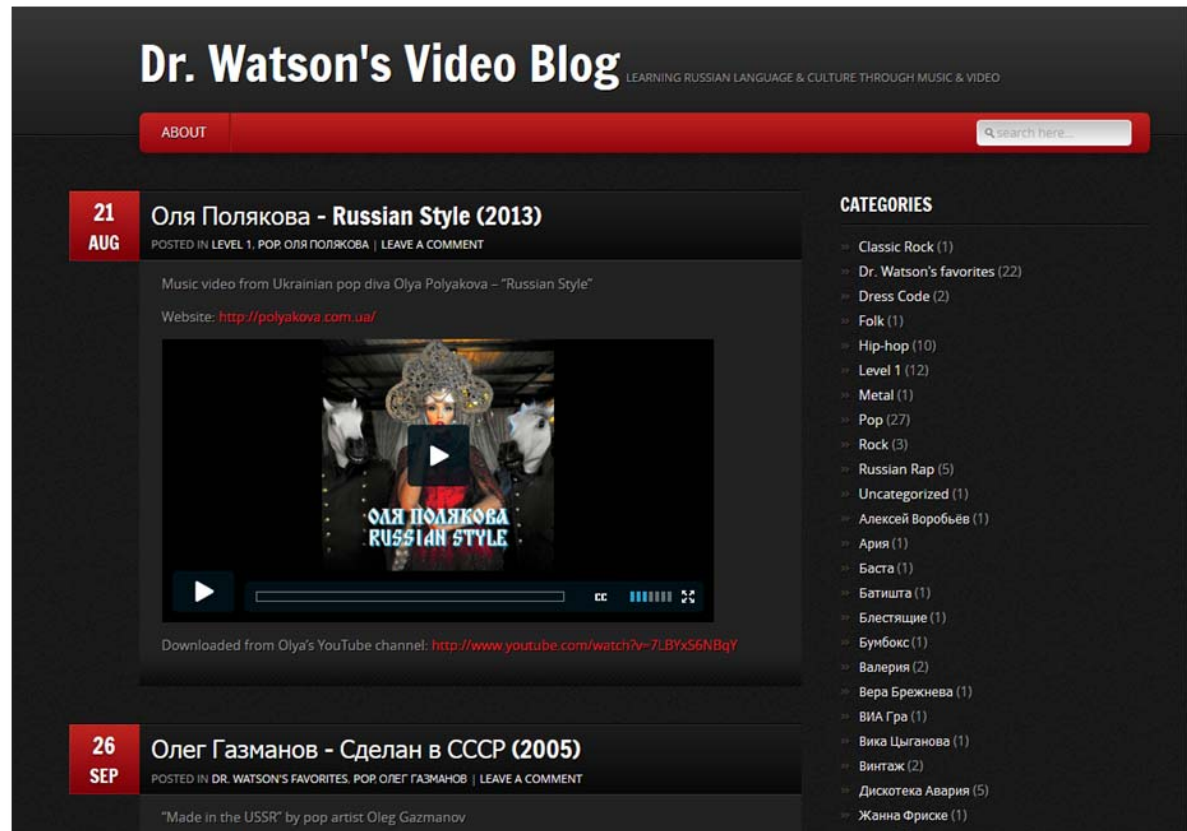
- affects primary and incidental vocabulary acquisition (Abraham, 2008)
- bridges the gap between reading and listening comprehension (Garza, 2009)
- construct a framework of comprehension for future application (Gruba, 2004)



Dr. Watson's Video Blog

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- <http://www.acerjw.com/rusmuz>
- in development and used in class since 2011



Dr. Watson's Video Blog LEARNING RUSSIAN LANGUAGE & CULTURE THROUGH MUSIC & VIDEO

ABOUT

21 AUG **Оля Полякова - Russian Style (2013)**
POSTED IN LEVEL 1, POP ОЛЯ ПОЛЯКОВА | LEAVE A COMMENT

Music video from Ukrainian pop diva Olya Polyakova – "Russian Style"

Website: <http://polyakova.com.ua/>

ОЛЯ ПОЛЯКОВА
RUSSIAN STYLE

Downloaded from Olya's YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LBYxS6NBqY>

26 SEP **Олег Газманов - Сделан в СССР (2005)**
POSTED IN DR. WATSON'S FAVORITES, POP ОЛЕГ ГАЗМАНОВ | LEAVE A COMMENT

"Made in the USSR" by pop artist Oleg Gazmanov

CATEGORIES

- Classic Rock (1)
- Dr. Watson's favorites (22)
- Dress Code (2)
- Folk (1)
- Hip-hop (10)
- Level 1 (12)
- Metal (1)
- Pop (27)
- Rock (3)
- Russian Rap (5)
- Uncategorized (1)
- Алексей Воробьев (1)
- Ария (1)
- Баста (1)
- Батишта (1)
- Блестящие (1)
- Бумбокс (1)
- Валерия (2)
- Вера Брежнева (1)
- ВИА Гра (1)
- Вика Цыганова (1)
- Винтаж (2)
- Дискотека Авария (5)
- Жанна Фриске (1)



Why a video blog?

