The Maintenance of Written Russian in Heritage Speakers

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1.0. Introduction

As our schools and universities see an ever-increasing number of students whose families emigrated from the former Soviet Union, we are faced with the dilemma of Russian-speaking students entering and interacting with language programs designed for the native speaker of English. These students intersect with our universities’ Russian programs in a number of ways: they use it to leap various bureaucratic hurdles, including foreign language proficiency requirements; they come to us for objective certification of Russian-language documents; they participate in extracurricular activities that emphasize Russian culture; and, most importantly in an era of stagnant enrollments, in ever growing numbers they take courses in Russian language, linguistics, and literature.

This project on heritage speaker writing is an outgrowth of the increasing presence of the Russian community in Southern California. The Russian program at UCLA has traditionally provided a service to area high schools by administering proficiency tests to students wishing to place out of foreign language requirements. In recent years this latter group has been growing steadily, and in 1995–1996 UCLA received approximately 100 exams. We saw in this increased demand an opportunity both to rationalize the grounds on which heritage speakers were tested and to identify these students’ needs more systematically, so that we can meet them more effectively when these students arrive in our university classrooms one to four years later.

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1 The authors would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their comments, and acknowledge the contributions of other colleagues and Russian teachers in Southern California, whose ideas and discussions over the last few years have influenced our approaches to teaching heritage speakers. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Maria Polinsky (UCSD), who offered detailed commentary on the examples and analysis. Elena Kaminsky (University of Sheffield) and Maria Rjazanskaja (Moscow) reviewed many of the examples and offered suggestions and equivalents, and we are grateful for their assistance.

O. Kagan & B. Rifkin, eds. The Learning and Teaching of Slavic Languages and Cultures, 405–36.
The UCLA examination aims to test mastery equivalent to at least one full year of college Russian. We structured the exam around written Russian, a solution dictated by both practical and philosophical considerations. On the practical side, it is difficult and time-consuming to arrange oral interviews with a native speaker, given the number of students involved. On the philosophical side, a strong emphasis on literacy in the exam reflects the importance of this skill in Russian culture. This also insures equivalence with college-level Russian programs, where all students, native speakers and otherwise, are held to strict standards for the production of written Russian.

Although the test did not measure speaking or listening proficiency, some inferences can be drawn from the results about students’ knowledge of spoken Russian, and conclusions congruent with those found in the research of Polinsky, Sussex and others can be observed in these students’ writing. For obvious reasons, the test excludes the group most interesting to those studying language reduction and language death: those who speak or understand Russian, but can neither read nor write with any facility.

The cover page of the test asks the students for biographical information: city of residence in the former Soviet Union, years of schooling there, birthplaces of both parents, foreign languages studied, how often students speak Russian. Students are requested to evaluate their own abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening to Russian on a five-point scale. The test itself has five sections. There is a grammar section, where students are asked to put words into the forms required by the sentence’s syntax. This tests their knowl-

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2 We have used the term mastery instead of proficiency where possible, since the test is not intended to measure ACTFL proficiency levels (see below); the use of the words proficient, proficiency elsewhere in this paper does not imply specific attainments on the ACTFL scale. Parts of the test may be substantially harder than exams given after the first year of Russian.

3 Polinsky’s unpublished study (1996), which is the most thorough and up-to-date study on this subject, distinguishes two sorts of Russian spoken in America. Emigré Russian (ER), spoken primarily by those who emigrated when grown, is a full-fledged language, differing from Full Russian (FR) in its vocabulary, intonation, speech tempo, language culture and reduced sensitivity to language norms. American Russian (AR), spoken primarily by those who emigrated at grade-school age or earlier, is a reduced language, and contains marked divergences from FR in nearly every area. Polinsky subdivides AR speakers into acrolectal, mezilectal and basilectal types, in decreasing order of ability. The highest-functioning students taking this exam have characteristics of ER speakers, while many others share characteristics of Polinsky’s AR speakers, although most of those are presumably acrolectal (high-functioning). A sketch of AR, contrasted with other reduced languages, can be found in Polinsky 1994.
edge of formal grammar, similar to that demanded of non-native students or of Russian schoolchildren. The second section asks students to insert appropriate forms of any motion verb into a paragraph of text. This passage tests their grasp of how vocabulary and grammatical items work within a text; motion verbs were chosen because for these words each English item (e.g., go) corresponds to multiple Russian items (идти, ехать, ходить, ездить, пойти, поехать, etc.). A brief autobiographical essay assesses their ability to write coherently on a personal theme similar to those given in first-year Russian classes. A translation passage from English into Russian presents constructions that typically cause difficulties for learners of Russian; it assesses the students' ability to create appropriate, "real" L2 in situations where the influence of L1 is strong. The reading comprehension passage asks students to read a passage in Russian and answer some simple questions in Russian based on it.

The exam takes into consideration certain proficiency guidelines for reading and writing as laid out in Omaggio Hadley 1993, but the grades given are not intended to reflect a particular ACTFL proficiency rating. The proficiency skills tested include: narration on a personal topic; understanding a variety of short texts with limited vocabulary; using forms that are culturally and grammatically appropriate to a number of familiar situations; conscious awareness of structures that differ between L1 and L2.

2.0. Compiled Student Information versus Grades

A set of 111 exams, comprising most of a year's results from several schools, formed the corpus for this study. Students were asked to give the number of

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4 The text is adapted from Xavronina, Мы говорим по-русски.
5 The results of this section in particular show that these students use Russian in a far more sophisticated manner than language learners; most went far beyond what was needed to achieve a high mark.
6 Here and elsewhere we use L1, L2 in the pedagogical sense: Russian is L2 because it is the target of the exam. This approach skirts the fascinating but complex question of whether or not all these students do in fact have Russian as their L1 ("native language") in the linguistic sense. Sussex 1982: 143 discusses this problem with respect to Australian Poles but comes to no hard-and-fast conclusions.
7 The passage is from Темп 6.
8 The exam uses intermediate-level tasks; based on Omaggio Hadley's descriptions (509-10), an intermediate-low writer could pass with a fairly low grade, while an intermediate-high writer should pass with a high grade, but we have no empirical data to back these claims.
9 The methods used in this exam and the ensuing study were prepared in conformity with and approved by the UCLA Office for the Protection of Research Subjects; in accordance with their guidelines, exam-takers cannot be identified either directly or
years of schooling they had had in Russia; in Chart 2.0.1 results are broken down by grade received. (Half years were rounded up.)

Chart 2.0.1. Years of School in Russia/Former Soviet Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Students also reported the number of years they had been in the US; this is correlated in Chart 2.0.2 with their exam grades.

Chart 2.0.2. Number of Years in the US Correlated with Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years:</th>
<th>&lt; 1 yr</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>More</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These numbers show that, as expected, the amount of time spent in Russian schooling and the amount of time elapsed since students left Russia are factors in predicting whether or not a student will do well on the exam. However, the indirectly. To this end, some measures have been taken to protect students' anonymity, including not cross-referencing any data in the charts below that might prove sufficient to identify particular students.
figures also make clear that there are substantial individual exceptions to this trend.  

As seen in Chart 2.0.3, the students came from a wide geographical background, although Russia and Ukraine were especially well-represented.

