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ЖИВАЯ РЕЧЬ

As Spoken:
Russian for Everyday Usage
A1 Elementary level

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Учебник «Живая речь» предназначен для говорящих на английском языке и содержит подробные комментарии, учитывающие специфику восприятия русской грамматики данной аудиторией.

Курс состоит из трёх частей. Первая часть направлена на создание у учащихся коммуникативного языкового ядра на базовых функциях трёх падежей (именительного, предложного, винительного).

Материал данного уровня (A1) является необходимым языковым минимумом в подготовке к следующему этапу, на котором вводятся виды глаголов и родительный падеж (A1+).

Учебник может использоваться как для самостоятельной работы, так и для работы с преподавателем. Десять уроков рассчитаны на 60 академических часов.

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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 lexico-grammatical 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.

THE PROPER RUSSIAN PRONUNCIATION

The Russian Alphabet – Phonics Rules

Letters	Similar English Sound	Letters	Similar English Sound
А а	like a in «father»	Р р	like r in «run»
Б б	like b in «but»	С с	like s in «sun»
В в	like v in «visit»	Т т	like t in «table»
Г г	like g in «go»	У у	like oo in «boot» or «moon»
Д д	like d in «day»	Ф ф	like f in «fat»
Е е	like ye in «yet»	Х х	like ch in «loch» or like the h in «hello»
Ё ё	like yo in «your»	Ц ц	similar to the ts sound in «sits» or «its»
Ж ж	like s in «fusion» or «pleasure»	Ч ч	like ch in «chips»
З з	like z in «zodiac» or «zone»	Ш ш	like sh in «shell»
И и	like ee in «meet»	Щ щ	Doesn't exist in English (see p.16)
Й й	like y in «boy»	Ъ	Hard sign (no sound)
К к	like k in «like»	Ы	Doesn't exist in English (see p.10)
Л л	like l in «look»	Ь	Soft sign (no sound)
М м	like m in «man»	Э э	like e in «edit»
Н н	like n in «no»	Ю ю	like you in «you» but faster
О о	like or in «more»	Я я	like ya in «yard»
П п	like p in «pet»		

INTRODUCTION

Differences between the Russian and the English articulation

There is a big difference between the Russian and the English articulation. **In the English articulation the main force is based in the back part (zone) of the vocal tract closer to the larynge.**

In Russian articulation it is the opposite: **the main force is transferred to the front part (zone) of the vocal tract.** For this reason in Russian articulation the lips are very agile: they round out strongly and bulge out; the distance between the jaws is wider than in the English pronunciation; the tip of the tongue cambers down and the front part strongly adjoins the teeth (as if the tongue would be cramped in the mouth). And inasmuch the tension is taken off from the back plane of the tongue, the breathed out air goes in a continuous and longer stream (“legato”). This characteristic of articulation explains the high number of “long” words in the Russian language. When you use the English kind of articulation it is almost impossible to pronounce one word consisting of 14 sounds “in one breath”.

The essential reading rules

In English not only vowels, but also consonants have a few ways of reading: under certain conditions you don’t read a variety of letters, one and the same sound is expressed by different letters, by a combination of letters and so on.

In Russian differences between spelling and pronunciation are insignificant and easy to remember. You read all letters in the word apart from a few rare exceptions.

In Russian diphthongs don’t exist. The reading of Russian letters, which express vowels, doesn’t depend on the type of syllable, in which the letter is included.

Word stress in Russian

In Russian the stress isn’t fixed and can fall on every alternate syllable.

Apart from that the stress doesn’t influence the pronunciation of vowels. Being stressed the vowels have the maximal intensity, i.e. the pronunciation of the sound is extended and clear. In an unstressed position it is, as if all vowels would lose their intensity, i.e. the pronunciation is shorter and weak.

But it is important to distinguish this phonetic phenomenon from the division into short and long sounds in English! In English the difference between short and long sounds is more significant and the meaning of a word often depends on it; in Russian the strong or weak position of a vowel doesn’t have any impact on the meaning of the word. In other words if reading a word you pronounce all vowels clearly (as if stressed or near to that), a native speaker will perceive that just as a characteristic of your pronunciation, in some cases won’t pay any attention to that. Practicing and as a result of the right training of articulation the proper pronunciation of vowels in an unstressed position will come by itself.

For this reason in this course we will examine only these nuances of the pronunciation of unstressed vowels, which are most necessary for the listening comprehension (s. the section about O, E, Я in an unstressed position). And we will start learning the Russian phonetics with the vowels in a stressed position.

FIRST PART

The vowels Aa, Ээ, Oo, Уу, Ыы

Letter	Sound	Characteristics of the pronunciation
Aa [ʌ]	Similar to the English [ʌ] in the words «but», «come»	Differently from English the lips aren't draught [ʌ], the tongue isn't tense and not drawn back, but lies unmoved on the bottom of the oral cavity.
Ээ [e]	Similar to the English [e] in the words «bed», «end»	Pronounced more openly, the lips aren't draught.
Oo [ɔ]	Similar to the English [ɔ] in the words «box», «got»	Pronouncing the Russian [o] the lips are actively involved: they are round out strongly and lightly drawn forward.
Уу [u:]	Similar to the English [u:] in the words «school», «soon»	The lips are round out and strongly drawn forward (more strongly than by the [o], but not tense)
Ыы [ɨ]	Doesn't exist in English	The tongue is located at the same place as by the pronunciation of [u:], but the lips are draught like by the pronunciation of [i:]. For pronouncing [ɨ], pronounce [u:] at first and then change the position of the lips (extend them) and pronounce the Russian [ɨ]

Exercise 1. *Listen, repeat, and read.*

а – у у – о о – э э – ы
 о – у – ы а – о – э у – э – ы о – а – ы
 ау – уа оу – эу уы – ыу

Exercise 2. For the mechanical changeover of the articulation from English to Russian. *Press the tongue close to the lower teeth (the tip of the tongue needs to be incurved down to the palate). Now, not changing the position of the tongue, pronounce the Russian vowels.*

а – э – о – у – ы	фа – фэ – фо – фу – фы
ма – мэ – мо – му – мы	ва – вэ – во – ву – вы
па – пэ – по – пу – пы	ка – кэ – ко – ку
ба – бэ – бо – бу – бы	га – гэ – го – гу