

Incomplete Acquisition: American Russian*

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Abstract: This paper has two main goals: (i) to provide a description of the language of incomplete learners of Russian living in the U.S. and (ii) to identify across-the-board differences between a full language and an incompletely learned language. Most data used here come from American Russian, a reduced and reanalyzed version of Russian spoken in the U.S. by those speakers who became English-dominant in childhood. Incomplete acquirers of Russian demonstrate significant intra-group variation, which corresponds to similar variation found among incomplete learners of other languages. However, there are a number of structural properties that are shared by American Russian speakers regardless of their proficiency level and that distinguish their language from the baseline variety of Russian. American Russian therefore cannot be defined solely on geographical grounds; it differs significantly from varieties of Russian spoken by subjects who maintain language competence appropriate to uninterrupted acquisition. The paper also demonstrates a correlation between vocabulary deficiency and gaps in the grammar of American Russian. Such a correlation suggests a compact method of estimating incomplete acquirers' proficiency based on a concise lexical test.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the morphosyntactic consequences of incomplete acquisition for language structure.¹ Let me say from the outset that the descriptive aspect of this paper is unquestionably its most important one, as

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¹ Abbreviations:

ACC - Accusative; COND - Conditional; DAT - Dative; DIM - Diminutive; DM - Discourse marker; FEM - Feminine; FUT - Future; GEN - Genitive; IMPF - Imperfective; INC - Inceptive; INF - Infinitive; INST - Instrumental; MASC - Masculine; MD - Marked; NOM - Nominative; PERF - Perfective; POSTP - Postposition; PREP - Preposition; PRES - Present; PREP - Prepositional (case); PRT - Particle; REFL - Reflexive; RP - Resumptive pronoun; UNIDIR - Unidirectional; UNM - Unmarked.

incompletely acquired languages have received little coverage in linguistic literature, and I hope that this paper will serve to fill a small part of that gap. In addition to describing an incompletely acquired system, I address the interaction between language-particular and cross-linguistic phenomena under incomplete acquisition. I also demonstrate the correlation between lexical attrition on the one hand, and attrition in morphology and syntax on the other. This correlation allows me to propose a vocabulary-based method of measuring language attrition.

The crucial data introduced here come from instances of lexical, morphological, and syntactic attrition as they occur in one particular language, American Russian. American Russian is compared to the full version of Modern Russian. As the two languages are compared, it becomes clear that American Russian is not just an offshoot of the Russian spoken in the language metropoly (the place where Russian is the sole or dominant language). Rather, it is a language in its own right, and while some of its properties may be viewed as caricatures of the trends already apparent in the language of the metropoly, many other traits are idiosyncratic and cannot be derived from the full version of Modern Russian.

The paper has the following structure: in Section 2 I discuss the basic concepts used in the paper, introduce the elicitation techniques used in this study, and describe the speakers of American Russian interviewed for this study. Some salient lexical properties of American Russian are reviewed in Section 3. Section 4 presents and analyzes structural characteristics of American Russian in nominal morphology, and Section 5 discusses verbal categories. Section 6 summarizes the main characteristics of American Russian in syntax and discourse. Section 7 demonstrates the correlation between lexical and morphological/syntactic attrition, concluding that the proposed method of measuring lexical proficiency can reveal the general level of language competence. The major findings of the paper are summarized in the conclusion.

2. American Russian and Its Speakers

2.1. Basic Notions

This paper examines American Russian, a language variety that is endangered in that it is unlikely to stay around for generations, but does not come to mind as obviously endangered because it is associated with the healthy varieties of Russian spoken in Russia and in the growing Russian diaspora. Thus, the presence of a significant baseline from which Ameri-

can Russian departs obscures the endangered status of American Russian as a specific variety. Indeed, endangered languages are usually thought of as those with small communities of speakers who have been exposed to a set of catastrophes, to a competing community that is more aggressive culturally or economically, or to political pressure. While all this is true, there are other factors that may cause a language to become endangered: a part of a large and healthy speech community can move to a different environment, where their language is no longer the one of economic, social, political, or cultural prestige and where another language is dominant. In this new setting, the community loses regular contact with the original speech community and adopts, fully or partially, the dominant language. Accordingly, the notions of healthy and ailing languages are only relative: one language can be dominant under one set of circumstances and endangered under other circumstances.

The difference between the complete disappearance of a language and the case of it disappearing from one environment while remaining spoken elsewhere is linguistically important. If a language is spoken in just one environment and is gradually disappearing in that environment, it certainly requires a salvage study. In this salvage study, however, the linguist should bear in mind that the language may already have features that characterize it as dying, and unless a healthy version of the dying language exists elsewhere, it cannot be compared to a full system (see Sasse 1992: 75–77 for a discussion). As a consequence, it may be impossible to decide if some features in the language pertain to its “original” linguistic structure or result from reduction or decay in the use of that language. This in turn leads to the question of how much the language, undergoing change due to contact and the dominance of another language, reflects the original baseline, which is no longer available.

If, on the other hand, a language is spoken in several separate environments, the linguistic description can benefit from comparing the different variants. A comparison between variants of the same language, one used as a dominant language and another used as a secondary to a different dominant language, is particularly interesting because it allows one to distinguish those linguistic features that arise under limited communication and are therefore characteristic of language disappearance. If such a comparison is possible, it can yield promising results in a dynamic study. The disappearing variant of a language is compared to the stable variant of the same language. That is what is done in this paper, which compares American Russian, as spoken by its incomplete acquirers in the U.S., to the “baseline” Russian language.

Throughout this paper, I will be using attrition as the most general term denoting imperfect language competence which may be due to various factors, communal language loss being of course the main one.² Attrition is contrasted with incomplete acquisition, which is a specific case whereby an individual fails to learn the entire system of a given language. If we ignore cases of brain damage or learning disability, incomplete acquisition is a result of bilingualism where one of the languages is strongly dominant. A language that undergoes attrition or incomplete acquisition is called "reduced" and contrasts with the full language, i.e., the language characterized by full conventionalized knowledge. Language death is the end result of language attrition, though language death can also be instant, due to the physical disappearance of all the relevant speakers (Campbell and Muntzel 1989: 182–83; Menn 1989; Wurm 1991, and many others).

An underlying assumption in most studies of attrition is that speakers still control their language as a system (e.g., as assumed in Dorian 1981, 1992; Seliger and Vago 1991; Myers-Scotton 2002); since incomplete acquisition as well as contact-induced language loss are often collapsed under the general term attrition, it may be tacitly assumed that these phenomena do not affect competence (for an example of such an approach, see Levine 2000, who mainly discusses typical attrition phenomena but refers to them as "incomplete acquisition"). The true situation with incomplete acquisition is rather unclear, and one of the goals of this paper is to address the issue of the mental representation of Russian in incomplete learners. The crucial question is: do incomplete learners still have language competence, controlling a linguistic system, or do they just retain arbitrary bits and pieces of the language they spoke as young children? As the reader will see, the empirical results suggest that the reduced language maintained by incomplete learners is definitely subject to constraints, even if many of those constraints are gradient. To anticipate the conclusion of this paper, incompletely acquired language is still a system, not a collection of odds and ends retained when everything else has been lost.

As this paper discusses different variants of Russian, I will maintain the distinction between Full Russian and American Russian. Two binary contrasts are helpful in addressing the difference between these variants: first/second language and primary/secondary language. First language

² As this explanation of terms shows, the major focus in the study of attrition is on the resulting situation rather than the process itself. The process of language decay or loss is also sometimes called attrition; another common term is obsolescence (Dorian 1989).

and second language are distinguished by the temporal order of acquisition. The primary and the secondary language are distinguished by the prevalence of usage. Thus, if an individual learns language A as his/her first language and speaks it predominantly as an adult, this language is both first and primary. If an individual dramatically reduces the use of his/her first language A and switches to using language B as the more important one, then A is characterized as this person's first/secondary language, and B becomes the second/primary language.

Full Russian (FR) is defined as the language spoken in the metropoly (Russia and some adjacent countries) by those communities in which it is the first and primary language. Importantly, Full Russian is understood in a broader sense than Contemporary Standard Russian (CSR), which is the basis of schooling and educated speech. Thus, Full Russian includes different variants, not necessarily spoken in territories populated by ethnic Russians; for example, it includes Russian as spoken in Ukraine or Central Asia. Many speakers of Full Russian may not maintain CSR, so these two notions overlap only partially.

American Russian is a case of a first language that has become secondary; it is spoken by those who acquired it as their first language and then switched to English as their primary language. As with other incompletely acquired languages, American Russian shows significant variation across individual speakers (see Au and Romo 1997 and Au et al. 2002 on identifying several subgroups among incomplete learners of Spanish and Korean). This paper concentrates on those speakers whose acquisition was interrupted early and whose apparent knowledge of the language, at least as manifested by their production, is very weak. However, they co-exist with more fluent and competent speakers who do not demonstrate the significant structural changes discussed below (see Bermel and Kagan 2000 for a discussion of more fluent American Russian speakers).

There is another variant of Russian spoken in the U.S.: *Émigré* Russian, defined as the Russian language as spoken in North America by the first generation of immigrants, who grew up speaking Full Russian and came to America as adults. For these speakers, Russian remains their first and often primary language. Thus, the distinction between Full and *Émigré* Russian is rooted in territorial criteria. For a description of *Émigré* Russian, see Wells 1932; Benson 1957, 1960; Andrews 1990, 1993a, 199b; 1994, 1999; Polinsky 2000; Bermel and Kagan 2000; see also Zemskaja 2001, Polinsky and Pereltsvaig 2003, for a more general discussion of *Émigré* Russian in several Western countries.

2.2. Elicitation Techniques

Dealing with a reduced language poses certain problems unanticipated in the more traditional elicitation setting where the linguist is dealing with a full language. This section describes the elicitation techniques used in this study and focuses on the special problems that arise with regard to studying a reduced language.

Full language studies rely heavily on direct elicitation of data (in narration and in conversation), on acceptability judgments (including forced choice), and on production experiments. Expanding this type of database eventually leads to the core of a comprehensive grammar; acceptability judgments elicited from full language speakers also shed some light on style and language norms. These basic techniques are virtually impossible when working with speakers of a reduced language. Unlike full language speakers, speakers of a reduced language cannot be accurately tested for acceptability judgments. If asked “Can you say...?” or “Is the following correct?”, speakers usually accept what they are offered, unless some very basic principle of grammar is violated. Likewise, these speakers’ decisions on forced choice seem almost random. To illustrate this, let me present an interview excerpt where American Russian speaker J was offered a set of non-standard (non-CSR), marginal, or clearly ungrammatical expressions (see comments in square brackets following the translations).

- (1) American Russian speaker, 25 years old, female, born in Moscow; U.S.resident for 14 years (I - investigator; S - speaker; numbers indicate lines)

1 I: Could you say in Russian: *ja vseгда zdes' kušaju?*
I always here eat

‘I always eat here.’ [non-CSR]

2 S: *Da, ja kušaju.*
yes I eat

‘Yes, you can say ‘I eat.’

3 I: How about: *ja vseгда zdes' em?*
I always here eat

‘I always eat here.’ [CSR]

4 S: That’s OK.

5 I: Which one do you prefer? Which one would you say more often?

6 S: I don’t know. People say both. I don’t care.

- 7 I: Can you say:
pokušav, u menja zabolet život?
 having eaten by me began to ache stomach
 'Having eaten, I got a stomach ache.' [violation of coreference
 between the subject of the gerund and the subject of the
 matrix clause]
- 8 S: Yeah.
- 9 I: What do you think of: *sin-ij pal'to?*
blue_{MASC} coat_{NEUT}
 'blue coat' [gender agreement violation, ungrammatical]
- 10 S: That's fine.
- 11 I: *Sladk-oe kofe?*
sweet_{NEUT} coffee_{MASC}
 'What about 'sweet coffee'?' [violation of agreement
 prescribed in CSR; acceptable in non-CSR]
- 12 S: Sure.
- 13 I: How about: *ty дума-ет, что ja говор-иш'*
you_{2ND.SG} think_{3RD.SG.PRES} that I_{1ST.SG} say_{2ND.SG.PRES}
gluposti?
 rubbish
 'You think that I am saying foolish things.' [violation of
 person agreement, twice—boldface subscript]
- 14 S: No: *on дума-ет # ja говор-ю*
he_{3RD.SG} think_{3RD.SG.PRES} I_{1ST.SG} say_{1ST.SG.PRES}
 'He thinks that I am saying...'
- 15 I: What's better: *pónjala* or *ponjalá*?
 'understood (past fem.)' [non-CSR vs. CSR stress]
- 16 S: Both are OK.
- 17 I: Could you say: *ja videl nikogo?*
I saw no one
 'I didn't see anybody.' [single negation, ungrammatical]
- 18 S: I don't know. *Ja videl nikogo*. Something is missing here.
- 19 I: Could you say: *ja pobedju?*
 'I'll win.' [*pobedit'* has a systematic gap; 1.SG cannot be
 expressed synthetically; cf. Wade, 2000: 245]
- 20 S: Like 'I'll win'? Yes.

21 I: Do you have any preference regarding the following three phrases: *exat' v avtobuse, na avtobuse, avtobusom?*

go in bus_{PREP} on bus_{PREP} bus_{INST}

'go by bus' [stylistic variants]

22 S: I don't know.

This interview, representing a part of the standard preliminary interview with all speakers, tests several grammatical features, some of which are indicative of core grammar and others of which pertain to finer grammatical, lexical, and phonological points. Russian has obligatory gender agreement between the adjective and the noun in the singular; obligatory agreement between the subject and the verb in person (non-past) and in gender (past), and negative concord, where the negative pronoun cannot be used without a negation marker on the verb. These features were tested in the interview in the following way: in line 9, the investigator presents a sequence with a violation of the adjective-noun agreement (the adjective is in the masculine, the noun is neuter); in line 13, the investigator presents a sequence with a violation of verbal agreement (the first verb is third person singular, and the pronoun is second person singular; the second verb is second person singular, and the pronoun is first person singular); in line 17, the investigator presents a sequence with a violation of double negation (the verb is in the affirmative and the negative polarity item *nikogo* is used). All three sequences would be declared ungrammatical by any speaker of Full Russian. J, however, accepts the violation of adjective-noun agreement (line 10). She corrects the violation of verbal agreement (line 14); interestingly, here she keeps the form of the verb and changes the personal pronoun from second to third person. This is in contrast to five speakers of Full Russian who were interviewed in the same manner, and who all started with the personal pronoun *ty* and corrected the form of the verb. Finally, though she feels that there is some inadequacy in the example in line 17, J is unable to correct it (line 18). This indicates significant differences between J's control of the language and its control by a Full speaker.