Chart 2.0.3. Geographical Background of Students

- Armenia—6
- Azerbaijan: Baku—3
- Belarus: Minsk—6
- Belarus: Gomel—2
- Georgia—1
- Latvia: Riga—3
- Latvia: other or unspecified—2
- Moldova—1
- Russia: Moscow—13
- Russia: St. Petersburg—7
- Russia: other or unspecified—13
- Tadjikistan: Dushanbe—1
- Ukraine: Kiev—19
- Ukraine: Odessa—14
- Ukraine: other or unspecified—13
- United States—1
- Uzbekistan—4

Some students reported that their parents had native languages other than Russian or that they spoke other languages in or outside of school. This can be used as a guide to how many of the students came from non-Russian or partially non-Russian households and educational background (see Chart 2.0.4; primary language is given first).

Chart 2.0.4. Students' First Language(s)

- Only Russian: 79  
- Armenian with Russian: 8  
- Russian with Armenian: 3  
- Russian with Belarusian: 1  
- Russian with English: 1  
- Russian with Latvian: 1  
- Russian with Ukrainian¹¹: 16  
- Ukrainian with Russian: 2

¹⁰ Unfortunately, we did not ask whether students had come directly from the former Soviet Union or spent time in a third country before coming to the US. This might explain some of the more surprising findings in Chart 2.0.2.

¹¹ Includes a number of students who reported that both parents were Russian speakers but that they studied Ukrainian at school and/or spoke it in addition to Russian.
Students were also asked to evaluate their own knowledge of Russian in four areas. In Chart 2.0.5 averages are reported on the 0 to 5 scale students used, where 0 is “none” and 5 is “fluent.” Results are classified by exam grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group I (B+ to A)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group II (C- to B)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group III (F to D+)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, although all groups scored themselves relatively highly on speaking and listening abilities (regardless of what they meant by “fluency” and how well they evaluated themselves), Groups II and III showed correspondingly lower evaluations of their abilities to read and write. Many students are thus clearly aware of limits in their own language capabilities, especially in the area of literacy. This difference is especially striking, considering how highly they rated their oral-aural skills.

Although scores on the exam do correlate with certain factors presented in charts 2.0.1 to 2.0.5, none of these factors alone can adequately explain the difference between students achieving high grades and those achieving low ones. Polinsky (1996) finds that emigre Russians’ self-reported social status (whether they identify themselves as members of the “intelligentsia” or not; their and their families’ professions in the former Soviet Union) correlates with retention of more normative spoken Russian; we might expect difficult-to-measure qualities such as these to play an even stronger role in the maintenance of written Russian. (We did not ask students to evaluate their own social status, feeling it would be uncomfortable for them and produce unreliable findings.)

2.1 Received Grades as a Measure of Written Mastery

For the purposes of this paper, the test results are segmented into three groups (examined in sections 3, 4 and 5 respectively) representing three different levels of mastery of written Russian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group I:</th>
<th>B+ to A (87–100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group II:</td>
<td>C– to B (70–86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group III: F to D+ (up to 70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group I includes students who scored a B+ or better on the exam. They are by all rights native speakers of Russian, capable of carrying on a comprehensible exchange in written Russian that most Russians would admit as literate discourse. Group II consists of the remainder who passed the exam, i.e. those who received between a C– and a B. While they are also capable of a comprehensible exchange in written Russian, it is less likely that native speakers would perceive their writing as acceptable adult Russian. Group III is the students who failed the exam, with a grade below C–. These students do not produce acceptable written Russian, although what they write is usually comprehensible.\(^\text{12}\)

After analyzing linguistic and orthographic features of the exams, we consider the content of the essays (section 6). The essay examples are taken only from Group I and Group II students, since Group III students were not judged to be competent writers of Russian.

### 3.0. Characteristics of Group I Students

The majority of those taking the examination, and a plurality of students in our corpus, fall into this group. They rated their own fluency as high, although some did not give themselves the highest possible mark in writing and speaking. Their errors were sporadic, and centered on spelling and punctuation rather than grammar. Stylistic problems were evident; some might be characteristic of less-careful native speakers in Russia, while others are a result of the particular difficulties presented by language maintenance and development in emigration.

### 3.1. Spelling Errors

The most frequent problems were with the placement of signs lacking their own phonetic/phonemic value (hyphens, spaces, and the hard and soft signs). For instance, some students wrote что бы or что-бы for чтобы ‘in order to’; потомучто for потому что ‘because’; and подъехал for подъехал ‘drove up to’.

Punctuation is substantially reduced, especially in essays. Paraphrasing Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire Cat, we can say that the commas disappear first (see examples 8, 30 and 37).

Other spelling errors, such as those resulting from akan’е and ikan’е\(^\text{13}\) and omission of doubled consonants, were infrequent in this group. Such errors

\(^{12}\) This artificial arrangement into three groups is not meant to enshrine the cutoff figures of 87% and 70% in any standard of proficiency; it merely reflects the fact that this particular exam was designed to yield certain sorts of grades, and that these groupings proved useful in retrospect in identifying students roughly by ability. They are a tool useful only in bulk, and the performance of any one student will vary to greater or lesser degrees from the norms described in the following sections.

\(^{13}\) By akan’е and ikan’е we mean the vowel neutralization found in many dialects of Russian in which an unstressed vowel [a], [ʌ] or [ɔ] corresponds to either a or o in
tended to occur in word roots and constructions on the periphery of basic domestic vocabulary (but certainly well within the vocabulary of any educated native speaker): приключенческие книги for приключенческие книги 'adventure books', родственники for родственники 'relatives'.

Toward the bottom of this group, profound spelling errors became more frequent. One student, for instance, finished 10 years of school in Russia and came to the US only two years before taking the exam, yet nonetheless made mistakes like в Нижнем Новгороде for в Нижнем Новгороде 'in Ниžнij Ноvгopод', о матерё for о матери 'about mother', советывали for советовали 'advised', начил for начал 'began', увидимся for увидимся 'see you later'. These sorts of mistakes indicate more systematic problems than do simple spelling errors in word roots: they reflect a lack of understanding of the grammar.

3.2. Grammatical Errors

Certain grammatical errors were characteristic of students in this group. Some students did not decline numbers in the one place they were necessary; instead of около трёхсот ‘around three hundred’ they produced forms like около трiesta, около трехста, около тристо, where instead of both parts being declined only one part (or no part at all) was declined. At the lower end of the scale, one student wrote на прошлом месяце for в прошлом месяце ‘last month’; this switching between the prepositions в ‘in’ and на ‘on’ finds a parallel in Kouzmin’s study of spoken Australian Russian (1982: 82).14

Russian subordinating conjunctions can give way to English-influenced ones. In the case of (1), the growing Russian tendency to replace который with кто in speech is strengthened by the fact that English uses ‘who’ in analogous situations.

(1) Я не понимала учителей и студентов, кто пытался говорить со мной по-английски.

‘I did not understand the teachers and students who tried to speak English with me.’ (9 years of Russian school, 3 years in the US; Full Russian (FR) equivalent is ... которые пытались ...)
3.3. English Interference

The translation section caused perhaps more problems than it should have, with students tending to produce word-for-word translations from English into Russian despite instructions to produce idiomatic Russian. In the sentence “You and I have different opinions,” FR would use the construction у нас с тобой for 'you and I have'. However, constructions like ты и я имеем и у тебя и у меня were frequently found. These sentences are well-formed in Russian from a grammatical point of view; they simply do not reflect ordinary usage. The tendency to replace idiomatic constructions with less idiomatic ones corresponds to the general loss of standards Polinsky (1996) observes for Emigre Russian (ER): a heightened permissiveness as to what constitutes acceptable Russian.

