

SLI Program for Russian Heritage Speakers

The term “heritage speaker” or “heritage learner” refers to a person who has grown up in the U.S. in an informal Russian-language environment, usually at home, without attaining full Russian language proficiency or a native Russian’s complete educational background and cultural awareness. Many of the characteristics of heritage learners distinguish them from typical college-level language learners. Heritage speakers are often deficient in their reading, writing, and academic discourse, which is out of line with their much higher level of listening and speaking competence.

SLI provides a special program for Russian Heritage Speakers, with two-hour afternoon sessions devoted to the special needs and concerns of those who have learned Russian at home or from friends and family. During the morning, heritage students study alongside other SLI Russian students. Placement is determined by written and oral proficiency examinations administered on the first day of classes. The afternoon heritage course is taught by an instructor experienced working with Russian heritage learners, using the textbook **Russian for Russians: Textbook for Heritage Speakers** by Kagan, Akishina and Robin (2003).