

EVONAJ MAT' VES NOČ TELEVISION KARAULIL - HIS MOTHER WATCHED TV
ALL NIGHT LONG: ON THE LOSS OF GENDER AS A GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY
IN ALASKAN RUSSIAN

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0. Statement of the problem

This paper presents further evidence of a phenomenon already observed by scholars: functional reduction associated with language death may also be accompanied by reduction in grammatical structure.¹ The discussion will be based on field-work carried out in the village of Ninilchik, Kenai peninsula, Alaska during summer 1985. I will present a brief history of the Russian-speaking settlement there, a sociolinguistic overview of the community at present, and a summary of the principal features of the dialect. The body of the paper will be devoted to gender agreement and evidence for its loss as a grammatical category.

1. The History of Ninilchik

The precise date of the founding of Ninilchik is unknown. It is thought to have been settled by retired members of the Russian-American company and their Sugpiaq Eskimo wives between 1810 and 1835. Descendents of the five original families still live in Ninilchik, and a variety of Russian is still maintained by some members of the older generation. The history of Ninilchik has not been thoroughly studied,² but the village seems to have remained largely free of outside influences until the construction of the

Seward highway (1950). Thus while commercial links were maintained with other parts of Russia's Alaskan colony (e.g. the transport by boat of coal from Ninilchik's 'krasnoj mys' to English Bay [Alexandrovsk]) there is little evidence of language contact with the indigenous Tanaina (Athabascan) Indians. The Ninilchik Orthodox Church (dedicated to the Transfiguration) was serviced by clergy stationed at Kenai. After the sale of Alaska to the U.S. in 1869, the connection with the Russian patriarchate was still maintained and Russia provided priests for Alaska. This practice was discontinued after the 1917 revolution. Since then Alaska's clergy has been provided by the Orthodox Church in the U.S., and no direct linguistic contact with Russia remains. The Russian school in Ninilchik was also closed circa 1917. The educational reforms associated with Sheldon Jackson discouraged the use in Alaskan schools of native languages other than English: many Ninilchik residents recall schoolteachers placing soap on their tongues as a punishment for speaking Russian. The present revival of native Alaskan languages³ will certainly not affect Ninilchik Russian (itself a colonial relic), and the dialect will die out with the death of its present speakers.

Ninilchik was one of several retirement outposts of the Russian-American company, the only one in the Cook Inlet. The remainder were centred around Kodiak island, headquarters of company operations: on Afognak, Spruce Island and Woody Island.⁴ However, the tenacity of Sugpiaq Eskimo in this area coupled with the intense English-speaking activity of the King Crab industry, has already led to the disappearance of Kodiak Russian as a medium of com-

munication. Field interviews with a number of informants suggest that Kodiak Russian is substantially the same as its Ninilchik counterpart.

2. The present situation of Ninilchik Russian

It was the geographical and social isolation of Ninilchik Russian (NR) which led to its long term survival. With the large influx of English speaking settlers since 1950 these conditions no longer hold, and the community is at present in a stage of language shift. That this process is already nearly completed can be seen from the fact that there are no more than 15 fluent speakers of NR, the youngest 45 yrs. Moreover none of these are monolinguals: all speak a variety of English with phonological interference from NR. The extreme functional decline of NR in the last generation has led to the present state in which an estimated 2 of these 15 speakers are NR dominant. The majority of NR speakers are of the Kvasnikoff and Oskolkoff families. Use of NR is restricted to domestic, in-group situations. The presence of an English monolingual dictates the choice of English as language of communication. However, NR is not being passed on to the younger generation. Most NR speakers marry outside the community. Thus the need for internal solidarity has given way to the need for integration with the modern world.

Speakers of NR have absorbed the negative attitudes to their

dialect inculcated by English monolinguals (e.g. schoolteachers, see 1. above). This is commonly observed within 'language islands' undergoing shift. NR is associated in the minds of its speakers with peasant culture and a subsistence lifestyle. Its speakers are illiterate (since the closing of the Russian school no formal education has been offered in Russian). Most important the context for complex linguistic behavior has been withdrawn: NR is seen as divorced from the economic and social reality of the surrounding English-speaking society. NR is not encouraged by official or covert language policy. There is a feeling that the dialect has no historical continuity with Standard Russian, that it is contaminated by outside influence (particularly lexical loans from English) and is therefore inferior to all other varieties. No longer is there any tradition for story-telling or religious instruction in NR. Other studies^{5.} have shown that this lack may have an effect on the grammatical structure in child language acquisition: such traditional texts and complex speech situations often provide the language learner with forms otherwise rarely encountered, and thus with the means of learning them.