3.4. Language Culture and Stylistics

By and large, this group was aware of stylistics and what is termed language culture, meaning the production of not only correct but also appropriate speech, and the correct interpretation of cultural material in context. However, the exams point to regular gaps in this knowledge.

Inappropriate language in this group was sporadic but revealing: книжка as an informal variant of книга 'book'; детский садик reflecting parent- or child-speak for детский сад 'nursery school'. Differences in style generally showed up in the essays, often within the first sentence. The way the writers introduce themselves ranged from informal (Меня зовут Витя 'My name's Vitja') to formal or bureaucratic (Меня зовут Дубровская Елена 'My name is Dubrovskaja, Elena'; Я, Светлана Смирновская .... 'I, Svetlana Smirnovskaja ...').

Many essays contained clashes between colloquial and high style, often in the same sentence or close by. For example, in one essay, we read:

(2) ... недалеко от меня была речька с прекрасным названием Днепр
... весело не было предела...
... но может это и к лучшему.
‘... not far from me was a small river with the wonderful name Dnepr’
‘... (our) joy knew no bounds’
‘... but maybe it’s for the best.’

15 Names of students here and elsewhere in this paper have been changed.
It would be appropriate to say Пойдем на речку ‘Let’s go down to the river’ when talking about the Dnepr, but not to combine the diminutive-familiar речка with the literary phrase с прекрасным названием. Similarly, the failed attempt at stylistic elevation in веселью не было предела contrasts with the colloquial, casual use of может for может быть ‘maybe’.  

In another essay, we find:

(3)  ... и так, потихонечку, я начал разузнавать о компьютерных языках ...  

‘... and so, bit by bit, I began to find out about computer languages...’ (Emigrated in 1992; took exam in 1996.)

Neither потихонечку nor разузнавать are appropriate in this context. The former is too colloquial for an essay; the latter means ‘find out the details’, generally in situations where someone is trying to conceal information.  

There was noticeable English interference in students’ choice of words. In the essay, one student referred to his Russian high school as высшая школа ‘higher school’, a term applied to colleges and universities in Russia (where the term for ‘high school’ is средняя школа, literally ‘middle school’).

4.0. Characteristics of Group II Students

The second group of students had more systemic problems in their writing. Nearly all of them demonstrated the errors found above, and further problems also became evident. Characteristic of this group is avoidance of complex words and constructions, and difficulty situating lexical items in context.

4.1. Avoidance

Students in this group frequently substituted a broader lexical term for a more specific one, or a more concrete term for an abstract one. Examples are книга ‘book’ for роман ‘novel’ and говорить ‘speak’ for спорить ‘argue’. (Both of these examples occurred in the translation section.)

A related sort of lexical expansion occurs with the word потом ‘then’, which one student used as a logical connector of the type ‘don’t do it, then.’ In a type of grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 1991; Heine et al. 1991) apparently motivated by restrictions on the lexicon, an adverb frequently used to show temporal relations in simple compound sentences (после) replaces the conjunction тогда ‘then’, found primarily in complex sentences to show either causal or logical relations. Quite common in the translation section were similar

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16 Polinsky comments that sentences like these contain “a confusion of functional styles” (personal communication); other examples are found in sections 4.3 and 6.1.
formulations like время для меня идти ‘it’s the time to go for me’ (FR: мне пора идти ‘it’s time for me to go’), where the basic, denotative lexeme время ‘time’ expands its usage into the realm of пора ‘the right moment’.

4.2. Circumlocution and Calquing from English

When a semantically more restricted or specific word replaced a more general one, English often played a role. Several students used the word поема ‘(long) poem’ instead of роман ‘novel’; the former was clearly retained through its similarity to the English ‘poem’. In an example of grammatical calquing, one student used оставить ‘leave (alone, behind)’ in the sense of покинуть, уехать ‘abandon, leave (a place), depart’: мы оставили Москву ‘we left Moscow’. Here the student modeled her construction on English ‘leave’, which takes a direct object, thus choosing оставить over the stylistically neutral уехать, which requires a prepositional phrase with an object (из Москвы).

A related change in semantic domain occurs with the pair шанс—возможность.

(4) Я имела шанс учиться на могучем и великим русском языке и прочитать много русских книг.*17

‘I had the chance to study in the powerful and great Russian language and read many Russian books.’ (Arrived in the US in 1992; exam taken in 1995. FR equivalents might begin: у меня была возможность изучать великий и могучий русский язык....)

Here the motivation for the expansion of the semantically restricted шанс ‘probability of success’ seems to be its more common English cognate; in this context it is unacceptable in FR (we would expect возможность ‘option, chance, opportunity, possibility’ or the construction мне повезло, что ... ‘I was lucky enough to ...’).18

Circumlocution to avoid less familiar words and constructions was common in this group. One student wrote in an essay:

(5) мы остались одинаковые по отношению к нашей родине19

‘we remained the same with respect to our homeland’

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17 This sentence and others marked with an asterisk were judged to have no acceptable overall FR equivalents; all equivalents required fundamental changes in the substance or tone of the sentence. (See section 7.2 for further commentary.)
18 See also example (21), where роль ‘goal (in sports)’ appears instead of цель ‘goal, target’
19 Note the use of к + genitive case.
This sentence corresponds to FR мы не изменились по отношению к нашей родине or мы не изменили наше отношение к родине 'we did not change our attitude to our homeland'. A more subtle interference from English can be seen in (6).

(6) мой старший брат ... ходил в одинаковую школу со мной

‘my older brother ... went to an identical school with me’

Here we might see in FR мы со старшим братом ходили в одну (и ту же) школу or мой старший брат ходил со мной в одну школу ‘my older brother went to the same school with me’. Since words like один ‘one, the same’ are clearly basic Russian vocabulary, this is not an example of lexical impoverishment; it is a restriction of the word’s semantic field to its English denotative meanings, with a corresponding expansion in the field of одинаковый ‘identical’.

A few students overused вещь ‘thing’ in essays. In FR, constructions with neuter sg. forms are normative in these contexts, whereas the English ‘thing’ appears in exactly these phrases and compounds (‘something’, ‘anything’, ‘nothing’, ‘just one more thing’, ‘the main thing’)

(7) много вещей были новые для нас

‘many things were new for us’ (FR: для нас было много нового)²⁰

(8) Мои интересы в России были мои друзья и вещи которые я любил с ними делать.*²¹

‘My interests in Russia were my friends and things that I liked to do with them.’ (FR: ... то, чем мы с ними занимались. Emigrated in 1990; exam taken in 1996.)

Anglicisms modeled on phrases with ‘take, have’ were found in the fill-in-the-blanks. In (9), the student uses берёт ‘takes’ despite the preposition на ‘on’, which renders the choice even less felicitous:

²⁰ Note also the unprompted use of English word order in the student sentence (which, although not ungrammatical, is inappropriate in this context; see Sussex 1993: 1020) and the semantic agreement of verb and adjective with the subject, as in (10) below.

