A Composite Linguistic Profile of a Speaker of Russian in the U.S.*

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Linguists like to contrast principled "internal" changes of language systems and chaotic, unpredictable "external" changes. The former derive from inner pressures within a linguistic system, the latter from various social, demographic, or historical changes. Since grammatical structures are remarkably similar across languages, the fate of a particular group of speakers of a given language plays little role in a linguistic investigation. On paper, this contrast looks nice and clean, but real life is more complicated, and even radical "internal grammarians" make an exception for those languages that have a dwindling number of speakers (the so-called endangered languages) and need to be recorded with urgency and alacrity. In real life, the contrast is often blurred, and extralinguistic processes may trigger dramatic changes in the life of a language, which consequently lead to a reconsideration of fundamental principles in its grammar.

Russian, one of the most populous languages of the world, is certainly in no danger of extinction, so at first blush the fate of some speakers of Russian who no longer speak it well may seem peripheral to linguistics. I would like to challenge this assumption on two grounds. First, studies of reduced languages are

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Language examples in the paper are given in Cyrillic; Latin font in the examples denotes code-switched items. In several examples, which are dramatically different from standard Russian, I have added a third line, which glosses each individual word of the example. The following abbreviations are used: ACC—accusative; AR—American Russian; ER—Émigré Russian; FR—Full Russian; GEN—genitive; NOM—nominative; RP—resumptive pronoun.

often identified with salvage studies; a linguist finds the last speakers of a language undergoing extinction and documents the final stages of that language. In such a study, however, there is no baseline or control language (Sasse 1992). Different from this is the emigration scenario, whereby part of a large and healthy speech community moves to a different environment in which its language is no longer the one of economic, social, political, or cultural prestige, and where another language is dominant. In this new setting, the community loses regular contact with the original speech community and adopts, fully or partially, the dominant language. Thus, the very existence of Russian in the metropoly\(^1\) offers linguists a unique opportunity to compare the Russian of those who don’t speak it very well with the “good” Russian—an opportunity not available in salvage studies of disappearing languages. Second, inasmuch as changes in the Russian language outside the metropoly result from inner pressures of the Russian grammar, they represent an accelerated version of what the metropoly Russian may look like many years from now. Using a “reduced” language as a predictor of future changes in a “healthy” language provides us with a rare chance of glancing into the linguistic future.

At this point, a quick biographical note may be in order. As a native speaker of Russian who arrived in the US in 1989, I remember my initial surprise, amusement, and horror at hearing the Russian spoken by children of immigrants. My own reaction reminded me of my grandmother, born in 1903, who, in the seventies, used to correct me when I used accusative rather than genitive under negation, failed to use a partitive in offering people tea, said ихний instead of их ‘their (possessive)’ and извиняясь instead of извините ‘excuse me’, or used the ubiquitous Moscow slang. Now the tables had reversed—these speakers were simultaneously behind me and ahead of me in their strange Russian. But my reaction to them was also quite different from my reaction to the speech of someone fifteen years younger than myself. With younger speakers of Russian in Russia, I felt generally amused; here I was annoyed. What was the reason for the annoyance? Answering this question amounts to constructing a partial grammar of reduced Russian, and as a theoretical linguist, this is what I am supposed to do.

In this paper, I will present some results of my investigation (see also Polinsky 1994; 1995; 1997; in press; in preparation) and will show how these theoretical results can be linked up with pedagogical recommendations (for the latter, see Bermel and Kagan, this volume). The paper is structured as follows. In section 1, I will present all the relevant concepts and notions needed for the

\(^{1}\) Here and below, I will be using the term “metropoly” to refer to Russian spoken as the only or as the dominant language. The reader is invited to treat this simply as a handy term, without any political or cultural connotations.
discussion below. Section 2 is a brief outline of the sociolinguistic situation in immigrant Russian communities. Section 3 presents an overview of the language spoken by many parents of heritage speakers, and section 4 discusses the language of the least proficient heritage speakers (roughly corresponding to group III in Bermel and Kagan). Although I have not studied more fluent speakers, I will offer some general observations on their place in the linguistic landscape of Russian in the U.S. This and several other general issues will be summarized in section 5.

1. Basic Concepts

To discuss the material below, I will employ several distinctions, namely:

(i) the distinction between first and second language (L1, L2);
(ii) the distinction between primary and secondary language;
(iii) the distinction between a standard language and a baseline language;
(iv) the distinction between full and reduced language;
(v) the distinction between incomplete acquires and forgetters.

Starting with (i), L1 and L2 are typically distinguished by the temporal order of acquisition. If the languages have been acquired sequentially, there is little doubt which one is L1 and which is L2. For speakers growing up bilingual or multilingual, there are several ways of determining which language is first. One of the options is assuming that L1 would correspond to the language spoken outside the family. For instance, if a child grows up with a Russian-speaking and an English-speaking parent and the community they live in is English speaking, English can be established as the child’s L1 (e.g., Turian and Altenberg 1991). (There are other ways of determining L1, which I won’t discuss here.)

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

For a fluent native speaker of a language, it is quite easy to detect that someone does not speak that language “right.” It is much harder, however, to account for the way such detection takes place. The native speaker establishes that the other person is doing something “wrong” by comparing that person’s language to ... what is the standard of comparison? This brings us to the distinction in (iii) above. If we are dealing with a standardized, literary language, taught in schools, as Russian is, one can easily assume that the standard is the
Contemporary Standard Russian (CSR), as codified in several normative grammars (for instance, Academy Grammar (1980–1982; Wade 1992). These grammars are notoriously conservative, and a cursory comparison of CSR with spoken educated Russian, as illustrated in Zemskaja (1973, 1981, 1983, 1987) reveals an ever widening gap between the normative and the colloquial language (see also Kostomarov 1994). Until the demise of the socialist system, the maintenance of CSR was achieved through the centralized media and through extremely effective secondary school instruction. Some remnants of the school system will probably survive well into the next century. Of the speakers of Russian in the US, those who emigrated young or were born in this country have not been exposed to such schooling and have been little exposed to the media. Therefore, they cannot be expected to be aware of the CSR as codified in grammars. Rather, the baseline that their language can be compared to is the spoken (colloquial) Russian of the second half of this century—the language that their parents or grandparents are most comfortable with.

Unlike CSR, colloquial Russian is less well documented—the only comprehensive attempts have been by Zemskaja and her colleagues (1973; 1981; 1983; 1987), but the language they reflect is that of highly educated urban speakers, predominantly Muscovites and predominantly specialists in the humanities. One can compare that to studying the English spoken at MLA conventions in this country—certainly colloquial, but how representative is it of the overall population?