Expectedly, J accepts deviations from Full Russian in more peripheral phenomena, for example in the control of the non-finite gerundial clause. Standard Russian requires the subject of the gerund to be controlled by the subject of the main clause (Rappaport 1984). In the ungrammatical example in line 7, the underlying subject of the non-finite clause is 'I' and the subject of the main clause is 'stomach'. Similarly, the noun *kofe*, which is masculine according to Russian normative grammars but which has the

form of a neuter noun, is treated as neuter by many speakers of Full Russian (Comrie et al. 1996: 110); not surprisingly, J accepts it as a neuter noun too.

Finally, several examples throughout the interview indicate that it is virtually impossible to elicit J's acceptability judgments. She is offered different variants in lines 1 and 3 (two different verbs 'eat'), 15 and 21; in these cases, she accepts all variants.

Acceptability judgments therefore are of little help in eliciting data on a reduced language. Translational elicitations also prove futile because American Russian speakers often lack the vocabulary necessary for translations. This leaves the linguist working in this type of situation mostly confined to observation and perception, rather than production experiments.³ However, observation, which yields spontaneous speech data, is not without difficulties either. Speakers whose language acquisition was interrupted early in their development have tremendous difficulty with production in general and with the development of a coherent narrative in particular. Thus it was very difficult to elicit a sizeable and coherent narrative in this study, and I often had to revisit a particular topic on a number of occasions in order to get a response. Although time consuming, this strategy of "priming" subjects to the task of producing a spontaneous narrative yields satisfactory results. For each speaker in this study, the aggregate number of speech segments (roughly corresponding to clauses) collected on multiple occasions is no less than 450. The best strategy appeared to be to ask for the plot of a book or a movie. Because the informants in this group were fairly young, a life story narrative, which usually works well with older speakers, did not prove particularly useful. The other choice was a discussion of the generation gap and the speakers' differences with their parents.⁴

The next section discusses the procedure used in the selection of subjects and the characteristics of the American Russian speakers involved in this study.

2.3. Estimating Proficiency

Proficiency is understood here as the level of linguistic knowledge represented by the command of the vocabulary. Proficiency is distinguished

³ For a detailed discussion of those, see Polinsky 2003b.

⁴ More recently, I have also started using the frog story narratives (Berman and Slobin 1994; Polinsky 2003a). This type of elicitation seems to work well with children and with more competent speakers; less proficient incomplete learners find this elicitation unnatural and often resist it.

from the command of an overall set of phonological, lexical and structural rules that enable a person to speak and understand a language.

It seems fairly easy to assess the linguistic competence of someone who speaks a language well-known to the investigator; such assessment is based on intuition. However, the real problem lies in assessing competence in objective terms and also in assessing competence in a language the linguist does not know well.

To assess their language proficiency formally, the speakers were asked to translate 100 words of the basic vocabulary list (the Swadesh list; see Table 1) from English into Russian. All the translations were elicited in spoken form in a direct interview with the investigator. Where possible, visual support was given to make sure that the speaker understood the concept unambiguously. The number of correct translations was taken as a measure of an individual's proficiency in Russian. The list of correct translations (listed in the Full Russian column in Table 1) was established using a comprehensive English-Russian dictionary (Mednikova and Apresjan 1993–94); if an English word had several translations into Russian, the translation listed first was chosen. The resulting list, presented in the Full Russian column in Table 1, was then rechecked in consultation with three Full Russian speakers.

The statistical procedure used to measure proficiency on the basis of the Swadesh list was very similar to the one employed in historical linguistics: the translations elicited from a given speaker were compared to the Full Russian list. One point was deducted for a wrong translation (e.g., 'liver' translated as *počka* 'kidney'; the correct translation is *pečen'*) or for no answer. If a word was translated by the correct root form but the choice of the word form was wrong (e.g., if the singular was translated as the plural), 0.5 was deducted. The total number of incorrect forms was then deducted from the number of items on the list (100) and the result taken as the numerical value of a speaker's proficiency.

Table 1. American Russian and Full Russian: Basic Vocabulary List

(American Russian translation variants are listed in decreasing frequency; ~—epicene ending in adjectives, NA—no answer; for verbs, American Russian citation forms are shown as *stem~*, to minimize the number of variants in the table; typical citation forms include third person singular past, first person singular past or present, imperative, and infinitive)

Concept	American Russian	Full Russian
I	ja	ja
you	ty	ty
we	my	my
this	èt~, ètot	ètot
that	to, tot	tot
who	kto/čto	kto
what	čto, kak	čto
not	net, ne	ne
all	vsě, vse	vsě, vse
many	mnogo	mnogo
one	odin, odno	odin
two	dva, dvoe	dva
big	bol'soe, bol'soj	bol'soj
long	dlinn~, dlinnyj, širok~, širokij	dlinnyj
small	malen'k~, malen'kij	malen'kij
woman	ženščina, tetja, devuška	ženščina
man	mužčina, djadja, mužik	mužčina
person	čelovek	čelovek
fish	ryba	ryba
bird	ptica, ptička	ptica
dog	sobaka	sobaka
louse	NA, vša, vši, muxa	voš'
tree	derevo	derevo
seed	NA, zerno, zernyško, semečka	semja
leaf	list, listik	list
root	koren', NA	koren'
bark (tree)	NA, kora, koža	kora
skin	koža	koža
flesh	telo, mjaso, NA	plot'
blood	krov'	krov'
bone	kost'	kost'
grease	žir, maslo, NA	žir
egg	jajca [pl.], jajco	jajco
horn	truba, roga, NA	rog
tail	xvost, szadi, zad	xvost
feather	pero, per'e	pero
hair	volosy, volos	volosy

Concept	American Russian	Full Russian
head	golova	golova
ear	uši, uxo	uxo
eye	glaza	glaz
nose	nos	nos
mouth	rot	rot
tooth	zub, zuby	zub
tongue	jazyk, NA	jazyk
claw	NA, nogot', kogtí	kogot'
foot	noga	noga
knee	kolenka, kolen'	koleno
hand	ruka	ruka
belly	život, želudok, pupok	život
neck	šeja	šeja
breast	grud', sisja, NA	grud'
heart	serdce	serdce
liver	NA, počka, pečenka, bok, serdce	pečen'
drink	pit'	pit'
eat	kuša~, est'	est'
bite	NA, ukusi~	kusat'
see	videt', uvidet'	videt'
hear	slyš~, sluš~	slušat'
know	znať, uzna~	znať
sleep	sp~	spat'
die	umer~	umirat'
kill	ubi~	ubivat'
swim	ply~, plava~, kupat'sja	plavat'
fly	lete~	letat'
walk	id~, xodi~, gulja~	xodit'
come	id~, prid/š~	prixodit'
lie	leč'	ležat'
sit	sest', sjad'	sidet'
stand	stoj~, vstat'	vstavat'
give	dat'	davat'
say	skazat'	govorit'
sun	solnce	solnce
moon	luna	luna
star	zvezda, zvezdy	zvezda
water	voda	voda
rain	dožd'	dožd'
stone	kamni, kamen'	kamen'
sand	NA, pesok	pesok
earth	zemlja	zemlja
cloud	oblako, tuča	oblako
smoke	dym, oblako	dym
fire	ogon'	ogon'
ashes	NA, pyl'	zola/pepel

Concept	American Russian	Full Russian
burn (vi)	obžeč', gore~, žeč'/ žg~	žeč'
path	doroga	tropa, doroga
mountain	gora, gory	gora
red	krasn~	krasnyj
green	zelen~	zelenyj
yellow	želt~	želtyj
white	bel~	belyj
black	čern~	černyj
night	noč'	noč'
hot	gorjač~	gorjačij
cold	xolodno/xolodn~	xolodnyj
full	poln~/bol's~	polnyj
new	nov~	novyj
good	xoroš~, xorošo	xorošij
round	krugl~	kruglyj
dry	suxoe	suxoj
name	imja	imja

(2) Estimating Proficiency by the Basic Vocabulary List (100 items)

$100 - N_{\text{WRONG}} = \text{numerical value of linguistic proficiency}$

$N_{\text{WRONG}} = (N_{\text{WRONG WORD}} + N_{\text{TRANSLATION ABSENT}} + N_{\text{WRONG FORM}} \times 0.5)$

To illustrate this procedure, let us look at the test performance by the female speaker Le (see Table 2 for the list of subjects). This speaker failed to translate from English into Russian the words 'claw', 'liver', and 'bark'. She also translated 'grease' as *maslo* 'butter', instead of the correct *žir*; 'eat' as *kušat'* (a common non-standard word) instead of the standard *est'*; and 'seed' as *zernyško* 'little kernel', instead of the correct *semja*. Finally, she used the plural *vši*, to translate the singular Russian 'louse'.⁵

Another common deviation from Full Russian that Le also demonstrated was the wrong choice of gender in the citation form of adjectives. Full Russian speakers, including young children, standardly use the masculine as the citation form for adjectives; the masculine is also used in Russian dictionaries. Meanwhile, American Russian speakers apparently oscillate between the masculine, on the one hand, and the neuter (or feminine), on the other.

⁵ In the control set of three Full Russian speakers, none had any of these problems.

Table 2. American Russian speakers
(m - male; f - female; & - grew up with a sibling)

Speaker	Age emigrated	Age in the U.S. (at the time of the beginning of study)	Parents' origins in Russia	Lexical proficiency
B (m)	7	11	Moscow	86.5
Bo (m)	3	19	Moscow	79
D (m) &	3	17	St. Petersburg	78
G (m) &	6	16	St. Petersburg	82
K (m)	9	17	Moscow	88.5
Ko (m)	10	10	Tashkent	90
Ma (m) &	7	17	Moscow	74
Mi (m) &	3	21	Saratov	76
Na (m) &	7	9	Odessa	77
P (m)	8	9	Moscow	86
S (m)	9	12	Kiev	88.5
V (m) &	6	13	St. Petersburg	81
Z (m) &	11	12	Minsk	84
Zh (m)	9	18	Moscow	89.5
A (f) &	5	12	Kiev	77
E (f)	7	14	St. Petersburg	89
I (f)	7	11	St. Petersburg	88.5
Le (f) &	7	13	Moscow	90.5
M (f)	9	12	Kharkov	88.5
Mi (f)	5	18	Tashkent	84
Sv (f)	5	12	Odessa	75

If we ignore some dialectal varieties, the majority of Full Russian speakers do not distinguish between the pronunciation of feminine and neuter adjectives with unstressed endings (Panov 1967: 27ff.; Polinsky 1996, 1997); thus:⁶

- (3) a. sinjaja [s'ín'əjə] — sinee [s'ín'əjə]
 blue_{FEM} blue_{NEUT}
- b. malaja [máləjə] — maloe [máləjə]
 small_{FEM} small_{NEUT}

⁶ The distinction is easily perceptible in adjectives with stressed endings:

- (i) smešnaja [s'm'ĩšnájə] — smešnoe [s'm'ĩšnójə]
 funny_{FEM} funny_{NEUT}

The same lack of pronunciation distinction is retained in the speech of American Russian subjects. Thus at the elicitation of adjectives with unstressed endings, if a speaker did not use the masculine, it was impossible to determine which gender, feminine or neuter, was actually used. It would be more accurate to characterize the non-masculine adjectives with unstressed endings as "epicene". In Table 1, the epicene forms have a tilde in place of the ending.

Le used the epicene, instead of the standard masculine, for the following adjectives: 'long', 'red', 'yellow', 'green', 'white', 'black', but she also used the masculine to translate several other adjectives, e.g., 'new' and 'big' (it is hard to tell whether this indicates that she has some concept of the right citation form). Overall, Le had the following deficiencies in the basic vocabulary list, so her proficiency was at 90.5%.

$$(4) \quad 3 \text{ absent translations} + 3 \text{ wrong words} + 7 \text{ wrong forms} \times 0.5 = 9.5$$

The use of "basic vocabulary" is not uncontroversial, and to anticipate possible criticisms, let me discuss three issues here. First, one might object that lexical gaps do not necessarily correlate with a deficiency in grammar, and it is the former that the basic vocabulary technique is geared to. However, the correlation between lexical and grammatical proficiency was empirically sustained, which in itself is one of the major findings of this study. This will be discussed below (Section 6). Second, with regard to the procedure, one might object that there is a certain degree of arbitrariness in taking off points for the wrong citation forms; if Russian were compared with some language without a lexicographic tradition, this might become a hindrance. However, any language, documented or not, has established citation forms for major word classes. In languages like Russian, these citation forms are codified by dictionaries; otherwise, citation forms can be easily established in interviews with fluent competent speakers. The very absence of a standard citation form indicates some dissociation from the dominant linguistic environment. Third, the list used here was apparently designed for non-urban cultures; the speakers interviewed in this study commonly stumbled over words such as 'bark', 'louse' or 'ashes'. Though these are not the most common concepts for a twenty-year old in New York or Chicago, any competent speaker of the language would have no problem translating these words into Russian. The interesting question, of course, is whether or not the most common gaps observed in the American Russian word lists somehow reflect a more general problem.

Two major reasons for gaps in the Swadesh list are the lack of the right word and the misuse of the word form, in particular not using the correct citation form. Among the misused citation forms, the three most common cases seemed to be the wrong form of the adjective (see above); the plural, instead of the singular, form of a noun (e.g., *vši* instead of *voš'* 'louse'; *uši* instead of *uxo* 'ear'), and an inappropriate aspectual form of the verb. With regard to the latter, the Full Russian citation form requires the verb to be given in the imperfective. Meanwhile, American Russian speakers demonstrate significant variation between perfective and imperfective forms. For example, the verbs 'die' and 'kill' were typically used in the perfective (*umeret'*, *ubit'*, instead of the imperfective *umirat'*, *ubivat'*). The oscillation between the perfective and imperfective in the citation forms of American Russian suggests a restructuring of aspect as a category, an issue to which I will return below.

