

CIBER BUSINESS RUSSIAN: BASIC DESCRIPTION

CIBER BUSINESS RUSSIAN introduces students at the third-year level to the basics of business-related communication.

TOPICS AND LANGUAGE COVERAGE

INTRODUCTION: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

History
Economic and political system
Natural Resources
Basic business culture

Language coverage

Participles and verbal adverbs

1. EMPLOYMENT

Hiring practices
Resume writing and analysis
Interviewing
Benefits packages
Interning
Cultural specifics

Case and simulation:

What to do with the American intern?

Language coverage

Expressions of necessity
Reflexive verbs as passive voice

2. BUSINESS TRAVEL

Getting around the country and the city
Hotel arrangements, car rental, etc.
The travel business
Travel restrictions and regulations

Case and simulation

Can Anna get to Velizh?

Language coverage

Verbs of going and driving
Prefixed verbs of motion
Review of где – куда

3. BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

Computers and communications
IT and business networking
IT contracts

Case and simulation

Vista or Mac?

Language coverage

Verbs of teaching and learning
Verbs of stopping and quitting
Numbers
Verbs of changing
то-, -нибудь, ни...не

These units are complete and in active use.

These units are complete and, but have not been used

4. MEDIA AND ADVERTISING

Entertainment and news industry
Intellectual property and piracy
Advertising
Local media markets
Media regulations and licensing

Case and simulation

The Russian Channel in America?

Language coverage

Deriving titles
Verbs of *remaining*
Indefinite quantities
Same — different

5. INSURANCE: MEDICAL, AUTO, PROPERTY

Insurance culture: class and market
Government requirements and regulations
Insurance contracts

Case and simulation

Sarah's march to medical insurance?

Language coverage

Medical verbs: **лечить / вылечить, вылечивать.**
Coordinating conjunctions **пока, пока не**
Verbs of driving and transport
Verbs of stopping

These units are to be completed in 2010
based on a GW CIBER grant & sabbatical

6. BANKING AND FINANCE

Local culture and regulation
Personal and business financial services
Brokerage houses

Language coverage

Verbs of placement
Review of **то, что** constructions

7. TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Local industries and international contracts
Negotiation
Shipping

Language coverage

Verbs of commanding with instrumental
Review of verbs of transport

WHY THESE LANGUAGES?

The GW CIBER LANGUAGE PROJECT targets languages are those of countries undergoing major changes, both political and commercial. All four languages are less commonly taught and are rated as difficult. The U.S. State Department rates Russian as a Category Three language: it requires about 1400 hours of face-to-face classroom time in small groups before students are considered fully functional (ILR S3, R3). The remaining languages belong to Category Four. They require up to 2200 of face to face instruction for full functionality. By contrast, the Romance languages (Category One) require 400-500 hours.

WHY THIRD YEAR?

The materials we are proposing target the second semester of a regular third-year course. That means that student will have had about 300–350 hours of face-to-face instruction. At this point, they are able to “survive” in country without recourse to English, but their topic areas are limited to immediate needs and interests (ILR 1 in speaking, a bit higher in reading).

Students at this stage are usually exposed to expanding vocabulary and structure aimed at the general humanities. Typical areas form a mix everyday topics, social issues, and national culture theater, music, housing issues, education, medicine, etc. Many of those issues readily lend themselves to business oriented topics: music and film are the media business. Daily routine is one’s work day. Medicine and housing involve insurance.

One might assume that an in-depth coverage of business topics should wait till later — fourth year or beyond. Alas, in the critical languages, there often is no fourth year. Students set out after a third year course to study in country, where business communication is usually underemphasized. After an in-country experience, too few students continue with intensive formal study in the critical languages to make a business course economically viable.

For these reasons, a third year foundation introduction to business communication makes the most sense as a gateway to further proficiency in a business setting: both in school-based internships both in the U.S. and in country and in real-work situations in country.

WHY THESE TOPICS?

The choice of topics is based on an across-the-board survey of subjects in business language courses. Nevertheless, the range and depth of topics is necessarily a result of realistic instructional expectations for Category Three and Category Four languages. For example, students in a third-year business class in Spanish (a Category One language) could reasonably expect in-depth oral and written discussions of hiring practices as seen through a matrix of skill sets, industry needs, and cultural/social issues such as class, professional preparation, and nepotism. In the critical languages, the unit on employment

should contain readings and sidebars that deal with such issues. But the development of linguistic production — speech and writing — must be grounded at the lower-end of the topic. For employment that would include résumé writing and analysis, matching work skills to job requirements, and the interview procedure.

For that reason, we have been careful to choose topics that have a “lower end.” The business topics we introduce are especially conducive to group work in the form of simple *case studies followed by simulation* at levels appropriate to the second semester of a third year of study. No other business book surveyed is based on case study plus simulation.

Of course, the choice of topic details depends on the specifics of the countries where the target language is spoken. For example, any discussion of business in the U.S. leads to talk about the New York Stock Exchange. And while the Russian stock exchange (RTS) is far more volatile, Russian stocks do not cast the largest shadows in day-to-day business talk. For that reason the banking and finance unit for a Russian book would de-emphasize stock market investment in favor of other financial activities.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE TOPICS

In some languages, a topic might command its own unit. For example, in the RUSSIAN CIBER book layout, employment, business travel, media, (medical) insurance, banking, and trade all get their own units. Government regulations, corruption, and nepotism, all deeply embedded in Russia’s business culture, are presented throughout the units as part of dialog simulations, in sidebars and articles, and as parts of the case studies.

STRUCTURE OF A UNIT

CIBER BUSINESS RUSSIAN serves as a model for other materials to be produced in the CIBER series. CIBER BUSINESS RUSSIAN opens with an introductory unit that covers in the target language the basic history, political, social, and economic structure of the country in question.

Each subsequent unit covers the topics listed on the first page of this section.

Each unit starts with authentic material, leading into simulation dialogs, followed by the presentation of the required “raw” grammar and lexicon. That in turn leads to the final part of the unit: the case study and simulation. The structure is presented below.

Pages 1 – 3

Display of opening texts and graphics samples with content questions. Business e-mail template

Pages 4–5

Office talk – Business conversations on hiring.

Pages 6–8

Grammar and lexicon: use and exercises. Wage packages, benefits. Office hierarchy.

Pages 9–11

Case study story

Did you understand the case study?

Your opinion: what happens next? (Rehearsed speech)

Page 12–13

Role-play your opinion in teams (Rehearsed performance)

Unit 1, “HR” is accompanied by a 12 minute set of interviews with a Russians about the topic at hand. The GW CIBER grant awarded to Professor Shatalina and me (supported by a sabbatical for me in spring 2010) will allow us the resources to complete video segments for the rest of the units.