These remarks should not be taken to mean that the data on colloquial Russian are not useful. In fact, they are the only solid set of facts for the requisite baseline. However, they need to be corrected or supplemented along two dimensions: first, to reflect less educated registers of Russian, and second, to reflect geographical variation in spoken Russian. The latter is particularly important given the diversity of territorial origins of heritage speakers (Bermel and Kagan, this volume; Polinsky 1997). Although I am not prepared to address both dimensions comprehensively, I will comment on them in section 3.

Moving on to distinction (iv), the difference between a full and a reduced language can be best expressed in terms of communicative competency. If a speaker is able to use language A in any communicative situation, with any other speaker of that language, discussing any topic, then this speaker exemplifies a full use of A. If a speaker is unable to use A in some communicative situations, has difficulty with other speakers of A or problems with a chosen topic, A is reduced. Note that if a language is reduced for all its speakers, we arrive at the typical definition of a pidgin: a lexically and grammatically restricted lan-

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2 On changes in prescriptive (normative) grammars throughout the twentieth century, see Comrie et al. 1996 (Introduction).
guage used for basic communication between people with different native languages. This point will be crucial in the discussion below.

With regard to Russian, full competency is observed for speakers in the predominantly or solely Russian-speaking communities in the former Soviet Union and for adult immigrants in this country who maintain Russian as their first and often primary language. To distinguish between the two, I will be referring to the former as Full Russian (FR), and to the latter as Émigré Russian (ER). FR is not to be confused with CSR; rather it has to be identified with the baseline language discussed above. Reduced Russian, spoken primarily by 2+ generations of speakers in this country, will be referred to as American Russian (AR).

What is the relationship between American Russian and Heritage Russian? Roughly, the two terms are synonyms, but there are also differences in the domains they denote. Heritage Russian includes some ER, which is evident from the examination of Group I—least removed from FR—in the paper by Bermel and Kagan (this volume). This group can be based characterized as the intermediate between ER speakers and 2+ generation speakers. Heritage Russian seems to exclude a relatively small group that is included in AR—the so-called forgetters. The issue of forgetters brings me to distinction (v) listed above. A reduced language can have different origins. One possible origin is incomplete acquisition: being exposed to language A in their family, even as their first language, speakers never have a chance to go through the entire acquisition process into their adolescence and switch to another language as their primary language early on. The deficiency in language A is also compounded, in this case, by the missing or insufficient schooling in A. All this sets the stage for an incompletely acquired language, resulting in restricted communication, inability to make native speaker judgments about language, and insufficiency in certain areas of the lexicon and grammar. Another less common source of language reduction is the forgetting of the language by a speaker. Brain damage aside, healthy subjects beyond the critical period of acquisition may forget it if they don’t use it for a long period. The forgetting of L1 can actually go very far and result in an extremely reduced language system. In my pool of subjects, there were several such remarkable forgetters, and I will discuss them below.

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3 The acquisition of language through adolescence (roughly around age 12) is crucially associated with the notion of the critical period (Lenneberg 1967). There are a number of controversial issues associated with the critical period and with the age at which it stops (see, for example, Newport 1990; Hurford 1991), but it is clear that, exceptional cases aside, acquisition of a language is radically different after the critical period. Moreover, acquisition of a language after puberty is highly variable and unrelated to the age of arrival into a language community.
2. Who Are All These Speakers?

The discussion of the relevant notions might have already suggested that there is a borderline between competent speakers of Russian and heritage speakers. The sociolinguistic landscape of Russian immigration in the U.S. is rather complex; this section will present an attempt at navigating it.

The first boundary can be set between those Russian speakers who arrived in the U.S. as adults (adult arrivals below) and those who arrived as pre-critical age children or were born in the U.S. to Russian-speaking families. For the majority of the former, Russian is L1 and often their primary language; no matter how fluent in English, they never acquire native competence. The latter speak Russian as their secondary language and have a much better competence in English. At best, they can be characterized as bilinguals for whom English is prevalent.

2.1. Adult Arrivals

The initial generational division is not sufficient because there are internal distinctions within each group. Adult arrivals can be further subdivided into three groups: conservatives, ER speakers, and forgetters. The conservatives are those who try to maintain their Russian as close to the standard as possible. This amounts to living an illusion—the conservatives make an effort, often a conscious one, to maintain the purity of their Russian as they spoke it in the metropoly, but this purity is also the peril. The Russian language in the metropoly is changing too, and the changes have been particularly rapid since the demise of the Soviet system, which emphasized prescriptivism and standardization. It is very hard to keep up with these changes when the speakers are separated from the main language community. As the result, they are frozen at the standard of the time of their departure. This is particularly obvious in the speech of the so-called “first” and “second” waves of immigrants who, among other features, adhere to the Old Moscow pronunciation and older tonal patterns (on these phonological and tonal patterns, see Comrie et al. (1996) Ch. 1, 2; Buning and van Schooneveld 1960).\(^4\) The speech of more recent immigrants (the so-called third and fourth waves) is less dramatically different from that of the metropoly, but this is only because of the shorter time that has passed since they left Russia. A striking feature of this group is their careful avoidance of English borrowings and code switching (for details, see Polinsky, “Russian in the US”). Many of the more recent conservatives are Russian Jews. In the former Soviet Union, Jewishness was associated with ethnicity, not

religion, and was thus opposed to Russian ethnicity. As a result, the conservatives avoid calling themselves русские ‘Russians’ and use such terms as эмигранты ‘immigrants’, американцы русского происхождения ‘Americans of Russian origin’, выходцы из России ‘arrivals from Russia’. This is a very prominent feature setting them apart from Émigré Russians who refer to themselves as русские regardless of their actual ethnicity or religion.