Possible reasons for the lack of words become clearer if we merge the word lists obtained from different American Russian speakers and divide the resulting list into those words that show little or no variation (same word as in Full Russian, or minor deviations such as the wrong use of a citation form) vs. those words that show strong variation across speakers. The former group consists of words that express "stable" concepts, the latter, "unstable". The results of this classification allow us to differentiate among basic vocabulary items based on their stability. These groups are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Concept Stability in the Basic Vocabulary List:
Based on Responses from the American Russian Subjects

High Stability: Items with uniform translations across subjects (deviation in citation form was ignored)

Low Stability: Items which received no translation at minimum and had more than 2 possible translations

High stability items (uniform translations)	I, you, we, this, that, many, one, two, big, person, fish, bird, dog, tree, leaf, skin, blood, bone, egg, feather, hair, head, ear, eye, nose, mouth, tooth, foot, knee, hand, neck, heart, drink, see, know, sleep, die, kill, fly, lie, sit, stand, give, say, sun, moon, star, water, rain, stone, earth, fire, mountain, night, hot, cold, full, new, good, round, dry, name, COLOR TERMS
Low stability items (unable to translate; translation very different from the full language version)	woman, man, louse, seed, root, bark, flesh, grease, horn, tail, tongue, claw, belly, breast, liver, bite, swim, walk, sand, ashes

Concept stability can probably be explained in terms of the pragmatic relevance of the respective concepts. Given that all the subjects interviewed in this study came from an urban environment, poor retention of words describing nature or animals is probably understandable (see Gonzo and Saltarelli 1983, for similar observations with regard to Immigrant Italian). However, there are significant parallels between the stability of concepts in American Russian and in several creole languages, which are characterized by a different habitat. According to a lexical study of several pidgins and creoles (Belikov 1987), Sranan, Jamaican Creole, Krio, Tok Pisin, Bislama, Haitian, Mauritian Creole, and Negerhollands are quite similar with regard to the relative stability of basic vocabulary concepts. In these languages, the concepts 'long', 'root', 'seed', 'hot', 'bark', 'claw', 'louse', 'breast', 'liver', 'belly', and 'grease' are unstable, just as in American Russian. This similarity suggests that under the restricted communicative circumstances characterizing both reduced languages and pidgins/early creoles, the need for some concepts may not arise until later, which explains the absence of such words or their *ad hoc* formation.

If the distribution of concepts within the basic vocabulary is not accidental, the word list is still a viable tool in a study of incomplete acquisition; it could be possible however to assign different weights to different concepts, thus making the lexical assessment more sophisticated. As I will show below, preliminary lexical-grammatical correlations are quite robust even without such optimization.

2.4. Subject Pool

The speakers in this study were relatively young people, in their twenties and thirties, who originally spoke Russian as their first language but for whom communication in Russian is now severely limited or is close to entirely passive. Thus Russian has become a secondary language. For all these subjects English is now their primary language. All the subjects surveyed here left the Full Russian environment between the ages of three and eleven.⁷ At present, there is no shortage of American Russian speakers

⁷ In my initial study of American Russian, I included speakers who left the metropolis under age 12. I also had data from one speaker who left at age 14 but seemed to have had learning disabilities (Polinsky 1996, 1997). It now seems clear that children interrupted at 10+ do not form a coherent group with those whose acquisition was interrupted earlier. Further studies should draw even finer distinctions. For instance, in my own work on narratives, I have separated those who were born in Russian-speaking families in the U.S., those who arrived in the country under age 5 and those who arrived under age 8–9 (Polinsky 2000, 2003a; see also Bermel and Kagan 2000). Since this paper is largely a

who were born in this country. However, I made a conscious decision to limit this study to those who had first been exposed to Russian in a monolingual environment or an environment where Russian was clearly dominant. Mixing those speakers who started their acquisition in the metropoly and those who were born and grew up speaking Russian in Émigré Russian families in the U.S. may confound results in an unpredictable way. It seems therefore more reasonable (or at least more cautious) to identify the defining properties of a more homogenous group and to compare that group to the incomplete learners whose acquisition of Russian took place in the English-dominant environment of the U.S. (see Polinsky 2003a, 2003b, for some discussion of incomplete learners who grew up in the U.S.).

All the subjects speak Russian only when prompted and only as a second choice. Thus they would speak it to their parents or grandparents or to people who they did not expect spoke English. Incidentally, they always use English with siblings, and the numerical results indicate greater language erosion for those who grew up with siblings. With the exception of one case, the attitude towards the reduced language ranged from indifference to a feeling of inferiority; sometimes the subjects expressed a wish that they spoke Russian better.

A note on code-switching and code-mixing is in order here. As will be obvious from the examples below, code-switching, even within a sentence, is a common phenomenon for American-Russian speakers, primarily because of their restricted Russian vocabulary. It is generally assumed that bilingual speakers can control code-switching, modifying its level to suit a specific communicative situation (Seliger and Vago, 1991: 7, 10; Halmari 1997; Myers-Scotton 1993a, 1993b, 2002; Schmitt 2000, 2001). American Russian speakers seem to lack this ability: there was no significant difference in the number of English words and expressions that were used in the speech addressed to another American Russian speaker, to the investigator, or to a parent/relative whose knowledge of English was viewed as very limited. The subject of the conversation seemed to be the only factor affecting the degree of mixing. Thus, the number of English words definitely increased when the subjects spoke about their education or career and dropped when they spoke about their family.

The preliminary selection of American Russian speakers was based on a sample interview (a segment of the interview was shown in (1) above), and on the proficiency assessment described in this section. On the basis

survey of American Russians as a diverse group, it is reasonable to overlook some of the more fine-grained distinctions.

of these criteria, 21 speakers were drawn from a larger pool of about one hundred speakers who underwent preliminary testing by the basic vocabulary technique described above (see Table 1 for the vocabulary list and Table 2 for the list of subjects). As Table 2 indicates, the highest proficiency was 90.5 percent. This proficiency threshold was established based on empirical evidence, where these speakers were compared to those with higher proficiency. Speakers with proficiency over 90 percent did not demonstrate significant structural differences from speakers of Full Russian or Émigré Russian and were, therefore, rejected.

The speakers' proficiencies cover a fairly wide range, which indicates that the group considered here is not homogenous. This is to be expected given that the prognosis for L1 maintenance differs depending on whether a child leaves the full language environment at the age of three or at the age of ten (see Long 1990 for a general discussion and Au and Romo 1997 and Au et al. 2002, for possible divisions among incomplete learners).⁸ However, as I have shown elsewhere (Polinsky 1997), there was no statistical correlation between the age a speaker left the metropoly or the time spent in the U.S. and that speaker's proficiency. This surprising result suggests that the age of separation (and the time in the dominant language environment) may be mediated by some other factors, for example individual differences in learning profiles. Once we have a more general idea of what the population of incomplete acquirers is like, these factors may become clearer.

Another question concerns the lowest proficiency threshold: is such a threshold needed? Of the subjects originally interviewed, several could not speak any Russian whatsoever; these speakers failed to translate over 70 words of the list, which indicated a proficiency of about 30 percent. One of these subjects arrived in the U.S. from Moscow when he was seven years old; he was 23 at the time of the interview.⁹ One hypothesis suggests itself, which is that a proficiency level of 70 percent may mark the boundary between American Russian as a system and the sort of remnants of language that are characteristic of the lower levels.

3. The American Russian Lexicon

The major feature of the American Russian lexicon is its deficiency: speakers lack significant portions of the vocabulary, not only at the level of per-

⁸ Au and her colleagues concentrate on incomplete learners who grew up in the U.S.

⁹ There were no speakers with intermediate proficiency (between 30 and 70) which may be the effect of the pool that was available here. All the subjects listed in Table 2 could construct Russian sentences and short texts and reacted to questions in Russian.

formance but also at the competence level, which is reflected in their inability to understand words or shades of meaning. The experiment with the basic vocabulary list already revealed significant gaps in the vocabulary of American Russian speakers. The absence of lexical items is compensated for by switching to English. Thus, the elicitations from American English speakers are full of English words. These words are not adopted into the Russian sound system but are pronounced as normal English words. Accordingly, we are dealing with extensive code-switching which is often indicative of language loss.

Often the speakers would know a Russian word but lack direct access to it. The difficulty with lexical access results in a slow speech rate. In the time it takes the average Full Russian speaker to say ten words, an American Russian speaker averages six. To illustrate, compare the speech rates of an American Russian speaker and a Full Russian monolingual in their production of "frog stories" (Berman and Slobin 1994). The American Russian speaker had a rate of 59 words per minute, the control speaker's was 105 words per minute. For comparison, the American Russian speaker's speech rate in English was at 145 words/minute, which means that the low rate in Russian had nothing to do with his speech habits.

The slower pacing of American Russian again finds parallels with extended pidgins and early creoles, which also show a low speech rate (Mühlhäusler 1986: 151). According to Mühlhäusler, the reasons for this may be twofold: first, speakers of a pidgin are less certain of their collocators' proficiency and try to secure proper decoding by clearer and slower speech; second, speakers may feel uncertain of their own language ability.

In addition to its relatively slow speech rate, American Russian is characterized by numerous lengthy pauses between words, in particular between the elements of a single constituent. In (5a) and (6a), pauses occur between the preposition and the nominal:¹⁰

(5) a. American Russian

Moja	sestra	ona	#učit	v#	ELEMENTARY	škola.
my	sister	she _{RP}	studies	in	elementary	school _{UNM}

¹⁰ A couple of comments on the presentation of examples: here and below, code-switched English words are italicized. "Unmarked" (UNM) in the glosses means that the form/case is a deviation from Full Russian, which would have an overt case ending.

(5) b. Full Russian

Moja sestra učít-sja v načal'n-oj škol-e.
 my sister studies-REFL in [elementary school]_{PREP}
 'My sister is in elementary school.'

(6) a. American Russian

Vsegda ja polučala A's ot # ètot professor.
 always I received 'A's' from this_{UNM} professor_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

Ja vsegda polučala pjaterki u èt-ogo professor-a.
 I always received A's by [this professor]_{GEN}
 'I always got A's from this professor.'

It is possible to explain the pauses in (5a) and (6a) as indicating problems with lexical access (incidentally, in both cases the speaker ends up switching to English).¹¹ However, grammatical factors may play a role here as well. Halmari (1997: 146–147) reports severe repair phenomena at the switch site when the language changes. She gives the following account: if the switched element is in a governed position (as they are in these examples, after the prepositions) and the governed element is not marked with the case and agreement morphology of the language of the governor (or case-assigner), the “ungrammatical” switch is preceded with hesitation, pausing, repetition, and halting speech.

Another outcome of the lexical inaccessibility is the misuse of words; see Table 1 for the incorrect translations of basic vocabulary items and also (7a), where the intransitive verb ‘to disappear, be lost’ is used instead of the transitive ‘to lose’:

(7) a. American Russian

Často moja mama propadaet den'gi.
 often my mother disappears money

¹¹ Pauses occur quite commonly before numerals, which are retained very well, cf.:

(i) i my poexat' v# tri mašiny
 and we go in [three cars]_{UNM}
 'And we will go in three cars.'

This indicates that structural reasons, not just lexical access, must play a role in pause distribution.

(7) b. Full Russian

Moja mama často terjaet den'gi.
 my mother often loses money
 'My mother often loses money.'

A common reason for the misuse of a word is the interference of English, especially if the Russian and the English words are cognates. In Full Russian, *nerwnyj* 'nervous' can denote only a permanent characteristic, while the English cognate *nervous* may refer to a temporary state. The interference of the English word explains the misuse of *nerwnyj* in (8a). As shown by (8b), Full Russian requires a verb, not an adjective, to describe a temporary state of nervousness (see Bulygina 1982 for a discussion of the adjective-verb contrast in Full Russian):

(8) a. American Russian

Segodnja on očen' nervnyj.
 today he very nervous_{ADJ}

b. Full Russian

On segodnja očen' nervničael.
 he today very nervous_{VERB}
 'He is very nervous today.'

The interference of English is even stronger in direct translations from English into Russian, for example:

(9) a. American Russian

Oni byli v ljubvi.
 they_{3RD.PL} were in love

b. Full Russian

Oni ljubili drug druga.
 they_{3RD.PL} loved each other
 'They were in love.'

(10) a. American Russian

Segodnja moja mašina ona ne načinalas'.
 today my car she_{RP} NEG began

(10) b. Full Russian

U menja segodnja ne zavodilas' mašina.
 by me today NEG wound car
 'My car wouldn't start today.'

The tendency to translate from English into Russian is also present in the use of discourse markers. With the exception of *OK*, American Russian speakers try to avoid English forms. Instead, they literally translate English discourse markers into Russian. Predictably, the following discourse markers and fillers occur: *ty znaeš'* 'you know'; *xorošo/ladno* 'well'; *tak* 'so'. Compare (11) with its English translation, where *well* is normal. In Full Russian, the word *xorošo* is less desemanticized than the English *well*; accordingly, a sequence such as in (11) would be unacceptable because of the pragmatic conflict between the word *xorošo* 'well-done; nice' and the word *neudobno* 'embarrassing'.

(11) To budet # xorošo# neudobn[əjə].
 that be_{3RD.SG.FUT} well embarrassing_{EPICENE}
 'This will be, well, embarrassing.'

A distinct case where American Russian retains synthetic nominal forms is the retention of diminutives, particularly in the names of foods. This retention is more pronounced in the speech of those American Russian speakers who come from southern Russian families; diminutives were also observed in the speech of Ko, who grew up in Central Asia (Tashkent). For example:

(12) a. Ja ne ljublju paštetik.
 I NEG like paté_{DIM.UNM}
 'I don't like paté.' (M, from Kharkov)

b. Moja sestra vseгда ona est mnogo varen'ice.
 my sister always she_{RP} eats much jam_{DIM.UNM}
 'My sister always eats a lot of jam.' (Na, from Odessa)

In spoken Full Russian, diminutives are characteristic of the southern variant and also of adult speech addressed to children (Zemskaja 1973: 54; 1981: 62). But the example shown here was used in adult-to-adult conversations. For example, (12a) was recorded at the second meeting between the investigator and M. The use of the diminutive in such a formal setting

suggests that the speaker was not aware of the pragmatic connotations carried by the form. It is possible that the diminutive is the only form in which the names for these foods were retained by the respective speakers; hence, the diminutive semantics is no longer perceptible to them.

Fossilized diminutives most likely occur in American Russian because speakers acquired them as young children and never reanalyzed them later. In the speech elicited from a young child growing up in New York, diminutive forms *moločko* 'milk', *jabločki* 'apples', *nožka* 'leg, foot', *volosiki* 'hair' occur as the only option (Turian and Altenberg 1991: 222–23). The child probably repeats them as heard from his Russian-speaking parent.

The description of lexical processes in American Russian given here is by no means exhaustive, but it allows us to outline the major lexical characteristics of this variety, namely: (i) code-switching (due to lexical gaps), (ii) incorrect use of words, and (iii) direct translation from English into Russian.

4. Nominal Categories

The two major areas of difference between American Russian and Full Russian have to do with the morphology of case and gender assignment. The marking of number does not show any significant differences.