It is significant that there is very little contact between NR speakers and the Russian-speaking Old Believers, who settled around Nikolaevsk from Oregon after 1969. Old Believer Russian is a standard Russian dialect, but NR speakers claim to have great difficulty in understanding it, complaining particularly about the rapidity of speech. It is typical that an NR speaker in conversation with an Old Believer will "give" English, but

"receive" Russian. Such interactions are commonly centred^e around fishing, a semantic area in which NR and OB terminology substantially coincide.

Given the wholesale bilingualism, the extreme social and functional restriction of NR and its small number of speakers, whether it is possible to speak of NR having a "grammatical structure" is itself debatable. It could be that the linguist is here dealing with a community of semi-speakers⁶, i.e. with people who acquired a target language (standard Russian) imperfectly, possibly due to lack of exposure to crucial structures, to lack of prescriptive speech norms, and for other reasons. The continuum of speakers normally available to the student of language death is not available in the case of NR. However, sufficient similarity emerges across speakers (from study of a taped corpus) to justify the term "grammatical structure". It is a fact that NR speakers share certain structural features - however they may have come about - which are shared by no other attested Russian dialect past or present. Thus NR represents a cluster of idiolects of such similarity that they may be taken to represent a single 'abstract' variety NR.

3. General features of NR

Before proceeding to the grammatical category of gender in this dialect, it is important to have some impression of its general structure. The following inventory highlights those features

which present divergence from standard Russian. Significant features are found on all levels: discourse, syntax, lexicon, morphosyntax, morphology and morphology. Brief examples will be given of each, though each could form a paper topic in its own right.

a) Discourse level. The functional restriction of NR was emphasized in 2. above. This has had an impact on the range of stylistic options available to the NR speaker. NR speakers seem to command only a single 'informal register' in NR. For formal discourse they must switch codes (*i.e. from NR to English*).

Code-switching is universal among NR speakers. While the precise preconditions for code-switching have yet to be determined (e.g. degree of intimacy between interlocutors) for NR, it seems to be the case that group-external activity, itself experienced in English, is also preferably narrated through English. One informant interpolated into his NR local reminiscences a lengthy English account of his war experience in Asia. It is not clear how frequently or in what contexts NR speakers code-switch when outsiders (e.g. fieldworkers) are not present, and given the closed nature of the speech community it would be hard to test this. From the informal, relaxed style of the material recorded (especially in conversations between two NR speakers with minimal prompting/interference from the field-worker) I would judge that the difference between 'observed' and 'non-observed' states is insignificant.

Intrasentential code-switching is also frequent, and seems to follow the same constraints posited by linguists⁷ to cover this phenomenon universally (e.g. a code-switched constituent is grammatically acceptable only if it violates the syntactic rules of neither language).

Code-mixing (the switching of languages at morphological, esp. inflectional boundaries) is common in NR, because of wholesale borrowing of English roots on which NR endings are preserved, e.g. priest^{Engl.}/y = "priest". This is further illustrated in c) below.

Engl. priest!
R. pl. marker -y- used as ending in NR form i.e. instead of Eng. -s. [pri:st₁]

b) Syntax: The "stylistic restrictedness" of NR is best exemplified by its lack of complex syntactic structures. In the entire corpus (10 hrs of tape) there are only two non-adverbial relative clauses (i.e. where 'kotóryj' is used in CSR): relativization is commonly avoided by speakers. In general subordination is limited in NR; there are few conditional sentences; the set of conjunctions, prepositions is limited (e.g. 'nesmotryá' "in spite of" is unattested). Participles are very infrequent and almost all restricted to past-passive. A general tendency to analicity and 'simple' structures, parataxis rather than hypotaxis, is observed.

This is just what would be expected where literacy is not maintained, and where the socio-cultural environment needed to foster

syntactically complex behavior in conditions of language shift (e.g. an NR oral narrative tradition) is lacking. NR speakers seem never to have acquired the complex syntactic structures typical of Russian dialects (by no means monopolized by CSR). Factors in the language contact situation of NR must be responsible for this.

It is an interesting feature of NR that the unmarked word order appears to be SOV. Thus:

- (i) $\begin{array}{c} \text{ty} \quad \text{etix} \quad \text{rusakov} \quad \text{vstrečal?} \\ \text{S} \quad \text{O} \quad \text{V} \\ \text{you} \quad \text{those Russians} \quad \text{met} \end{array}$ "Did you meet those Russians?"
- (ii) $\begin{array}{c} \text{ja} \quad \text{včera} \quad \text{setk} \quad \text{postavil} \\ \text{S} \quad \text{adv.} \quad \text{O} \quad \text{V} \\ \text{I} \quad \text{yesterday} \quad \text{net [acc.]} \quad \text{placed} \end{array}$ "I put a net out yesterday"
- (iii) $\begin{array}{c} \text{ja} \quad \text{skolu} \quad \text{xodil} \\ \text{S} \quad \text{O} \quad \text{V} \\ \text{I} \quad \text{school [acc.]} \quad \text{went} \end{array}$ "I used to go to school"
[*prepos. inaudible/omitted in NR]

While CSR also permits this word order, it is usually interpreted as marked vis-a-vis SVO. In NR, however, SOV is the more frequently attested. The factors governing the distribution of SOV and SVO in NR remain to be studied.

c) Lexicon

Peculiarities of the NR lexicon may be divided into i) loanwords, ii) Russian archaisms/dialectalisms/prostorecie, iii) semantic shift/interference, though the boundaries between these are often fuzzy.

i) Loanwords Although many NR speakers believe that their speech

contains many Eskimo and Indian words, this is not in fact the case. The only reliably attested Eskimo loan in NR is 'mamái' ("razor~~u~~clam"). The suffix -ik is frequently considered proof of Eskimo origin (cf. Esk. nominal suffix -iq), but in all attested cases it is best interpreted as a Russian diminutive (e.g. stolik = table). The word 'tájša' ("dried~~u~~fish") is of unclear origin: it may be Native Alaskan, but could just as well be Siberian.

The number of loan-words from English is considerable. All parts of speech are represented, from conjunctions ("but") to such participial predicates as "cleared-up" (as in: "sovsem ^{completely} cleared-up ^{stalo}"), Moreover all points on the scale of integration are ^{(it) became} represented: "but" is a fully-integrated loan - it is perceived by the speaker as part of NR ; "cleared-up" is a nonce-borrowing - it is perceived by the speaker as borrowed from English to fit the present contingency of the speech situation. The degree of phonological integration - usually a reliable diagnostic for the status of a given loan - is unreliable here since NR speakers use identical phonology in their English speech.

Consider the following examples of English loans in contexts of code-switching: ⁽¹⁾ ja gárbage ne ubrál "I didn't clear away"

(i) ja gárbage ne ubrál
I not cleared "I didn't clear away
the garbage"

(ii) oni eti priest/y stationed v Tyonek/e
R. pl. ending "R. prepos. sg. ending"
"Those priests stationed in Tyonek..."

(iii) my mousse/a pojmaem
we will catch (1 pl.)
R. acc. animate sg. ending "We'll catch a mousse"

In each case the English noun (garbage, priest, mousse) seems to

have been more "accessible" to the speaker than its Russian equivalent, though the Russian forms (*músor*, *sv'aščénnik*, *saxát*)
gaxbaga *priest* *mousse*
 were both known and used. This suggests that code-switching and nonce-borrowing are characteristic of certain speech situations, but that in other contexts a speaker may avoid them. In NR at present such code-switching is perceived to be the neutral speech mode. Excessive use of the 'appropriate' Russian term is felt to be normative and unnatural.

It is significant that the words for 'yes' and 'no' in this dialect (and in Kodiak Russian) are borrowed from English: 'ya' and 'no'.

There is a restricted amount of borrowing into NR from other varieties of Russian. There are two principal sources for these loans: i) CSR as taught in higher educational establishments in Anchorage, or other American universities. Some NR speakers have, at some point in their lives, taken formal courses in Russian. ii) The Russian of neighboring Old Believers. At least one NR speaker claims that he has 'improved' his Russian by listening to OB fishermen communicating to each other by short-wave radio. There has been one case of NR/OB intermarriage, but in general (as indicated in 2. above) contact between the two speech communities is sparse.

ii) Archaisms, dialectalisms, *prostorečie*

The NR lexicon contains elements which are recognizably Russian, but not part of CSR. However, no single Russian dialectal area seems to be represented. The presence of `xáta' and absence of `izbá' (both "hut") would suggest a southern origin, but `lájda' ("beach") is Finnic and `evráška' ("ground-squirrel") Siberian. It is possible that the NR lexicon represents a composite, reflecting the diverse geographical origin of the original settlers. Their social origin seems to have been similarly diverse: a large number of NR lexical items are marked `prostorečie' ("the speech of common folk") in Russian dialectal dictionaries, e.g. `buševát' ("to behave violently").

An important feature of NR is its use of 3rd pers. possessive adjectives: evónoj, eěnoj, íxnoj. This is shared by many Russian dialects.

Non-standard influence is apparent on all levels of the lexicon; e.g. idiom: "u menjá kiški korótkie - my guts are mighty short" (an example of code-switching); adjectives: xudój ("bad", cf. CSR "thin"), suxoj ("thin, dry", cf. CSR "dry" only); nouns, where -ka 'diminutive' suffixation is particularly common: setka ("net", cf. CSR set', unattested in NR), na výške ("upstairs"); conversational particles: suffixation of -eka (esp. to adverbs of location: táme^éka, zděs'eka) is a characteristic feature of NR, one maintained even by the most English-dominant semi-speakers.

Precise study of the NR lexicon will certainly reveal a great deal about the social and geographical origin of Ninilchik's

original settlers.

iii) semantic loans / interference

That words shift in meaning in situations of language contact has been well-documented for many languages. A bilingual typically uses the lexical tokens of language A to represent an idiom from language B. NR exhibits many cases of this:

1. sg. pres. Reflexive particle
ja lomajus' "I'm broke"
I break
my davno' odin druga znaem "we've known one another for a long
we a long time one other know 1 pl.
time" [nom.] [acc.] cf. CSR idiom drug druga lit. 'other-other'
filipini toze kurjat i edjat ix "Philippinos also smoke them
Philippinos also smoke [3rd] & eat [3rd pl.] them
and eat them [dogs]. (= only 'smoke & cigarette' in CSR)

[them - [dogs]] The most remarkable case is that of 'karaulit', which in NR has the same range of usage as English "watch", i.e. its primary meaning "to keep watch, to guard" has been complemented by the sense of CSR 'smotret' (also present in NR, though 'gl'adet' is more common) "to watch". Thus NR speakers ^{are} ~~may be~~ heard to say: ja sevodnja television karaulil ("watched the T.V.")

d) Morphosyntax

The morphosyntactic features of NR are of interest because their origin cannot be traced back to any Russian dialects. They must

be a direct result of the contact situation. These features are
 i) case government, ii) gender agreement. Since gender agreement
 forms the focus of the present paper (section 4. below) no ac-
 count of it will be given here.

Case government in NR appears to be very much reduced in NR
 compared to CSR. Although all cases are attested in NR, oblique
 cases (Gen., Instr., Prep., Dat.) are morphologically distinct
 only in lexicalized expressions, rhymes etc.

"Oh, we let the landing boats, down, by the steep shore"
 ex my sl'upečki spuskali po krutomu beregu Otherwise
 oh we little boats let down by steep (dat. sg.) shore
 there is a tendency to use a single 'unmarked' case (one for each
 number, singular vs. plural), e.g. -s'a verbs, which require an
 oblique object in CSR govern a direct object in NR:

ja grammatiku naučil's'a [cf. CSR ja grammatike naučil's'a]
 acc. or DIRECT case learned reflexive particle Dat. case
 "I learned GRAMMAR"

This may be interpreted either as a colloquialism (spoken Russian
 exhibits a similar tendency) or as a case of interference due to
 contact with English ("I learned the grammar"). That the latter
 is more likely is supported by the loss of case government by
 many prepositions:

my do mamina dom došli.
 we to mom's house arrived
 [adj.?] DIR. case [cf. CSR do doma "as far as the house"]
 [Gen.]

Particularly striking of NR government is the pattern after
 quantifiers. NR consistently replaces the CSR genitive by an
 direct case (clearly marked as accusative in the fem. sing.),
 esp. after 'mnogo':
 "many"

mnógo rybu zdes'
much acc.sg. here
fish

"there's a lot of fish here"

ja mnógo molítvy ne znáju
I many acc.pl. not know 1sg.
prayers

"there are a lot of prayers that
I don't know"

kusóček pirog
piece [dim] pie
acc.sg.

"2 little piece of pie"

dva dni
two days acc.pl. case

"two days"
[cf. CSR, where numeral 2,3,4 govern
gen.sg.: - dva dn'a-gen.sg.]

The genitive in NR appears to have lost all its functions, e.g. possession is expressed by a preposed indeclinable adjective: moj deduskina dom. Speech situations which might seem to demand a genitive are simply avoided.

The question of case reduction in NR - whether or not case is lost as a grammatical category - deserves independent study. It is conceivable that the lack of normative enforcement of the standard Russian case system (e.g. by literary language) coupled with intense English-language contact have led to the transfer of 'analytic' speech habits into NR from English. Thus NR inflection has become functionally redundant.

e) Morphology

NR morphology appears simplified with respect to CSR. Analogical levelling (particularly of stress) is common in both verbal and nominal paradigms. Thus, e.g., zém'l'a ("land") is stem-stressed

in NR (cf. CSR *zeml'á* nom.sg. ~ *zémľ'u* acc.sg.)
 throughout; *men'á* and *teb'á* appear in dative as well as accusa-
 tive function (an example of case syncretism to be examined in
 the context of the weakening of the inflectional system as a
 whole); ^{the verbs} *glad'u*, *gládiš'*, *gladit* etc. "stroke" ^{and} *mógu*, *mógiš'*,
mógit, *mógim*, *mógite*, *mógut* "can" exhibit both stress leveling and
 loss of consonant mutation (cf. CSR *glážu*, *gládiš'*; *mogu*, *móžeš'*)

There is considerable variation in morphology from speaker to
 speaker. Thus "they said" appears variously as *govor'ali*/
govoreli /*govoríli*'. The plural of ^{"slovo"} [word] (direct case) is
 variously *slóva*/*slóvy*'. Such analogical formations as *docer'ja*'
 (by analogy with standard *synov'ja*) are common. [cf. CSR *dóčeri*]

The radical alteration in gender agreement patterns (see 4.
 below) and the loss of phonemic softness (see 3.f) have had
 radical repercussions on the inventory of declension types. The
 'soft feminine type' (e.g. CSR *dver'*) has disappeared, its mem-
 bers being either reassigned to the masculine hard stems (e.g.
 CSR *most*) or receiving the -ka suffix and being treated as
 feminine hard stems.

f) phonology

The systematic opposition of hard and soft consonants which is a
 feature of CSR is not present to the same degree in NR, par-
 ticularly not in word final position. Thus, e.g. "was" and "hit"
 do not present a minimal pair in NR: both are pronounced [bɪl].
 "Now" is pronounced [tɛpɛr], with no closing of the [ɛ] vowels

(in CSR vowels occurring between two soft consonants are pronounced close [t'ep'er'] but these consonants are not soft in NR).

[č, š, ž] are pronounced with the same 'central' articulation. [v] in NR is a bilabial (rather than a labio-dental) fricative.

Some words reflect idiosyncratic phonetic development: lokóško ("window") features prothetic [l], wúlica ("street") prothetic [w]; puḃovica ("button") with [b] for [g] probably reflects interference from or borrowing through a Native Alaskan language (e.g. Sugpiaq) which did not distinguish between labials and velars.

CSR
Geminate [nn] is pronounced as single [n] in NR: postojánoj /
pereménój tok ; derev'ánoj
alternating current wooden
direct

4. Gender agreement in NR compared to Russian dialects

The remainder of the paper will be devoted to gender agreement patterns in NR. In this area of the grammar NR has experienced considerable reduction vis a vis the three gender system of CSR. However, examination of the data - which at first seem haphazard and contradictory - reveals a system which is steadily eliminating gender as a productive grammatical category. Although evidence of gender remains (principally in lexicalized expressions, and in certain common attributive adjectives qualifying female humans) NR prefers to generalize a single (morphologically

masculine) form~~s~~ in adjectives, verbal past~~s~~tenses and for the numeral 'two' (NR 'dva' vs. CSR 'dva'[M,N] 'dve'[F]), i.e. in all those environments where CSR must distinguish morphologically between masc., fem. and neuter.

This section examines precedents in attested Russian dialects for such a development in NR. The following sections examine the particular grammatical contexts where gender is morphologically expressed in CSR: adjective-noun agreement (5.), verb-subject agreement (6.) and numeral expressions (7.)

9.

Handbooks of Russian dialectology point out that the Russian dialects display no single constant system of gender. The most common systems have three members (masc., fem. and neut.), though the inventory of nouns belonging to each gender may vary from dialect to dialect. A restricted number of dialects (principally in South Russia and in areas bordering on non-Russian speaking areas) display only two genders (masc. and fem.). In such two member systems it is invariably the neuter which disappears, distributing its constituent nouns among the other two genders.

Dialectologists attribute the weakening of the neuter gender to the functional redundancy inherent within the gender system as a whole: for most non-animate nouns there is no semantic correlation between grammatical gender and real-world gender characteristics. N.A.^{vv}Mescerskij^{10.} goes as far as to say that only the influence of the literary language in the Soviet Union prevents this tendency from being carried to its logical conclusion. In

Alaska, where literary norms have been lacking for two generations, this "logical conclusion" seems to have been reached, though the reason for such a radical development must be sought not solely in factors 'internal' to the Russian of the Alaskan colony but principally in its prolonged exposure (through bilingualism) to languages without the grammatical category of gender: Sugpiaq, Tanaina and principally English.

In addition to the general functional motivation for the loss of gender, phonetic and morphological factors are often cited. Thus in Southern 'akan'e' dialects, where the neuter has merged with the feminine, the precondition for merger is held to be the phonetic identity of unaccented word-final [o] and [a]: stádo, "herd", séno, délo etc. are reinterpreted as stáda, séna, déla and appear with ending-accented feminine attributes [bol'saja stada]. Note that the phonetic similarity of stem-stressed adjectives (krasívaja / krasívoje, both [krasívaja]) adds further impetus to the neut./fem. merger. As a further development in such dialects even end-stressed neuters (Vedró, pís'mó) take feminine attributes (xudaja Vedró, bol'saja pís'mó), although there is some variation.

Frequently, however, in the oblique cases Southern dialects preserve merger of the neuter with masc. (iz xudógo Vedrá, 4
bol'sóm selé), i.e. as in CSR. from bad bucket
gen-neut. masc.
in big (neut/masc.) village

Much rarer are dialects in which the neuter merges totally with the masculine (i.e. in direct cases too). Such dialects are

attested around Smolensk and in areas of contiguous Russian and non-Russian populations (e.g. the foothills of the Urals).

Weinreich (1964:39) cites an example of apparent feminine verb agreement with a masculine subject, in the Russian of Chuvash speakers: *syn ne pila čaj*. Chuvash itself has no gender agreement.

As has been indicated, gender agreement in NR is more radically reduced than in any attested Russian dialect. NR behaves in this respect more like a contact variety of Russian (e.g. the Chuvash example). The NR data is presented in the sections below.

5. Adjective-noun agreement

Despite overall tendencies towards the generalization of morphologically masculine agreement patterns for all lexical items in all cases, the picture of adjective-noun agreement in NR remains complex. In certain contexts standard agreement patterns are maintained. Precisely what these contexts are would be clarified considerably by quantitative analysis of the corpus. However, the factors influencing the retention of standard patterns seem to include the following:

a) personhood; an adjective modifying a noun denoting a female person is more likely to display feminine agreement: e.g.

xudája oná, mučít's'a ona, staraja (said of a bitter old woman)
 bad [nom.sg.fem.] she tortures self she old [nom.sg.fem.]

"She's a bad one,
 always agonizing over something
 the old woman"

oná xoróšaja póvar
 she good [fem.sg.] cook [masc.]

"she's a good cook"

my odnú dit'ú poter'áli, ej býlo šest let
 we one child [acc.sg.fem.] lost to her was six years

"we lost one child; she
 was six years old"

In the last example (from Kodiak Russian) a feminine counterpart to ^{CSR. neuter} 'dit'a' is qualified by feminine (accusative) adjectival agreement.

b) frequency of adjective; more frequently occurring adjectives tend to display standard agreement more frequently. This analysis implies that gender is inherent in nouns though the speaker is not always obliged to display it morphologically:

~~Example~~

stáršoj sestra' drugája tam
 elder sister other
 nom.sg.masc. nom.sg.fem.

"the elder sister, that other one ..."

u teb'a bol'saja golová a u nego malenkej
 with you 'big' nom.sg. head but with him 'small'
 fem. nom.sg.masc.

"you have a big head but
 he has a little one"

In both of these examples one of the two attributes displays 'standard' agreement whereas the other does not. The "frequency" hypothesis is plausible in the case of 'drugája' (which is statistically more frequent than 'stáršoj') but hardly explains the data in the second example. This suggests that a number of contradictory factors may be operating at the same time, their relative weight determining the actual agreement pattern in any

given utterance, e.g. the "frequency" factor might be complemented by other factors:

c) an "attributive" factor, whereby attributive position is more conducive to standard agreement than predicative position (or qualifying non-overt constituents). The validity of many other possible factors would have to be tested statistically, e.g.

d) multiple agreement: only one modifier preferably displays standard agreement. cf. example 'stářiš(oj) sestrá drugá tam' from b) above.

e) case: nominative displays standard agreement more frequently than accusative

zajdeš' v takoj budku
you enter in such booth [acc.]
[perf.] [masc.] fem.

"you go into a kind-of booth"

vidiš takoj dyročku
you see such hole (dim.)
[masc.] acc. fem.

"you see that kind-of little hole"

bol'soj fabriku stroili
big [masc.] factory built 3 pl.
acc. fem.

"[they] built a big factory"

f) position of stress: end-stressed adjectives tend to display standard agreement; end-stressed nouns tend to take attributes with standard agreement. The phonetic weakness of the last syllable of stem-stressed adjectives may account for the loss of agreement where other factors (e.g. personhood) may encourage it, e.g.

ja egó grándma, ja grándma egónaj
I of grandma I grandma his [adj. masc. nom. sg.]
[gen. pron.]

"I'm his grandma,
I'm his grandma."

However, yet another factor may be operating here, viz.

g) loan-words; a loan-word will always tend to display morphologically masculine agreement:

bol'soj bakery
big [masc.]

"a big bakery"

It is possible too that certain modifiers which display gender agreement in CSR do not in NR. This would be a 'lexical factor' as expressed in h):

h) lexical factor; the following modifiers inhibit standard gender agreement: i) the demonstrative CSR 'étot/éta/éto' (which appears as invariant 'éto' in NR); ii) the numeral "one"; iii) invariant possessive adjectives in -ina/-ova: ^{masc. fem. neut.} ^{which displays regular case/gender agreement in CSR}

i) ja pómnu kogdá éto vtoroj vojna náčals'a "I remember when World War Two started"
I remember when DEM. [masc.] war [fem.] began Refl. particle
INVARIANT CSR

(cf. on éto černogo petuxá svoego na fair taskál) "He brought that black cockrel of his along to the fair"
He that DEM. black acc. anim. cockrel acc. anim. own to fair dragged black cockrel of his along to the fair
INVARIANT

ii) ja odín xlopušku pustíl
I [one [masc. acc.] cracker [acc. fem.]] released

"I let off one firecracker"
cf. CSR 'odny'

u men'a odín ruka
with me one [masc. nom.] hand [nom. fem.]

"I have one hand"
cf. CSR 'odna'

iz odnogo lódki
from one [gen. sg. masc./neut.] boat [gen. sg. fem.]

"From one boat"
cf. CSR 'odnoj'.

iii) Sergejina mat'
1) Sergej- [poss. ending] mother

"Sergej's mother"

2) Mikhaíl'ina brat
 Mikhail ^{poss[PA]} ^{adj[PA]} brother ^[nom.sg.]

"Mikhail's brother"

3) moj brat'ina syn
 my brother ^{PA} son
^[nom.sg.] ^[masc.]

"my brother's son"

4) eto moj dedúšk'ina dom byl
 this my grandpa ^{PA} house was
^[nom.sg.] ^[masc.]

"this was my grandpa's house"

5) Simeón'ova brat
 Simeon ^{PA} brother

(The third and fourth examples here suggest that -ina is suffixed to the entire nominal phrase in the nominative case: [moj dedúšk(a)]-ina dom. -(in)a might thus be analysed historically EITHER as i) a genitive ^{nominal} case ending, later extending its possessive function to the whole NP, OR as ii) a fem. adj. ending, generalized to cover all genders & cases.

i) phraseological factor: in remembered idioms, verses, sayings etc. standard agreement patterns are more likely to be preserved:

Bába Jagá, kost'anája nogá; nos v potolók ros
 Baba Yaga, bone ^[nom.sg.] leg. nose to ceiling grew
^[fem.] ^[acc.] ^[masc.sg.]

"Baba Yaga had a bone leg; her nose grew to the ceiling"

It must be emphasized that the validity of the above factors is yet to be tested. This can only be done by examining each item in the corpus individually.

In some cases there is apparently random variation between agreement and lack of agreement, where no factor other than permissible variation itself (both from speaker to speaker and within a single idiolect) seems to be responsible, e.g. tvoj im'a vs. ^{your [masc.] name} ruskoje im'a (both said by the same speaker in quick Russian [neut.] name

succession).

In the vast majority of ^{attested examples} ~~cases~~, however, there is no variation in agreement patterns: the agreement is simply lost. Thus for nouns which are neuter in CSR:

bol'šoj zemletr'asénie byl
big (masc.) earthquake [CSR neut.] was [masc.]

"There was a big earthquake"

tëploj mesto
warm (masc.) place [CSR neut.]

"a warm place"

grímánskoj pívo "German beer" (with metathesis)
German [masc.] beer [CSR neut.]

Nouns which are Fem.II (soft-consonantal) in CSR:

u vsej rússkoj cérkov' est'
with all Russian church is
[gen.pl.] [masc.] [fem.]

"Everyone has a Russian church"

u men'a nemnóžko rússkoj krov'
with me little Russian blood
[masc.] [fem.]