The conservatives are more or less frozen in the Russian they spoke at the time of their immigration. Many, although not all of them, have a university education and find employment in their original occupation in this country. However, many conservatives are also those who emigrated too late in life to be employed in the American economy; as a result, their exposure to English is extremely limited, and that serves as a preservation factor. Many of the conservatives think that their Russian has deteriorated and Anglicized since their immigration; as for the inadequacy of the Russian of the next generation, some conservatives find it sad, others inevitable, still others don’t want their children to speak Russian because “it’s not proper Russian anyway.” The breakdown of a sample “conservative” group is presented in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention of the pre-immigration occupation</th>
<th>Attitude towards their own Russian</th>
<th>Attitude towards next generation’s Russian</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained: 31</td>
<td>Inadequate: 42</td>
<td>Pessimistic: 29</td>
<td>Moscow/Leningrad: 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not retain: 6</td>
<td>Adequate: 13</td>
<td>Optimistic: 4</td>
<td>Odessa: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never worked in the U.S.: 18</td>
<td>No opinion: 0</td>
<td>Indifferent: 22</td>
<td>Kiev: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Belorussia: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tashkent: 6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ER speakers, probably the largest Russian-speaking group in this country, represent what can be called the communal standard of Russian spoken in this country. They are much less dependent on the Russian spoken in the metropolis and they probably would not notice the changes in it as acutely as the conservatives do. I already mentioned one of the hallmarks of this group, their self-de-
notation as русские. Their educational and occupational situation is generally different from that of the conservatives; although many ER speakers have a college diploma, they had to switch fields as a result of immigration. They generally think that their Russian is very good and that they know how to speak it—a vexing problem for any instructor of Russian who has to teach their children. They also think that their children speak quite well, but see little value in maintaining their Russian. Finally, another factor separating these speakers from the conservatives is the geographical variation within the metropolis Russian. The conservatives, regardless of their geographical origins, tend to speak the standard Russian based on CSR, which in turn is based on Moscow/Petersburg standards. ER speakers represent non-standard varieties of Russian, particularly the southern variety. Simple numbers are the reason for the preponderance of southern Russian—these speakers constitute a large percentage of the Russian immigration in the U.S., and many of them have been prominent in the Russian micro-economy in the U.S. since the 1970s. Some of the features of their speech have become prominent in the overall communal standard adopted in this country. I will describe some of the linguistic features of ER in section 3 below. At this point, let me also mention that speakers of other varieties of Russian, e.g., Muscovites, adopt ER features. A sociolinguistic overview of the Émigré Russian speakers I interviewed is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Émigré Russian speakers in the US: Sociolinguistic Composition

(N=100; number of speakers with college degree or higher: 24; average time in the US: 8.9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention of the pre-immigration occupation</th>
<th>Attitude towards their own Russian</th>
<th>Attitude towards next generation's Russian</th>
<th>Place of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained: 12</td>
<td>Inadequate: 18</td>
<td>Pessimistic: 42</td>
<td>Moscow/Leningrad: 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not retain: 62</td>
<td>Adequate: 67</td>
<td>Optimistic: 8</td>
<td>Odessa: 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never worked in the US: 26</td>
<td>No opinion: 15</td>
<td>Indifferent: 36</td>
<td>Kiev: 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other places in Ukraine: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Belorussia: 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tashkent: 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the obvious lexical features of ER appear extremely early, 3–6 months after immigration. One of such early features is the use of не (pronounced [nɔ]) in place of the Russian нет. Such an early emergence of features indicates that the speakers adopt ER for social reasons, as a sign of solidarity with the entrenched group of immigrants. One might find it ironic that the socially desirable and prestigious speech is associated with the southern variety of Russian, the variety heavily stigmatized in the metropolis (Comrie et al. 1996: 23–7, 36–9, 43–4). Let me, however, remind the reader that this is simply a matter of statistical prevalence and economic visibility. Similar factors govern the prestige ranking of other immigrant languages—for example, Cuban Spanish is considered prestigious because of the affluence of Cuban immigrants in the U.S., who control a large portion of the Hispanic broadcasting business (Carmen Silva-Corvalan, pers. comm.).

The last, almost invisible, group of adult arrivals are the forgetters. Numerically, they are extremely small: in my sample of about 300 interviewees, only three qualified as forgetters. Let me briefly present the life story of a representative forgetter, MZ (1903–1996). MZ was born in the Urals, a daughter of an army officer and a musician. The family emigrated to Shanghai in 1920, and MZ married another such immigrant there, in 1924. MZ and her husband left for the United States in 1946; her husband died in 1951, and she married an English-speaking American. She did not have children in either marriage and she spoke very little Russian until the late seventies, when the family moved to a large city. When I first interviewed her in 1990, MZ had tremendous problems communicating with me in Russian. My initial suspicion was that this was an age-related problem, because MZ was almost 87 when we met. But her English and French, although accented, were extremely fluent, and I had to conclude that the problem lay elsewhere. In the overall forgetter group, MZ was probably my most willing informant, and she agreed to watch Russian videos and listen to Russian tapes between our regular meetings. In the three years that I was fortunate to meet with her, her Russian improved with regard to lexical retrieval, grammar, and the general speech tempo. This was particularly stunning because MZ was the oldest of the three Russian forgetters in my pool, the two others being World War II displaced persons.

2.2. “Children”

Speakers of Russian who immigrated with their families before age 12 or were born in this country are the other large group. The majority of this group are incomplete acquirers for whom Russian is obviously secondary. Since acquisi-

5 In 1993, MZ was moved to a nursing home and her health slowly deteriorated, so we were unable to work any longer.
tion presumably spans twelve years, one can expect clear differences between the speakers who were closer to the critical age when they left and those who left when very young (before age 7) or were born in the U.S. This expectation is corroborated by the literature on the developmental differences between age groups within the critical period (for example, Krashen 1975; Newport 1990; Johnson and Newport 1989, and references there). Within the incomplete acquirers, then, there are different degrees of incomplete acquisition. The degree of acquisition depends on the age up to which the child was exposed to the language in the metropoly, the level of schooling, and possibly the group of adult speakers their parents belong to. Overall, Bermel and Kagan's groups II and III represent incomplete acquirers, group II being more fluent. (As I mentioned earlier, Bermel and Kagan's group I is intermediate between adult arrivals and AR speakers.)

Of course, it is not impossible for a child in this country to retain his or her Russian, and some children of conservatives actually accomplish that. In my sample, however, such speakers were as small a minority as the forgetters are, which is understandable given the sociolinguistic pressures on immigrants. Figure 1 summarizes the breakdown of Russian speakers in the United States presented above. The dotted lines represent sporadic, occasional associations between groups, which can be treated as exceptions or rare trends.

![Figure 1. Speakers of Russian in the United States](image)

3. Émigré Russian

As I mentioned earlier, ER speakers are a clear majority in the adult group, and the so-called heritage speakers are likely to grow up hearing ER, both in the extended family and social circle, and from the Russian TV and radio that their parents listen to. It is therefore important to take a look at what they consider to be proper Russian.

The numerical prevalence of southern Russian speakers in this country leads to the establishment of a southern-based communal standard. It deviates
from spoken standard Russian, and is characterized by register contraction. Since Russian in the U.S. is used mostly in everyday situations, there is much less use for it in higher or more technical registers. Several striking features of register contraction can be mentioned here: the uniform use of the familiar pronoun ты, second person familiar, the use of the short form of one’s first name and total loss of the full first name-patronymic usage, and the increased use of vulgar or obscene words. Register contraction is handed down to the children of ER speakers, and it is the lack of register exposure that results in the reported inappropriateness of heritage speech (Bermel and Kagan, sections 4.3, 5.2).

