

Title: Investigating Syntactic Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in the Writing of Heritage Speakers of Russian

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Heritage speakers (HSs) of Russian in the United States form a very complex group of learners that pose a big puzzle to scholars and educators: on the one hand, their speech may sound so native-like; on the other hand, it has certain features that set them apart from those who speak Full Russian. Research in heritage linguistics has examined key parameters of the HSs' oral production. Important work has been done in heritage language (HL) pragmatics, morphology, and lexicon. However, very few studies have been conducted to investigate HL writing. The present study expands current research on heritage learners by introducing new data on their written language production.

Studies of L2 and HL writing tend to focus on discrete elements and formal analysis of the elements that are easily identifiable. Although examining these elements in isolation provides some information to create a HSs' linguistic profile, these findings are only fragments of an overall profile. In this presentation I will use the measurements of linguistic complexity, accuracy and fluency (often referred to as CAF) as components of a global picture of writing skills development in the HL. I will investigate academic texts produced by Russian heritage learners who are undergraduate students at U.S. universities. The combination of HSs and native speakers' essays resulted in a corpus of 118 texts and approximately 34,000 words. I will analyze the syntactic, morphological, and lexical features of these academic texts and compare them with the same features in texts written by native speakers.