8-11-1956

Article by Nan C. Carpenter in July issue of the Christian Science Monitor

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations

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"At Montana State University They Say It in Russian," an article by Dr. Nan C. Carpenter, chairman of the MSU English Department, appeared in The Christian Science Monitor for Saturday, July 28.

Dr. Carpenter's article, about the courses in Russian given by Dr. Thais S. Lindstrom of the MSU foreign language faculty, is subtitled "College Students and also Babes." In it, Dr. Carpenter tells of the success Dr. Lindstrom has had in teaching Russian to pre-school children. The reception accorded Dr. Lindstrom's regular classes in Russian for University students led her to try her unique experiment with children, Dr. Carpenter writes.

"As far as is known, this is the first time in the United States that four-and-five-year-old children of non-Russian parentage have been given regular instruction in the Russian language," according to the article.

Dr. Lindstrom finds very young children easy to teach because they have not become prejudiced against sounds which are different from English, Dr. Carpenter reported.

Dr. Lindstrom's class of four-and-five-year olds met for an hour once a week during the school year. Their lesson began when Dr. Lindstrom called for them in her car and continued until she deposited each of her charges at his home again. The play hour and the portal-to-portal time were spent in naming familiar objects, singing traditional children's songs, identifying pictures, listening to records, and acting out dramatic skits - all in Russian.

(more)
The article also describes Dr. Lindstrom's classes in Russian for University students. As part of their regular work, members of the University class prepared a simple dramatic version of "Little Red Riding Hood" for presentation by the pre-school group. They translated the story into Russian, wrote the dialogue, cast the young actors and actresses, and even directed rehearsals. With recordings of parts to be played at home during the week and with three Saturday rehearsals in costume, all the children learned all the lines of dialogue, thereby increasing their Russian vocabulary by about 50 new words.

The children presented the play before an enthusiastic audience made up of their parents, members of the University faculty and administration, and community leaders in education.

Although the University class found their part in producing "Little Red Riding Hood" as much fun as work, the regular course is strictly business, using the latest equipment and giving full University credit, according to Dr. Carpenter.

Dr. Carpenter writes that the course, although given for the first time this past year, "has already attracted a fair-sized complement of students - some of them language majors who wish to increase their knowledge of languages, some of them history and political science majors with an eye on the present world situation and our need for Russian interpreters."

"Best of all," the article concludes, "this unique experiment in teaching Russian to very young children . . . has focused attention on friendliness, kindliness, brotherly love. Such qualities, introduced to a young child's experience through foreign language study, should bear fruit in better world understanding and more harmonious international relations."