²¹ A FR equivalent involving more substantial alterations is: В России мне больше всего нравилось, как мы с друзьями проводили время ‘What I liked most in Russia was how my friends and I spent time together.’
(9) он берет на метро до станции "Университет"

'He takes on the metro to the station "University".' (FR: он едет на метро or similar constructions with verbs of motion.)

Students often used time constructions that reflect English syntax. 'Last month', for instance, became прошлый месяц instead of в прошлом месяце. These constructions are heard in colloquial or careless Russian, but do not correspond to the literary norm. Students no doubt use them because they match the English forms more closely; in doing so they also avoid the locative case, which Polinsky has found is gradually eliminated in favor of the nominative or accusative for young emigres. Kouzmin has found analogous simplifications of grammar and syntax, especially under the influence of English, in her work on Australian Russian (1982: 79–86).

An interesting example of semantic agreement occurred in one exam:

(10) Моя семья переезжали в Америку.

'My family moved to America.'

Plural agreement with родина 'family' violates Russian (and, in the present tense, American English) syntactic rules here (we expect переезжал 'moved' [fem. sg.]), but given the lack of a need for agreement in the English past tense, this may be a result of English influence as well.

4.3. Context, Appropriateness and the Lexicon

Problems situating lexical items in broader contexts showed up most clearly in the motion verb section of the exam.22 One student, for instance, was inconsistent in the use of tense forms (underscored words show the position of the blanks):

(11) Вчера в Москву прилетела делегация английских преподавателей русского языка. Сегодня утром делегаты пойдут в Московский университет. Они поехали туда на автобусе.

'Yesterday a delegation of English teachers of Russian flew into Moscow. This morning the delegates will go to Moscow University. They went there on a bus.'

This group had consistent problems using Russian in a culturally appropriate manner. In beginning her essay, one student wrote,

(12) Меня зовут Ира Гольдштейн

'My name is Ira Gol'dshhtein'

22 See section 1.1 for an explanation of the significance of these verbs.
This use of her nickname—Ira, short for Irina—with her last name\textsuperscript{23} is a somewhat informal beginning for what she perceived as a formal situation, given that she later took pains to use more complex constructions like когда мне исполнилось семь лет ‘when I turned seven’ (FR исполнилось).

Another student, translating ‘buy a car’, used the verb брать ‘take, get’, which is used in substandard Russian for transactions at, for instance, a grocery store, but is infelicitous for a major purchase like a house or an automobile.

The mixture in styles of speech was at points quite severe; one student translated ‘let’s not argue about it’ as

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(13)] давай не ругаться насчет этого, ладно?
\end{enumerate}

‘let’s not fight with regards to this, OK?’ (FR equivalent: давай не будем спорить об этом ог давай не будем ссориться из-за этого)\textsuperscript{24}

Another, filling in a blank that described a student’s daily routine, wrote:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(14)] Обычно он прибывает в университет без десяти девять.
\end{enumerate}

‘Usually he arrives at the university at ten to nine.’

Here the verb прибывать is inappropriate; it is a mark of official style, usually reserved for delegations, visiting dignitaries and the like.

In some essays, it is hard to distinguish English language interference from a weak grasp of Russian stylistics. The basic distinction between the verbs нравиться and любить ‘like, love’ gave some students difficulty:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(15)] Мне очень нравилось ходить в кино ... Больше всего мне нравилась музыка.
\end{enumerate}

‘I really liked going to the movies ... More than anything else I liked music.’ (Emigrated in 1990; test taken in 1996.)

If in the first sentence нравиться is possible—although not the best choice—in the second sentence it is not a Russian phrase at all. (FR would have любить in both sentences: Я очень любила ходить в кино.... Больше всего я любила музыку.) Equating любить with English ‘love’, a more extreme and intense

\textsuperscript{23} See note 15.

\textsuperscript{24} This particular sentence caused more problems than any other in this group of test-takers. For ‘argue’ there were a range of equivalents from спорить (the most neutral term) to драться, meaning ‘have a fist-fight’. Although most answers were grammatically correct in and of themselves, they show a lack of sensitivity to style differences between English and Russian. Only one student translated OK as о’кей, a surprising finding considering how prevalent English filler words are in conversation at all levels of speech (Polinsky 1996).
feeling, may prompt the expansion of нравиться in American Russian (AR) along the lines of the less emotionally charged English ‘like’.

Another student had problems with тот vs. этот:

(16) В том центре люди могли арендовать компьютеры... и здесь я продолжил мои занятия с компьютерами.

‘In that center people could rent computers ... and here I continued my studies with computers.’ (Emigrated in 1992; essay written in 1995. FR equivalent: в этом центре можно было взять напрокат компьютер, и я продолжал заниматься компьютерами.)

A speaker of FR would say в этом центре instead, since it had been introduced in the previous sentence.25

In some cases, students lose a sense for the stylistic or semantic spheres of near-synonyms:

(17) Киев очень красивый город, расположенный на Украине.*

‘Kiev is a very beautiful city, located in Ukraine.’ (Emigrated in 1992; took exam in 1996.)

Here the form расположенный is unidiomatic; changing it to который находится ‘which is located’ improves the sentence somewhat.26 A similar problem occurs in the following example:

(18) А здесь у меня появились уже другие развлечения.

‘And here I found different amusements.’

Since the writer had just mentioned studying ballet and art, the word развлечения is inappropriate; the FR choice would be увлечения ‘passions, enthusiasms.’

There are instances where writers choose stylistically higher vocabulary than is justified contextually. It may be that they believe they are expected to use more literary, official or bureaucratic terms on an exam. The following word combinations appear in many essays: посещать магазины ‘visit stores’, посещать школу ‘attend school’ in the meaning ‘study’, постоянное жительство ‘permanent residence’, покинуть город ‘abandon/leave a city’.

Other students attempted to use verbal adverbs that were inappropriate or malformed:

25 The preposition с ‘with’ is also incorrect, as занятия governs the instrumental case directly.

26 A better FR version would look quite different, e.g.: Киев—столица Украины. Это очень красивый город. ‘Kiev is the capital of the Ukraine. It’s a very beautiful city.’
(19) Очень любя своих родители, я всегда слушала их советы ...
‘Loving my parents very much, I always obeyed their advice ...’ (A FR equivalent: я очень любила своих родителей и поэтому всегда слушала их советы/прислушивалась к их советам.)

(20) ... я блуждала по корridорам, искав свой класс ...
‘... I roamed the corridors, having searched for my classroom...’ (A FR equivalent: в поисках своего класса я блуждала по корридорм...) 

(21) Имеf большой интерес к занятиям, а особенно к человеческому существованию (его сотворение и особенность), я поставила гол стать доктором.*

‘Having had a great interest in my studies, and especially in human existence (its creation and uniqueness), I set a goal of becoming a doctor.’ (FR equivalents: имея огр проявляя оф имев; я решила стать врачом оф я поставила перед собой цель стать врачом.)

The overuse of verbal adverbs may be traceable to the influence of English, where gerunds and participles are more frequent and not as stylistically marked.

4.4. Alphabet Soup

This mixture of styles and grammars was reflected in the confusion of alphabets. Students wrote predominantly in Cyrillic, but would occasionally slip in Latin letters. Sometimes this was motivated by the existence of a similar English word, but not always.