4.1. Case System

Simplifying things somewhat, Full Russian has a six-case system (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, instrumental, prepositional). In addition, it is important to recognize the partitive (genitive II), locative (prepositional II), and the so-called count form (for arguments in support of this system, see Zaliznjak 1967). Heavily interacting with the case marking system in Full Russian is an intricate system of declensional classes, which is the starting point for the derivation of case forms and for gender assignment rules (Zaliznjak 1967, 1977; Corbett 1982, 1991: 35–40). All these systems undergo reanalysis in American Russian, and the change in declensional classes seems to be the root cause of many changes in the nominal paradigm.

Two distinctions are relevant for a discussion of the re-analysis of case paradigms in American Russian. The first distinction is between pronouns and nouns: there are more morphological distinctions in the pronominal paradigm than there are in the nominal paradigm. The second distinction is between unmarked case (corresponding to the nominative in Full Russian) and marked case. With nouns, the unmarked case is used for

subjects, objects, and objects of most prepositions (but see also below). With pronouns, the situation is more complex. The most commonly used marked case, which corresponds to the accusative of Full Russian, is used to encode the second object (indirect object); cf. the forms of ‘old man’ and ‘me’ in (13a, b):

- (13) a. On pokazyvaet kartina starik-a. (cf. FR: starik-u)
 he show picture_{UNM} old man_{GOAL}
 ‘He showed the painting to the old man.’
- b. Muž podarit menja novəjə kol’co. (cf. FR: mne)
 husband present me_{GOAL} new_{EPICENE} ring_{UNM}
 ‘My husband gave me a new ring.’

The American pronominal paradigm is not uniform. The most articulated paradigm is found with first and second person singular pronouns; the least articulated one, usually just the unmarked case, is observed with third person plural. As with most other phenomena in incomplete learners, speakers of American Russian can be best represented as points on a scale, from the most proficient, whose pronominal system is predictably more articulated, to the least proficient (in Table 10 below, I will present quantification of the American Russian data supporting this representation of different speakers). The two extremes on this hypothetical scale of pronominal paradigm are given in Tables 4 and 5. For comparison, the pronominal system of Full Russian is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 4. Personal Pronouns in American Russian:
More Proficient Speakers

Case form	1 sg	2sg	1pl	3sg	2pl	3pl
Unmarked	ja	ty	my	on/ona	vy	oni/èti
Second object, object of prep	menja	tebja	nas	(n)ego/ (n)ee	vas	oni/im/ ètim/ ètix
Dative	mne	tebe	nam	(n)emu	vam	oni/ix/ètix

Table 5. Personal Pronouns in American Russian:
Less Proficient Speakers

Case form	1 sg	2sg	1pl	3sg	2pl	3pl
Unmarked	ja	ty	my	on/ona	vy	oni/èti
Object of prp	menja	tebja	my	on	vy	oni/èti
Second object	menja	tebja	nas	emu	vas	oni/èti/im

Table 6. Personal Pronouns in Full Russian

Case form	1 sg	2sg	3sg	1pl	2pl	3pl
Nominative	ja	ty	on/ona	my	vy	oni
Genitive	menja	tebja	ego/ee	nas	vas	ix
Dative	mne	tebe	emu/ej	nam	vam	im
Accusative	menja	tebja	ego/ee	nas	vas	ix
Instrumental	mnoj	toboj	(n)im/(n)ej	nami	vami	(n)imi
Prepositional	mne	tebe	(n)em/(n)ej	nas	vas	(n)ix

As these data show, the most robust distinction is between the unmarked case and the special case dedicated to the second object. More fluent speakers also have a special dative typically used with verbs of perception and psychological verbs in the position identified as that of the dative subject (Moore and Perlmutter 2000). Unlike Full Russian, American Russian seems to restrict the distribution of the dative NP to the preverbal position—cf. the almost minimal pair recorded from the same speaker:

- (14) a. Vsegda tebe nraivitsja takie ljudi.
 always you_{DAT} like [such people]_{UNM}
 ‘One always likes such people.’ (lit.: you always like such people)
- b. Prosit’ u moi roditeli neprijatn[ə] menja.
 to ask from [my parents]_{UNM} unpleasant me_{2ND-OBJ}
 ‘I don’t like to ask my parents (for money).’

In addition, many American Russian speakers use fossilized expressions *u menja*, *u nas*, *u nix*, *u nego/nee* ‘by me, us, them, him/her’ (see (18a) below); these occur despite the lack of an articulated paradigm in other

pronouns, and this suggests that they are just retained as “chunks”, not as productive members of the pronominal paradigm.¹² Many “chunks” are also retained in the nominal paradigm, for example, *v dome* ‘in the house’, *na mašine* ‘by car’, *na velosipede* ‘by bicycle’, *v Moskve* ‘in Moscow’, *v Rossii* ‘in Russia’, and some instrumental forms. These forms, however, seem to be lexicalized outside their respective nominal paradigm, thus functioning as lexicalized adverbials. Some evidence for this comes from the fact that correct case forms often co-occur with other PPs where the preposition assigns the unmarked case, for example, in (15a, b), where the oblique forms adequate to Full Russian (‘with chopsticks’, ‘with a pen’,¹³ ‘in Russia’) co-occur with PPs where the object is unmarked (‘in a restaurant’, ‘on computer’, ‘without a doctor’).

- (15) a. V kitajskij restoran oni edjat paločk-ami.
 in [Chinese restaurant]_{UNM} they eat chopstick_{INST.PL}
 ‘They use chopsticks when they eat in a Chinese restaurant.’
- b. Ja ploxo pišu s ručk-oj, i na komp’juter
 I badly write with pen_{INST} and on computer_{UNM}
 xorošo.
 well
 ‘My handwriting is poor but I type well.’
 (lit.: I write poorly with a pen and well on a computer)
- c. V Rossii oni dumajut # možno lečit’
 in Russia_{PREP} they think is possible be treated
 bez vrač.
 without doctor_{UNM}
 ‘In Russia they think that one can be treated by home remedies.’
 (lit.: without a doctor).’

Given the preponderance of the unmarked case in American Russian, it is not surprising that it is used in those cases where even Full Russian allows variation between the unmarked and marked form. The two main

¹² Readers not familiar with the grammar of Russian should bear in mind that these prepositional phrases are extremely frequent, something that the translation equivalents presented here may fail to convey. The prepositional phrases presented here are used in possessive constructions, can mean ‘at X’s house’, and can also denote the experiencer with a range of frequent verbs.

¹³ The PP *s ručk-oj* in (15b) is actually a direct translation from English, unacceptable in Full Russian, but the case assigned by *s* is nevertheless used correctly.

areas of case alternation in modern Full Russian include predicate nominals (whose case alternates between the nominative and the instrumental) and nominals under negation (whose case alternates between nominative/genitive and accusative/genitive, depending on the position); see Chvany 1975, Babby 1980, Pesetsky 1982, Mustajoki 1985, Neidle 1988, among others. In American Russian, these cases are standardly represented as unmarked. Some examples are given in (16)–(18); note that in (18a), the unmarked case is used instead of the obligatory genitive under negation.

(16) a. American Russian

Moj otec kažetsja molodoj.
 my father appears young_{UNM}
 'My father looks young.'

b. Full Russian

Moj otec kažetsja molod-ym.
 my father appears young_{INST}
 'My father looks young.'

(17) a. American Russian

Ja ne čitaju russkaja kniga.
 I NEG read [Russian book]_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

Ja ne čitaju russk-ie knig-i/ russk-ix knig-ø.
 I NEG read [Russian book]_{ACC.PL}/ [Russian book]_{GEN.PL}
 'I don't read Russian books.'

(18) a. American Russian

U nee net muž-ø.
 by her NEG husband_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

U nee net muž-a.
 by her NEG husband_{GEN}
 'She has no husband.'

In those situations where some case forms are still retained, American Russian speakers tend to overuse the genitive plural marked by the suffix *-ov/-ev*.¹⁴ For example:

- (19) a. On bežit v trusik-ov. (cf. FR: trusik-ax)
 he runs in shorts-OV (shorts_{PREP.PL})
 'He jogs in shorts.'
- b. Ne zabud' pro konfet-ov. (FR: konfety)
 NEG forget about candy-OV (candy_{ACC.PL})
 'Don't forget about sweets.'
- c. U sosedev mnogo den'gi. (FR: sosed-ej)
 by neighbors-OV much money_{UNM} (neighbors_{GEN.PL})
 'My neighbors have a lot of money.'

Zemskaja (2001: 362–64) makes similar observations about the confusion of the genitive and prepositional plural in the speech of émigré Russians in several countries. Similar confusion is found in child language (Gvozdev 1961: 388–9), in the history of Russian declensions, and in Russian dialects (Avanesov 1949: 137, Kuznecov 1960: 106, Azarx 1984). However, American Russian data suggest that the genitive plural does not always take over. Despite the predominance of the genitive plural, there are some instances where the prepositional plural is used in the genitive context for example (cf. especially the contrast between (19c) and (20b)).

- (20) a. U menja trudno govorit' bystro bez slov-ax.
 by me difficult to speak fast without word_{PREP.PL}
 (cf. FR: slov-ø)
 (word_{GEN.PL})
 'It is hard for me to speak fast because I don't know many words.' (lit.: ...without words.)
- b. U starik-ax svobodn[əjə] vremja. (FR: starik-ov)
 by old people_{PREP.PL} free time_{UNM} (old people_{GEN.PL})
 'Old people have a lot of free time.'

Thus, the confusion between the two plural forms, the generalized genitive in *-ov/-ev* and the prepositional form with the suffix *-ax*, can have

¹⁴ The genitive plural has several endings in Full Russian depending on the declensional class of a noun (Zaliznjak 1967: 42–43; Wade 2000, 2002).

two possible outcomes, contrary to the common assumption that the genitive plural wins out (Zemskaja 2001: 87, 362–65).

The next example of prepositional plural is particularly striking because the prepositional plural is used in the position of the genitive plural in a numerical expression, which is recognized as the specialized count form (Zaliznjak 1967: 47–48, esp. note on p. 48; Babby 1984; Mel'čuk 1985: 27–34). Occurrences such as (21) are not uncommon, although it is hard to put a numerical value on them because speakers produce them only in spontaneous speech.

- (21) a. Pjat' gostjax prišli. (cf. FR: gost-ej)
 five guest_{PREP.PL} came (guest_{GEN.PL})
 'Five guests arrived.'
- b. Ja kuplju šest' disk-ax. (cf. FR: disk-ov)
 I will buy six CD_{PREP.PL} (CD_{GEN.PL})
 'I will buy six CDs.'

However, even the poorest speakers in my sample maintained the correct count forms when asked to count using a numeral and a noun.¹⁵ The reason the form following a numeral is so well retained in general may have to do with its highly specialized function. In a sense, this retention can be compared to the adverbial-like retention of some prepositional phrases: the count form is not associated directly with the overall declension paradigm of a given noun.

Despite the apparent chaos of the case forms occurring in American Russian, a general pattern of argument case shift can be identified. This pattern involves a general decline in the number of case forms and a reanalysis of the salient cases as follows:

- (22) dative → accusative → nominative → unmarked case

This shift characterizes the changes undergone by the cases that encode major grammatical relations, in particular the direct and indirect object (the subject case, which is mostly the nominative, remains unchanged). Other cases, which primarily encode adjuncts, also disappear, and their functions are assumed by the nominative. As a result, American Russian has a basic two-case system: the unmarked case and the case of

¹⁵ See Tables 9 and 10 below for the distribution of speakers according to their use of forms conforming to Full Russian.

the second object (goal). The nominative of Full Russian assumes multiple functions, and the accusative is specialized as the case of the indirect object (goal). American Russian also keeps a number of prepositional forms and the count form of the genitive, but these seem to be fixed as lexical items rather than forms derived by regular case rules.

The important question is whether the dramatic reduction of cases in American Russian, compared to Full Russian, can be explained by the transfer from English, with its extremely shallow case distinctions, or is due to the more general processes of incomplete acquisition (see Campbell and Muntzel 1989 and Sasse 1992 for similar examples of case loss under genuine attrition). An ideal testing situation would be one where Russian is influenced by a language with a richer case system. If in such a hypothetical situation Russian speakers also used a reduced case system, language death processes would emerge as a valid reason for reduction. Leisiö's work on Finland Russian (Leisiö 2001: Ch. 4) is one of the few studies comparing case changes in Russian under the influence of another case-rich language. Leisiö's speakers overall seem to be more proficient than the ones surveyed here, but even they show a certain degree of case loss and of the predictable analogical leveling. That suggests that some general patterns of attrition or incomplete acquisition may play a role in the case shift, but due to the lack of more cross-linguistic data, both solutions mentioned here remain entirely speculative.

4.2. Gender

The three-gender system of Full Russian has important ramifications for declensional classes. We have just seen that case marking is significantly reduced in American Russian, which also reduces the impact of gender distinctions on case choice. Gender differences are still preserved and show up in adjectival, demonstrative, and participial agreement, which often has the same patterns as in Full Russian (however, see a more general discussion of agreement below).

Even the least proficient speakers are generally able to maintain the simple semantic rules of gender assignment for nouns denoting males and females regardless of their morphological form (but see below on the nouns 'mother' and 'daughter'). The main difference between Full Russian and American Russian is in the treatment of feminine nouns with palatalized stems and stem-stressed neuter nouns.

Feminine nouns with palatalized stems (*sol'* 'salt', *kost'* 'bone', *ten'* 'shadow'), which belong to one of the more vulnerable declensional classes, are treated as masculines.

- (23) a. Tam my vidim naš ten'.
 there we saw our_{MASC} shadow_{UNM}
 'We noticed our shadows there.'¹⁶
- b. Noč' byl xolodnyj.
 night_{UNM} was_{MASC} cold_{MASC}
 'It was cold at night.'
- c. Kupit novyj krovat'.
 will.buy new_{MASC} bed_{UNM}
 'They will buy a new bed.'

However, the very frequent feminine nouns *mat'* 'mother' and *doč'* 'daughter', although belonging to this declensional class, are typically treated as feminine. Only two speakers, representing the least proficient group of subjects, regularly used them as masculines (24a, b).¹⁷

- (24) a. Moj mat' ona ubirat' dom.
 my_{MASC} mother she_{RP} clean up house_{UNM}
 'My mother does the cleaning.'
- b. Ona ne ljubit takoj doč'.
 she NEG likes such_{MASC} daughter_{UNM}
 'She does not like such a daughter.'

