

Title: L2 Speech Acts in Cyber Communication
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Over the past ten years electronic correspondence has become an established communicative medium in Russia, particularly among younger generations. Despite its sporadic use online communication has developed a distinct set of conventions different from those of oral and traditional written speech. This study has two-fold objectives: firstly, to identify some of the most conspicuous features of Russian cyber rhetoric particularly as related to performing four speech acts - requests, invitations, compliments, and apologies. Secondly, to investigate e-production of correspondent speech acts in Russian by American L2 learners of Russian.

Given the current instructional imbalance in favor of developing L2 oral skills, it is hypothesized that learners will show little, if any, knowledge of Russian email conventions and will heavily rely on either their native email writing rules or their L2 oral patterns. It is further hypothesized that increases in L2 proficiency will lead to greater L1 pragmalinguistic transfer, while in-country experience may cause higher frequency of Russian colloquialisms in learners' emails. Unless learners have been engaged in L2 email practices they are unlikely to know Russian cyber conventions. One of the pedagogical outcomes of this study will be identifying areas of particular difficulties for learners and suggesting possible remedies. The study also addresses the question whether sheer engagement in the social practice of emailing is sufficient for learners to acquire Russian cyber norms or whether an additional structured input is needed.

The theoretical framework for this interdisciplinary study draws on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (Blum-Kulka et al.; Kasper & Rose), theories of literacy (Gee), and cyber rhetoric (Murray).

References:

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