The most striking feature of ER is the large number of lexical borrowings from American English (see also Wells 1932; Benson 1957, 1960; Andrews 1990, 1993a; Polinsky in press). Lexical items are easier to transfer than elements of grammar and they are transferred at early stages of language contact. Together with the negative no mentioned above, early typical borrowings include such words as паунт ‘pound’ (FR фунт), эрия ‘district, area, neighborhood’ (FR район), шапинк ‘shopping’ (FR покупки), or интертьеймент ‘entertainment’ (FR эстрадное представление). Many borrowings coexist with the respective FR words, for example, the ER апартмьнт ‘apartment’ and the FR квартира, but it is clearly more appropriate to use the borrowings, and I have often been corrected and reprimanded for the use of ковер instead of кarpit ‘carpet’ or фунт instead of паунт. It is important to note that ER adopts the borrowed words to the phonological system of Russian. Borrowings often reflect the actual pronunciation of the respective English word and allow one a glimpse into the territorial or temporal characteristic of a given word. A good example of that can be seen in borrowings reflecting the low open o of American English: каледж (college), шапинк (shopping), клазит (closet), and

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6 The register contraction makes the comparison with spoken Russian (as described by Zemskaja and her colleagues) problematic—although Zemskaja’s texts do have a large number of everyday situations, they also abound in references to professional and academic life (lectures, trips, books, proofs).

7 The large number of English words in the ER lexicon can be accounted for in two ways: either as actual lexical borrowings or as code-switching. Code switching is changing from one language to another in the course of the conversation, often within one sentence. There are two pieces of evidence suggesting that the bulk of English in ER is due to borrowing. First, code-switching preserves the phonology of the language that the relevant items belong to; ER adopts English words to Russian phonology (see examples below). Second, ER does not follow the typical patterns of morphosyntactic integration observed under code-switching (Halmari 1997; Myers-Scotton 1993). In AR, on the contrary, there are very few borrowings from English, and actual code-switching does most of the work. See also fn. 13 below.
even the well-known place name—Калипуд ‘Hollywood’ (see also Benson 1957; 1960).

Usually in the second or third year of residence, ER speakers develop a number of calques, many of which are passed on to the second generation (see Bermel and Kagan, this volume, esp. 4.2 and 5.2). Some examples: брать врея ‘take time’, иметь фан ‘have fun’ (with the borrowed noun), дать хорошую цену ‘give a good price’.

ER speakers tend to code-switch or borrow in their use of discourse markers—the typical Russian значит ‘thus’, так сказать ‘so to say’, итак ‘so’ give way to оке́й, аймин (from I mean), юно ‘you know’. In my sample, speakers start using these discourse markers after 6 months of residence, even if their English is still quite minimal. This suggests that the use of markers is another prestige feature. For children of ER speakers, there is no need to establish their prestige as “true Americans,” because English is their primary language. Interestingly, they tend to avoid English discourse markers and hedges in their Russian and desperately try to translate them into Russian. This leads to such monstrosities as как ‘as’ for like, ты знаешь ‘you know’, ты видишь ‘you see’, or я имею (from я имею в виду ‘I mean’). The overall rate of borrowings/code-switched items in ER speech is between 6–11 percent, depending on an individual speaker.

In the sound system, ER is characterized by a lesser reduction of consonants or vowels (strong vowel reduction was typical of the spoken standard until the late 1980s, but seems to be decreasing in the standard as well). One can attribute this both to the internal pressures of the standard and to the characteristics of the southern variety of Russian, where reduction has always been weaker (Comrie et al. 1996: 49–59). The glottal fricative /h/, as in the southern variant (Comrie et al. 36–40), commonly replaces the standard velar stop /g/, and this is found even in the speech of those who grew up speaking standard Russian. In the southern variety of Russian, the possessive suffix -ина/-ино is pronounced as [э]na#no and this feature is extremely prominent in ER, used even by those who grew up without it. Bermel and Kagan’s example (23) indicates that this feature is interfering with the orthography of a heritage speaker, who writes папану ‘father’s’, staying true to what s/he hears.

In the domain of stress, there is a notable increase in non-standard stress patterns, many of which are again associated with the southern variety of Russian. For example: арбузы ‘watermelons’ (FR арбузы), пónяла ‘understood’ (FR поняла), спокойнее quieter’ (FR спокóйнее).

A very early and striking feature of ER, developing in the first year of residence in the U.S., is the change in n exal intonation (intonation in conjoined clauses or phrases). The non-emphatic intonation of FR requires a falling tone under the coordination of elements (close to contour 2 in Bryzgunova 1977).
ER replaces that with a dramatic rise, resembling the exaggerated contour 3 of Bryzgunova. It is possible that this tonal contour represents an adaptation of the English level tone. This feature also sets ER apart from AR—speakers of the latter normally superimpose English tonal contours on the Russian segmental sequences.8

Moving on to grammar, I would like to emphasize that ER shows no significant grammatical deviations from spoken Russian of the metropoly. Whatever may shock or annoy a speaker of CSR in ER comes from code-switching, extensive and often unnecessary lexical borrowing, and the logical continuation of those structural features that are already present in colloquial spoken Russian. These features include the attrition of genitive of negation and lexically governed genitive, which is replaced by the accusative (1), (2); the attrition of the predicative instrumental, replaced by the nominative (3); the use of the relative который in place of кто or что (4); the non-declension of numerals (see Comrie et al. 1996: 134–5), and the increasing analyticity in nominal expressions, as in (5). Of the examples below, (1), (3), or (4) would be perfectly acceptable for a colloquial Russian register in the metropoly; the only difference between that colloquial Russian and ER is that the attrition is greater in émigré speech.

(1) я не купил огурцы
‘I didn’t buy cucumbers (accusative).’

(2) если вы просили политическое убежище
‘If you have asked for political asylum (accusative)’
(FR ... политического убежища (genitive))

(3) а этот сын у неё был мафиозник
‘and this son of hers was a Mafioso (nominative)’

(4) все которые приехали с нами ...
‘all who arrived with us’ (FR все, кто...)