More fluent speakers, who occasionally use cases beyond the system outlined in (22), decline feminines with palatalized stem as masculines, for example:

- (25) a. Posoli s sol-em. (cf. FR sol'-ju)
 salt_{IMPF} with salt_{INST}
 'Salt this.'
- b. On polučaet operacija na kost-é. (cf. FR kóst-i/kost-í)
 he receives surgery_{UNM} on bone_{PREP}
 'He had a bone graft.'

¹⁶ The sentence was elicited in a narrative where it clearly referred to a past event. In Full Russian, however, the verb form used here is that of the present tense.

¹⁷ Also note that in (24a) the possessive pronoun shows masculine gender, but the resumptive pronoun occurring before the verb is in the feminine form (*ona*).

The reanalysis of this declensional class as masculine is also observed in the acquisition of Russian by monolingual children (Gvozdev 1961: 442). This declensional class also shows some gender instability in the history of Russian (Comrie et al. 1996: 107–8). Thus, as with several other phenomena considered here, American Russian simply builds on the opacity inherent in the full language. As an alternative to this view, one might propose that American Russian treats masculine as the default gender, and this explains the gender assignment of the palatalized stem nouns.¹⁸ If this were the case, however, all new words or English borrowings/switches should be treated as masculine, and this does not occur, as the following examples show:

- (26) a. Ja pol'zuju moja *Jornada*.
 I use my_{FEM} *Jornada*
 'I use my PDA "Jornada".'
- b. Moj brat on kupal novaja *Honda*.
 my brother he_{RP} bought new_{FEM} *Honda*
 'My brother bought a new Honda.'
- c. Ja daju dedušk-u èta *whisky*.
 I give grandfather_{GOAL} this_{FEM,UNM} *whisky*
 'I always get this whisky as a gift for my grandfather.'

In (26c), the baseline Russian word should be *viski* 'whiskey', which is neuter. The use of the feminine demonstrative (*èta*) indicated that the speaker is treating *whiskey* as feminine. This points to another strong tendency in American Russian: neuter nouns get reanalyzed as feminines:¹⁹ *bol'saja jabloko* 'big apple', *krutaja jajco* 'hard-boiled egg', *moja derevo* 'my tree', *dorogaja kol'co* 'expensive ring', *takaja vremja* 'such time'. More fluent speakers maintain a finer distinction in the neuter nouns, determined by stress placement. Most neuter nouns in Russian end in -o/-e. If a neuter noun has stem stress, this makes its ending virtually indistinguishable from an unstressed -a, which is strongly associated with the feminine class. These nouns are typically treated as feminine in American Russian. If a neuter noun has stress on the ending (*okno* 'window', *kop'e* 'spear', *lico* 'face', *kare* 'square'), that makes it easier to

¹⁸ The predominance of the masculine is reported in the speech of one subject, a third generation Finnish-dominant Russian speaker, in Finland Russian (Leisiö 2001: 241).

¹⁹ Recall that only end-stressed adjectives differentiate between feminine and neuter (fn. 6), so this limits the initial sample of observation data.

identify it as different from the feminine class, which is what some more proficient speakers do.

The fate of the neuter in American Russian is not terribly surprising. The neuter is numerically the smallest gender class in Russian, at about 13 percent of the general vocabulary (Mučnik 1963: 57). Some Russian dialects have an even lower percentage of neuters (Seliščev 1939: 77, Mučnik 1963: 55), and the acquisition of neuter by children seems to lag behind the learning of the other two genders (Gvozdev 1961: 443). However the similarity to Russian dialects and child language only goes so far. Unlike dialects and child language, American Russian is much more consistent in assimilating neuters to feminines. Overall, gender assignment rules in American Russian are quite straightforward and, with the exception of the semantic core, are based on the formal shape of the nouns:

- (27) Gender assignment rules in American Russian
- a. sex-differentiable nouns are masculine or feminine depending on the natural gender of the referent
 - b. nouns ending in a consonant are masculine
 - c. nouns ending in a vowel are feminine (however, for more proficient speakers nouns ending in a stressed *-o/-e* are neuter)

In sum, the reanalysis of the gender system is accounted for in part by tendencies inherent in Full Russian (although not necessarily in its standard, codified form) and also by the general trend of eliminating the opacity that permeates the morphological system of American Russian. The reanalysis pattern observed in American Russian, with its heavy reliance on the endings for gender assignment, is consistent with the findings for Australian Russian (Kouzmin 1973: 90–97) and Finland Russian (Leisiö 2001: 226–41).

5. Verbal Categories

As with the nominal categories, the general trend in American Russian is towards a significant restructuring of verbal categories and the rise of analytic forms. The latter tendency is inherent in Full Russian as well (see Comrie et al. 1996: 117–24, 153–56 for discussion), so American Russian simply takes this several steps further.

American Russian clearly differs from Full Russian in the lack of synthetic forms expressing complex meanings. Instead, American Russian uses analytical expressions consisting of several distinct components. The use of such expressions is particularly noticeable in the verbal lexicon.

Numerous Full Russian prepositional verbs are rendered in American Russian by combinations of an aspectual verb, which acts as the light verb, and a notional verb, carrying most of the lexical content. Compare (28a), (29a), (30a) vs. (28b), (29b), (30b) respectively:

- (28) a. American Russian
 Ona nikogda ona ne načnet govorit' ko mne pervaja.
 she never she_{RP} NEG will begin to speak to me first_{UNM}
- b. Full Russian
 Ona nikogda ne za-govorit so mnoj pervoj/pervaja.
 she never NEG INCEPTspeak_{FUT} with me first_{INST/NOM}
 'She would never speak to me first.'
- (29) a. American Russian
 V Cleveland moja mama načala bolet' i ona pošla
 in Cleveland my mom began to be sick and she went
 v hospital.
 in hospital
- b. Full Russian
 V Klivlende moja mama za-bolela i legla
 in Cleveland_{PREP} my mom INCEPTwas sick and lay
 v bol'nic-u.
 in hospital_{ACC}
 'In Cleveland, my mother got sick and went to the hospital.'
- (30) a. American Russian
 I togda ja ne byl bol'she p'janyj.
 and then I NEG was more drunk
- b. Full Russian
 I tut ja srazu pro-trezvel.
 and here I immediately COMPLsober_{PUNCTUAL.PAST}
 'And I immediately got sober.'²⁰

²⁰ The context requires a punctual reading: the speaker is describing a party in his fraternity that became too wild.

These examples lead to another important feature of the American Russian verbal system: its aspect is expressed in a very different way than it is in the fully acquired language.

5.1. Aspect Restructuring

Volumes have been written on Slavic aspect, and this paper makes no attempt to resolve the general problems of it. If one were to summarize various views on Russian aspect expressed in the literature, two major approaches could be distinguished. Under the first approach, aspect is viewed as a grammatical phenomenon, with the grammar somewhat marred by diachronic residues and lexical exceptions (Forsyth 1970; Academy Grammar I: 583–96). According to the second approach, aspect is a lexical characteristic, with some degree of grammaticization (Bulygina 1982; Comrie 1976).

If American Russian serves as a litmus test of any kind, Russian aspect is clearly a lexical category. The lexicalization of aspect is reflected in the fact that verbs no longer form aspectual pairs. Rather, they are either retained as separate entities or just one verb form, perfective or imperfective, is retained and the other is lost. The second strategy, when just one form of the verb is retained and the other is entirely lost, seems to be more common for American Russian; this strategy is consistent with the general reduction of the lexicon. Under this strategy, the retention of a certain form seems to be determined by the relative frequency of its use (I will return to this issue shortly below). This tendency can be demonstrated if we adopt Vendler's division of verbs into those of achievement, accomplishment, process, and state (Vendler 1967). There is no question that this division is a very approximate one; a much finer set of distinctions capturing the aspectual semantics is suggested by Bulygina (1982). However, Vendler's four-way distinction is sufficient for providing a rough basis for the classification of the tendencies observed in American Russian.

In American Russian, verbs of achievement and accomplishment are clearly favored in the perfective form, hence the use of *sdelat'* 'do', *smoč'* 'be able to', *napisat'* 'write', *pročitat'* 'read', *otdat'* 'give', *vzjat'* 'take' in the place of their imperfective correlates. A number of similar examples were given in Table 1 above: the subjects offered the perfective, instead of the imperfective, citation form, for 'know', 'die', 'kill', 'lie down', 'stand', 'give', 'say', and 'burn'. Some other examples:

(31) a. American Russian

Ja nikogda ne pročital ta kniga.
 I never NEG read_{PERF} [this book]_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

Ja nikogda ne čital ètu knigu.
 I never NEG read_{IMPF} [this book]_{ACC}
 'I have never read this book.'

(32) a. American Russian

Ego otec snačala on otdal ego den'gi i potom
 his father first he_{RP} gave_{PERF} him_{GOAL} money and then
 on ne otdal.
 he NEG gave_{PERF}

'His father was first ready to give him the money and then he changed his mind.' (lit.: did not give it away)

b. Full Russian

Ego otec snačala daval/ otdaval emu
 his father first was giving_{IMPF}/ was giving away_{IMPF} him_{DAT}
 den'gi...
 money

'His father was first ready to give him the money...'

At the other end of the perfective-imperfective opposition, verbs denoting processes and states, which do not imply a natural limit, are often lexicalized in the imperfective form. In (33a) below, the speaker is retelling a scene in a movie when a character hides for a moment by hanging outside the window:

(33) a. American Russian

On prjatsja, on visel iz okna.
 he was hiding_{IMPF} he was hanging_{IMPF} from window

b. Full Russian

On sprjatsja, svesivšis' iz okna.
 he hid hanging_{GER} from window
 'He was hanging outside the window, hiding.'

In (34a) the speaker comments on his short trip to Princeton:

(34) a. American Russian

Mne nraavilos' v Princeton no ja ljublju žit'
 me_{DAT} liked_{IMPF} in Princeton but I like to live

v Chicago.

in Chicago

'I enjoyed Princeton but I would prefer to live in Chicago.'

b. Full Russian

Mne ponraavilos' v Prinestone...

me_{DAT} liked_{PERF} in Princeton_{PREP}

'I enjoyed Princeton...'

The restructuring of aspectual characteristics is also reflected in the reanalysis of motion verbs. In Full Russian, motion verbs are opposed not only as perfective and imperfective but also, within each aspect, as unidirectional and iterative or multidirectional (Forsyth 1970: 64; Academy Grammar I: 590–96). This is illustrated in (35) for 'to move, to go (in a vehicle)':

- | | | | |
|---------|----------------|-----|-----------------------|
| (35) a. | imperfective | b. | perfective |
| i. | unidirectional | i. | unidirectional |
| | <i>exat'</i> | | <i>poexat'</i> |
| ii. | iterative | ii. | iterative |
| | <i>ezdit'</i> | | prefix+ <i>ezdit'</i> |

American Russian speakers do not maintain the iterative correlates of the motion verbs.

(36) a. American Russian

V voskresen'e ja exal v Washington s
 in Sunday I went_{UNIDIR} in Washington with
 moi druž'ja.
 [my friends]_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

V voskresen'e ja ezdil v Vašington s druž'jami.
 in Sunday I went_{ITER} in Washington_{ACC} with friends_{INST}

'On Sunday I went to Washington with my friends.'

- (37) a. American Russian
 Na ètot boulevard ljudi begut.
 on this_{UNM} boulevard people run_{UNIDIR}
- b. Full Russian
 Na ètom bul'vare begajut ljudi.
 on [this boulevard]_{PREP} run_{ITER} people
 'People jog on this boulevard.'
- (38) a. American Russian
 Vy ljubite idti v cerkov'?
 you_{PL} like go_{IMPF.UNIDIR} in church
- b. Full Russian
 Vy ljubite xodit' v cerkov'?
 you_{PL} like go_{IMPF.ITER} in church
 'Do you like to go to church?'

As far as the perfective-imperfective distinction is concerned, some speakers retain both aspects for unidirectional motion verbs. This was attested for speakers with higher proficiencies (proficiency range: 88.5–90.5, see Table 2). In (39a) the speaker correctly uses unidirectional imperfective expressing planned future action; however, he fails to use the right word, substituting *idti* 'go, walk' for *exat'* 'go':

- (39) a. American Russian
 V avgust ja idu v Seattle.
 in August_{UNM} I walk in Seattle
- b. Full Russian
 V avgust-e ja edu/poedu v Siètl.
 in August_{PREP} I go/ will go in Seattle
 'I am going to Seattle in August.'

With the attrition of aspectual distinctions, many events whose expression in Full Russian is rendered by a single prefixal verb are encoded analytically, by the combination of an aspectual verb ('begin', 'become', 'be', 'stop') and the notional verb.²¹

²¹ Examples (40a) and (41a) are particularly interesting since they show violations of the subcategorization pattern of the Russian verbs *načínát'* 'begin' and *byt'* 'be'. These verbs require an infinitive or a noun, not an inflected form of another verb.

- (40) a. American Russian
 On načinaet deržit olen' roga.
 he begins holds_{IMPF} deer_{UNM} antlers_{UNM}
- b. Full Russian
 On sxvatil olenja za roga.
 he grabbed deer_{ACC} at antlers_{ACC}
 'He grabbed the deer by the antlers.'
- (41) a. American Russian
 On budet vidit èto.
 he will sees_{IMPF} this
- b. Full Russian
 On u-vidit èto.
 he _{PERF}see_{FUT} this
 'He will get to see that.'

The descriptive generalizations are clear. First, in the aspectual system of American Russian, just one member of the so-called aspectual pair is typically maintained. Second, and related to the first point, there are a large number of analytical expressions which replace synthetic aspectual verbs of Full Russian.

Two questions arise with respect to the use of aspect. Is it possible to predict which aspectual form is retained for each particular verbal concept? And assuming that the Full Russian system is no longer available to incomplete learners, what means of expressing aspect are used in American Russian?

Let's address the first question, what explains the maintenance of the imperfective in Full Russian for some verbs and of the perfective in Full Russian for others. If only one verb is maintained in American Russian, it represents the member of the aspectual pair that denotes the more common conceptualization associated with a given event. If a more commonly occurring eventuality is the one that has an inherent limit, it is conceptualized as telic, and the perfective form of the verb is more likely to be maintained. If the event is more commonly conceptualized as atelic, lacking an inherent limit, the imperfective form is maintained. If the more common conceptualization of a given verb is indeed the determining factor, then the frequency of the perfective and imperfective verbs in aspectual pairs of Full Russian, the input language, may serve as a fairly accurate predictor of what is going to be used in American Russian.

