This study investigates teaching methodology for the presentation and acquisition of Russian second-person pronouns, *ty* and *vy* (T/V), at the novice level of Russian. Russian language textbooks often present pragmatic usage of T/V as a straightforward choice between two terms in opposition (e.g., informal or formal, polite or impolite). However, such terms poorly characterize the complexity of the sociopragmatic implications of pronoun choice and code-switching. Limited sociopragmatic distinctions between the two pronouns are introduced at the outset of the elementary level of Russian. In elementary Russian textbooks the topic is initially presented explicitly, with explicit and implicit exemplification in texts, written exercises, and oral drills; although at subsequent levels, forms of address are more commonly only modeled implicitly, through dialogues, texts, multimedia materials, immersive strategies, experiences abroad, and, ultimately, in interactions with native speakers. Although implicit instruction alone is not believed to be entirely ineffective for the achievement of pragmalinguistic competence, explicit instruction is believed to be slightly more effective in the acquisition of sociopragmatics. Textbooks generally present complex sociopragmatic concepts as seemingly straightforward, as binary terms such as polite/impolite, formal/informal, and familiar/unfamiliar; and textbooks generally seem to assume that these concepts are uniform between English- and Russian-speaking communities. Generally, this study suggests that such minimization of the culturally- and contextually-defined social and emotional content encoded in Russian forms of address restricts the full acquisition of sociopragmatic competence in usage

and interpretation of forms of address, even though students may be fully aware of grammatical distinctions. This study investigates ways to deepen student understanding of these complex issues as early as the first week of novice-level instruction, in order to create a solid foundation of sociopragmatic awareness insofar as it allows greater control over the usage and interpretation of Russian *ty* and *vy*.

My LTLR grant generously provided funding for travel to Pittsburgh, funds to be distributed to student volunteers, and time with student volunteers in Pitt's Slavic, East European, and Near Eastern Summer Language Institute (SLI) to develop a strategy grounded in Vygotskian psychology known as Concept-Based Pragmatic Instruction (CBPI) for the teaching of Russian T/V. Similar studies have been successful in classrooms for commonly taught languages such as Spanish and French, yet no such study has been conducted among students of Russian. This study's methodology and assessment strategy implemented a simplified framework that mirrored van Compernolle et al's 2016 study of the acquisition of the sociopragmatics of Spanish pronouns *tú* and *Usted* at the introductory level and van Compernolle and Henery's 2014 study of the acquisition of the sociopragmatics of French pronouns *tu* and *vous*.

In the proposal submission process, I had intended to have two groups of students: one variable group that would participate in an enrichment session designed to provide a more comprehensive, concept-based presentation of the Russian second-person pronouns, and one control group that would not, in order to see if students who received the enrichment presentation demonstrated the achievement of desired outcomes in the concept-based approach. As I prepared to carry out the study in Pittsburgh, I decided to simplify the research design by providing the enrichment to all interested students, rather than testing a separate

group that would not receive CBPI. I opted to have the students who wanted to participate first complete three pre-enrichment assessment activities, then receive the concept-based content, and then once again complete the same assessment activities post-enrichment. The three assessment tools were a Sociocultural Inventory Survey (SIS), a Language Awareness Survey (LAS), and an Appropriate Judgment Task (AJT). All assessment tools are included at the end of this report for reference.

Despite a flaw in the AJT that seemed to elicit some questions among the students, the results of that assessment suggested that students both in the pre- and post-enrichment periods were able to appropriately select which second-person pronoun was best in specific speech situations. The AJT was not only a source of confusion for students, but it also did not yield any significant differences between pre-enrichment and post-enrichment, which suggests that the content of the AJT was not fully addressed in the enrichment exercise. The flaw in the AJT ultimately led to my decision not to meet with a second group of students as planned in order to collect more data during an alternative time slot, because I felt that the AJT would not yield conclusive results. Despite this setback, the LAS and the SIS yielded some compelling results that suggest that CBPI in the context of this enrichment exercise is an effective strategy for illuminating and solidifying sociopragmatic concepts of perceived cultural uniformity, social distance, social closeness, definitions of friendship, family, politeness, familiarity, and official contexts. In the LAS, broadly speaking, nearly all students demonstrated increased thoughtfulness about these sociopragmatic concepts, evidenced by comparisons between their initial answers to questions in the pre-enrichment phase and their post-enrichment responses to these same questions. In the pre-enrichment phase, students tended to lean on the textbook