(5) я удивляюсь на тебя
‘I am surprised by you’ (FR ...тебе)

The most notable trait of ER speech, which cannot be related to the colloquial standard, is the replacement of the focus particle ли ‘whether; if’ by или which means ‘or’ in the standard. The use of или as a complementizer particle is observed in southern Russian, so this is another manifestation of the southern influence. Prima facie, this replacement could be classified as lexical change: the particle is a separate segment and there is also formal resemblance between ли and или, which facilitates the replacement. However, the switch from ли to или

8 See also Andrews (1993b; 1994; 1995) for analysis of ER and AR intonation.
is also accompanied by word order changes, which indicates that the change is indeed grammatical.

In FR and in CSR лі is the second-position clitic that follows the focus of the sentence. The focused element undergoes fronting, so the structure is quite different from that of a regular declarative. Compare (6a) and (6b, c), where the focus is fronted:

(6) a. Маша любит мультфильмы
   ‘Masha likes cartoons.’
   b. любит ли Маша мультфильмы?
   ‘Does Masha like cartoons?’
   c. мультфильмы ли Маша любит?
   ‘Is it cartoons that Masha likes?’

In southern Russian, the focused element does not have to be fronted (it can be simply pitch-accented) and the word order stays the same as in the declarative. The whole sentence is introduced by или, which indicates direct (7) or reported (8) question.

(7) или ты не знаешь как в Америке дружат?
   Q you not know how in America they are friends
   ‘Don’t you know how one is friends with others in America?’
(8) он сомневался или она их пригласила
   he doubted if she them invited
   ‘He wasn’t sure if she had invited them.’

The use of или differentiates ER both from the baseline and from AR, where ли is totally replaced by если. It is commonly assumed that если is a simple mistranslation of the English if—the same error occurs in the speech of L2 learners of Russian (Andrews 1994). Indeed, Russian-speaking children growing up bilingual use если from age 3.5 (Turian and Altenberg 1991; Polinsky in preparation). However, for those AR speakers who are exposed to ER, the motivation is doubled by the matching structural pattern in the language of adults.

To conclude, ER has few structural features that are dramatically different from spoken colloquial Russian in the metropoly. It has a clear preponderance of southern traits, and that might result in pedagogical problems in teaching CSR to children of ER speakers, who should not be expected to be aware of it. Overall, ER is a composite of different geographical colloquial variants, characterized by extensive borrowings, code-switching, and register contraction.
4. American Russian

I should start with a disclaimer: my main interest in the AR group was confined to those speakers who had extremely limited proficiency in Russian. I am therefore most qualified to comment on those heritage speakers whom Bermel and Kagan classify as Group III. Although I do not have enough longitudinal data to support this claim, I believe that, unless serious language maintenance is undertaken, Group II speakers will deteriorate into Group III.

The discussion below is based on extensive interviews with twenty-five speakers of AR, none of whom could read or write Russian at the time of the interviews (some speakers chose to take courses in Russian later and learned the written language). I used a special measure of lexical proficiency (see Polinsky 1994; 1995; 1997; in press) to determine the level of overall language competency of these speakers. The use of this measure was motivated by my findings, on the basis of several incompletely acquired languages, that the level of incompleteness in the acquisition of grammar correlates with the level of incompleteness in lexical acquisition (Polinsky 1994; 1995). All speakers were either born in the U.S. or were brought to this country as children under ten.

Their families represent the wide geographical variation in spoken Russian—from Moscow and Leningrad to Ukraine, Belorussia, Siberia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Based on a number of statistical measures, the speakers were represented in a continuum of proficiency, from more competent ones (whose overall proficiency was measured at 75–90 percent of full competence) to the least competent ones (see Polinsky in press for details). In the discussion below, I will assume the speaker continuum as a given, thus referring to more and less competent/proficient speakers.

From my discussion of ER, one may presume that there is also a continuum of attrition, from the fully equipped baseline to ER and then to AR. This is not true. The most striking fact about AR is that it is not a simple continuation of tendencies found in ER. Rather, it is a severely restricted language with no register variation and with a grammar of its own. In the subsections below, I will

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9 This result is independently corroborated by the findings that lexical maturation and grammatical maturation correlate in very young children (Bates et al. 1994; Thal et al. 1996). While Bates, Thal, and their colleagues looked at the language on its way up, towards complete acquisition, I am concentrating on the inadequacies in acquisition, but the pattern of lexical-to-grammatical correlation remains the same.

10 In my earlier papers, I had a more inclusive group of people who emigrated before age 12, but, given the findings on the critical period issues (see note 3), it is preferable to lower the acquisition cut-off age. Lowering the age would also ensure a more viable comparison between those AR speakers who grew up in the metropolis and those who grew up in the U.S.
concentrate on some salient features of grammar and discourse of AR. The lexical composition of AR, surprisingly, does not show much influence of ER either. Of course, AR speakers use code-switched items, but for reasons entirely different from those that motivate their parents to borrow or code-switch. For ER speakers, borrowing and code-switching are strong prestige indicators; for AR speakers, code-switched items simply come from their primary language. This also explains why they preserve the English phonology in code-switching (see fn. 7) and why they have a much higher rate of code-switching, roughly from 25% for the most fluent AR speakers to 50% for the least proficient ones (see also fn. 13).

4.1. Missing Conventionalizations

On the issue of registers, I already mentioned above that ER undergoes register contraction by virtue of being used in a limited communicative setting. AR speakers grow up hearing the everyday colloquial register and parent speech directed at them as young children. As a result, they have very little understanding of or control over register variation in Russian. This is apparent from their confusion about ты and Вы—they normally use ты, but if told about Вы start using it indiscriminately—from their use of terms of address typical of children’s speech (дядя, тетя), and from their desperate attempts, when polite, to impose English speech etiquette on Russian. Some manifestations of the latter can be seen in the frequent use of the interlocutor’s first name, uncharacteristic of Russian; in the hedges and discourse markers mentioned in section 3, and in the inflated use of привет (as the English hi/hello) or как дела. Etiquette features are not derived from the grammar of an individual language; rather, these are conventions learned (and enforced) from cradle to grave, and the gaps in the knowledge of these conventions are symptomatic of incomplete acquisition. In addition to the features just named, I would also like to mention the pragmatically inappropriate use of the third person pronoun denoting a person who is present. In modern American English, this is a common unmarked feature. In Russian, this is considered very rude, but AR speakers do not know that and use this feature just as in their primary language. A typology of etiquette differences between Russian and English might remedy the situation, using possible sources for Russian such as Akiśina and Formanovskaja (1989) or Comrie et al. (1996: Ch. 7).

