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Освоение прямого дополнения при изучении взрослыми русского языка как иностранного

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Аннотация

В статье исследуется освоение прямого дополнения при изучении взрослыми русского языка как иностранного (L2). Для этого был проведен эксперимент со студентами уровней A1-C1. Полученные данные сравнивались с контрольной группой носителей русского (L1). Исследование показало, что важную роль в этом процессе играют как лингвистические, так и экстралингвистические факторы. Глаголы с 5–6 типами объекта продемонстрировали большую разницу между группами L1 и L2, чем глаголы с 3–4 типами объекта. Выяснилось, что типы прямого дополнения, которые используют изучающие РКИ с низким уровнем владения, не всегда самые частотные в русском языке. На употребление типов прямого дополнения уровень владения языком влияет только частично. Изучающие РКИ почти на любом уровне знакомы с разными типами объектов, при этом употребление периферийных типов объектов, таких как инфинитивы, не зависит от уровня владения языком.

Ключевые слова

валентность глагола, освоение второго языка, русский язык как иностранный, структура предложения, прямое дополнение

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Direct Object Acquisition in the Speech of Adult L2 Russian Learners

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Abstract

This article investigates direct object acquisition by adult learners of Russian as a second language (L2). Students of different proficiency levels (A1-C1) took part in the experimental study and their data was compared with that produced by the L1 speakers. It found that verb valency, as well as learner proficiency levels, significantly impact this process. Verbs with 5–6 object types demonstrate more differences between L1 and L2 groups than verbs with 3–4 object types, indicating a link between verb valency and acquisition difficulty. Object types used by low proficiency level speakers turned out not to be always the most common or frequent in standard Russian, as the most common types do not equal the simplest ones. The distribution of direct object types was only partly affected by the proficiency level. L2 learners of almost any level appeared to be familiar with different direct object types. It claims that non-accusative, peripheral object types, like infinitives, do not depend on the language proficiency level, regardless of their frequency.

Keywords

verb valency, second language acquisition, Russian as a foreign language, sentence structure, direct object

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests.

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Introduction

Russian verbs usually carry more grammatical information than nouns, making processing verbs more difficult [Dragoy & Bastiaanse, 2010]. So, verb acquisition is an important aspect of acquisition of Russian as a second language (L2) in general.

This article is aimed to investigate direct object acquisition by adult learners of Russian as a second language (L2). It has two main aspects: case acquisition, as a direct object in Russian is marked by case, and acquisition of verb argument structures.

Case processing is a classic problem in L2 Russian acquisition [Peirce, 2018; Taraban & Kempe, 1999] and is quite well-studied. Kempe & MacWhinney have investigated the acquisition of overt morphological cases by adult native speakers of English who were learning L2 Russian or L2 German [Kempe & MacWhinney, 1998] and the case-marking cues [Kempe & MacWhinney, 1999]. Their conclusion is that L2 Russian learners mostly relied on the endings when identifying a case. In the more recent research, Artoni & Magnani focused their study on the production of case marking [Artoni & Magnani, 2015]. It has also previously been observed that there are many similarities between L1 and L2 Russian morphological processing, the main one being the role of frequency [Tkachenko & Chernigovskaya, 2010]. A solid review of the acquisition of Russian morphology and how it affects the practice of teaching Russian as L2 can be found in [Nuss, 2022].

As for the acquisition of verb argument structures, it is strongly connected with verb valency acquisition. Although verb valency acquisition plays an important role in second language acquisition (SLA) in general and is crucial for forming high proficiency, there are fewer works discussing it from this perspective. Most of them obviously consider English as an L2 [Zhao & Jiang, 2020; Laufer & Waldman, 2011; Montrul, 2001]. There are just few works considering verb valency acquisition in

adult L2 Russian learners. Verb valency was compared in Croatian and Russian as foreign languages, but this paper has some general examples of different verb types and possible mistakes of L2 learners [Brač & Magić, 2014].

Regarding direct object acquisition in particular, there are several works elaborating on the L1 acquisition of nominal direct objects by Russian children [Janssen & Meir, 2019; Ladinskaya et al., 2019]. Papers related to verb arguments in Russian as an L2 concentrate mainly on the acquisition of case forms (or, specifically, case endings) and the L2 learners' errors in the choice between different cases [Cherepovskaia et al., 2021]. However, to the authors' knowledge, there are no works investigating direct object acquisition by L2 Russian learners.

This experimental study contributes to the theory of L2 acquisition in Russian, filling the research gap in the area of verb argument structure acquisition. It also provides new information on the Russian interlanguage system. An interlanguage is a separate linguistic system based on the utterances which are produced when the learner attempts to say sentences of a target language [Selinker, 1972, p. 214]. An interlanguage system, or rather a continuum of interlanguages gradually replacing one another, is individual for each language learner. It has specific features making it different from the target language. Though not as well-developed as L1, an interlanguage is still a full-fledged means of communication. One of the overall goals of SLA research is to obtain a full and non-contradictory understanding of how this system, or systems, works in general.

So, the research questions of this study are:

1) What linguistic and extralinguistic factors influence choosing the type of direct object? Linguistic factors are verb government and frequency of direct object types. An extralinguistic factor (the factor that does not belong to the system of language), considered in this study, is the language proficiency level of a speaker.

2) To what extent linguistic features that influence the choice of a direct object relate to the level, and is the level the leading factor causing differences in direct objects in L1 and L2 speakers?

Our hypothesis is that direct object acquisition correlates to the language proficiency level in the following aspects: (a) object types used by low proficiency level speakers are the most common or frequent in standard Russian; (b) in general, non-accusative object types are peripheral for L2 learners, regardless of their language proficiency level.

Direct object in Russian

As objects are all arguments, except a subject, whose form is directly determined by a given head [Müller, 2018, p. 38], a direct object (or most patient-like) can be defined as an argument of a transitive verb that bears the action of that verb. Another argument of a transitive verb is a subject (or most agent-like). Russian is a nominative-accusative language, so the subject and the agent of a transitive verb are coded alike by the nominative, while the patient, i.e., a direct object, appears in the accusative. However, there are verbs classes in Russian that take other constructions, which are semantically and syntactically identical to a direct object. These could be:

- genitive phrase. Accusative often alternates with genitive under negation.
- prepositional phrase. It plays the role of a direct object in a distributional context when participants expressed by direct objects are distributed among a group of actors, places or other participants. For instance:

Mi *kupili* *po* *knige*.
we.NOM buy.PL.PST per book.DAT.SG.F
'We bought a book for everyone'.

- sentential argument, e.g., an infinitive or a subordinate clause. Verbs of speaking, thinking, emotions, and perception may take as a direct object subordinate clauses or infinitive clauses with the meaning of speech/thought/emotion content.

- adverbial phrase. Verbs of thinking and speaking can also take as an argument an adverb *tak* 'so' (*kak* 'how' in questions) which can be considered as a substitute for a direct object or an infinitive. Some transitive verbs (for instance, *znat*' 'to know') take as an argument adverbs *mnogo* 'much', *malo* 'little', *dostatochno* 'enough' [Letuchij, 2016].

Thus, the types of objects chosen for the research are: accusative noun phrase (DON), accusative pronominal phrase (DOPR), genitive phrase (GEN), infinitive (INF), subordinate clause / sentential actant (SUB), adverbial phrase (AdvP), and prepositional phrase (PP).

Method and Materials

We took fifty most frequent transitive verbs [Ljashevskaja & Sharov, 2009] and analyzed different types of direct objects of these verbs. Some verbs had the same set of direct object types, so we took verbs with unique sets (n = 17): *govorit*' 'to speak', *davat*' 'to give', *delat*' 'to do', *znat*' 'to know', *l'ubit*' 'to love', *moch*' 'can / be able to', *nachinat*' 'to start', *nazyvat*' 'to call', *otvechat*' 'to answer', *pokazyvat*' 'to show', *ponimat*' 'to understand', *prodolzhat*' 'to continue', *privodit*' 'to lead / to bring', *prinimat*' 'to receive', *smotret*' 'to watch / to look', *umet*' 'can / be able to', and *hotet*' 'to want'. Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of direct object types according to the syntactically annotated subcorpora of Russian National Corpus [The Russian National Corpus]. The direct object types include accusative noun (DON), accusative pronoun (DOPR), genitive (GEN), prepositional phrase (PP), adverbial phrase (AdvP), infinitive (INF), and subordinate clause (SUB). Each row represents a different verb, and the percentages indicate the proportion of each direct object type used with that verb. The last row shows the mean value.

Table 1

The frequency distribution of direct object types (in %)

	DON	**DOPR**	**GEN**	**PP**	**AdvP**	**INF**	**SUB**
govorit'	5.92	20.13	6.9	0	1.72	0.1	65.23
davat'	70.65	3.52	11.84	0.2	0.78	13.01	0
delat'	51.84	39.3	8	0.06	0.8	0	0
znat'	24.56	9.61	13.86	0	2.07	0	49.9
l'ubit'	35.56	22.89	6.69	0	0	30.28	4.58
moch'	0	0.32	0.07	0	0.05	99.56	0
nachinat'	23.75	0.56	0	0	0.11	75.58	0
nazyvat'	46.84	48.82	4.34	0	0	0	0
otvechat'	6.52	15.21	10.87	0	0	0	67.4
pokazyvat'	36.54	7.9	0.74	0	0.25	0	54.57
ponimat'	14.83	14.1	7.9	0	2.8	0	60.37
prodolzhat'	37.64	0.84	0	0	0	61.52	0
privodit'	76.8	22.5	0.7	0	0	0	0
prinimat'	84.63	11.42	3.35	0	0	0	0.6
smotret'	67.12	2.74	0	0	0	0	30.14
umet'	0	3.1	0.8	0	7.5	88.6	0
hotet'	1.91	2.32	10.25	0	0	78.42	7.1
Mean	34.42	13.25	5.08	0.01	0.94	26.29	19.99

From the given table, several patterns and results can be observed:

1. Variation in direct object types: Different verbs exhibit varying preferences for direct object types. For example, some verbs predominantly take accusative objects (e.g., *davat*'), while others primarily use subordinate clauses (e.g., *govorit*').

2. Absence of certain object types: Some verbs have zero percentages for certain object types, indicating that they do not commonly occur with those types of objects. For example, verbs like *nazyvat*' and *privodit*' do not appear to take infinitive, subordinate clause, prepositional, or adverbial phrase objects in the given data, while *umet*' and *moch*' are not able to govern nouns in the accusative.

Verbs *govorit*', *davat*', *delat*', *znat*', *l'ubit*', *moch*', *nachinat*', *otvechat*', *pokazyvat*', *ponimat*', *prodolzhat*', *smotret*', *hotet*' are usually presented in a classroom at A1 level, *umet*' at A2, and *prinimat*', *privodit*', *nazyvat*' at B1, according to the requirements of the Test of Russian as a Foreign Language (TORFL). That means that most of the verbs were known to L2 students participating in the study. Types of direct objects introduced to L2 students at A1-B1 levels are DON, DOPR, INF, and SUB. AdvP is introduced in constructions like *kak vy dumaete* 'what do you think', but no attention is usually paid to the grammatical role of the word *kak* (in general, students are not taught that it is an adverb in the function of a direct object). GEN as a direct object is introduced at B2 level.

We designed 119 stimuli with these verbs (seven stimuli with each verb), using both aspects, perfect and imperfect. There were different kinds of stimuli: fill in the gaps; complete a sentence; and decide if a sentence is correct or not, and if not, correct it. In "fill in the gaps" and "complete a sentence" stimuli the gaps were provided to be filled in. The task was to write a word or several words. In "correct a sentence" task no gap was provided but a line for a whole sentence. The informants were asked either to write "no" if they judge the sentence correct ("no" means "no correction needed") or to rewrite the sentence they consider incorrect. There were also thirty-four fillers: in "fill in the gaps" and "complete a sentence" tasks non-object parts of a sentence were omitted (for example, a modifying adverb). The fillers aimed to mask the object-directed purpose of the study. In the "correct a sentence" task, as fillers we used grammatically correct sentences without a direct object. That was done in order to avert the informants' attention from the "incorrectness" of the sentences and let them believe there may be both correct and incorrect sentences, while all experimental stimuli in the task were in fact incorrect. The data received from the fillers were excluded from the analysis.

Here are some examples of stimuli.

Complete a sentence:

Ty	*ponimaesh'...?* (stimulus)
You	understand.2.SG

'Do you understand…?'

Ochen'	*vazhno…* (filler)
very	important

'It is very important…'

Fill in the gaps:

On	*ne*	*ponyal…*	*i*	*poprosil*	*povtorit'* (stimulus)
He	not	understand.PRET…	and	ask.PRET	repeat.INF

'He didn't understand … and asked to repeat'

Moj	*drug –*	*vesyolyj*	*chelovek:*	*on…*	*smeetsya* (filler)
My	friend	cheerful	person:	he…	laugh.3.SG

'My friend is a cheerful person: he … laughs' (in this filler an adverb like *chasto* 'often' was expected, and not an object).

Correct a sentence:

On	*mozhet*	*bistro*	*zadachi (stimulus)*
He	can.3SG	quickly	task.PL

*'He can tasks quickly'

On	*pozdno*	*vstal*	*i*	*poetomu*	*opozdal*	*na*	*rabotu (filler)*
He	late	get.up.PRET	and	so	be.late.PRET	on	work.ACC

'He got up late and that's why he was late for work'

A "complete a sentence" task gives an informant more freedom than a "fill in the gaps" task. The former is an overt task allowing to receive more differentiated answers, while the latter is a task obliging an informant to choose answers from a specific set of forms and even lexemes. Both types of tasks test the language production. A "correct a sentence" task allowed us to analyze the informants' reaction to incorrect sentences. It tests both the language production and comprehension.

So, we had a bank with 153 questions. Each informant got a set of thirty-eight random exercises carried out online. The task distribution was as follows: complete a sentence (ten tasks), fill in the gaps (sixteen tasks), correct the sentence (twelve tasks), i.e., 25% of the total number of the tasks of this type in the bank. There was a time limit for doing exercises (2-5 minutes for each question, depending on the task type). For all RSL participants, the written level grammar test was provided before the set of experimental tasks. All participants provided informed consent.

The participants in our study were sixty-one adult learners of Russian as an L2, mean age = 22.3, thirty-five female, twenty-five male, and one not stated, mostly living in an L2 environment. First languages of RSL (Russian as a second language) participants were Albanian, Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Persian, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Macedonian, Nepali, Portuguese, Serbian, Setswana, Somali, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Uzbek, and Vietnamese. Most of them demonstrate accusative (like Russian) or neutral (like Chinese) patterns of the alignment of the verbal person markers. The languages with the greatest number of informants are Chinese (n=19), Serbian (n=5), Bulgarian (n=4), Indonesian (n=4), and Spanish (n=3).

RSL participants have different language proficiency levels: A1 (n=3), A2 (n=10), B1 (n=30), B2 (n=17), and C1 (n=4). As the number of A1 and C1 participants was small, A1 results were merged with A2 results, forming A1/2 group, and C1 were merged with B2, forming B2/C1 group.

A control group consisted of 70 adult monolingual Russian L1 speakers permanently living in Russia, mean age = 31.

Results

The number of answers obtained in the experiment is 3,970 (excluding fillers), of which 2,058 were produced by speakers of Russian as a first language (RFL) and 1,912 by RSL. Each example was annotated according to the verb used in it and the type of object given by the informant. It was also necessary to add 2 more labels: no object (NON, if there is no object after the verb or if it is not a direct object) and an answer with empty meaning (EM). EM answers were either written in other languages (not Russian), or with totally unclear meaning, or just said 'I don't know'. The number of EM answers ranged from 30% in A1 to 0% in C1.

Small number of informants in each language group makes it impossible to run comparisons between them, so the groups were compared by levels: each level group vs. each level group vs. RFL.

For comparison, we used relative values. An example of the resulting data (in %) is demonstrated in Table 2. The direct object types are accusative noun (DON), accusative pronoun (DOPR), genitive (GEN), prepositional phrase (PP), adverbial phrase (AdvP), infinitive (INF), subordinate clause (SUB), no object (NON), answer with empty meaning (EM). Each column shows a different group of informants (their level), and the percentages indicate the proportion of each direct object type used by this group in their answers.

The most frequent object types in the informants' answers were DON, INF, and NON both in RSL and RFL groups. DOPR and SUB were less frequent, while AdvP, GEN and PP were the least frequent types. This mostly corresponds to the relative frequencies seen in the Russian National Corpus (Table

Table 2

Direct object types found in the data

	A1/2	B1	B2/C1	RSL Total	RFL
DON	90 (23.3%)	245 (26.8%)	172 (28.1%)	507 (26.5%)	592 (28.8%)
DOPR	12 (3.1%)	61 (6.7%)	58 (9.5%)	131 (6.9%)	263 (12.8%)
GEN	6 (1.6%)	21 (2.3%)	23 (3.8%)	50 (2.6%)	77 (3.7%)
AdvP	15 (3.9%)	63 (6.9%)	33 (5.4%)	111 (5.8%)	103 (5%)
PP	9 (2.3%)	25 (2.7%)	24 (3.9%)	58 (3%)	44 (2.1%)
INF	74 (19.2%)	207 (22.7%)	126 (20.6%)	407 (21.3%)	400 (19.4%)
SUB	46 (11.9%)	80 (8.8%)	50 (8.2%)	176 (9.2%)	162 (7.9%)
NON	76 (19.7%)	175 (19.2%)	125 (20.4%)	376 (19.7%)	409 (19.9%)
EM	58 (15%)	36 (3.9%)	2 (0.3%)	96 (5%)	8 (0.4%)
Total	386 (100%)	913 (100%)	613 (100%)	1912 (100%)	2058 (100%)

1) and means that RSL learners generally tend to follow the same type distribution frequency patterns as they receive in the input. The SUB type shows different frequency variation, being frequent in the Corpus data and infrequent in our experimental results.

For the further analysis evenly aligned percent numbers were compared, using the T-Student test in the SPSS package (ver. 27.0), in order to find out if there is any statistically significant difference in the usage of certain types of direct object by the analyzed groups of informants. The sets being compared are examples with one verb. The abbreviations used in Table 3 are the following: p = p-value, or probability of the null hypothesis being true; T = T-value, score of the T Student test, demonstrating the difference between the groups. *Level vs. level* column shows the difference between groups of informants.

Table 3 presents the statistical tests that demonstrate an obvious significant difference in the use of the following types of objects ($p < 0.05$).

The results show that there are Russian verbs that tend to be treated differently in relation to the object structure depending on the level of language proficiency, and verbs that tend to have the same distribution of object types in the speech of any speaker. The verbs most prone to object differentiation are *govorit', delat', l'ubit', and ponimat'*. The verbs that almost always have the same structure of object types are *moch'*, *nachinat'*, *pokazyvat'*, *prodolzhat'*, and *prinimat'*.

Significant difference in ratio distribution of object types, other than NON and EM, was found only in 5 verbs, *delat*' (DOPR and INF), *govorit*' (DOPR), *lubit'*, *ponimat'*, and *umet'* (DON in all three verbs).

Task "fill in the gaps", delat' (planned: GEN, received: INF)

*Ne delai **zhech' koster!** Eto opasno!*
not do.INF burn.INF fire it dangerous!
*"*Don't do burn a fire! It's dangerous!"*

The distribution of NON and EM is significantly different in 7 verbs, *davat'*, *hotet'*, *nazyvat'*, *otvechat'*, *ponimat'*, *privodit'*, and *znat'*. All these verbs demonstrate differences in EM A1/2 vs. other levels. This is easily explained by low proficiency speakers' tendency to produce ungrammatical utterances. NON usage is different only in *otvechat'* (A1/2 vs. B2/C1 and RUS). It demonstrates that L1 speakers, as well as high proficiency ones, mostly use no-object phrases with *otvechat'* (cf. *otvechat'* NA *vopros* lit. 'answer ON the question') instead of a subordinate clause in an indirect speech (cf. *otvechat'*, *chto*… 'answer that…').

Let us turn to the qualitative analysis of some examples. We analyzed one sentence with each type of a direct object, excluding PP, as there were no correct examples with this type.

Table 3

Significant difference in the use of types of objects by different groups of informants

verb	**object type**	**level vs. level**	**p**	**T**
davat'	EM	A1/2 vs. B2/C1	0,047	2,846
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0,047	2,846
delat'	DOPR	A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0,016	-4
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0,011	-4,424
		B1 vs. RUS	0,041	-2,984
delat'	INF	B1 vs. RUS	0,032	3,226
govorit'	INF	A1/2 vs. B1	0,017	-7,667
govorit'	DOPR	B1 vs. RUS	0,047	-4,431
hotet'	EM	A1/2 vs. B1	0,006	5,306
		A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0,009	10,332
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0	10,332
l'ubit'	DON	A1/2 vs. B1	0,013	-4,264
		B1 vs. B2 C1	0,015	4,054
nazyvat'	EM	B1 vs. B2 C1	0	11,6
		B1 vs. RUS	0	11,6
otvechat'	NON	A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0,025	-3,516
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0,028	-3,372
ponimat'	EM	A1/2 vs. B1	0,017	3,911
		A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0,013	4,221
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0,01	4,109
ponimat'	DON	A1/2 vs. RUS	0,015	-4,051
privodit'	EM	B1 vs. B2/C1	0,003	6,602
		B1 vs. RUS	0,003	6,602
smotret'	EM	A1/2 vs. B1	0,042	2,94
		A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0,009	4,68
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0,012	4,382
umet'	DON	B1 vs. RUS	0,035	3,132
znat'	EM	A1/2 vs. B1	0,007	5,054
		A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0,005	5,5
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0,005	5,5
ALL VERBS	EM	A1/2 vs. B1	0,001	9,37
		A1/2 vs. B2 C1	0	13,277
		A1/2 vs. RUS	0	13,424
		B1 vs. B2 C1	0,002	6,908
		B1 vs. RUS	0,002	7,283

AdvP, task “fill in the gaps”. (got: AdvP, planned: SUB)

Ya	*ne*	*umeu*	*tancevat’,*	*no*	*ochen’*	*khochu.*
I.NOM	not	can.1SG.PRS	dance.INF	but	very	want.1SG.PRS
Pokazhi		*mne,*	*kak.*			
show.IMP.SG		I.DAT	how			

‘I can’t dance, but I want to. Can you show me how?’

This example was produced by a Chinese informant of B1 level. We obtained 19 answers with this verb from L2 learners, and only one was incorrect. This verb is studied at A1 level, but mostly with nouns/pronouns in the accusative.

DON, task “correct the sentence”

**On ne prinimaet reshat’ samostoyatel’no* (‘He doesn’t decide on his own’). => *On ne prinimaet reshenie samostoyatel’no* (‘He doesn’t take a decision on his own’).

On	*ne*	*prinimaet*	*reshenie*	*samostoyatel’no*
he.NOM	not	take.3SG.PRS	decision.ACC.SG	on_his_own.ADV

‘He does not take a decision on his own’

This correction was made by an Indonesian B1 student. The target structure requires the knowledge of deverbal noun morphology, and such transformations (forming a deverbal noun from a verb) is introduced in a classroom at A2/B1 level. Moreover, the verb *prinimat’* cannot take an infinitive as a direct object. To use a noun in the accusative is the most obvious choice.

DOPR, task “fill in the gaps”. (got: DOPR, planned: AdvP)

‘Mama,	*smotri,*	*chto*	*ya*	*umeyu!’*
mom.SG.F.NOM	look.IMP.SG	what	I.NOM	can.1SG.PRS

‘Mom, look, what I can do!’

This sentence was produced by a Spanish B1 student. *Umet’* is not a typical transitive verb as it does not take an accusative noun as a direct object, so its valency can be described as limited. The only two correct variations here are a pronoun or an adverb.

GEN, task “fill in the gaps”. (got: GEN, planned: DOPR)

Ya	*gotov*	*dat’*	*tebe*	*deneg,*
I.NOM	ready.ADJ.M	give.INF	you.SG.DAT	money.PL.GEN
esli tol’ko	*ty*	*poprosish’.*		
if only	you.SG.NOM	ask.2SG.FUT		

‘I am ready to give you some money, if you ask.’

This example was from a Serbian B1 learner. The verb *dat’* is probably the most frequent ditransitive verb (verbs with two arguments in addition to the subject) in all languages. Russian has the indirect-object type of ditransitive constructions. It means that the theme of the ditransitive verb is coded like the monotransitive patient, and the recipient is coded differently. In these constructions, the monotransitive patient and the ditransitive theme are grouped together as a direct object (here ‘money’), as opposed to the recipient (here ‘you’), which is referred to as an indirect object [Haspelmath, 2013]. Here, a genitive as a direct object expresses partialness (*dat’ deneg* means ‘to give *some* money’).

INF, task “complete the sentence” (got: INF, planned: DON)

Nesmotrya na	*trudnosti,*	*on*	*prodolzhil*	*rabotat’.*
despite	difficulty.PL.ACC	he.NOM	go_on.SG.M.PST	work.INF

‘Despite the difficulties, he went on working’.

This example was made by an Uzbek B2 student. This is very close to L1 speakers as INF is the most frequent direct object type for this verb.

SUB, task “fill in the gaps”. (got: SUB, planned: INF)

Kogda	*deti*	*nachali*	*shumet’,*
when	child.PL.NOM	start.PL.PST	make_noise.INF

ya	*rasserdilas'*	*i*	*skazala*	*im*	*strogo,*
I.NOM	get_angry.SG.F.PST	and	say.SG.F.PST	they.DAT	strictly
chto	*im*	*nuzhno*	*igrat'*	*tikho.*	
that	they.DAT	need.ADJ.N.SG	play.INF	quietly.	

'When children started making noise, I became angry and said that they must play quietly'.

This sentence was from a Greek B2 learner. Here, we checked if the L2 learners are able to use the construction *govorit'* + *infinitive* that has the meaning of an order (like imperative). L1 speakers tend to use infinitives in this example, while the L2 learners used both infinitives and subordinate clauses, and also had mistakes or sentences without a direct object.

The examples above elucidate that the L2 learners are familiar with the variation of direct object types and are able to use them in their written production.

As for the errors in the answers, they belong to several main groups.

The first group is agreement errors (15% of all errors): (a) anaphoric disagreement, or disagreement in gender or number between an antecedent nominal phrase and an anaphoric pronoun; (b) disagreement within a nominal phrase; (c) filling a gap with a type of object that does not agree with the rest of the sentence.

(a) Anaphoric disagreement (task "fill in the gaps", verb *pokazat'*, the gap after the verb)

Mal'chik	*narisoval*	***risunok****i*	*pokazal*		****ee***	*mame*
boy	draw.PST	picture.m	and	show.PST	*her	mother.DAT

"The boy drew a picture and showed *her to the mother"

(b) Disagreement within a NP (task "fill in the gaps", verb *otvechat'*, the gap after the verb)

On	*prekrasno*	*otvechal*	****eto***	***vopros***
he	greatly	answer.PST	*this.N	question.M

"He was answering *this question greatly"

(c) filling a gap with a type of object that does not agree with the rest of the sentence (task "fill in the gaps", verb *nachinat'*, the gap after the word novuyu 'new')

Esli	*tebe*	*ne*	*nravitsya*	*etot*	*pisatel',*	*luchshe*	*ne*	*nachinat'*
if	you	not	like	this	writer	better	not	start
ego	*novuyu*	****chitat'***						
his	new	read.INF						

"If you don't like this writer, it's better not to start his new *to read"

The second group are errors in case forms (13%): (a) use of the nominative due to the simplification strategy; (b) chaotic use of case forms disregarding semantics and/or government; (c) use of animate accusative forms instead of inanimate nouns and vice versa; (d) mechanic use of specific case forms in structures that have been learned as a whole, while a stimulus structure demands another case form.

(a) use of the nominative due to the simplification strategy (task "complete the sentence", the verb *delat'*, NOM is used instead of ACC):

Esli	*delat'*	****eta***	****rabota***	*kazhdyj*	*den',*
If	do.INF	***this.NOM**	***work.NOM**	every	day,
to	*bystro*	*vyuchish'*	*pravilo.*		
then	quickly	learn.FUT.2.SG	rule.		

"If you do this work every day, you'll quickly learn the rule."

(b) chaotic use of case forms (task "fill in the gaps", the verb *delat'*):

Za	*svoju*	*zhizn'*	*on*	*sdelal*	*ochen'*	****horoshimi***	*dlja*	*ljudej.*
during	own	life	he	do.PST	very	*good.PL.INST	for	people.

"During his life he has done very *good for people"

(c) use of animate accusative forms instead of inanimate nouns and vice versa (task "fill in the gaps", the verb *privodit*'):

Prikhodite	*v*	*gosti*	*i*	*privodite*	****svoi***	***deti.***
come.IMP	in	guest.PL	and	lead.IMP	own	child.PL.ACC.INAN

"Come to our place and bring *your children."

(d) mechanic use of specific case forms in structures that have been learned as a collocation (task "fill in the gaps", verb nazyvat', the interference of the construction "nazyvat' + ACC + INSTR"):

Uchjonye	*nazyvajut*	***teoriej***	*«jeffektom*	*prisutstvija».*
scientist.PL	call	*theory.INSTR	effect.INSTR	presence

"The scientists call *theory "the presence effect"."

The next group are semantic errors. Interestingly, this is the largest group, as it takes 26% of all errors. The semantic errors were the following: (a) forming collocations consisting of words that cannot be combined semantically; (b) incorrect comprehension of the verb meaning given in the stimulus.

(a) Incorrect collocation (task "fill in the gaps", the verb *privodit'* 'to lead, to bring by leading' collocates only with animate objects):

Prikhodite	*v*	*gosti*	*i*	**privodite*	*cvety.*
come.IMP	in	guest.PL	and	*lead.PL	flower.PL

"Come to our place and *bring flowers."

(b) Incorrect comprehension of the verb (task "fill in the gaps", the verb umet' was comprehended incorrectly or not comprehended at all):

«Mama,	*smotri,*	****magazin***	*ja*	*umeju!» —*	*kriknul*	*mal'chik.*
mother	look.IMP	*shop	I	can	shout.PST	boy

"'Mother, look, I can *a shop!' A boy shouted"

The last group are omitting errors (14%). The informants often omit: (a) an obligatory argument; (b) a part of a sentential actant.

(a) An argument omitted (task "fill in the gaps", the verb *govorit'/skazat'*, the gap after *kazhdomy*):

On	*podoshel*	*k*	*nam*	*i*	*skazal*	*kazhdomu*	***cheloveku***	**0.*
he	come-up.PST	to	we.DAT	and	tell.PS	each	person.DAT	*0

"He came up to us and told each person *0"

(b) A part of a sentential object omitted (task "fill in the gaps", the verb *govorit'/skazat'*, the gap after im, the verb infinitive was omitted in the answer):

...ja	*rasserdilas'*	*i*	*skazala im,*	***chto***	***nado***	****0***	***tiho.***
…I	get-angry.PST	and	tell.PSTthey.DAT	that	need	*0	quietly

"…I got angry and told them that they must *0 quiet"

Finally, stimuli in the "correction" exercise left without correction take 21%. The two kinds of errors here are: (a) an incorrect sentence is judged as correct, and (b) a sentence was corrected but it still remains incorrect.

(b) Incorrect sentence rewritten and remains incorrect (verb *pokazat'*, an incorrect imperfective INF was replaced by a perfective INF, but an object type still remained incorrect):

Pokazhite,	*pozhalujsta,*	*eshhjo*	*raz*	****reshit'***	*jetu*	*zadachu.*
show.IMP	please	more	time	*solve	this	task

"Please show one more time *to solve this task"

Several stimuli caused similar errors in the informants of different language proficiency levels. Regardless of the level, the informants tended to produce identical erroneous answers. This means that some types of errors like ignoring an overall meaning of a sentence or its pragmatics or forming incorrect collocations are typical of any level of RSL interlanguage.

Discussion

The results show that the most differences are seen in infrequent object types (PP and SUB, DOPR, GEN) and in EM answers. Some types of objects tend to be used with different frequencies by speakers of different groups, and some types of objects tend to retain the same frequency, as shown

in Results. It means that there is a level-grounded tendency to use core (accusative) object types with different frequency: the informants are more likely to use more nouns and fewer pronouns in low proficiency level, and the distribution of nouns vs. pronouns in high proficiency levels gets closer to the L1 speakers' one. Non-accusative, peripheral object types, like infinitives, do not depend on the language proficiency level, regardless of their frequency.

According to [Cherepovskaia et al. 2021], accusative is one of the first cases to be acquired in RSL, after nominative and locative. RSL speakers of the same language proficiency level tend to produce correct case forms in accusative more often than in genitive, dative, and instrumental. Our results confirm these findings at large. DON phrases show some frequency variation between levels. A1/2 level RSL speakers tend to use fewer accusative objects with the non-action verbs *lubit'* 'to love' (emotion), *ponimat'* 'to understand' (mental), and umet' 'can, to know how' (modal). All other verbs govern DON at the same frequency rate in the production of the informants of all language proficiency levels. This means that nominal accusative is a "stable" form overall, well-acquired already at the low language proficiency level.

As for the infinitive objects, their tendency to be used frequently even at the low proficiency levels proves the similarity of the processes of the first and second language acquisition. Infinitives as basic verbs forms are essential both for monolingual children and adults learning a second language. An Optional Infinitive stage is a well-described phenomenon of children's language acquisition [Bar-Shalom & Snyder, 1996]. Russian children, going through the protomorphology stage, are known to use mostly infinitive and imperative verb forms [Gagarina, 2003], while inflection is acquired later. Root infinitives are typical both for creole languages [Wakabayashi, 2021] and second language learners' individual interlanguages [De Lisser, 2021]. Our data confirms that RSL learners prefer infinitives to verbal nouns (i.e., *reshat'* 'to decide' to *reshenie* 'a decision'), meaning that verbal semantics is most likely to be expressed via an infinitive.

Still the most differences between the levels stems not from the distribution of direct object types, but results from the rate of EM answers produced. RSL learners, when producing grammatically and semantically correct sentences, mostly use the same object types with the same frequency as RFL speakers.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to examine direct object acquisition by adult L2 Russian learners. This study has shown that both linguistic (verb argument structure) and extralinguistic (students' level of proficiency) factors play an important role.

Linguistic factors are verb government and frequency of direct object types. The verbs that show the least variability (*moch'*, *prodolzhat'*, *otvechat'*) have fewer object types than the most variable ones (*govorit'*, *l'ubit'*). Verbs that have 5–6 object types show more differences between L1 and L2 groups than verbs with 3–4 object types.

As for the relation between language proficiency and direct object acquisition, this study has found that generally there is some correlation. While, as it was predicted, the groups that mostly demonstrate statistically significant differences from the L1 speakers are L2 learners of A1/2 levels, the distribution of object types preferred by the B2/C1 level group demonstrates no statistically significant difference from that in the RFL group. Still, particular details of the use of object types are not the same in B2/C1 and RFL. For example, non-native speakers "guess" the predicted object type less successfully, make agreement errors, and sometimes produce semantically incorrect answers.

The second major finding was that object types used by low proficiency level speakers are not always the most common or frequent in standard Russian. The less frequent object types in standard Russian, e.g., prepositional and adverbial phrases, are used by A1/2 level speakers at the lowest rate possible (2–4%), as has been predicted. As for the preferred types, objectless (zero object) and EM

phrases are almost as frequent in their speech as the most common object types (nominal accusative phrases and infinitives).

Infinitive objects have special meaning for the low proficiency speakers. They are widely used in general. An infinitive is a salient verb form for the beginners. It is generally the first verb form to be introduced and learned, so it is quickly acquired and easily produced when necessary.

Finally, the distribution of direct object types appeared to be only partly affected by proficiency level. For instance, A1/2 level students produced all types of objects. However, several types of objects, namely prepositional phrases, were found only in the "correct the sentence" task, where the informants had to agree or disagree with the objects already given. No such types were found in the answers directly produced by the informants of this level. It seems possible that these results are due to the fact that low language proficiency level speakers tend to avoid syntactically complicated structures.

So, it may be stated that L2 learners of any level are familiar with different direct object types. Even if they were not strictly taught to use some constructions with some transitive verbs, they turned out to be able to produce them by association with those they already know.

This study explored and described one aspect of an interlanguage, that is being developed in L2 acquirers. The analysis of direct object L2 acquisition fills in one of the gaps in the representation of a generalized L2 Russian system. This contributes to the theoretical field of SLA. The data revealed in this study can be used practically. Providing that L2 acquirers' interlanguage being a self-supporting system, it may be recommended for the teachers to pay attention to the possible and impossible object types of characteristic for each verb, teaching also those that are theoretically acceptable but infrequent, and let input do the rest.

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