Chart 4.4.1. Latin Letters in the Russian of Group II Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English interloper</th>
<th>Form produced</th>
<th>Full Cyrillic target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comfortable</td>
<td>комфортабельные</td>
<td>комфортабельные</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>мы собрались</td>
<td>мы собрались</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister</td>
<td>к сестре</td>
<td>к сестре</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poem</td>
<td>роему</td>
<td>роему</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argue</td>
<td>спорить</td>
<td>спорить</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>снег</td>
<td>снег</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karamzin’s</td>
<td>Карамзин’s or</td>
<td>Карамзина</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>Karamzina</td>
<td>Город</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>книга</td>
<td>книга</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pair</td>
<td>пара</td>
<td>пара</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In unfamiliar names and foreign words, this might be expected, but it clearly occurs in the basic lexicon as well. A few students had problems making the basic shapes of the letters, especially ё and ь.

### 5.0. Characteristics of Group III Students

The third group consists of students who are by any standards only semi-literate in Russian. These correspond most closely to Polinsky’s AR speakers, although students in this group do not in general display some of the most striking examples of language loss Polinsky describes; presumably those lowest-functioning speakers do not have the confidence or the training to take a written exam.

### 5.1. Spelling and Phonemes

What distinguishes Group III most clearly from Group II is the disappearance of regular correspondences between letters and phonemes. Students in Group II would occasionally make phonetically comprehensible mistakes like жыл for жил ‘lived’, останешься for останется ‘will remain’, машина for машина ‘car’. In these instances, the student spellings either reflect FR pronunciation where it deviates from orthographic rules, or present a variant spelling that is not correct, but represents standard pronunciation as well as the official spelling does. However, the mistakes in Group III do not reflect FR pronunciation, but rather a confusion of letters or an uncertainty about what sound is represented, thus: я послал срочную телеграмму for я послал срочную телеграмму ‘I sent an express telegram’; из Москвы for из Москвы ‘from Moscow’; о матери и отца for о матери и отце ‘about mother and father’; они вышли presumably for они вышли ‘they went out’; я мечтаю for я мечтаю ‘I dream’.

There is some indication that the distinction between soft and hard consonants, a fundamental feature of FR but not English, has eroded for these speakers. The students in this group frequently confused и and ы and did not use the soft sign regularly, thus только instead of только ‘only’. The endings indicate either a very incomplete understanding of the alphabet or declension and conjugation systems that are no longer fully in place (or both). Students wrote:

(22) о матери у отцу

‘about mother and father’ (FR о матери и отце)

(23) Мои папаны родителя ише в России

‘My father’s parents are still in Russia’ (FR Родители моего папы еще в России or, informally, Папины родители еще в России)
(24) ты и я имеем разные мнения
‘You and I have different opinions’ (FR у нас с тобой разные мнения)

(25) идет снег
‘it is snowing’ (FR идет снег)

The widespread loss of Russian palatalization finds a parallel in Henzl’s research on American Czech, where she notes the disappearance of $d'$, $t'$, $ň$ and $r$, palatal consonants that have no close English equivalents (1982: 37–38).

This confusion as to what sounds letters of the alphabet represent were understandably most extreme in those who had been in the US longest. One student who left Russia before beginning school used vowel letters more or less indiscriminately; the only distinction respected in her exam was that between palatalizing and non-palatalizing vowel letters: вшле for вышли ‘they went out’; уходят for уходит, идёт ‘he leaves, he goes’; главная for главный or главное (grammar unclear) ‘main’; изъя for язык ‘language’; я надеюсь for я надеюсь ‘I hope’.

One student used the letter ё to mark grammatical endings, often to replace the letters и, й, е, hence: от моих друзей (for от моих друзей ‘from my friends’); в северной Оссетии (for в северной Оссетии ‘in North Ossetia’); в моё свободное время (for в моё свободное время ‘in my free time’); в городе Одессе (for в городе Одессе ‘in the city of Odessa’). This feature is especially interesting because consistent use of ё is not typical for standard written Russian. In this instance it is not possible to say to what extent spelling reflects pronunciation.

In these extreme examples of language loss or incomplete acquisition, handwriting deviates substantially from the Russian norm. Letters are most often unconnected; one person wrote entirely in block capital letters.

5.2. Context and Appropriateness

Motion verbs provide a good example of the difficulty these students have in delimiting what forms are appropriate in what contexts. One student filled in the blanks as follows:

(26) Володя учится в университете. Каждый день он едет в университет. Он выходит из дома в восемь часов. Он едет ходит на автобусную остановку и садится на автобус …

27 A reviewer pointed out to us that the student may be trying to use ё consistently as a marker for /i/ or /i/, with an additional attempt to cover all bases in writing в городе Одессе.
Volodja studies at the university. Every day he goes (one-way) to the university. He walks out of the house at 8. He rides (one-way) walks habitually to the bus stop and gets on the bus …

A few sentences later, in the same text, we find:

(27) От метро до университета Володя ходит едет идёт пешком.
... from the metro to the university Volodja goes habitually rides one-way walks one-way on foot.'

The student clearly knows all the necessary forms but lacks enough understanding of context to distinguish when one or another form is preferable. In the first blank he inserts a form that indicates a single trip or multiple trips in one direction (ходит), where an indeterminate form is more appropriate; later, in two contexts that require a determinate form, he inserts indeterminate forms (ходит), best used for expressing multiple directions and destinations. The passage clearly caused him some trouble, since several items are written in and crossed out, and there are two spelling errors (ходит, едет for едет ‘he goes’).

A different type of contextual problem is evident in (28). In completing the aforementioned text with verbs of motion, one student wrote:

(28) Он уезжает из дома в восемь часов. Он едет на автобусную остановку и садится на автобус.
‘He drives off from home at eight o’clock. He drives to the bus stop and gets on the bus.’

Spelling aside, 28 the forms chosen by the student are not incorrect; they simply represent an American perspective on the activity. Only in America can one conceive of driving to a bus stop to take a bus to the metro as part of one’s daily commute.

5.3. Strengths of Group III Students

This discussion has focused primarily on what separates these students from truly literate speakers, but they have a sensibility for the language and a love for the culture (or at least the idea of the culture) that exceed the limitations of their active linguistic knowledge. In one essay, a student pulled a nice rhetorical flourish that reminds us that in some ways this language is very much hers:

(29) Но в один прекрасный день я мечтая приехать в Россию и видеть где я родилась.

28 Standard spelling is уезжает 'drives off', едет 'drives'.
‘But one fine day I dream of coming to Russia and seeing where I was born’ (FR: я мечтаю когда-нибудь поехать в Россию и увидеть те места, где я родилась и жила.)

6.0. Student Perceptions of Russia through Essay Content

The purpose of this part of the investigation was to determine cultural, sociocultural and pragmatic issues demonstrated in the essays that were part of the test. In analyzing the essays, we sought to evaluate the following: what kind of memories do students have of their life in Russia, and how can this guide our understanding of their linguistic knowledge and attitude toward learning Russian?

For the essay assignment, students could choose between (1) a brief autobiography telling where they were born and grew up and about their interests; (2) an interesting thing they did or that happened to them; or (3) their first impressions of America. The majority of the essay writers chose to write an autobiography or to give their first impressions of America. Many combined the two topics.