- Culture of “video-on-demand”
 - new expectations by learners
- Interactive and “social” medium
 - familiar “consumer” environment
- More suited for beginning learners
 - Different approach than “Rockin’ Russian”
- User-, time-, and resource-friendly



Useful language learning videos should:

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Garza, 1991, 2009:

- 1) present desirable linguistic material that is both current and accurate
- 2) have high audio/visual correlation in which the video track is essential to comprehension
- 3) have multiple layers, present cultural literacy issues, and provide paralinguistic elements such as gestures and body language
- 4) exhibit high production values, tells a complete story, is entertaining, and can maintain the interest of a native speaker

PLUS:

- 5) have high memetic value – memorable, attractive, catchy



Implementation

In-class

- change-of-pace exercise – 2-3 times a week
- targeted classroom discussion
- pre-viewing activity
 - activate schemata
 - introduce viewing focus
- post-viewing activity
 - discuss cultural topics, draw connections with home culture
 - speaking/reading/listening practice to reinforce

Out-of-class

- provided to students as a supplementary resource
- students urged to use on their own at their leisure



Initial observations

- connections between home and target cultures
- questioning cultural realities in Russian-speaking world
- humming melodies, singing choruses, promoting videos and artists to peers
- searching and recommending new videos for the blog
- clarifying grammar and vocabulary issues – planned and incidental
 - pronunciation
 - verb conjugations
 - case forms



Student survey: May 2014 (N=15)

- Anonymous survey (hosted on SurveyMonkey.com) offered to 34 students
- Nine open-ended questions
 - What aspects of language/culture did you learn from the blog?
 - What video did you like the most and why?
- Ten Likert-scale agreement items
 - The video blog gave me valuable insight into Russian culture.
 - The blog motivates me to want to study the language more.
 - The blog helped make Russian culture a little more “real” to me.



Student responses

- **When asked what they liked most:**
 - “real word language and culture exposure”
 - “lightened up the course”
 - “[I] wanted to sing along...had to learn some new words”
 - “The music was good, but being able to know what they were saying made them even better”
- **When asked what aspects of Russian language they learned:**
 - “how to pronounce certain things” or “how normal Russians speak” and “the speed at which Russians communicate.”
 - “Being absolutely 100% honest with you. I did not know what in the world a conjugation was at all. But when we watched Pupsik I constantly saw the conjugation for love in the ‘I’ form and I don’t know why, but it literally made me realize what a conjugation was for.”



Student responses *cont.*

- **When asked what aspects of Russian culture they learned:**
 - better understanding of *how Russians perceive Americans* and *how Russians and Americans have similar tastes*
 - “different perspectives” ... “little nuances of Russians” ... “how they treat holidays,” “city life,” and “current events”
 - “helped further my understanding of the culture” and
 - “brought Russian to life and made it something we can see...not just words in a book.”
- **When asked what their favorite video is/was on the blog and why:**
 - *lyrics* (easy, not complicated)
 - *cultural elements* (Russian perspectives, Western/American influences)
 - *song/video quality* (good beat, funny video)
 - *memetic value* (easy to memorize or catchy, “stuck in my head”)



Likert-Scale Agree/Disagree data

- 93% of respondents (N=14/15) agreed:
 - the blog was useful for learning about culture
 - generated interesting discussion
 - made Russian culture more “real”
- 86% (N=13/15) agreed the blog motivated them to want to study the language more
- 80% (N=12/15) agreed the blog motivated them to want to study the culture more
- Only 34% of respondents expressed interest in more language exercises to accompany the videos
- 46% said they would use the blog in the future to practice language skills



Evidence-based implications

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- visual contextualization + written and spoken lyrics = “potent”
- bilingual glosses/captions crucial at this level
- memetic value of song+video combination = saliency
 - incidental learning (noticed, sought out for practice, recalled)
 - more important than “song likeability” (see Beaseley & Chuang, 2008)
- video blog effectiveness
 - highly manipulable, DIY environment
 - effective and time-efficient use in-class
 - afforded increased contact hours outside of class
 - mirrors the way music videos are consumed in native language settings
 - sharing, leisure viewing, playlists
 - avoids typical pitfalls of using technology
 - unfamiliar activities or technology
 - technology for the sake of technology



Implications for the future

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beginning Russian: A pilot study***

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QUESTIONS?



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Russian Language Videos

- **stereotypes – caricatures and self-caricatures, parodies**

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Secret Service Entertainment Agency (Producer). (2012, December 21). *Russian Style*. [Recorded by Olya Polyakova]. Retrieved from

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- **social and political commentary**

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- **nationalism, military**

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Russian Language Videos

- **folk vs. contemporary themes**

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