presentation of T/V usage; whereas in the post-enrichment phase, they demonstrated more flexible and nuanced sociopragmatic understanding in their responses. The SIS demonstrates the most observable results (Figure 1), showing that students more accurately agreed or disagreed (using a likert scale from 5 to 1) with statements about sociopragmatic concepts in the post-enrichment phase than in the pre-enrichment phase. Ideally, students should have disagreed or strongly disagreed with all statements except for Q5. For Q5, students ideally would have agreed or they would have remained neutral since the age context is not revealed. As the results indicate, post-enrichment, students progressed significantly, moving from neutral (3) or agree (4) responses in the pre-enrichment phase to disagree (2) or strongly disagree (1) responses in the post-enrichment phase.
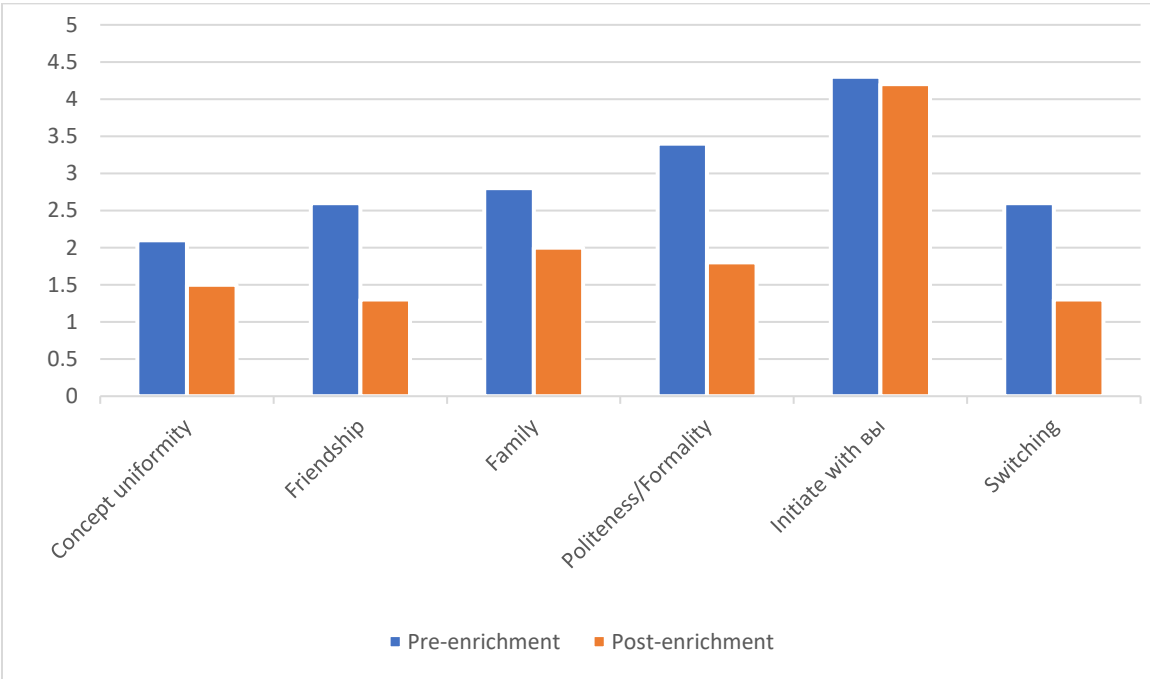

Figure 1: Sociocultural Inventory Survey (SIS) Results

Overall, the study results have been immensely useful in: a) considering future avenues to continue this research, which would likely involve a longitudinal study of continued enrichment activities designed to elicit greater pragmatic competence, and b) composing a forthcoming article for the *Slavic and East European Journal* that discusses the results and the implications for continued research and teaching of this complex sociopragmatic issue. The methodology still needs some work, but the teaching of concepts rather than reliance on definitions or opposing terminology appears to have the expected effect in helping students to develop greater sociopragmatic awareness and to differentiate between what is customary in American culture and what is expected in Russian culture in selected speech contexts.

Pre- and Post-Enrichment Assessments (LAS, SIS, and AJT)

Language Awareness Survey

1. Describe the differences between the pronouns ты and вы.
2. How do you decide which pronoun to use to address someone?
3. What does it mean when someone addresses you with вы?
4. What does it mean when you address someone with вы?
5. What does it mean when someone addresses you with ты?
6. What does it mean when you address someone with ты?

Sociocultural Inventory Survey

Agree or disagree?
The American concepts of friendship, politeness, social closeness, social distance, authority, familiarity, and formality are identical to the same concepts in Russian culture.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

The word *friend* means the same thing to a Russian as it does to an American.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

The word *family* means the same thing to a Russian as it does to an American.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

The meanings of the words *polite* or *impolite*, *formal* or *informal* have universal meaning across cultures. (In American culture, for example, something that is considered impolite, like cutting in line, is also considered impolite in most other places around the world.)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

Using the pronoun вы is the most appropriate way to initiate a conversation with a Russian speaker whom you don't know, regardless of age.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

It is acceptable for a younger person to switch from вы to ты with an older person if the younger person feels close to the older person.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree

Appropriate Judgment Task

For each of the following situations, indicate which pronoun, ты or вы, you would a) expect to hear addressed to you and b) expect to use to address the other person or people in the situation and then c) provide a short explanation about the pronouns you chose.

Situations
1. You are at a local bar one evening to meet someone you have known for a long time whom you consider a close friend.

a)
b)
c)

2. Just before you and your friend order your drinks, your friend's cousin comes over. You've never met this person before.

a)
b)

c)

3. You're walking down the street with some of your friends on a Saturday afternoon when you run into one of your favorite teachers who is about 40 years old.

a)
b)
c)

4. You have a question about your course schedule so you go to the main office of the department. There, the office manager, who is older than you and whom you've never met, greets you.

a)
b)
c)

5. You're in a subway station in Moscow and a police officer stops you and asks for your documents.

a)
b)
c)

For the following speaker → addressee pairs, check the column for the pronouns you think they would use with one another. If more than one pronoun pair is possible, check as many as apply.

RELATIONSHIP	ты→ты	ты→вы	вы→ты	вы→вы
6 parent → child				
7 child → parent				
8 teacher → student				
9 student → teacher				
10 classmate → classmate				
11 boss → employee				
12 employee → boss				

13 you → God				
14 you → child (never met)				
15 you → friend's grandmother				
16 customer → waiter				
17 waiter → customer				
18 doctor → patient				
19 patient → doctor				

Please provide any additional comments you may have about this exercise – for example, if there's a situation above for which you gave an answer that you wish to explain further, such comments are welcome.