6.1. Essay Analysis

In describing their life in Russia, the students use vocabulary reminiscent of the Soviet era and recall a happy childhood and adolescence, often linked specifically with things Russian. The contrast with their lives in the United States is sometimes made explicit in the text, as in (30).

(30) Моё детство было лучшим временем в моей жизни. Оно было беззаботным и радостным. Меня окружали своим теплом мои друзья и моя семья. Однако жизнь моя резко изменилась когда я переехала в США. Я стала взрослой и серьёзной.

‘My childhood was the best time of my life. It was carefree and joyful. I was surrounded by my family and friends’ warmth [meaning ‘affection’ — authors]. However, my life changed drastically when I moved to the USA. I became more grown-up and serious.’ (From a student who came to the USA in 1991. The essay was written in 1995.)

In (31) and (32) the comparison with America is implied but not stated directly.

(31) Всё моё детство прошло у моей бабушки в городе ... Это было самые замечательные годы в моей жизни.

‘My whole childhood was spent with my grandmother in the city of ..... These were the most wonderful years in my life.’ (Emigrated in 1993; essay written 1995.)
... у меня остались самые наилучшие воспоминания о детстве и юности потому, что все самое интересное и первое произошло именно там — в маленьком, тихом и гостеприимном поселке.

'... I have the very best memories of my childhood and adolescence because all the most interesting things first happened right there: in a small, quiet and hospitable little town.' (Emigrated in 1993; essay written 1995. FR: ... очень хорошие воспоминания ...)

Мои годы жизни в Одессе я буду считать моими лучшими годами жизни.

'I will regard the years of my life in Odessa as the best years of my life.' (Emigrated in 1995, after 10 years of schooling in Russia; essay written 1996, after one year in Los Angeles. FR: Мои годы жизни в Одессе я считаю лучшими годами моей жизни.)

In (34) the writer appeals to a sense of national identity, claiming that he 'feels closest' to the Russian people. This sentiment is echoed in (35), where the author refers to being raised 'in Russian traditions', clearly a shorthand for a type of upbringing perhaps opposed to what she sees in the United States.

... моё мнение, что русские самый (для меня я имею в виду) близкий и любимый народ, не изменилось. Я всё также люблю Россию и очень хочу туда вернуться. Не навсегда, просто чтобы повидать друзей и близких, и увидеть родные места.

'... My opinion that Russians (for me, I mean) are the dearest and most beloved people has not changed. I love Russia still, and want to go back. Not forever, just to see my friends and relatives and where I came from.'

можно сказать, что я была воспитана в русских традициях и всегда буду помнить наставления моей бабушки. Сейчас я ужасно скучаю за моей прошлой веселой беззаботной жизнью.

'One could say I was brought up in the Russian traditions and will always remember my grandmother’s moral injunctions. Now I miss terribly my old happy carefree life.' (Six years of Russian school, five in the US. FR: ... и я всегда буду помнить... ... я ужасно скучаю по своей прошлой веселой и беззаботной жизни.)
Many of the essays profess love for Russia or Ukraine and affinity with the Russian language and people. Note in the following example the reference to 'my' city and country and the personification of Kiev.

(36) Я родилась в замечательном старинном городе Киеве. Моя страна и город дали мне очень много культурного запаса. Такие писатели, как Достоевский, Пушкин, Толстой, Гоголь оставили след в моей душе навсегда. Киев дал мне счастливое детство и я горжусь своей страной.*

'I was born in the wonderful ancient city of Kiev. My country and city gave me a real lot of cultural background. Writers such as Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Tolstoy and Gogol have left an imprint on my soul forever. Kiev gave me a happy childhood, and I'm proud of my country.' (Emigrated to the US in 1992; essay written in 1995. FR: ... дали мне большой культурный запас ... or, more idiomatically, Там я приобщилась к культурным ценностям моего народа.)

Quite a few writers use the words родной 'native', родина 'motherland, homeland', народ 'people, nation'. We can speculate that these lexical choices are consequences of the way they were taught to write in Soviet/Russian schools. Possibly for the same reason the word родина is sometimes capitalized. In (37) and (38) the word is used fairly neutrally.

(37) Когда мне исполнилось десять лет, я слышал как мои родители думали о том что нам надо уезжать с Родины.

'When I was ten, I heard my parents were thinking that we would have to leave our Motherland.' (Seven years of Russian schooling; exam taken after three years in US. FR: Когда мне было десять лет, я слышал, как мои родители говорили о том, что нам нужно уезжать из России или покинуть Родину.)

(38) Я за семь лет забыл многое о своей родине, но я знаю, что я там вырос и что Одесса-Мама мой родной дом.

'In seven years I have forgotten many things about my motherland, but I know that I grew up there, and that Mother Odessa is my native home.' (3 years of school in Russia/Ukraine; 7 years in the US.)

Одесса-мама 'Mother Odessa' is from блатной язык, originally the language of the underworld that has now made its way into mainstream society.
In (39), the student links the word Родина to a sense of belonging he feels he has lost. The word народ in (40) is likewise linked to a feeling of ethnic or national pride.

(39) Большую часть своей жизни я провел на Родине—в России. (Родился я в Ленинграде, теперьшнем Петербурге) …. там у меня были дворы друзей и сейчас я с грустью вспоминаю о тех временах.

'I spent the greater part of my life in the Motherland—in Russia. (I was born in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg) …. there I had courtyards of friends and now I look back on those times with sadness.'

(5–6 years of school in Russia, 5 years in the US. FR: ... там у меня было много друзей ....)

(40) ... никогда не забуду это веселое время, когда мои родители брали меня в музеи и объясняли мне о культуре и красоте моего народа.

'I will never forget that happy time when my parents took me to a museum and talked to me about the culture and beauty of my people.' (9 years of school in Russia; 3 years in the US. FR: ... то веселое время ..... ... и рассказывали мне о культуре и красоте моего народа.)

The words родина, родной and народ were staples of Soviet newspapers and propaganda. It is reasonable to assume that at schools in the former Soviet Union, students were assigned readings that made extensive use of such "patriotic" vocabulary. It is possible that to them these words are neutral stylistically. However, examples like (39) and (40) show more emotional or nationalistic uses of these words.

6.2. Essays as Indications of Student Motivations and Attitudes

The absolute majority of the students gave a positive, even nostalgic view of their childhood. There are several possible reasons for this outlook:

1) Their life in Russia may have been happy;
2) Children have a hard time adjusting to new conditions, and thus may view their previous conditions as preferable;
3) Students may know how to express positive impressions better because this is what they were taught to do in Russian schools;
4) Their parents, or grandparents, are probably nostalgic about Russian life and students may absorb these expressions of nostalgia;
5) It may be linguistically and emotionally easier to express positive feelings;

6) To a student who grew up in the Russian school environment, a test is not a proper context in which to express negative emotions.

Not infrequently, students dwell on the fact that their adolescence ended when they emigrated. This abrupt change could be explained by culture shock, the loss of a familiar environment, their parents' changed roles and status, or other factors. Emigration retains a central role for these students as well as a motivation for further study of Russian. They think of themselves as adults, perhaps more than their American peers; at the same time, some of them will in a sense try to recapture or reappropriate a lost part of their childhood by taking courses in Russian.

