

Introduction and acknowledgements

The authors, Tom Dickins and Irina Moore, decided to write ‘S azov’ (*Russian from Scratch*) because of the lack of suitable communicative *ab initio* Russian language courses for more mature learners. ‘S azov’ has been used extensively with our own degree-level students, and has thus benefited from considerable testing in practical classroom situations. It is appropriate for a wide range of learners, from school pupils with a background in foreign languages to evening-class students and undergraduates and postgraduates.

The textbook consists of an introductory chapter and twenty further chapters based on themes which exemplify and consolidate a series of new linguistic concepts. Particular emphasis is placed on the use of authentic up-to-date materials, such as advertisements, newspaper clippings, timetables, tickets, official forms and recent photographs, and on the creation of meaningful and relevant contexts for language learning. Wherever possible, the students are asked to deduce unfamiliar syntactic and morphological principles for themselves from regular paradigms, before being required to apply the new rules or to cope with irregularities.

Each chapter begins with a summary of the competences which the students will acquire and with a list of the main points of grammar which are to be introduced. Roughly equal weighting is given to the four skills (speaking, reading, listening and writing), which are developed through a series of lexical and interactive activities, including memory games, crosswords, gap-filling tasks and role plays. Vocabulary glossaries are provided at the foot of each page, where necessary, and there is a comprehensive alphabetical Russian-English and English-Russian vocabulary list at the end of the course. There is also a grammar section at the end of each chapter, with more detailed explanations and grammatical exercises. All the listening activities are recorded on audio cassette by educated native Russian speakers and are accompanied by transcripts.

We are enormously indebted to our friend, Aleksandr Polyakov, who painstakingly produced and designed the layout of the course. Particular thanks go to our former colleague and Head of Russian, Peter Rooney, for his invaluable support and encouragement, to Ludmila Khalilova for her contribution in the early planning stages and to Elena Kazimianets for her work on Chapters 10, 15 and 20. We also wish to express our gratitude to Katrina Fraser and Igor Babanov for their practical help and to Vicki Whittaker for sharing the benefit of her knowledge of publishing. We would similarly like to acknowledge Linda Aldwinkle and Christine Barnard of the University of Westminster for the interest that they have shown and for their constructive feedback. Without their assistance and the efforts of numerous other colleagues and friends, the task of completing ‘S azov’ would have been considerably more onerous, if not altogether impossible.

Finally, there is one academic source which merits a special mention, namely ‘A Comprehensive Russian Grammar’ by Terence Wade. We consulted this unparalleled work extensively when writing our Grammar sections, and we owe a great deal to Professor Wade’s clear and detailed explanations.

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