The typical aspectual forms used in American Russian are summarized in Table 7. The frequencies in the input language are based on the data in Lönngren 1993.²²

The results summarized in the tables support the generalization that the choice of the single aspectual form, lexicalized in American Russian, may be determined by whether the more frequent conceptualization of a given event is telic or atelic.²³ For several verbs in the table the absolute frequencies are very similar ('be born', 'do', 'fall'), which means that other factors may be at play here. At least two verbs ('lie (down)' and 'be able, can') seem to contradict the proposal that the more frequent conceptualization of a given event determines which aspectual form, imperfective or perfective, is retained. Again, one has to be careful not to read too much into the available frequencies. In the absence of data from colloquial, informal speech, including speech directed at children, all the conclusions based on frequencies have to remain extremely tentative.

Still, if the idea that the more frequent conceptualizations determine the choice of a verb form is on the right track, it is important to bear in mind that incomplete learners of Russian do not perceive the verb they retain as being imperfective or perfective. Since they no longer have the relevant morphosyntactic oppositions of Full Russian, for them the verb *dat'* 'give' or the verb *sidet'* 'sit' is just a lexical item without a specified aspectual value. The emerging system seems similar to the aspectual system of incomplete learners of Spanish (Montrul and Slabakova 2003), where the more commonly used conceptualization of a given event type likewise leads to the lexicalization of the perfective or the imperfective form.

²² American Russian speakers represent stages of incomplete acquisition, and their crucial input was provided by the child-directed speech heard in the home or the speech within the informal register that most incomplete learners are familiar with. It would be ideal to rely on frequencies of the relevant verbs in child-directed speech because they are likely to be different from the corresponding frequencies established on general adult corpora. However, there are no such statistics available for Russian, and in their absence, existing frequency data have to be used if only as an approximation. Of the currently available Russian frequency dictionaries—Brown 1996, Zazorina 1977, and Lönngren 1993—the last seems to provide the best approximation to the spoken language because it targets a wide variety of genres and attempts to normalize the effect of individual texts or genres (see Lönngren 1993: 20–23 for an overview of this approach).

²³ One could propose an alternative to this generalization, namely, that the retained form of the verb is the shorter one. While the correlation between phonetic weight (word length) and frequency is well established (Zipf 1935, Bybee 2001), even the small sample of verbs in Table 7 does not support this generalization; compare *sidet'* vs. *sest'* 'sit', where the longer word wins out, or *umirat'* and *umeret'* 'die', which are equal in length.

Table 7. Frequency of the Imperfectives vs. Perfectives in Full Russian vs. the Use of a Particular Form in American Russian

Event	Full Russian		American Russian
	Imperfective, absolute frequency	Perfective, absolute frequency	Word used (preferred or only form)
be able to, can	moč', 2981	smoč', 168	smoč'
be able to, know how	umet', 189	sumet', 82	umet'
be born	roždat'sja, 50	rodit'sja, 86	rodit'sja
become	stanovit'sja, 315	stat', 1583	stat'
believe	verit', 148	poverit', 77	verit'
buy	pokupat', 63	kupit', 153	kupit'
call	zvat', 140	pozvat', 26	zvat'
cry, scream	kričat', 149	kriknut', 69	kričat'
cry, weep	plakat', 114	zaplakat', 32	plakat'
die	umirat', 45	umeret', 165	umeret'
do	delat', 558	sdelat', 593	sdelat'
fall	padat', 130	upast', 116	upast'
find	naxodit', 97	najti, 392	najti
give	davat', 382	dat', 526	dat'
grow	rasti, 228	vyrasti, 115	rasti
jump	prygat', 45	prygnut', 21	prygat'
kill	ubivat', 40	ubit', 106	ubit'
lie (down)	ležat', 405	ložit'sja, 42 leč', 75	leč'
live	žit', 716	požit', 21 prožit', 66	žit'
look for, search	iskat', 192	poiskat', under 9	iskat'
sing	pet', 90	spet', under 9	pet'
sit	sidet', 505	sest', 145	sidet'
stay, stand	stojat', 800	(v-)stat', 152	stojat' > vstat'
take	brat', 206	vzjat', 488	vzjat'
walk	guljat', 66	poguljat', 13	guljat'

Let us now turn to the second question, how does American Russian express aspect. Aspect is a conceptual, semantic characteristic, and it does not have to disappear even if the relevant morphosyntax used to express it is gone. Thus the American Russian strategies of expressing aspect may be

different from those used in Full Russian, but they can still exist. Instead of the fairly arcane system of affixes employed in the Full Russian aspectual grammar, American Russian seems to use either the bare verb or the combination of a light verb and content verb (or another lexical category) to express aspectual distinctions. Roughly, the perfective of accomplishments and achievements is expressed using the light verbs *stat'* 'become' and *načat'* 'begin'. These same verbs are used as perfective in Full Russian, but in American Russian they become the major means of expressing perfectivity.

The American Russian imperfective is either unmarked or is marked by the light verb *byt'* 'be', as in example (41a) above. The same verb *byt'* is used as the auxiliary to express states if followed by a noun or adjective.

The system described here may have arisen either under the influence of English, which would amount to transfer, or may be due to the universal principles operating in incomplete learning. At this point, it is impossible to tell which of these two scenarios applies. To choose between them, it would be important to compare American Russian to Russian in contact with languages other than English. Such data, however, are not available.²⁴

5.2. Conditional

Full Russian has two basic conditional forms, a more frequent analytical form with the particle *by*, as in the second clause in (42) and in (43b) and (44b), and a synthetic form that, in most variants of Full Russian, materially coincides with the modern imperative (Wade 2000: 326–28). This form, illustrated in the first clause of (42), obligatorily precedes the subject.

- (42) Znaj ja èto togda, ja by s nimi vstretilsja.
 know_{COND} I this then I _{COND.PRT} with them meet_{COND}
 'Had I known this then, I would have met with them.'

The synthetic form was not attested at all in American Russian. As for the analytical conditional, the tendency is to replace it with the respective indicative forms, as in (43a), which represents a hypothetical statement, and (44a), which is counterfactual:

²⁴ The rise of the analytical system of aspectual marking in Finland Russian (Russian spoken in Finland), reported by Leisiö (2001), suggests that the influence of English cannot be the sole determining factor.

(43) a. American Russian

Esli ja rabotaju kak prezident, ja imeju mnogo *power*.
 if I work as president I have much power

b. Full Russian

Esli by ja byl prezidentom, u menja byla by
 if COND.PRT I be_{COND} president by me be_{COND} COND.PRT

bol'saja vlast'.

big power

'If I were the president [of the U.S.], I would have great power.'

(44) a. American Russian

Esli ona ne zabyla, ona prisylaet kartočka.
 if she NEG forgot she sends card_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

Esli by ona ne zabyla, ona by prislala otkrytk-u.
 if COND.PRT she NEG forgot_{COND} she COND.PRT sent_{COND} card_{ACC}

'If she had not forgotten (my birthday), she would have sent a card.'

The absence of the conditional is paralleled by the absence of the conjunction *čtoby* (< **čto* + *by*) 'so that' which introduces subjunctive clauses. This conjunction is replaced by the general complementizer *čto* 'that', which introduces indicative clauses.

(45) a. American Russian

Ja xocu čto ty vstreliš' moj *boyfriend*.
 I want that you_{SG} meet my boyfriend

'I want you to meet my boyfriend.'

b. Full Russian

Ja xocu, čtoby ty poznaomilas' s
 I want so that you_{SG} got acquainted_{COND} with

mo-im drug-om.

[my friend]_{INST}

'I want you to meet my boyfriend.'

Some of the cases where *čtoby* is replaced by *čto* can be explained by transfer, since in English *that* can introduce both a clause in the indicative

and some purpose clauses. However, examples such as (45a) cannot be directly traced back to English and confirm a more general tendency in the loss of the Russian conditional.

5.3. Reflexive

Full Russian has verbal reflexive forms ending in *-sja/-s'*, while American Russian consistently eliminates such reflexives. First of all, many verbs that have the reflexive affix are used without it, compare:²⁵

(46) a. American Russian

Ja xoču posmotret' mesta gde ja rodila-ø.
I want see places where I was born

b. Full Russian

Ja xoču posmotret' mesta gde ja rodila-s'.
I want see places where I was born_{REFL}
'I want to see the places where I was born.'

(47) a. American Russian

Tam my bludili-ø.
there we lost our way

b. Full Russian

My tam zabludili-s'.
we there lost our way_{REFL}
'We got lost there.'

Another example of the loss of the reflexive is in (15c) above, where the verb *lečit'* 'to treat' is used in the meaning of *lečit'sja* 'to obtain treatment'.

American Russian also uses the combination of a transitive verb and object in lieu of the Full Russian reflexive. This is apparently a manifestation of analyticism, characteristic of this language in general. In the following examples, however, it is impossible to rule out a direct transfer from English.

²⁵ These two American Russian examples are particularly striking for a Full Russian speaker because of the interpretive differences. The verb *rodit'* used in (46a) exists in Full Russian but only in the meaning 'to give birth', not 'to be born'. The verb *bludit'*, used in (47a), means 'to sleep around, be promiscuous', not 'to get lost on one's way' as the speaker intends it.

(48) a. American Russian

Ja pričesyvaju moi volosy tože večerom.
 I comb my hair also in the evening

b. Full Russian

Večerom ja tože pričesyvaju-s'.
 in the evening I also comb_{REFL}
 'I comb my hair in the evening, too.'

(49) a. American Russian

On ne umyval ego lico.
 he NEG washed his face

b. Full Russian

On ne umyval-sja.
 he NEG washed_{REFL}
 'He didn't wash his face.'

Some fossilized reflexive verbs that have no non-reflexive counterparts in Full Russian are retained in American Russian. The speakers in this study consistently used *smejat'sja* 'laugh' (no Full Russian **smejat'*); *ulybat'sja* 'smile' (no **ulybat'*); *bojat'sja* 'be afraid of' (no **bojat'*); *zabotit'sja* 'take care of' (Full Russian *zabotit'* 'to make someone worried' is very rare and semantically distant from the reflexive). In translation elicitations, six speakers used *oxotit'* for 'hunt' while three used FR *oxotit'sja*.

Overall, the general decline of reflexive forms in American Russian poses an interesting question: can this loss of reflexives be explained entirely by the influence of English, where morphological reflexivity is less prominent than in Russian, or is this a more general tendency of human language, or both? An indirect argument in favor of the influence of English comes from American Swedish: while Full Swedish has a developed system of reflexive marking, American Swedish loses it (Hasselmo 1974: 161).

6. Clause Structure

6.1. Word Order

Variations in Russian word order are well known and have received significant attention in the literature on syntax and information structure (Baylin 1995, King 1995, and references therein). American Russian speakers clearly limit the range of word orders available to them. The predominant order seems to be SVO, which is found in clauses involving both nominal and pronominal arguments. In Full Russian, the latter often require SOV word order. The speakers studied here used both SOV and SVO with pronominal objects, so it is hard to generalize beyond noting a tendency towards SVO.

Russian makes extensive use of the inversion VS order for existential and presentational constructions (Adamec 1966, Kovtunova 1976, and many others). This order seems to be retained relatively well, and even the least proficient speakers use it quite appropriately.

- (50) a. Priexali im deti.
arrived their_{3RD.PL.MD} children
'Their kids arrived.' (lit: there arrived their kids)
- b. Ja uvižu: valjaetsja den'gi.²⁶
I see is lying about money_{UNM}
'So I suddenly see that there is money on the ground.'

The VS order is particularly well retained under two conditions: (a) with the negative existential (*net*, *ne byl*), and (b) with an overt adverbial preceding the verb. However, if a nominal is quantified or modified, it resists inversion and the SV structure is used, as in (21a) above or the following examples:

- (51) a. Novyj fil'm stal.
new movie became
'There came out a new movie.'
- b. Mnogo časti ostalos'.
many piece_{UNM} was left
'There were many pieces left.'

²⁶ The Russian word 'money' is inherently plural, so the speaker fails to use the correct verb agreement.

A word of caution is in order here. In the study of clausal word order of American Russian, it is very hard to make solid descriptive generalizations because of the pausing which is rampant in the speech of even the most proficient subjects. For example, in the following sentence, it is hard to tell if the speaker introduced a referent as a topic, then aborted it, switched to the verb, and added something as an afterthought:

- (52) Mal'čik# on #on pomogaet# sobaka.
 boy he_{RP} he_{RP} helps dog_{UNM}
 'The boy is helping his dog.'

If all the elements of (52) are just paratactically joined together in a larger segment, it is really hard to tell what the word order at the clause level is. Thus, even the generalization concerning the overuse of SVO should be taken with a grain of salt. In my view, a better understanding of the word order preferences in American Russian can be gained only from experimental work involving implicit judgment elicitations.

6.2. Agreement and Resumptive Pronouns

A major difference between American Russian and Full Russian at the clause level involves the deterioration of verbal agreement and the related rise in the use of subject resumptive pronouns (or pleonastic pronouns).²⁷

The loss of subject-verb agreement in American Russian is clearly related to the destruction of conjugation paradigms, a process parallel to the loss of declension discussed above. However, loss of agreement is most prominent in the speech of the subjects with the lowest proficiencies, namely Ma, Na, A, and Sv (see Table 9 for numerical data on agreement patterns). These speakers tend to use the masculine form in the past and the third person singular or the infinitive elsewhere. For example:²⁸

²⁷ The term "resumptive pronoun" is used here to denote a pronominal element that is co-indexed with the subject of the same clause. This usage of the term is broader than the one found in some syntactic studies, where it is sometimes confined to the pronoun co-indexed with a moved element (Shlonsky 1992, Haegeman 1991: 372). The usage here follows the terminological tradition of pidgin and creole studies (Bickerton 1993) and does not necessarily entail the conception of movement. In some creole studies, the term "subject referencing pronoun" is also used (Keesing 1988, Crowley 1990: 230–52).

²⁸ See also (14a) above, where the verb is in the third singular form, while the subject is plural.

- (53) *Moi roditeli# oni kupil drugoj dom.*
 my parents they_{RP} bought_{PAST.3SG.MASC} another house
 (cf. FR *kupili* 'bought_{PAST.3PL}')
 'My parents bought another/a new house.'
- (54) *V universitet knig-i budet dorogo.* (cf. FR *budut*)
 in university_{UNM} book_{NOM.PL} be_{FUT.3SG} expensively (be_{FUT.3PL})
 'Books will be costly when you go to the university.'

As verb agreement deteriorates, a need arises for some other grammatical mechanism for marking the relation between the subject and the predicate. This explains, if only partially, another striking feature of American Russian, namely, the widespread occurrence of the subject resumptive pronoun before the verb. However, there must be some other reason for the rise of the resumptive pronoun, because verb agreement is lost only in the least competent speakers, while the resumptive pronoun is used by practically all the speakers surveyed.

Several examples of a subject resumptive pronoun appear above: (5a), (10b), (12b), (24a), (52), (53). In (53) the subject or topic *moi roditeli* is co-indexed with the resumptive pronoun *oni* 'they'. It is clear from the examples that American Russian is still at a stage where the resumptive pronoun distinguishes the person, gender, and number of the subject. The resumptive pronoun is obligatory, even for more competent speakers, if the subject and the verb are separated by intervening lexical material, as in example (12b) above.

All these examples involve third person pronouns. The resumptive pronoun co-indexed with first and second person subjects occurs under two principal conditions: if the subject is separated from the verb by intervening lexical material, as in (55), or if the subject is a compound noun phrase, as in (56).

- (55) *Ty včera ty pozvonila moja mat'*
 you_{SG} yesterday you_{SG.RP} called [my mother]_{UNM}
 dlja manikjur?
 for manicure_{UNM}
 'Did you call my mother for a manicure appointment yesterday?'
- (56) *Ja s učitel'nica ja ne dal ego brat' ètot klas.*
 I_{UNM} with teacher_{UNM} I_{RP} NEG let him_{GOAL} take this class
 'The teacher and I did not let him take this class.'

Another possible explanation for the development of the resumptive pronoun is that the pronominal copy originates as a topic marker (a similar explanation was proposed for Tok Pisin in Sankoff 1977). In spoken Full Russian, as well as in a number of other spoken languages, the use of the pronominal topic marker is quite common (Zemskaja 1981: 150ff.).

- (57) Petja u vas# on čto vseгда opazdyvaet?
 Pete by you he what always is late
 'This Pete of yours, is he always late like this?'

However, in spoken Full Russian, the resumptive pronoun signals a change of topic in discourse. Therefore, it does not appear after all topics. In addition, the resumptive pronoun is clearly separated from the preceding segment by a pause, as indicated by example (57). In American Russian, the resumptive pronoun appears with any subject and/or topic regardless of topic discontinuity. As for pausing between the resumptive pronoun and the preceding segment, it seems to be less consistent than in a fully acquired spoken language; there are numerous cases where no pause occurs at all. On the other hand, as was shown above, American Russian is characterized by aberrant pauses, which makes this criterion invalid.

While it is probably true that the resumptive pronoun originates following the tendency of the full spoken language, it is grammaticized in the reduced language and has a much wider function in it. That the original function of the resumptive pronoun relates to topic marking is confirmed by the fact that objects usually do not trigger resumptive pronouns. The correlation between subject and topic, on the one hand, and object and non-topic, on the other, is well-known (Li 1976; Givon 1983; Lambrecht 1994: 42, 131–36, 169, 262).²⁹

6.3. Binding

The Full Russian possessive reflexive *svoj* is consistently replaced by the regular possessive pronoun of the respective person. Compare (58a) and (58b):

²⁹ This correlation may explain why resumptive pronouns are typically co-indexed with subject NPs. Their co-indexation with non-subjects is confined to those cases where the non-subject is a topic (Polinsky 1997).

- (58) a. American Russian
 On_i govorit o ego_i dela tol'ko.
 he speaks about [his things]_{UNM} only
- b. Full Russian
 On_i govorit tol'ko o svoix_i/ego_j delax.
 he speaks only about [self's/his things]_{PREP}
 'He_i speaks only about his_i own/his_j business.'

In Full Russian, the contrast between the possessive reflexive and the regular pronominal possessive can be used for reference-tracking in discourse (for details see Padučeva 1985: 180–200). In (58b) the contrast is between the coreferential interpretation of the reflexive and the non-coreferential interpretation of the non-reflexive possessive pronoun. Another example:

- (59) a. Ivan_i pročital Petru_j svoi_{i/*j} stixi.
 Ivan_{NOM} read Peter_{DAT} self's poems_{ACC}
 'Ivan_i read his_i (=Ivan's) poems to Peter_j.'
- b. Ivan_i pročital Petru_j ego_{j/*i} stixi.
 Ivan_{NOM} read Peter_{DAT} his poems_{ACC}
 'Ivan_i read his_j (=Peter's) poems to Peter_j.'

There were no spontaneous American Russian examples involving this contrast. To test it I used a judgment task in which the subjects were offered examples such as (59). Skepticism with regard to elicited judgments notwithstanding, example (59b) was invariably interpreted as ambiguous by American Russian speakers, with *ego* referring to either Ivan or Peter. The loss of the possessive reflexive can also be explained by the direct influence of English, where simple possessive pronouns are used. Incidentally, American Russian has a greater number of overt possessive pronouns, often in those cases where, in Full Russian, possession would remain unexpressed and would be recoverable from the context. For example, the sentence in (49a) above would sound more acceptable to a Full Russian speaker if *lico* 'face' appeared without any possessive pronoun, in which case the semantics of possession would be recovered from the context.

The only reflexive which is retained in American Russian, at least to a certain extent, is *sebja* 'self'. Its preservation is probably related to the influence of English *oneself*, because *sebja* occurs most commonly where the

English counterpart is needed. However, *sebja* loses, partially or entirely, its nominal declension paradigm, as illustrated by (60), where Full Russian requires the prepositional case (60b):

(60) a. American Russian

Moj brat on zabolitsja o sebja.
my brother he takes care about self_{UNM}

b. Full Russian

Moj brat zabolitsja o (sam-om) seb-e.
my brother takes care about own_{MASC.PREP} self_{PREP}
'My brother takes care of himself.'

6.4. Beyond the Clause

Several tendencies differentiating American Russian from Full Russian stand out in the structure of sentences and discourse. One of these tendencies is a direct continuation of the resumptive pronoun strategy described in the preceding section; it consists of the loss of the anaphoric null copy under clause linkage.

On a pre-theoretical level, three basic techniques of reference tracking under coreference can be recognized for a full language: replacement of the coreferential entity by the null copy (61a),³⁰ replacement of the coreferential entity by a pronominal copy (61b), and repetition of the full NP (61c), usually when the two other strategies create ambiguity. The following English examples illustrate these three strategies:

- (61) a. The house_i whirled around two or three times and ____i rose slowly
through the air. (null copying)
- b. Dorothy_i felt as if she_i were going up in a balloon.
(overt pronominal copying)
- c. Jack_i and Jill_j went up the hill to fetch a pail of water; Jack_i fell
down and broke his crown and Jill_j went tumbling after.
(repetition of the full NP)

From the viewpoint of economy of expression, the null copy is certainly the most efficient. From the viewpoint of processing, the most unambiguous strategy is the use of the full NP, which provides fuller de-

³⁰ I am not assuming any particular characterization of the categorical status of the null element indicated by the gap in (61a); the reader should treat it simply as a 'place holder'.

scriptive content. However, such comparison of strategies is valid only if context is ignored, because contextual factors play a crucial role in disambiguation. Once the context is introduced, coreferential reduction is preferred over the unambiguous repetition of NPs, and such preference recurs cross-linguistically. Thus, the following hierarchy of reference-tracking strategies can be established, where economy of expression is inversely related to clarity of expression.

(62) Reference Tracking Strategies: Full Language

null copy > overt pronominal > full lexical description

In American Russian, the use of the null copy under coreferential reduction is practically non-existent. In the following examples the pronominal copy in the second clause is redundant from the viewpoint of an Full Russian speaker:

- (63) Ona_i xočet byt' model', i ona_i budet tonk[əjə]
 she wants to be model_{UNM} and she will be thin_{UNM.EPICENE}
 dlja èto.
 for this_{UNM}
 'She wants to be a model and is trying to lose weight for that.'

- (64) Ona_i togda ona uvidela moju mamu, i ona_i govorila
 she then she_{RP} saw my mom and she spoke
 s moej mamoj.
 with my mom
 'Then she [a teacher] met with my mom and finally spoke to her.'

- (65) My_i videli ètot dom i my_i ne ljubim tam.
 we saw this house and we NEG like there
 'We saw this house and didn't like it.'

As an aside, it is worth pointing out that this cannot be a borrowing from English because English would either use VP co-ordination, as in (65), or a null pronominal under coreference across clauses, as in (63).

Not only does the use of the pronominal anaphor increase in American Russian but also the repetition of a full NP under coreference. Note that in (64) the NP *moja mama* is repeated in the second clause instead of being pronominalized. Another example where a full NP is repeated:

- (66) I tam moj drugoj drug_i i moj drugoj drug_i on ne
 and there my other friend and my other friend he_{RP} NEG
 umel drive a stick-shift.
 could drive a stick-shift
 'My other friend was there; he didn't know how to drive a stick-shift
 car.'

The generalization is that American Russian eliminates the null copy strategy and replaces the three-way distinction in reference tracking strategies found in a full language (62) by a two-way distinction, as shown in (67):

- (67) Reference Tracking Strategies: Reduced Language
 overt pronominal > full lexical description

The elimination of the null copy is certainly related to the development of a resumptive pronoun at the level of clausal syntax (see section 5.2. above). However, the resumptive pronoun is co-indexed with the subject (and/or topic), while the null copy is eliminated for other arguments as well, as in (64) above. It seems that the elimination of the null copy is due to the general increase in the redundancy rules observed in American Russian. The speaker, who lacks confidence that the message will be understood properly, introduces more overt elements that are supposed to guide the hearer in the processing.

Given the reduction of the hierarchy to just two elements, an overt pronominal and a full NP, another interesting question arises: what are the correspondences between the hierarchy of coreference tracking in a full language (62) and in a reduced language (67)? In other words, is it possible to establish a set of rules that would match the use of each of the three strategies in Full Russian to the use of a certain strategy in American Russian? One might surmise that coreferential null copying in a full language would correspond to coreferential pronominalization in a reduced language and coreferential pronominalization and the repetition of a full NP in a fully acquired language would correspond to the repetition of an NP in a reduced language. However, we do not find a one-to-one correspondence between the use of the pronominal copy in Full Russian and the use of NP repetition in American Russian. For example, in (68a) the AR speaker uses a pronominal copy only whereas Full Russian requires an NP to be repeated in the second clause (68b):

(68) a. American Russian

Moi roditeli oni priglasili alana_i sestra_j tože potomu što
 my parents they_{RP} invited [Alla's sister]_{UNM} too because
 ona_{i/*j} očēn' poprosila.
 she very asked

b. Full Russian

Moi roditeli priglasili takže allinu_i sestru_j potomu što Alla_i
 my parents invited also [Alla's sister]_{ACC} because Alla
 ix očēn' prosila.
 them very asked
 'My parents also invited Alla's sister because Alla had begged
 them to.'

The data collected for this study are not sufficient for the formulation of precise rules that determine the distribution of the pronominal copy and of the full NP under coreference. There seems to be a certain degree of variation in the use of the two strategies, but variation of this kind can also be found in Full Russian. Thus, the only solid conclusion that can be made at this stage is that American Russian differs from Full Russian, and from Émigré Russian for that matter, in the absence of the null copy under coreference reduction.

The other feature that differentiates the sentential syntax of American Russian from Full Russian syntax is the absence of gapping. Gapping, or deletion of the predicate under co-predication or clause linkage, is functionally similar to the use of the null copy for a coreferential entity. Like null copying, gapping is motivated by economy of expression.

Spoken Full Russian uses gapping very commonly (Pesetsky 1982: 642–60, Zemskaja 1981: 214ff.). In American Russian, gapping was not attested. For instance, no gapping occurred in the following naturally occurring examples, for which the corresponding Full Russian strategy would involve deleting the second instance of 'study' (69) and 'go' (70).

- (69) Moja sestra ona učit *business* i ja uču *pre-med*.
 my sister she_{RP} studies business and I study pre-med
 'My sister is a business major, and I am pre-med.'

- (70) Moja babuška i deduška poexal v Israel,
 my_{FEM} grandmother and grandfather went_{PAST.3SG.MASC} in Israel
 vse my poexal sjuda.
 all we went_{PAST.3SG.MASC} here
 'My grandparents went to Israel and we all came to this country.'

The next example involves code-switching on the predicate. Despite the fact that the predicates are in English, the speaker fails to delete the second occurrence of the predicate.

- (71) Moja mama goes mad esli ja stay over s Sharon# moj otec
 my mom goes mad if I stay over with Sharon my father
 on goes mad esli moi druzja u menja doma.
 he_{RP} goes mad if my friends by me at home
 'My mother goes mad if I stay over at Sharon's house and my father,
 if my friends stay over at my house.'

Again, it seems that the loss of gapping can be explained by increasing redundancy of expression which is supposed to facilitate processing.

Turning now to discourse coherence, the elicited segments that are larger than a sentence reflect the same tendencies that were just described for sentential syntax, in particular, the absence of gapping and null copying. Another interesting tendency that characterizes the structure of American Russian texts is the recapitulation of the final clause of the preceding sentence before introducing new information. This type of repetition is known as "tail-head linkage" (Grimes 1975: 316, Reesink 1990: 301). For example (tail-head segments are capitalized):

- (72) Ètot mal'čik_i togda UBEŽAL# ON_i UBEŽAL, i vot
 this boy then ran away he ran away and DM
 ètot *policeman*_j ON_j U MAL'ČIKA_i DOMA# ON_j U NEGO_i DOMA,
 this policeman he_{RP} by boy at home he by him at home
 i tam U NEGO_i DOMA *policeman*_j on_j stal kak ego_i
 and there by him at home policeman he_{RP} became as his
 te *foster parents*_k# vot/tam *foster parents*_k bol'se NET#
 those foster parents DM foster parents more is not
 IX_k NET, ONI_k MERTVYE# ONI_k UMERLI/ potomu čto
 them is not they dead they_{RP} died because
*policeman*_j on_j ubil ètix *foster parents*_k.
 policeman he killed these foster parents
 'The boy then ran away and the policeman went to his house. At his
 house, he assumed the image of the boy's foster parents. The foster
 parents were dead because the policeman killed them.'

Another feature of American Russian that becomes more apparent in texts than in isolated sentences is the frequency of demonstrative pronouns modifying nominals. Thus, in (72), we find *tot policeman* 'this policeman'; *èti/te foster parents* 'these/those foster parents'. Such use of demonstratives, which would be excessive in Full Russian, has a twofold explanation. First, it may be a result of the tendency to avoid ambiguity. Demonstratives provide clearer referential instruction, and therefore assist the hearer in reference tracking and easier processing of the segment. Second, demonstratives in American Russian may compensate for the absence of the definite article. Thus, the frequency of demonstratives would be directly related to the interference of English. Whether the latter is a valid explanation can be tested by comparing the use of demonstratives in the speech of those whose primary and secondary language do not differ in the article system and also by studying the use of demonstratives in the speech of English learners of Russian as a second language.