These students' motivations for taking Russian evidently extend beyond the desire for an "easy A" (although there may be cases to the contrary). They try to find and maintain their identity by associating with peers who have similar problems, as well as associating with us, the instructors, who they feel should understand their background. Whether or not students are aware of these reasons, they seem to have a deep need to communicate with us and with each other about these issues, and the essays on this exam are proof of this point.

7.0. Findings in Context

While it is difficult to compare spoken and written data, many of the features discussed here have been noted in other studies of spoken Slavic emigre languages; their speakers are called variously "speakers of American Russian" (Polinsky 1996), "childhood bilinguals" (Kouzmin 1982), "immigrant speakers" (Henzl 1982) and a host of other country-specific terms (e.g. "Australian Poles" in Sussex 1982).

However, one feature of emigre speech—the wholesale adoption of English words in either declinable or indeclinable form, such as кар, бейбиситр, шопинк, паунд—was completely absent from this exam, even among the weakest writers.29 Although Polinsky notes that the use of foreign words is one of the first signs of deviation from FR in emigration, and Sussex (1993: 1023–1030) confirms this as a pan-Slavic tendency, under certain formal conditions students are clearly able to filter out obvious borrowings in a way they do not do with less obvious structural (what Kouzmin, "Grammatical

29 Examples from Polinsky 1996 and Sussex 1993. See also Polinsky, this volume.
Interference” calls “grammatical”) borrowings and calques.\textsuperscript{30} The relatively high prestige ascribed to the Russian literary language and the strong prescriptive strain in Russian education may contribute to restraining certain forms of borrowing or code-switching in some types of discourse.\textsuperscript{31} Material presented in 6.1 shows that students acknowledge and respect this prestige, at least formally.

7.1. Language Maintenance or Language Attrition?

It is in many respects accurate, although gloomy-sounding, to describe emigre language in terms of language death, a term first applied to Scots Gaelic, Austronesian languages and others undergoing assimilation into a majority culture. While the students in Group I are by all indications native speakers of Russian (albeit of Polinsky’s ER), the ones in Groups II and III appear to be what Dorian terms semi-speakers of a dying language; they have “normal, adult-appropriate skills in one language, and imperfect skills in a second language,” and they “acquire the weaker language in a ‘natural’ setting rather than in a classroom setting” (1983: 158). In the context of language death, these semi-speakers fall into three types: “fluent childhood speakers who later lose skills; imperfect early-childhood speakers whose skills never fully develop; and childhood nonspeakers whose passive skills give rise somewhat later in their young years to modest active skills” (159–60). Most of the students in Groups II and III probably fall into the first type, with a few Group III students in the second type; it is doubtful that any student with a primarily passive knowledge of Russian would take this exam.

As Stoffel (1993) points out, though, it may be premature to write a death certificate for Slavic languages in emigration, and this observation certainly applies to Russian. As distinct from microcommunities in peripheral areas, Russian in emigration is the diaspora of a large and powerful language commu-

\textsuperscript{30} This finding supports Stoffel’s claim about languages in emigration that “even at this periphery the two basic language systems (L\textsubscript{M} and L\textsubscript{2} [migrant language and the language of the host country]) are still sufficiently differentiated, especially in the case of a Slavonic language vs. English, where we have two sufficiently different systems.” (1993: 78) However, this does not mean that all written communication automatically excludes code-switching; Stoffel cites an example of informal written communication (a letter from a heritage speaker to her mother) in which such switching is rampant (1993: 81).

\textsuperscript{31} In a study of American and Finnish speakers of Swedish in Sweden, Boyd concluded that “social factors in the context of language contact play at least as important a role as language-internal structural factors do, and may explain why different pairs of languages in contact seem to follow different strategies in incorporation” (Boyd 1993: 387). Although her data concern different spoken languages, the comparison may be apt as well for Spoken Russian versus Standard Literary Russian.
nity whose culture and history exert a strong pull in the abstract (see examples in 6.1), even if many members of the emigre community are increasingly ignorant of its specifics. Continuous contact with Russia can provide a counter-weight to the inevitable loss of prescriptive standards in the American Russian community, and universities will continue to be a resource for the community in emigration, providing a formal way of maintaining contact and heritage through their courses in the language and civilization of Russia. Conversely, the Russian community can be a resource for the United States as well, if we see fit to nurture it. As Brecht notes, "... the new native-speaking population must be considered ..., if trained ... an important part of our national capacity in Russian" (Brecht et al. 1995: 47, our italics).

7.2. Implications for the Teaching of Russian

We will conclude with some recommendations on teaching heritage speakers, based on our findings here and on classroom experience.

1. Approach to instruction. When discussing the significance of sociocultural issues for teaching heritage speakers, Andrews (2000) observes that "a measure of familiarity with various aspects of immigrant languages will allow instructors to address their [heritage students'] needs with greater competence (42)." In a similar way, instructors will be able to make more informed curricular decisions if they are aware of where the main differences between heritage and non-heritage students lie and how these differences can affect the program of study.

The following questions need to be answered at least partially before a cohesive program for heritage speakers can be formulated: 1. What kind of curricula and what kinds of materials do heritage speakers need? 2. How different are these curricula and materials from the program we offer non-heritage speakers? 3. How different are the curricula and materials from those used to instruct native speakers in their native language?

Unlike non-heritage students, even the weakest (Group III) heritage speakers have a high percentage of internal grammar. That means that the approach to teaching them grammatical endings will be vastly different from the approach generally used to teach those students for whom Russian is a foreign language. In a typical contemporary beginning textbook of Russian as a foreign language, grammatical concepts are introduced as discreet points (e.g. the Prepositional Case of location is introduced first, then it appears again in contrast with the Accusative Case, etc.)—we call it 'micro-approach.' Heritage speakers need to be presented with the whole picture: for example, case endings can be introduced in complete paradigms, in three declensions, the way Russian school children are taught. The materials used for teaching Russian school children are, however, mostly inappropriate for our students because of
the differences in age, interests, and motivation. Thus the materials for heritage speakers should combine cognitively appropriate vocabulary and texts with the ‘macro-approach’ to grammar concepts, i.e. introducing and practicing large paradigms.

We believe that deduction is a good strategy in teaching Russian-speaking students. They have to be taught to rely on their own inner resources and gradually learn to monitor themselves, i.e. to self-correct, in order to facilitate further learning. In many instances, instead of providing students with grammar explanations, teachers can ask students to analyze examples and arrive at their own conclusions. This approach will help them develop their own coping strategies and deal with the anxiety and uncertainty that are typical of second language acquisition (Ehrman and Oxford 1995).

Even the more proficient students (Group I) frequently need to improve their writing style, ridding it of pompous language and the mixing of stylistic levels and vocabulary. A course in essay-writing that pays attention to vocabulary selection and development partially answers the question of what curriculum is appropriate for these students. It could be argued that these stylistic problems are relatively minor if students use grammar correctly and have an adequate vocabulary. However, we have shown that stylistic difficulties occur to varying degrees in virtually all heritage speaker writing. Even for those high school students functioning at a high level, these deficiencies (including the overuse of words like народ, родина, родной) are jarring to full native speakers and set the heritage speakers apart from their university-bound peers in Russia. Furthermore, a significant minority of heritage speakers aspire to use their Russian professionally, and some others will find themselves using it after graduation regardless. Faced with demanding interpreting work or the need to write a business letter in Russian, they will find stylistics and essay-writing professionally relevant.