Since the basic exposure of AR speakers to Russian was in early childhood, they tend to use a large number of diminutives. Diminutives are characteristic

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11 The only area where ER lexical influence on AR is truly strong is the use of geographically marked lexical items, for example, синий ‘eggplant’ from the southern lexicon.
of parent speech. Russian parent speech in particular, and a child mimics that from the early stages of language development (Gvozdev 1961: 399–404). A competent Russian speaker can back-form a regular form from a diminutive, but since AR speakers have very little morphological competence (see 4.3), this strategy is unavailable to them. If they had not heard the respective word in a regular and diminutive form, they may mistake the diminutive for the regular citation form. This is the case with the child described in Turian and Altenberg; he uses the words яблочники ‘apples’ (diminutive), ножки ‘dear little feet’ or глазки ‘dear little eyes’ in those contexts which clearly call for a non-diminutive form. Impressionistically, speakers of southern Russian seem to use more diminutives than speakers of other varieties. If the use of diminutives in AR were a reflection of their parents’ territorial dialect, then one would expect more diminutives in the speech of some American Russians but not others. My results (Polinsky in press) show that this is not the case; therefore, the heavy use of diminutives reflects the general parent speech directed at the child.

With regard to conventionalizations, I would like to mention still another phenomenon characteristic of AR, namely, the lack of stable citation forms. A citation form is that form of a lexical item which is used to name an isolated object or a dictionary entry. For items which do not involve any change in form (for instance, prepositions or adverbs), there is no problem in choosing one. For items whose form changes to reflect inflectional categories, the choice is influenced by two separate factors: usage conventions on the one hand and frequency and markedness on the other. Unmarked forms are generally best suited to be citation forms, hence the use of the nominative as the citation form of nouns in Russian. The use of the infinitive as the citation form of Russian verbs is a purely arbitrary strategy—compare Russian with Latin, where the citation form of verbs is first person singular present. Since AR speakers have not been exposed to the lexicographic conventions of FR, they have no reason to abide by them. As a result, if they have a variation in wordforms at all (see below), they tend to use the form which occurs most frequently—for verbs, this is either the imperative or a past/present tense form, usually third person. With adjectives, the use of the masculine as the citation form is a matter of convention, and inasmuch as AR speakers retain genders, they do not follow this convention. Most of the isolated adjectives in my elicitations were pro-

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12 The use of these verbal citation forms correlates nicely with the early acquisition of the same forms (Gvozdev 1961: 407–15) by a Russian-speaking child. Cross-linguistically, the earliest forms include third person singular present or past indicative, imperative, and first person singular present (see Slobin 1985: 1211–21; Smoczyńska 1985: 631–36; Tomasello & Merriman 1995). Thus, AR speakers are simply producing what they have acquired at early stages of their language development.
duced in the neuter (judging by those adjectives that have the stressed ending), which might reflect the perception of adjectival citation forms as abstract.

4.2. The Sound System

Although my study did not focus on pronunciation of AR, a few remarks are in order here. I refer the reader to Andrews (1996; 1994; 1993) for observations on intonation in AR. As far as the pronunciation of segmental elements is concerned, AR speakers consistently shift all their vowels backwards, so that [i] becomes either the central unrounded [ə] or the schwa, and the low front [a] becomes either the central unrounded vowel [a] or even the low back unrounded [o]. The Russian back vowels, [o] and [u], pronounced as semi-high/mid change to high vowels and receive less rounding than in the FR or ER pronunciation. Dentals and alveolars also seem to undergo a slight backing, and the pronunciation reflects the interference of American English aspiration. Overall, the vocal apparatus of AR speakers (the so-called phonetic setting) seems to be set backwards compared to the ER setting or FR setting. One might also expect to observe the disappearance of palatalization and final devoicing (strong indicators of the Russian accent in a foreign language), but that does not occur.

These sketchy observations are intended as strictly preliminary, and my hope is that an instrumental phonetic study of AR will eventually be undertaken.

4.3. Grammatical Characteristics of American Russian: An Overview

At first sight, AR strikes the casual observer as a language with no system. Indeed, it has few features of the Russian grammatical system, but it still does have a system of its own. In this subsection, I will first describe the features in which AR differs from either FR or ER and will then explain how the grammar of AR is structured.

The first dramatic difference between AR and all the other varieties of Russian is in the reduction of cases. The genitive of negation disappears, and it is not found even in the obligatory cases with нет ‘there is no’, thus:

(9) у нас нет автомобиль
    by us:GEN there is no automobile:NOM
    ‘We have no car’ (FR у нас нет автомобиля)

The lack of the genitive of negation is not accidental—acquisition data for children up to age 7 show that they make systematic errors in this construction (Babyonysev et al. 1994). Thus, AR speakers simply fail to entrench it and do not get any reinforcement from the case system.
Predictably, instrumentals in the predicative function disappear (recall that they were weak even in ER), hence:

(10) она хочет быть модель и она будет тонкая для это 
    she wants to be model:NOM and she will be thin:NOM for 
    that
    ‘She wants to be a model and she is trying to lose weight for that.’

The example in (10) illustrates another prevalent tendency in AR, the loss of oblique cases. Oblique forms are generally rendered by a preposition + nominative. The accusative of the direct object also disappears, but is, surprisingly, retained in a different function. It is used as the second object case in constructions with ditransitive verbs such as давать ‘give’, показывать ‘show’, e.g.

(11) я показываю мою собаку кости
    I show (my dog):ACC bones
    ‘I showed (sic) bones to my dog.’

The emergence of this construction may be explained in two ways. First, this might be the Russian calque of the English double object construction, with the recipient or goal immediately following the verb and resembling the actual direct object (cf. I showed him a bone). Although this explanation is quite plausible, it leaves unanswered the question why the accusative is not used for regular direct objects in transitive clauses of AR, as, for instance, in the ubiquitous я говорю тебя ‘I am telling you’. In (11), кости is ambiguous between the accusative and nominative, but (12) clearly shows that the direct object is expressed by the nominative:

(12) я не любил ее отец
    I not liked (her father):NOM
    ‘I did not like her father.’ (FR ... ее отца)

The other possible explanation is that the case system of AR is dramatically reduced and includes basically one unmarked case for all positions (nominative) except that of the second object, expressed by the accusative. Incidentally, the two cases are the first in the order of case acquisition in standard Russian (Gvozdev 1961: 378–93; Babyonyshchev 1993). The overall case system of AR can be represented in the following way:
Table 3. Case System of American Russian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical Function</th>
<th>Case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject, direct object</td>
<td>NOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect object</td>
<td>ACC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oblique objects</td>
<td>Preposition + NOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjuncts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But what about the correct use of forms such as у нас in (9)? I would argue that these forms represent lexicalized chunks, somewhat similar to idioms. In other words, speakers use them without internal grammar, not knowing that the Russian preposition у assigns the genitive case and к, the dative. Evidence for that comes from two quarters. First, the use of correct forms is extremely varied among different speakers, reflecting the individual frequencies of different lexical items. Secondly, and more importantly, AR speakers can use the correct case form for a lexical item they had a chance to learn in the same breath as the prepositional nominative, used with a lexical item they do not know well. Compare:

(13) в Советском Союзе нет денег у врача
   in Soviet Union:LOC there is no money by doctor:NOM
   ‘In the Soviet Union, doctors make little money.’

The scarcity of case forms is related to the generally impoverished morphology of AR. The combination of such scarce morphology with the impoverished lexicon prevents AR speakers from recognizing associations between word forms and related derivations (e.g., as in the entrenchment of diminutives, see above). The gender of nouns also presents serious problems, which is not surprising given a very strong interaction between declension and gender in Russian (Gvozdev 1961: 396–97; Corbett 1991: 40–41). More competent speakers tend to regularize morphological cues, treating all nouns ending in -a (including names of male humans such as дедушка ‘grandfather’) as feminine and treating all nouns ending in a consonant as masculine (hence, the feminines соль ‘salt’, тень ‘shadow’, and even ночь ‘night’ are treated as masculine). The least competent speakers, who also have very little agreement, seem to have a very vague idea of gender assignment and tend to use arbitrary forms of verbs and modifiers, as in мой мать ‘my mother’ (cf. also (21) below).

Turning now to the verbal system, several characteristic features deserve to be mentioned. Aspectual pairs, which are rather well preserved in ER (cf. Group I in Bermel and Kagan’s paper), are practically non-existent. AR abandons such pairs in favor of lexicalized perfectives or imperfectives. Which of the
aspectual forms is lexicalized is heavily determined by the telicity of a given verb; inherently telic verbs are lexicalized in the perfective, for example, начать ‘begin’, смотреть ‘be able to’, написать ‘write’, (от)дать ‘give’, and взять ‘take’. Verbs that do not imply a natural limit, such as processes and states, are lexicalized in the imperfective form, for instance, верить ‘believe’, лежать ‘lie down’, идти ‘go’, or нравиться ‘like/get to like’. The impoverished lexicon of AR again shows its ugly head because many events that could be expressed by a verb in FR/ER are expressed descriptively as combinations of the verb ‘be’ and an adjective or noun. For example, быть больной ‘be sick’ (FR болеть), быть alcoholic ‘get drunk’ (FR напиться), and so on.

In the verbal morphology, some striking features include the reduction of verbal person/number paradigms, the lack of agreement, and the absence of the subjunctive. In my discussion of citation forms (4.1), I mentioned that verbal paradigms of AR are rather incomplete. This has an immediate effect on agreement—since speakers of AR have no control over a full range of verb forms, they cannot meet the agreement criteria of Russian grammar. As I have shown elsewhere (Polinsky 1997: 382, 390), the percentage of correct agreement forms in AR varies across speakers, within the range of 40 percent for the most competent speakers and 3–10 percent for the least fluent speakers. The most common verb forms used are the imperative, first and third person singular in the present, and a random gender past tense form. Which form is retained depends a lot on the nature of the lexical item: for example, if the speaker was more likely to have heard this word as an imperative, he/she will use the imperative form (зажги, погаси, отдай); if first person usage was pragmatically determined (e.g., хочу, смотрю), this form is more likely to be retained.

Once again, these forms are the ones that are acquired early in normal language development (Gvozdev 1961: 410–19). Among the forms that are virtually non-existent are conditionals and subjunctives. More competent speakers use the past tense instead of the conditional with был, less competent speakers stay with the single verb form that they know.

AR has few reflexives. Many of the FR reflexive verbs in -ся are replaced with their non-reflexive counterparts, for example:¹⁴

(14) я хочу посмотреть места где я родила
I want to see places where I was born
‘I want to see the places where I was born.’

¹³ Here the English word is used as the predicative nominal, which is the most typical structural site of code-switching. Knowing possible structural positions associated with code-switching might become an effective tool in teaching AR speakers to avoid such switches.
¹⁴ Cf. the correct gender agreement in (14).
The syntactic expression of reflexivity is minimal, and both possessive and nominal reflexives are replaced by pronominals or by descriptive phrases, for instance:

(15) я думаю о моей живот
I think about (my stomach): NOM
'I am thinking about my stomach.'

Whether this reflexive weakness is due to the influence of English, which does not have morphological reflexives, or whether this is due to some possible universal tendencies, remains unclear.

4.4. Maintaining Discourse Reference

Although agreement errors or conjugation mistakes are extremely salient, other more subtle phenomena in AR are also worthy of note. To the extent that AR speakers are capable of producing clauses and linking them together into short texts, they demonstrate characteristics absent both from FR and from ER. One such characteristic is the excessive use of resumptive pronouns, i.e., clause-internal pronouns related to an NP within the same clause. Resumptive pronouns coindexed with subjects are extremely common. Compare (16) and the corresponding equivalent in FR (17) (see also (21) below):

(16) мой дедушка и бабушка он жил в Нью-Йорк
my grandfather and grandmother RP live in New York
'My grandparents, they live in New York.'

(17) мои дедушка и бабушка живут в Нью-Йорке
'My grandparents live in New York.'

Spoken FR also has resumptive pronouns, generally coindexed with a topic (Zemskaja 1973; 1981; 1987), cf. (18), so one may be tempted to view this usage in AR as a continuation of a language-internal tendency.

(18) Вовка# я ему все время говорю об этом
'As for Vovka, I am always telling him about this.'

However, in the spoken full language, resumptive pronouns are not grammati-
cized to be used with subjects, as they are in AR. Further, spoken full language resumptive pronouns are used after a pause (cf. (18)), which is not the case in AR. Finally, in the spoken language, resumptive pronouns occur in about 20% of utterances, whereas in AR their percentage is significantly higher (70–90%, see Polinsky 1997), which indicates that they have become categorical. In my opinion, resumptive pronouns develop as a way of compensating for the loss of
agreement (this explains their coindexation with subjects) and, related to that, as a strategy ensuring the maintenance of reference to the same participant in the discourse. This strategy may seem redundant to speakers of full languages, but since AR speakers feel rather uncertain about their own competence and have uncertain expectations of their interlocutors, extra redundancy in discourse may be a way of getting the message across.

The redundancy continues if we look beyond the grammar of a simple clause. In reference-tracking across clauses, an area where most full languages prefer strong economy and delete subsequent mentions of the same referent, AR also uses resumptive pronouns, as in (19):

(19) они не приглашают меня и они говорят они приглашают
     'They never invite me but they say that they do.'

Relative clauses, another strategy for making discourse more cohesive and economical, are also scarce. In those cases where a relative clause would be used by a full speaker, AR speakers juxtapose clauses, using the ubiquitous resumptive pronouns. Thus:

(20) и они имели собака и она ест суши
     'They had a dog that ate sushi.'

Another redundancy feature of AR discourse is the so-called tail-head linkage—the final segment of a preceding sentence is repeated at the beginning of the next one, thus creating an overall impression of tedious repetition. Outside AR, tail-head linkage is found in uneducated registers of full languages (Edward Finegan, pers. comm.) and in pidgins (Reesink 1991). Again, the overall picture is that of insecurity in one's production skills, which then projects onto the perception of the hearer's skills. As a result of such insecurity, AR speakers want to make sure they get their message across by increasing the redundancy of expression. Although this is the more common type of speaker I have encountered, there is also another type—speakers who try to minimize what they say and as a result hardly say anything. When you listen to speakers of this type, the perception is of telegraphic speech, with random key words rather than full utterances.

Both types of speakers produce an impression of those who know some lexical items and some grammar but lack the ability to construct cohesive texts of the type familiar to a full speaker. This impression of "discourse inadequacy" is corroborated by the seemingly random and frequent pauses in AR speech (for details, see Polinsky 1997). Pausing probably reflects two different phenomena, namely, unfamiliarity with discourse strategies and problems with lexical retrieval. Pauses punctuate clause boundaries (cf. the first pause in (21)), constituent boundaries, and—most surprisingly—word boundaries within a
single constituent. The latter is illustrated by pausing in (21), where наш дом has just been mentioned and therefore should not pose lexical retrieval problems (# indicates a pause):

(21) ты всегда ты находи наш дом # перед наш #
you always RP will find our house in front of (our
dом есть большое lawn
house):NOM there is big lawn

'You can always find our house, we have a big lawn in front.'

Problems with lexical retrieval mean that speakers need some time to search for a word describing a certain concept. That this plays an important role in their speech is demonstrated by the more rampant pausing in their speech on unfamiliar topics (Polinsky 1997). Often more frequent pausing co-occurs with greater code-switching, which suggests that they are motivated by similar lexical deficiencies.

To summarize this section, I have not presented a comprehensive grammatical description of AR; rather, I have emphasized some of its salient features that indicate its categorical difference from ER. Overall, the grammar of AR resembles that of an extended pidgin—a language that arises under restricted communicative circumstances (e.g., (Mühlhäusler 1986). Of course, AR does not have the major characteristic of a pidgin—it is not a language of people who have no common language—but the grammatical parallels are even more striking given that. Like a pidgin, AR has very little morphology, a very simple system of verbal and nominal forms, and a significant number of redundant features (including tail-head linkage). Even if the proposed parallelism eventually proves to be spurious, the other point I have made above remains—AR is more different from ER or FR than one would expect, and these differences are of a fundamental, grammatical nature.

5. Conclusion

This paper pursued an essentially descriptive goal, that of surveying the different varieties of Russian spoken in the United States. My main focus was on the salient features of each variety as well as on the interaction (or lack thereof) among the varieties. I hope to have shown that the Russian community in the U.S. is a small tower of Babel. The Russian speakers in this country are rather heterogeneous, and heritage speakers, who are a fragment of the overall Russian-speaking population, are not uniform either. To interact with a speaker of Russian in the U.S. efficiently, one needs to know which levels of the tower each given speaker comes from.
I compared Russian spoken in the U.S. to the Russian of the metropoly; the latter is also stratified. Its major representatives are the late-twentieth century standard (CSR); its educated spoken variant, as represented in the studies by Zemskaja and her colleagues; colloquial spoken Russian, and territorial variants of Russian. Of all these varieties, CSR is most removed from the Russian spoken outside the metropoly. Given the overly normative, prescriptive nature of CSR, it is unrealistic to expect that in the absence of schools and centralized media—the two main promoters of CSR—speakers would continue to abide by its standards.

Colloquial spoken Russian and territorial varieties seem to have a major impact on the shape of ER, the language spoken by the majority of first-generation immigrants in this country. ER does not show significant structural differences from the baseline; rather, it amplifies the tendencies already present in these varieties. In addition, ER includes a large number of borrowings from English, many of which replace the respective Russian nouns and serve as signs of prestige. This indicates that many changes in ER can be accounted for in sociolinguistic terms.

American Russian, the language of 2+ generation Russians living in the U.S. is quite different from any other Russian “languages” and cannot be explained as a mere calque of English. This is a language acquired only partially; the resources available to language learners are limited but they still lead to the emergence of a grammar. This grammar bears a striking resemblance to grammars of different types of languages arising under limited communicative circumstances—pidgins. As AR speakers interact with other language speakers, they converge on a common language and learn to correctly interpret each others’ communications. However, for these speakers, Russian is clearly a secondary language and they feel much less competent in it than they do in English.

Speakers of AR form a continuum of proficiency. There is evidence that in language development, lexical and grammatical maturation go hand in hand. It is therefore a pleasing and important result that the lexical proficiency of AR speakers is also a strong predictor of their grammatical level (and the other way around). This finding can have immediate implications in language teaching—by administering a simple test of lexical proficiency, a language instructor is able to place a speaker at the relevant level of overall language knowledge.

Speakers of ER can also be ordered in a continuum, but given that they have fewer structural changes, their level is potentially harder to evaluate. Since ER usage is largely driven by sociolinguistic factors, these habits may be easier to break if they are addressed directly and explained away as social phenomena. Thus, quite a few features of Groups I and II mentioned by Bermel and Kagan (this volume) fall into this category. For both groups of speakers it
is important to pay attention to the territorial features of Russian they have been exposed to in their childhood; in the absence of schooling, these features will have the upper hand and need to be addressed in a conscious way as well.

Although speakers form continua in both ER and AR (as well as in the smaller groups mentioned here), the groups themselves remain separate entities. In other words, there is an impermeable boundary between ER and AR, between "Conservatives" and Émigrés, etc. This is good news for a linguist, who cares less about speakers than about languages and dialects. Staying true to the Saussurean paradigm, the linguist can then record a given grammar as frozen at a certain stage. But those who care more about individual speakers need to stay vigilant; an individual speaker of Russian may slip from the full language to a reduced language (as in the case of forgetters), or may improve from AR to the near-native Russian with the appropriate instruction. I have not solved any puzzles for those involved in such instruction, but I hope to have shown them where to look for answers.

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