

# Russian class teaches with total immersion

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for the Tundra Times

On March 10-19, I took a Russian class offered by Information Dynamics and surprised myself — I learned a lot in only 35 hours of instruction.

My family is from the Pribilofs, and I grew up with the Russian Orthodox Church being the center of our community. I was exposed to the Russian language through our church and church school, but I wanted to learn more.

The class was taught by an instructor from University/SpeakEasy Language Center of Minneapolis. The instructor, Sasha Kogan, originally from the Soviet Union, made the students feel very relaxed.

The class used a "total immersion" method of teaching the Russian language through reading, writing, speaking and listening. Essentially the class recreated the way you learned your Native language as a child.

One of the biggest surprises was discovering that some of the Russian words I learned were also Aleut words.

SpeakEasy Language Center is one of the three model language schools worldwide that use the Modified Lozanov System for teaching foreign languages.

A very unique aspect of their methodology is the use of "concert readings" in the classroom. Concert readings are a form of storing information in the longer term storage and retention of the student.

The text is read by two formats to a background of classical music. During the "active" concert, the student reads along with the materials, and during the "passive" concert, the student relaxes and just listens to the concert of music and words.

When I left class after a concert reading, I experienced hearing Russian words and the music going through my mind. The process wasn't a grind. Instead, I experienced feeling calm and relaxed and had a new sense of confidence in my ability to learn Russian.