Calques from English are among the hardest features for medium- to low-functioning heritage speakers to get rid of. The best way to address them is to assign reading that is considerably beyond the students’ active production level. Even the most deficient Russian-speaking students can handle more of a leap than Krashen’s (1985) standard i+1. We also suggest assigning oral narration and structured expression of opinions, which force a broader choice of vocabulary. Even when students are unable to write an essay requiring higher level reasoning, they may be able to formulate these ideas orally.

2. Forms of address. Name conventions and formality are especially important for those who left Russia at an earlier age (primarily those scoring in Groups II and III). Both the analysis of students’ tests and experience teaching heritage speakers indicate that many heritage learners do not completely understand
how and when full names, patronymics and diminutives can and should be used. These students also imperfectly understand the rules for using ты and вы; their tendency in class to overuse the informal ты comes across in the tests as inconsistency in the translation of dialogues, with persons switching back and forth between formal and informal. For a student whose pronunciation is native, misuse of these pronouns can lead to a serious breakdown in communication in professional contexts.

3. **Spelling.** Unlike some other skills, spelling cannot be learned deductively. For that reason spelling will always be the most labor-intensive part of a program for such learners. For students with less mastery of written Russian, we emphasize spelling rules and the importance of learning the correct spelling of word roots as well as the spelling of grammatical endings. Students who sound quite convincing when speaking may in fact need substantial practice writing forms. For more proficient writers, a review of some commonly-violated rules and lesser-used declensions may suffice, while Group II and III students would benefit from reviewing declension and conjugation (especially of adjectives) more intensively so that the student learns the letters associated with each ending and environment (у vs. ь, e vs. и, я vs. e). Letters with no phonetic value (ь, Ь) should be pointed out to more proficient writers and reviewed systematically with less proficient writers. Certain consonantal letters—notably those for which there are no English equivalents, like щ, ц, ж—also cause problems for less-proficient students and deserve careful attention. Exercises for these students should focus heavily on the connection between the spoken and written word, as these students by and large do not have difficulty approximating the correct sounds in speech. Native Russian students in Russia are taught spelling rules but do not confuse ы and и or ь and я, while our Group III students (and some Group II students) clearly do. They need to be provided with an explanation and taught to distinguish between palatalised and unpalatalised consonants. Deduction will not work in this case, since for them these categories do not seem to be intuitive but must be learned. Dictations often prove a clear and effective tool to this end.

4. **Punctuation.** Review and enforce its correct use, most importantly the placement of commas. Punctuation is a problem at all levels of mastery. As can be seen above, even students with excellent written Russian adopt American punctuating conventions while retaining the rest of their native-language writing skills.

5. **Agreement.** Both written and spoken data (Polinsky, this volume) indicate that the least proficient speakers can either lose or fail to acquire the category of gender and have particular difficulties with the neuter; this was primarily evident in our exams in Group III. Consistent work is necessary to raise their
awareness of gender differences and of the significance of agreement in Russian. Our classroom observations show the need for a large quantity of written exercises where Group III students are asked to supply endings or provide adjective/noun pairs of their own. In general, whenever possible, they need to be asked to supply their own examples, as that will teach them how to tap their own resources, which they are not always aware of.

6. **Aspect.** Heritage speakers in Groups II and III often make aspactical choices that seem odd to native speakers. Full Russian speakers acquire aspect naturally, not consciously through study, and show a remarkable degree of consistency of choice in many (although not all) contexts; this may be the best proof that these heritage speakers are not in fact fully "native" speakers of Russian.\(^{32}\) The category of aspect and its implications need to be explained to them, preferably through the use of examples in context, and they will have to memorize certain aspactical pairs and groups just as foreign students studying Russian do.

7. **Advanced grammar, usage and style.** Use of conjunctions (кто, который, что) and other connectors is a problem at all levels; with Group I students we would focus not only on their grammatical use, but also on variation in register. Topics like этот vs. тот vs. Ø are especially important for students with better writing skills. In a more general sense, students' failure to write acceptable, idiomatic Russian may be a result of their failure to think clearly while writing. Pointing out tautologies and logical flaws in students' usage, such as those found in the starred sentences above, will make the students better writers in English as well as Russian.

8. **Effective use of resources.** The exam results show widely varying degrees of native-speaker intuition among heritage students, which can both help and hinder them. Students need to be taught both how and when to rely on their intuition, and where and to whom they can turn for help when their intuition fails. In more proficient speakers, we can turn to paradigmatic and derivational variation to help resolve spelling problems (e.g. голова but голову, hence the initial vowel is written with an о). Students of all abilities should learn how to use dictionaries effectively; the less-proficient ones should especially be made aware of dictionaries oriented toward native speakers of English, since their families are more likely to have Soviet/Russian editions aimed primarily at full native speakers of Russian. Finally, students need to be taught how to make effective use of the linguistic resources of the full native speakers they know. Classroom experience shows that many students consult friends and family when they reach a sticking point in an assignment or task, and that they often

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\(^{32}\) See Polinsky 1996 for extreme examples of failure to acquire aspect.
draw incorrect conclusions from the answers they receive. We should first increase student awareness of the varieties of Russian, so that they are aware of the variability of responses they are likely to meet with; and second, when the matter arises in class or in consultation, we should make students reflect on the process of consulting friends and relatives by investigating who they ask, how they phrase their questions, and how they evaluate the reply. Although not strictly language learning in itself, this exercise focuses student attention on the technique of elicitation, which is essential if they are to make further progress.

9. **Instructor awareness of linguistic factors.** In teaching vocabulary, instructors should be aware of the sorts of linguistic changes likely to occur in emigre vocabulary: the disappearance of more complex, abstract terms and their replacement by simpler, more concrete words; expansion or contraction of lexical fields by analogy with English; retention and overuse of Russian words that share a phonetic, phonemic or graphic shape with English words; overuse of lexical items that loom large in the lives of Russian school pupils and emigre families (e.g. народ, постоянное жительство). English to Russian translation, if focused on these problem spots, can be an interesting and challenging way of highlighting the differing scopes of lexical fields in English and Russian. For particular problem pairs (e.g. время vs. погода) we can provide multiple contrasting examples that allow the students to generalize their own definitions and usage rules, and we can use open-ended sentences with a missing word or phrase that students complete, to demonstrate the range of collocations available with certain words. For in-depth discussion of the peculiarities of Russian emigre speech, see Andrews (1998).

10. **Consideration of students’ cultural perspective.** Kramsch (1993), writing about the process of learning a foreign language, describes what she calls Culture 3, defined as the culture we create for ourselves as an intersection of Cultures 1 (our native culture) and 2 (the culture we are studying). As instructors, we have to ask ourselves: what is Culture 3 for a student who lived the first ten years of his or her life in Russia? Or the first sixteen? The examples from this paper (see (3.4)) testify to the complexity of determining what of Russia and Russian culture is part of these students’ world view. While the challenge for non-native speakers in our Russian classes is at first simply to become aware of an unfamiliar culture and customs, heritage speakers face a personally more meaningful and more complex task: to forge their own relationship to a language and culture that is part theirs, part foreign. For these reasons a language class for heritage speakers cannot be limited to learning to spell and use correct grammatical endings. Rather, it should be text- and culture-based to help learners contextualize their newly gained (or regained) linguistic skills.
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