Since its inception in June 2000, the internet site “Russkii iazyk” (more commonly known by its web address, “Gramota.Ru”) has marketed itself as a “portal” for the Russian language. With generous state funding, it has established itself as the premier online authority for issues in language usage, policy, and monitoring. In addition to serving as an interactive reference source for users with questions about proper usage, the project serves as a venue for scholarship, competitions, games, and a wide range of language-related news and discussions. Despite its widely recognized reputation as the go-to authority for all things language-related (underscored by its self-proclaimed status as “portal”), few have examined the extent or nature of such a resource’s actual influence. To what extent can “Gramota.Ru” be seen as a successful player in the ongoing process of linguistic normalization? In what ways does its new-media based platform enhance its influence on contemporary language culture?

In this paper I provide some preliminary answers to these questions through a metalinguistic examination not only of the body of knowledge that constitutes the portal, but also of the individuals and institutions foremost involved in both the production and reception of that knowledge. Given the pretense of interactivity of such a resource, I pay particular attention to what Deborah Cameron (1995) has called “folk linguistics” and its role in both “Gramota.Ru” and the broader debates over contemporary Russian language usage and norms.

References: