

Heritage Language Education

A New Field Emerging

Edited by

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Heritage Language Narratives¹

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This chapter is a preliminary exploration of the structure of heritage speakers' narratives. Although far from a full-fledged study, it aims to establish methodological foundations for an exploration of the structure of heritage speakers' narratives and will contribute to our understanding of the main properties of such narratives. Knowing what, if anything, makes heritage speakers' narratives different from those of fully competent speakers has implications for language acquisition studies and for the development of practical steps to improve the competency of heritage speakers.

Before moving to the discussion of the main issues addressed here, some terminological clarifications are in order. By *competent speaker* we understand a speaker who has full control of the grammar of their language as well as the ability to tailor their language to the particular audience this speaker has to address (control of styles and registers). *Narrative* is understood here very broadly, as an account of a story or past events, and does not presuppose a dialogical interaction. By *heritage language* I mean a language which was first for an individual with respect to the order of acquisition but has not been completely acquired because of the switch to another dominant language. An individual may use the heritage language under certain conditions and understand it, but his/her primary language is a different one (Valdés, 2000). The corresponding language that has been completely acquired (by a population of speakers other than heritage) and is spoken competently is referred to as the *full language*. If heritage language X is compared to a certain full language, the latter serves as the *baseline*; it is important to remember that the baseline does not have to correspond to a standard language. For instance, if dialect A of language L is the basis of the standard, but heritage speakers grow up surrounded by dialect B, which constitutes their main input, it is dialect B that serves as the baseline. In fact, correct identification of the baseline may assist people in understanding subjects' histories and sociolinguistic situation with respect to their heritage language.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first describe the research methods employed in this study. I then present the main results obtained in the study and identify characteristic features of heritage speakers' narratives compared with narratives elicited from fully competent speakers. Finally I discuss these findings from a more general perspective.

Research Methods

The design of this study followed the so-called frog story design successfully used for a cross-linguistic developmental study of narratives by a team of researchers (Berman & Slobin, 1994). The material for eliciting narratives was a picture book of 24 pictures showing a boy who loses his pet frog, goes through a series of adventures to find it, and reaches a happy ending (it is unclear from the picture if the boy finds his own frog or gets a replacement).

The task was also a replication of the original frog story study. Subjects were interviewed individually and given instructions very close to the ones used in Berman and Slobin: "Here is a set of pictures. They tell a story about a boy, his dog, and a frog. First please look at all the pictures. Pay attention to each picture and afterwards tell the story shown in these pictures" (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 22). The subjects were given five minutes to look at the pictures prior to the elicitation and then were able to see the pictures as they were telling the story. Since the study involved heritage speakers and controls, the heritage speakers were asked to tell the story in the heritage language and then in the dominant language (English). The controls, full speakers of the baseline language, were asked to tell the story only once.

Each session was digitally recorded and transcribed using standard transcribing techniques elaborated on in Berman and Slobin (1994, pp. 29–31 and 127–188). The basic unit of analysis here is a clause (as opposed to a sentence, utterance, or intonation unit), identified as a unit headed by an inflected or unified predicate.

The subjects for this study included two heritage speakers of Russian (both male) living in the United States. Following my earlier work (Polinsky 1995, 1997, 2000), I will refer to them as American Russian speakers. One of the American Russian speakers interviewed for this study was a child (M, age 9) representing the oldest age group considered by Berman and Slobin. He stopped using Russian actively around age 5 as he entered kindergarten. He lives in a Russian-speaking home and understands basic Russian but prefers to respond in English when addressed in Russian. The other subject was a college student (B, age 23) who was born in the United States and had a profile similar to the child's, having stopped using Russian actively upon entering kindergarten. Neither of these subjects can read Cyrillic.

The controls included S, a Russian-speaking child (age 8) and A, a Russian-speaking student (age 21).² English-speaking subjects were not interviewed; instead, I used the original frog story data for comparison (Berman & Slobin, 1994).

I compared the heritage speakers to fully competent speakers of Russian, within and outside of their age group, and to themselves as they told the story in English. In addition to the range and length of narrations (measures used by Berman and Slobin, 1994), I also measured the mean length of utterance (MLU) in words.³

Results and Preliminary Discussion

Quantitative Measures

The quantitative results obtained for the frog stories in question are summarized in Table 8.1 and Table 8.2. The numerical measures reflect the overall length of the narrative (number of clauses in the narrative) and the MLU in words. In addition, I counted the number of embedded clauses.

It is not unexpected that all the narratives are relatively similar in length; after all, they follow the same story plot, and the 9-year-olds are quite close to adults in terms of their ability to narrate the plot in general (for a discussion of narrative styles in 9-year-olds vs. adults, see Berman and Slobin, 1994). The three other measures, however, reveal significant differences between heritage speakers and full speakers, within and across languages. In Russian, the heritage speakers had much shorter utterances than the full speakers and also showed a significantly lower number of embedded clauses. The comparison of the heritage speakers with themselves when they speak English also shows significant differences. First of all, the English production shows that the heritage speakers are fully competent in the construction of English narratives. In fact, the child heritage speaker interviewed here is significantly more proficient than the children reported in Berman and Slobin (1994), and both heritage speakers are certainly on par with the adult speakers reported in their study. Second, given that the child speaker did very well in English, his relatively poor performance in Russian cannot be reduced to possible problems with his cognitive development. Likewise, the adult speaker's performance in English indicates that whatever problems arose for him in the construction of the Russian narrative were specific to the language used.

Table 8.1 Russian Narratives: Summary Data

	Heritage Speaker		Full Russian Speaker	
	child (M)	adult (B)	child (S)	adult (A)
# of clauses in the narrative	70	90	75	86
MLU (words)	5.1	4.6	8.5	9.8
# of embedded clauses	7	5	15	23

Table 8.2 English Narratives: Summary Data

	Heritage Speakers		Full English Speakers ^a	
	child (M)	adult (B)	children	adults
# of clauses in the narrative	71	85	45	84
MLU (words)	10.4	8.9	6.8	6.8
# of embedded clauses	12	15	6	19

Table 8.3 Average Speaking Rates (words per minute)

Heritage Speakers		Full Russian Speakers		English Speakers	
child (M)	adult (B)	child (S)	adult (A)	child (M)	adult (B)
68	59	100	105	163	145

Table 8.3 presents the statistics on speaking rate in the narratives. Since Berman and Slobin do not have similar statistics for their (presumably) monolingual English speakers, I will use the English narratives elicited from heritage speakers of Russian for the relevant measures. The speaking rate measures shown in Table 8.3 are particularly striking. Of course, cross-language comparisons have to take into account the average length of words in a given language; on average, Russian words are longer than English words. But even with that taken into account, the difference between the heritage speakers and the full speakers is remarkably strong: the adult heritage speaker's rate was almost half of the rate demonstrated by the full speaker control.

Problems with lexical retrieval represent the primary reason for this striking difference. Heritage speakers have serious problems with lexical access and retrieval (Polinsky, 1997; Andrews, 1998; Zemskaia, 2001), and this inability to access a relevant lexical item slows down their production significantly. As lexical retrieval problems arise, speakers also apply different strategies in coping with them. In the five-minute narrative, the child speaker did not resort to English at all, while the adult heritage speaker was much more liberal in code-switching and used English words and expressions 13 times over the same 5-minute narrative.

Structural Properties of Heritage Narrative

It is impossible to do justice to all the structural characteristics of heritage speakers' narratives here. One of the characteristic features of heritage language has become apparent from the quantitative measures presented earlier—namely, heritage speakers rarely utilize embedded structures.

In addition to the low incidence of embedding, I will discuss three other features: case marking, aspectual characteristics, and use of tenses. Before discussing these properties, it is important to note that many features of overt morphosyntax in American Russian cannot be characterized as categorical; rather, they are manifest as preferences or tendencies. This makes it tempting to associate the graded deviations from the Full Russian system as performance errors and problems with on-line production. While more work is needed to show conclusively that this is not the case, such a scenario is highly unlikely because of the rate at which the features are found. The differences between American and Full Russian discussed here fall under the category of syntactic errors. Such errors are extremely rare in heritage speakers (Berg, 1987; Deese, 1984; Fay, 1980; 1982;

Garnham et al., 1982; Poulisse, 1999, 2000; Stemberger, 1982).⁴ Meanwhile, the features described below occur at the rate of 60–75%, which indicates that they cannot be reduced to errors. It is more plausible that these features represent a grammar competing with the elements of the Full Russian grammar.⁵

In what follows, I describe the relevant features without further reference to their status as tendencies (unless statistics are needed), so the reader is asked to bear this provision in mind. I use the following abbreviations: ACC—accusative, DAT—dative, IMPF—imperfective, PERF—perfective, RP—resumptive pronoun, UNM—unmarked case.

Case marking

A rather apparent and striking feature of American Russian is the simplification of its case system as compared to Full Russian. In short, the elaborate case system of Full Russian is replaced by a system where the citation form (the nominative) is used predominantly for both main arguments, subject and object. This means that the accusative case, used to mark most direct objects in Full Russian, is not regularly available for such marking in American Russian. Consider the following from the narrative:

- (1) *i mal'čik idjot iskat' ljaguška*
 and boy.UNM goes look for frog.UNM
 'And the boy went looking for the frog.' (M)

Of the 25 direct objects in the child's narrative, almost half (12) still appeared in the accusative. The adult heritage speaker had accusative marking on 7 out of 18 direct objects.

The accusative case as a morphological word form is not lost, however; it is reanalyzed as the case of the indirect object (goal) and is used quite consistently with pronominal goals (Polinsky, 1997), and variably with nominal ones. For example, in one of the narratives we find:

- (2) *ëtot mal'čik on skazal sobaku*
 this boy he said dog.DAT
 'This boy said to the dog...' (B)

The restructuring of case forms also has an effect on the cases used with prepositions. In Full Russian, the nominative case does not occur with prepositions; in American Russian, the unmarked nominative is the case associated with almost all prepositions. Some numerical data from the narratives illustrate this feature. The child heritage speaker had 30 prepositional phrases, of which 11 (36%) did not have the oblique case assigned by the relevant preposition. The

adult heritage speaker had 26 prepositional phrases, of which 18 (69%) did not have the oblique case assigned by the relevant preposition.

Aspect

One of the advantages of the frog stories is that they present the relevant context for the expression of a number of aspectual distinctions used with all main types of verbs (accomplishments, achievements, states, and activities). Russian aspect is notoriously difficult and its development in monolingual speakers is known to take quite a while (Gvozdev, 1961; Slobin, 1966; Stoll, 2001). The aspectual system of American Russian is quite different from that of the full language (Polinsky, 1994). To simplify things quite a bit, a number of verbs are not used in aspectual pairs (imperfective/perfective);⁶ instead, only one member of the pair is typically used. When offered the lexical item they do not use themselves, heritage speakers recognize it, but on forced choice they cannot tell the difference between the members of the aspectual pairs.

With verbs of motion, the system of distinctions is further complicated by the contrast between unidirectional and multidirectional verbs of motion; each type has its own perfective and imperfective. Table 8.4 illustrates this for the verb 'fly.'

Usually, just one of the four cells is represented; for example, to conclude the narrative, the adult heritage speaker said the following:

- (3) *mal'čik i ego novyj l'jaguška budet idet domoj*
 boy and his new frog will go.IMPF home
 'The boy and the new frog were going home.' (B)

The corresponding Full Russian sentence should be something like this:

- (4) *mal'čik s novoj l'jaguškoj pošli/pojdut domoj*
 boy with new frog went.PERF/will go.PERF home

The child speaker chose only three lexical items incorrectly with respect to aspectual value; the adult heritage speaker made 11 such errors. In addition to the error shown in example (3), the following verbs were used incorrectly:

Table 8.4 Russian Verbs of Motion

	Unidirectional	Multidirectional
Imperfective	<i>letet'</i>	<i>letat'</i>
Perfective	PREFIX- <i>letet'</i> (e.g., <i>uletet'</i>)	PREFIX- <i>letat'</i> (e.g., <i>poletat'</i>)

- (5) 'jump': *prygat'* (imperf.) instead of *prygnut'* (perf.)
 'sit': *sidet'* (imperf.) instead of *sest'* (perf.)
 'get up': *vstavat'* (imperf.) instead of *vstat'* (perf.)
 'call': *pozvat'* (perf.) instead of *zvat'* (imperf.)
 'go': *xodit'* (multidirectional) instead of *idti* (unidirectional)
 'run': *begat'* (multidirectional) instead of *bežat'* (unidirectional)

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 heritage speakers, what means of expressing aspect are used in Heritage Russian?

Let us address the first question: What explains the maintenance of the imperfective for some verbs and of the perfective for others in American Russian? It seems that if only one verb is maintained in American Russian, then it is the member of the aspectual pair that denotes a more common conceptualization associated with a given event. If an event has an inherent limit, it is conceptualized as telic (i.e., having an inherent limit). In this case, the perfective form of the verb is more likely to be maintained. If the event is more commonly conceptualized as atelic (i.e., lacking an inherent limit), then 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 use of verb forms in the heritage speaker narratives is summarized in Table 8.5 and Table 8.6. The frequencies in the input are taken from Brown (1996).

Table 8.5 Frequency of Imperfectives versus Perfectives in Full Russian and Retention of a Particular Form in American Russian

Event	Full Russian		American Russian Form
	Imperfective form	Perfective form freq.	
cry, scream	kričat' 394	zakričat' 1741	imperfective
call	zvat' 428	pozvat' 1950	imperfective
give ^a	davat' 149	dat' 155	perfective
become	stanovit' sja 622	stat' 59	perfective
stay, stand	stojat' 104	(v-)stat' 444	imperfective
sit	sidet' 143	sest' 343	imperfective
take	brat' 419	vzjat' 132	perfective
lie down	leč' 259	ležat' 1368	imperfective
search	iskat' 646	poiskat' 6641	imperfective
find	naxodit' 1197	najti' 234	perfective
jump	prygat' 2994	prygnut' 7450	imperfective

^aFrequency cannot distinguish between the two.

Table 8.6 Motion Verb Forms and Frequency: Full Russian and Retention in American Russian

Event	Full Russian Form				Form Retained in American Russian
	U, I	U, P	M, I	M, P	
go	iditi	pojti	xodit'	prixodit' or uxodit'	iditi/ (u)xodit'
drive, move, travel	exat'	pocexat'	ezdit'	s"ezdit'	pojti/exat'
run	bežat'	ubežat'	begat'	sbegat'	begat'
fly	letet'	uletet'	letat'	sletat'	letat'
Frequency					
go	64	79	247	348 186	
drive, move, travel	420	386	1662	6535	
run	370	1702	1844	5871	
fly	1523	7525	2707	< 10,000	

Note: U = Unidirectional; M = Multidirectional; I = Imperfective; P = Perfective.

The results summarized in these two tables confirm the generalization that the choice of the single aspectual form, lexicalized in American Russian, may be determined by the more frequent conceptualization of a given event as telic or atelic.⁷ However, the lexicalizations of 'run' and 'fly' contradict this generalization; at this point, I have no explanation as to why this may be the case.

If this generalization is on the right track, it is important to bear in mind that heritage speakers of Russian do not perceive the verb they retain as 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.

Assuming that the lexicalization of a single verb form, perfective or imperfective, is determined by the conceptual structure of the more frequent event, let us now turn to the second question: how does American Russian express aspect? American Russian means of expressing aspect are different from those used in Full Russian, but aspect is a conceptual, semantic characteristic, and it does not have to disappear even if the relevant morphosyntax used to express it is gone.

Instead of the fairly arcane system of affixes employed in Full Russian aspectual grammar, American Russian seems to use either the bare verb or the combination of a light verb (functioning similar to an auxiliary) and content-carrying verb (or another lexical category) to express aspectual distinctions. Roughly, the perfective for verbs of accomplishment and achievement is expressed using the light verbs *stat'* 'become' and *načat'* 'begin'; these same verbs are used in Full Russian, but in American Russian they become the major means of expressing perfectivity.

For example, in describing how the boy grabs the deer by the antlers, a speaker used the following:

- (6) *on načinaet deržit olen' roga*
 he begins.IMPf holds.IMPf deer.NOM horns.NOM/ACC
 'He grabbed the deer by the antlers.' (M)

The corresponding Full Russian sentence involves synthetic verb forms: a prefixal perfective or a suffixal imperfective:

- (7) *on sxvatil/xvataet olenja za roga*
 he seized.PERF/seizes.IMPf deer.ACC by horns.ACC
 'He grabbed/grabs the deer by the antlers.'

The imperfective is either unmarked or is marked by the light verb *byt'* 'be', as in example (3). The same verb *byt'* is used as the auxiliary to express states if followed by a noun or adjective. This overall system of encoding aspect resembles aspect-marking strategies in creole languages (for an overview of the creole systems, see Singler, 1990). In American Russian, such a system may have arisen either under the influence of English or under the general creolization of the language. To determine which of these two possibilities is more likely, we need more data on heritage Russian in contact with languages other than English.⁸

Tense

In the use of tense, the two heritage speakers are quite different from each other. The child speaker consistently used past tense (forming it quite correctly in most cases), and this pattern of the past tense narrative is identical to the pattern he uses in English. The child speaker thus conforms to the overall tendency of English-speaking 9-year-olds to use the past tense in English (Berman & Slobin, 1994). The Full Russian counterpart also used past tense quite consistently, with the exception of a few episodes where he switched to historical present (the bees flying out of the beehive; the owl appearing in front of the boy; the boy finding a family of frogs).

The adult speaker (B), who used the past tense consistently in his English narrative, showed no consistency whatsoever in the use of tenses in the Russian narrative. He started out using the present tense, then switched to the past, then returned to the present. He also used a fair number of forms that correspond to future forms in Full Russian. Overall, B pays little or no attention to the use of tenses and their sequencing; it seems likely that the pragmatic sequencing, whereby he diligently follows the order of events in the pictures, is sufficient for his structuring of the narrative. Recall also that B has serious problems with lexical access, uses code switching, and shows an overall speaking rate even lower than that of the child heritage speaker. All this suggests that B simply has no time

to construct the appropriate forms on-line; instead, he just uses the forms that most readily come to mind. While this is certainly a testable hypothesis, it would be rather hard to find a good way to test it in naturally occurring discourse. At this point, the conclusion is that the child heritage speaker uses the tenses appropriate to his age and to the narrative mode observed for both languages he controls (English and Russian). The adult speaker, meanwhile, shows significant deficiencies and inconsistencies in his temporal narrative mode.

General Discussion

The previous section reviewed some differences between baseline full speakers of Russian and heritage speakers; in this section, I will revisit these differences in a more general way. Heritage speakers clearly lag behind full speakers on every quantitative measure examined. They speak at a much slower rate, probably because of the encumbered lexical retrieval, and they use much shorter utterances. The heritage speakers also differ from the baseline in a number of structural characteristics. Here I examined the loss of cases, the restructuring of aspect, and the inconsistent use of tense by the adult speaker. With respect to case marking and aspect, the most important result is that the changes occurring in the language of heritage speakers are systematic in nature. American Russian essentially uses two cases: the unmarked case, which corresponds to the nominative in Full Russian, and the secondary object case, which corresponds to the accusative in Full Russian. One of the crucial changes in the case system of American Russian is the use of the unmarked case with prepositions, an impossible option in Full Russian. In addition to these two main cases, heritage speakers use some other case forms correctly; in the current sample, the child speaker utilizes more correct forms than the adult. The correct forms behave as 'chunks' that are retained outside the overall case system of a given noun. For example, the speakers correctly use *v dome* 'at home', *v lesu* 'in the forest', *utrom* 'in the morning', *v vode* 'in the water', *na zemle* 'on the ground'. It is noteworthy that most of these forms are scene-setting expressions, which establish the spatial or temporal coordinates of the proposition (Chafe, 1976). Such expressions constitute frequent input to heritage speakers. This frequency facilitates their retention as "chunks" but it is unclear whether these forms are actually related to the other case forms in the paradigm of Full Russian nouns.

The aspectual system of American Russian also supports the observation that the language of heritage speakers is structured in a principled way. The expression of aspect in American Russian is quite different from that in Full Russian. If one were to approach American Russian aspect from the standpoint of the preservation of Full Russian aspect, the conclusion would be that the American Russian system is much simplified and rather arbitrary. However, the American Russian aspectual system is actually quite principled. The encoding of aspectual distinctions is achieved by analytical means (the combination of an auxiliary type

verb expressing inception, duration, or completion with a contentful predicative word). Full Russian has so-called aspectual pairs—perfective and imperfective verbs denoting similar events. Such verbs often have the same root. It is a striking feature of American Russian that usually just one of the members of such pairs is retained. At first glance, the choice of the lexical verb retained in American Russian seems somewhat arbitrary; however, the data examined suggest that the retention of particular lexical items is determined by their frequency in the input. If this hypothesis is correct, it opens up a more general question concerning the interaction between the frequency of linguistic elements and the rules and constraints that operate on them. Given the principled nature of structural properties observed in American Russian, it is clear that linguistic reanalysis takes place in that language. Whether frequency constitutes a primary motivation for the reanalysis or is concomitant with it remains an open question.

The distribution of tense forms in the two narratives is less conclusive. The child heritage speaker uses past tenses, with a few low-level morphophonemic errors (e.g., stress assignment). The overall use of tense is representative of narratives constructed by nine year olds. The adult heritage speaker uses tenses in a much more random manner, and it seems that the marking of tense appropriate to Full Russian is no longer valid in his system. Similar results were observed for other adult heritage speakers in other elicitation contexts (Polinsky 1997) suggesting that the Full Russian system of synthetic tense marking is supplanted by a new system where the tense operator is silent and needs to be recovered from the context. Given that the adult speaker interviewed here patterns with some other adult speakers in not overtly marking tense, it is certainly important to determine factors accounting for the differences between the child and adult speakers. I will return to this issue.

Ignoring the generational contrast for a moment, it is clear that the heritage speakers differ from the baseline in a number of ways. One might attribute the differences between the heritage speakers and the Russian baseline to cognitive impairment on the part of the former. However, the heritage speakers interviewed for this study clearly have no language deficiency in English, nor do they show any problems constructing narratives in English. The adult speaker's English narrative was comparable to the narrative elicited from monolingual English adults, as shown by the measures in Table 8.2 and Table 8.3. The child speaker is actually superior to his English-speaking cohort, at least as concerns the numerical measures, and he is consistent with his age cohort in the use of tense (all past) and the linear development of the narrative. The superior quantitative measures demonstrated by the child speaker in English motivate comparison to data from additional speakers.

Let us now examine the differences between the child and adult heritage speakers. One of the differences was already mentioned: The adult speaker uses grammatical tenses in a much more "scattered" manner than the child. An informal impression of the child narrative is that, although much more limited

Table 8.7 Structural Differences between Child and Adult Heritage Narratives

	Child	Adult
Correct use of case forms (non-nominatives) *	71% (n=46)	31.5% (n=38)
Correct agreement in gender	91% (n=71)	31.5% (n=19)
Resumptive pronouns : Full NPS	0:28	19:33
Embedded clauses : Total clauses	7:70	5:90
Code switching	0	13

*Four child and three adult narratives were excluded from the case form analysis because it was impossible to determine correctness.

lexically than the corresponding Full Russian narrative, it is fairly close to the Full Russian system. The adult narrative seems much more restricted both lexically and grammatically. This informal impression is confirmed by statistical data on the narratives, summarized in Table 8.7.

As the table shows, the adult speaker has a markedly low number of correct case forms, and the description of the American Russian case system is much more appropriate to his narrative than to the child narrative, where 71% of non-nominative case forms are still used correctly.

Let us now look at agreement. Full Russian has agreement in gender between the subject and the verb in past tense and between the head noun and modifying adjective; non-past tense verbs agree with their subjects in person and number. I will not discuss person agreement for two reasons: first, the narrative is mainly in the third person, so there is very little room for variation; second, the third person verb form often appears to be the default for American Russian (Polinsky, 1997), so its presence in the narratives is inconclusive. With respect to agreement in gender, the adult speaker shows a very low rate of correct agreement forms (31.5%), while the child speaker has 91% correct forms. The quantitative difference between the two speakers is thus similar to the one observed in the use of case forms.

The child and adult narratives show another striking difference in the use of resumptive pronouns. A resumptive pronoun is a copy of the full noun phrase appearing in the preverbal position; for example:

- (8) *sobaka on ljubit ljaguška tože*
 dog.UNM RP he loves frog.UNM also
 'The dog also likes the frog.' (B)

Resumptive pronouns are common in American Russian (Polinsky 1997, 2000), and the most obvious explanation for their emergence is that they serve as a compensatory mechanism replacing verbal agreement. The adult heritage speaker interviewed in this study, B, shows the same robust correlation between resumption and the decline in grammatical agreement frequently found in the baseline. Given that the use of resumptive pronouns in American Russian is otherwise well-attested, the child speaker's pattern, with fairly robust gender

agreement and no resumption, is noteworthy. It not only suggests that the link between the decline of agreement and resumption is a correct one, but also shows that the child's grammar has not undergone the same reanalysis as the adult's.

What are the implications of the quantitative differences between the child's grammar and the adult's grammar? The most important one seems to be that the adult heritage speaker is not just "frozen" or "fossilized" at the stage of interrupted acquisition corresponding to age 5–6. If this were the case, then it would be impossible to explain such dramatic quantitative differences between M and B as shown in Table 8.7. If the adult speaker (B) has a grammar different from that of the child heritage speaker, then how did B acquire such a grammar? I hypothesize that this grammar develops as a result of a reanalysis of the mental representation rescued from the childhood years. The reanalysis is presumably shaped by interference from English and some universal principles governing language development with limited input; thus, it would be interesting to examine possible parallels between the emergence of American Russian grammar and the genesis of creoles (Bickerton, 1981; DeGraff, 1999, among many others) or Nicaraguan Sign Language.

At this point, any account of the differences observed here is entirely hypothetical: One needs far more quantitative data on both child and adult heritage speakers, and one also needs to rule out possible individual variation. Also needed is comparable data on heritage speakers, children and adults, whose primary language is not English. However, the realization that adult heritage speakers are not simply fossilized at some stage of incomplete acquisition is an important result that requires explanation.

An alternate hypothesis is that adult heritage speakers actually control a system fairly close to that of the baseline; the problems they experience occur in on-line performance only. At this juncture, I have no conclusive arguments against this hypothesis, but I will offer a few observations. First, as I mentioned earlier, on-line performance errors of the kind discussed here occur at a significantly lower rate than the "errors" found in adult heritage speakers. Second, if heritage speakers had no competence problems, then one would expect them to perform well on any tasks that involve choosing a correct grammatical form over an incorrect one (the so-called forced choice task); according to my own experimental observations, this is not the case (Polinsky, 1997). Third, if heritage speakers had problems only with performance, one would expect to see more variation across adult speakers; however, they show consistency in a number of grammatical properties both within one language and across languages. The use of resumptive pronouns to compensate for a decline in agreement is one such property (Polinsky, 1995); it is found in the speech of all heritage speakers of Russian as well as in several other heritage languages. Unless this feature can be explained by interference from English, it is unlikely to be a manifestation of on-line performance problems.

Conclusions

This chapter presents a preliminary investigation of the structure of narratives in heritage speakers, comparing those narratives to the ones elicited from competent speakers. The narrative used here is based on the well-known frog story elicitation used in a large-scale study by Berman and Slobin (1994). Using existing narrative elicitation techniques affords a distinct advantage because the heritage narratives elicited that way can be added to the existing body of frog stories and thus allow for broader cross-linguistic comparisons. One future goal is to collect more such narratives and use them as a basis to establish the continuum of heritage speakers.

Although the sample used here is quite small, it allows us to determine some characteristic features of heritage narratives: lack of embedding, short utterances, restructuring of the case system and aspect, and inconsistent use of tenses (the latter by the adult subject only).

An unexpected result obtained here is a significant difference between the grammars of the child and adult narratives. If this result is confirmed by more extensive studies, then heritage speakers' language is not simply "frozen" at the stage where acquisition stops. Instead, their limited mental representation of the heritage language may undergo reanalysis in concordance with universal linguistic rules and constraints.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Amalia Arvaniti, Elizabeth Bates, Ruth Berman, Hana Filip, Olga Kagan, and Robert Kluender for helpful comments on this project. All errors are my responsibility.
2. The session with S was recorded in Moscow, courtesy of Olga Sergeeva.
3. An obvious question here may be why morphemic MLU was not used. First, MLU is not effective for a cross-linguistic comparison, which was involved here. Second, as shown by several researchers, MLU is not effective in older children (Scarborough et al., 1991).
4. It is rather difficult to produce a numerical estimate of the range of syntactic and morpho-syntactic errors simply because the question of such estimates is hardly ever raised. In those studies where numerical assessment is possible, it is clear that the number of (morpho-) syntactic errors is extremely low. Fay (1982), for example, found 94 such errors in the corpus of 5,000 errors total; of the 191 errors discussed by Garnham et al. (1982), only 20 can be viewed as syntactic, and even that is based on a very generous interpretation of a syntactic error.
5. The statement about two co-existing grammars is certainly a loaded one—the issue of whether or not two grammars can co-exist in the mental representation of a single speaker is controversial. I am not prepared to take a definitive stand on it here.
6. The elimination of aspectual pairs is not an across-the-board process; some verbs are maintained in both perfective and imperfective form, as can be seen from the verb 'begin' below.
7. 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 8.5 does not uphold this generalization; compare *sidet'* vs. *sest'* 'sit' where the longer word wins out, or the fairly equal in length *prygat'* and *prygnut'* 'jump'.
8. The rise of the analytical system of aspectual marking in Finnish Russian (heritage Russian as spoken in Finland), reported by Leisio (2001), suggests that the influence of English cannot be the sole factor determining the use of aspect.

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Prior Language-Learning Experience and Variation in the Linguistic Profiles of Advanced English-Speaking Learners of Japanese

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Introduction

This chapter reports on a study of the relationship between type of language-learning experience and variation in the linguistic profiles of advanced English-speaking learners of Japanese. A typical advanced-level Japanese language class in the United States is a mix of learners with different learning backgrounds, including heritage learners, pure classroom-instructed learners, those who learned Japanese naturalistically, and those who have mixed learning experiences. It is important to ascertain whether all of these learners have similar instructional needs as they move toward a higher level of language proficiency and whether there is a set of identifiable characteristics in the interlanguages of each of these types of learners.

Very few studies (e.g., Nagasawa, 1995) have addressed this issue. The study reported here attempted to begin to remedy this situation by examining the linguistic profiles of heritage and non-heritage learners of similar second language (L2) proficiency, i.e., Advanced or Advanced Plus on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Scale. As assessed by the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1986), these levels are equivalent to Levels 2 and 2+ respectively on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale (Interagency Language Roundtable, n.d.).

There were three research questions:

1. What are the common characteristics of, and differences among, the linguistic profiles of learners at the Advanced proficiency level?
2. How does prior language-learning experience affect those profiles? In other words, are profiles comparable for students (a) who have learned their L2 naturalistically, for the most part through in-country residence; (b) who have learned their L2 mostly through classroom foreign language