As for the redundancy of expression, some parallels of this phenomenon are observed in the use of lexical items. In particular, there is a tendency towards repetition of certain adverbs, for example:

- (73) Ploxo ploxo on vedet.
 badly badly he behaves
 'He behaves very badly.'

- (74) Molokanskije pesni èto očén' očén' prekrasno.
 Molokan songs this very very splendid
 'Molokan songs are absolutely splendid.'

This redundancy at the level of lexical items is probably motivated by several related factors, namely, the semantic vagueness of each individual word, which calls for "extra support" coming from additional lexical items, and the need to express each notion most explicitly, to facilitate processing on the part of the hearer.

7. Correlating Lexical and Grammatical Knowledge

Above, the evaluation of the speakers' proficiency was based on purely lexical data. It does not necessarily follow that lexical change should be connected to structural change. In theory the two may be unrelated. However, several grammatical changes discussed above were more apparent in the speech of those subjects whose proficiency was lower. The goal of this section is to address the possible relationship between grammatical and lexical knowledge. This relationship is not immediately obvious or trivial. However, some findings on L1 development suggest a correlation between lexical and grammatical maturity in fairly young children (Bates et al. 1994; Thal et al. 1996, 1997; Fenson et al. 2000).

To test this possible correlation in American Russian speakers, I chose eleven structural variables, summarized in Table 8. The percentage of occurrences consistent with the grammar of Full Russian was calculated within each variable for each of the sixteen speakers. These percentages were taken as the measure of grammatical competence. For each individual speaker, these percentages were then compared with the speaker's proficiency score.

Where possible, fifty tokens of each variable were transcribed for each speaker. The variables for which fifty tokens were available are represented in Table 9. In the two left columns of the table, abbreviated names of speakers and their proficiency ranges are given, taken from Table 2. The speakers are listed in order of descending proficiency. In the subsequent columns, which represent variables, the occurrence of the Full Russian feature is given, in percentage points, for each speaker within each of the four variables. Thus the 20 percent indicated for speaker Le in the column "absence of resumptive pronoun" means that she avoided a resumptive pronoun, consistent with the grammar of Full Russian, in 10 sentences out of 50 (conversely, she used a resumptive pronoun, in accordance with the grammar of American Russian, in the other 40 sentences).

Table 8. Structural Variables Differentiating Full Russian and American Russian³¹

Variable	Full Russian	American Russian
case of the predicative nominal	instrumental/ nominative	nominative (unmarked case)
preposition-governed case	other than nominative	nominative (unmarked case)
possessive construction	<i>u</i> -phrase + <i>be</i> (<i>u menja est'/bylo X</i> 'I have/had X')	Have-clause (<i>ja imeju X</i> 'I have X')
case of the nominal in the existential negative clause (<i>net</i>)	genitive	nominative (unmarked case)
case encoding the recipient/addressee	dative	accusative (marked case)
reflexive verb	- <i>sja</i> marking	no - <i>sja</i> marking
conditional	yes	no
use of aspectual pairs	yes	no
subject-verb agreement	yes	no
subject resumptive pronoun	no	yes
null copying under co-reference	yes	no

As the results in Table 9 indicate, high percentages of Full Russian grammatical features (prepositionally governed obliques, correct choice of aspect, subject-verb agreement, and the absence of a resumptive pronoun) are directly related to higher proficiency scores. In other words, speakers with higher proficiency show less deviation from the structural features of Full Russian, and low proficiency speakers demonstrate greater structural deviation from Full Russian. This correlation is not bound to one variable but is reiterated across the four variables in Table 9.

Table 10 lists those variables for which the number of tokens obtained from an individual speaker was less than 50. In such cases, the available number of tokens (for each speaker) was transcribed. For example, speaker Sv produced 26 tokens where the conditional had to be used. Of these 26 cases, Sv failed to use the conditional form with the particle *by* in 23 cases and used it in three cases. The speaker's percentage for the correct

³¹ For expository purposes, the values for American Russian are presented as categorical. However, as the data in the paper show, the features listed here act as variables in the speech of individual American Russian speakers.

Table 9. American Russian: Correlations between Lexical Proficiency and Structural Competence

Percentage of the Full Russian Structural Patterns
(number of tokens for each speaker within each variable—50)

Speaker	Proficiency	Preposition-Governed Oblique	Correct Choice of Aspect	Subject-Verb Agreement	Absence of Resumptive Pronoun (3rd person subject only)
Le	90.5	24	52	66	20
Ko	90	34	34	72	32
Zh	89.5	20	40	84	24
E	89	20	38	68	30
K	88.5	18	32	74	36
S	88.5	10	40	66	28
I	88.5	22	44	68	18
M	88.5	14	26	72	22
B	86.5	12	20	60	20
P	86	8	24	64	10
Z	84	10	26	50	14
G	82	10	28	54	1
Na	77	0	12	30	12
A	77	4	16	36	16
Sv	75	0	18	42	6
Ma	74	0	10	32	12

Table 10. American Russian: Correlations between Lexical Proficiency and Structural Competence

Percentage of the Full Russian structural pattern for tokens under 50 (first number-percentage, rounded off to integers; in parentheses, m/n—number of occurrences of the Full Russian pattern over the total number of tokens elicited from an individual speaker)

Speaker	Proficiency	Predicative Nominal in INST	U-phrase in Possessive Construction	Genitive of Negation in Existentials	DAT of Recipient/ Addressee	Reflexive Verb in <i>-sja</i>	Conditional with <i>by</i>	Null Copying under Coreference
Le	90.5	25(4/16)	29(5/17)	30(6/20)	37(17/46)	64(25/39)	47(7/15)	21(14/66)
Ko	90	33(6/18)	25(8/32)	50(3/6)	33(8/24)	89(55/62)	37(7/19)	28(11/39)
Zh	89.5	20(2/10)	30(3/10)	39(7/18)	31(11/36)	88(36/41)	37(11/30)	33(13/39)
E	89	20(1/5)	28(5/18)	64(9/14)	22(2/9)	82(60/73)	56(9/16)	37(10/27)
K	88.5	17(2/12)	18(4/22)	40(4/10)	41(13/32)	72(36/50)	35(5/14)	36(15/42)
S	88.5	10(2/20)	14(2/14)	64(7/11)	20(4/20)	85(28/33)	32(7/22)	35(18/52)
I	88.5	21(3/14)	17(3/18)	33(4/12)	33(18/55)	65(20/31)	36(4/11)	39(11/28)
M	88.5	14(3/22)	28(7/25)	43(6/14)	27(7/26)	54(13/24)	33(6/18)	29(17/58)
B	86.5	13(1/8)	16(3/19)	42(8/19)	29(9/31)	50(14/28)	28(11/40)	27(11/41)
P	86	8(1/12)	22(2/9)	40(2/5)	28(5/18)	55(22/40)	20(3/15)	26(5/19)
Z	84	9(1/11)	11(2/18)	20(2/10)	16(5/13)	48(24/50)	13(1/8)	23(9/40)
G	82	10(2/20)	7(1/14)	13(1/8)	22(6/27)	36(13/36)	19(3/16)	11(3/27)
Na	77	0(0/16)	14(3/22)	10(1/10)	6(1/16)	21(5/24)	10(1/10)	13(2/15)
A	77	4(1/24)	10(1/10)	0(0/6)	14(3/22)	28(11/40)	11(2/18)	15(4/26)
Sv	75	0(0/11)	0(0/14)	9(1/11)	6(1/18)	16(5/31)	12(3/26)	6(1/18)
Ma	74	0(0/10)	8(1/12)	0(0/8)	8(2/25)	11(2/18)	13(2/15)	14(3/21)

*only verbs with the non-reflexive counterpart were counted

use of the conditional, i.e., the use conforming to Full Russian, was 12 percent.

The results presented in Table 10 also confirm the correlation between lexical and structural knowledge: speakers with higher proficiency have a higher percentage of Full Russian structural features than low proficiency speakers.

The statistical results, therefore, confirm a positive correlation between the proficiency level established on a lexical basis and more general language competence as reflected by structural features. Of the structural variables introduced above, the most relevant ones seem to be syntactic variables, the absence of prepositional case forms, and the absence of the dative. It is these variables that most clearly distinguish speakers with different proficiency levels.

Since attrition in the lexicon and structural attrition are related, the basic vocabulary technique, proposed above as a method of rough approximation, turns out to be relevant for the general assessment of language competence. In other words, lexical proficiency can serve as a representation of structural knowledge and overall competence in a given language. Accordingly, the proficiency assessment method proposed above allows us to obtain a preliminary idea of the speaker's general status with regard to language competence. This seems to be an important finding, which must certainly be tested against the material of other reduced languages. Some preliminary results obtained from incomplete learners of Polish, Kabardian, and Tamil (Polinsky 1993, 1994, 1995), seem to confirm the correlation between lexical and structural attrition.

Next, since structural attrition and lexical proficiency are correlated, the lexical proficiency scores can serve as a basis for the characterization and ranking of incomplete learners in terms of a continuum model. Such a model, which can be patterned on the synchronic creole continuum models (DeCamp 1971, Bickerton 1973, Rickford 1987), will distinguish between acrolectal, mesolectal, and basilectal varieties of a reduced language. In the case of language attrition, acrolectal speakers are those whose language system is least removed from the respective full language. At the other extreme, basilectal speakers demonstrate the greatest deviation from the full language. The intermediate varieties are then characterized as mesolectal.

Within these three groups of speakers, there is some variation in percentages obtained for individual speakers. Most conspicuously, individual speakers may have very high or very low percentages of some variables but score consistently within their group for the majority of other variables. Thus, speaker I differs from the rest of his group by an unusually

high percentage of the predicative instrumental (at 21.4 percent, see Table 10). Otherwise, I's percentages agree with those of the rest of the group. Speaker P, whose scores are fairly low, stands out in the use of the correct possessive construction (at 22.2 percent, Table 10). Assuming that the number of tokens is not too small to hinder the statistics, it can be suggested that the speakers within a lect may still differ. The relevant fact, however, is that differences between speakers within a lect are less significant than the differences across lects. This is particularly evident in the case of speakers with the lowest proficiency, whose scores within each variable drop significantly compared to the rest of the pool.

If we correlate the data on the structural variables with the proficiency scores, American Russian speakers with proficiency scores of 88+ can be identified as acrolectal speakers. Basilectal American Russian speakers are characterized by the lowest proficiency scores, in this case 74–82. The mesolectal group includes speakers with proficiency scores between 82 and 88. One of the speakers, namely G, whose proficiency score is 82, seems to occupy an intermediary position between the basilectal speakers and mesolectal speakers. He resembles mesolectal speakers in his use of prepositionally governed obliques, use of aspectual forms, agreement, and use of the dative. Meanwhile, his use of the possessive construction and his low scores on the genitive of negation and null copying identify him with basilectal speakers.

The structural changes discussed above (see Table 8) are most prominent for basilectal speakers (speakers with higher attrition). Of course, the specific numerical scores might change if more informants are studied and people with scores lower than 70 are found (see above on the gap between scores of 30, which corresponded to total loss of Russian, and 74, the lowest score in this study).

Based on such a breakdown of the scores, the individual idiolects studied here can be represented as elements of the attrition continuum, as shown in (75) (see Table 2 for the list of speakers).

(75) American Russian: Continuum of Speakers

basilectal speakers 70-82	mesolectal speakers 82-88	acrolectal speakers 88-90+
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Maintaining the continuum representation, it is possible to speak of these structural phenomena as tendencies that increase along the continuum.

The continuum model, as represented for American Russian, poses several further questions.

The main question concerns the relationship between the *acrolect* and the full language: what is the borderline between the *acrolect* and the full language? Can the proposed numerical procedure be employed in distinguishing between the full language and such an *acrolect*? What structural and lexical variables are necessary and sufficient to distinguish between the two?

Going back to the data in Tables 9 and 10, it is clear that some structural features differ across *lects* in a more pronounced way than others. This greater variation may be interpreted in the following manner: these features are more indicative of language attrition than others, which vary less significantly. In light of this, the relevant question is whether it is necessary or even possible to rank structural variables according to their diagnostic weight. It would be reasonable to develop a more general list of structural variables indicative of attrition such that structural variables determined by the internal grammar of an individual language would follow from it. Judging by the data presented above, the variables that are most sensitive to the degree of language attrition include all the syntactic variables and those morphological variables that are the direct outcome of paradigm leveling.

8. Conclusion

This paper examined American Russian a reduced variety of Russian, spoken by immigrants who learned Russian as their first language and then switched to English as their primary language. American Russian is characterized by profound structural changes brought about by the fact that speakers no longer maintain Russian as their primary language. A stable correlation is found between the level of lexical attrition in the language and the level of structural (morphological and syntactic) loss. This finding allows us to propose a compact method for assessing language attrition. The method, based on a simple lexico-statistical procedure, proves adequate as a more general linguistic tool of evaluating language competence.

In studies of language attrition, a distinction is made between externally and internally induced changes in the grammar (Seliger and Vago 1991: 6–10). Externally induced changes are explained by the direct influence of the interfering language, while internally induced changes are motivated by universal principles or by the internal grammar of the language undergoing attrition.

Externally induced changes certainly play an important role in American Russian, but their primary domain is the lexicon. Throughout this paper we have shown that American Russian structural properties cannot be explained by the influence of English. However, the relatively minor role played by English lexical interference should not be taken as a general sign that lexical change cannot have consequences for grammar. The observed changes to the American Russian aspectual system show how systematic changes to the lexicon can have significant structural ramifications, including the reinterpretation of the relationship between aspect and telicity and the expansion of analytical aspectual expressions.

Overall, the structural changes observed in American Russian cannot be explained as a reflection of tendencies characteristic of Full Russian. Rather, these changes derive from restricted language competence, which leads to the leveling of paradigms, increased analyticism, and increased redundancy in morphology and syntax. Thus, if we maintain the contrast between externally and internally induced change, the latter change in American Russian is seemingly motivated by some universal principles.

The material from American Russian proves that a reduced language is indeed structurally different from the full language. Language attrition is indicated by a series of structural features. If we ignore features external to the grammar of Russian, the following structural properties are indicative of language attrition: loss of case distinctions, loss of verb agreement, elimination of the conditional, loss or simplification of reflexivization rules, development of resumptive pronouns, loss of null copying under clause linkage, and increased redundancy in discourse. Some parallels between reduced Russian and languages with a discontinuous tradition are already clear, but it is important to study other reduced languages in order to verify the properties listed here as diagnostic.

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