"I have a little Russian blood"

Nouns which are Fem. hard stems (in -a) in CSR:

"No work is easy"

nikakój rabóta ne légkoj (cf. gender marking on co-referential
no work [f.] not easy [masc.]

pronouns in: rabóta sam ne pridët, ego nado iskat)
work [f.] self not will it necessary to
[m.] come [masc.] look

"Work won't arrive on its own; one must look for it"

u negó páločnoj nogá, derev'anoj
with him stick leg wooden
(nom.sg.) [f.] [nom.sg.]
masc. [masc.]
adj.

"He has a peg-leg,
a wooden one."

v voennom službe
in war [adj.] service
prepos. masc/neut. [f.]

"on military service"

v xolódnom vode
in cold water [f.]
[prep. masc/neut.]

"in cold water"

ja spustils'a po glávnomu doróge; rússkaja baba ego nazyvala
I [f.] descended [m.] by main [m.] Road [f.] Russian [f.] woman it called [f.]
`glavnoj doroga'; ja ne znaju počemu `glavnoj', on sovsem ne
main [m.] Road [f.] I not know why 'main' [m.] it [m.] absolutely not
glavnoj.
main [m.]

"I came down by the main Road. Some Russian woman used to call it 'the main Road.' I don't know why 'main'. It's not 'main' at all."

xorošoj vsegdá malenkej dorozhka byl tuda
good (m.) always little (m.) Road [dim.] [f.] was [m.] to there.

"There was always a good little Road [leading] there"

6. Verb-subject agreement

NR exhibits the general tendency in singular past tense forms to generalize an unmarked (morphologically masculine "-0") ending corresponding to CSR -0/-a/-o. However, as with noun-adjective agreement, the data presents a more complex picture, with considerable survival of standard agreement patterns. These seem to be conditioned principally by the factor of 'personhood', i.e. if the subject of the verb is a feminine person, then standard agreement patterns are likely:

* ona ušla, ona skazála, ona byla
she exited [f.] she said [f.] she was [f.]

"she left, said, was etc."

*N.B.
larger context
would show that
'ona' is co-referent
with female human
subject.

This general tendency may be overruled by other factors, e.g. the 'reflexive' suffix "-s'a" seems to inhibit feminine gender agreement:

ja spustíls'a (said by a female speaker)
 1 descended: refl.
 [m.] particle

Where the subject is non-personal, especially inanimate, standard agreement is generally lost:

a) CSR neuters:

elektríčestvo pogás, potúx, op'át pošël
 electricity [n.] extinguished stopped again went [pers.]
 [intr.] [m.] [m.] "The electricity went off, died, then started up again."

vsë pogorel
 all (neut.) burned [intrans.]
 [m.] "Everything burned up"

lokoško slomal's'a
 window broke: refl.
 [dim.] [n.] [m.] part. "The window broke"

b) CSR Feminine II declension:

vnútrennost sgorel ot požára
 interior [f.] burned from fire [gen. sg.]
 [sq.] [m.] [sq.] "His insides burned from the fire."

c) CSR Feminine I (hard):

póčta priežžal
 post [f.] arrived [m.] "The mail used to arrive"

mašina perestál, mašina zaéxal
 car [f.] stopped [m.] car [f.] drove in [m.]
 "The car stopped, the car drove in"

Thus verb-subject agreement in NR is restricted to the category of number, except for female personal subjects, where feminine

agreement tends to survive. This supports the tendency - already indicated in 5. above - for a purely morphological concept of gender to be replaced by a one based on the real-world sex of the referent. The reasons for such a development are probably to be sought in the speech behavior of bilinguals: given two language systems, bilinguals tend to generalize whichever pattern from each language is the simplest. In this case English non-agreement, being morphologically simpler than CSR gender agreement, is the preferred strategy. It is likely that modern day NR speakers, rather than ~~[consciously]~~ simplifying CSR patterns, simply never acquired them. Thus lack of gender agreement in NR may be interpreted as part of the semi-speaker phenomenon: simplification through imperfect acquisition.

7. Numeral expressions

It was indicated in 5. above that the numeral "one" does not exhibit gender agreement in NR (though it does inflect for case).

Similarly the numeral "two", which in CSR appears as 'dva' when governing a neuter or masculine object (dva okna, dva stula), but ^{2[n] window [gen.sg.] 2[m] chair [gen.sg.]} 'dve' when its object is feminine (dve knigi), ^{2[f] book} is an invariant "dva" in NR. Moreover, it governs not the genitive singular (as in CSR) but the direct plural case:

dva dni, dva nógi, dva nedéli, dva ^{*}sestry
 two days 2 legs 2 weeks 2 sister
 [m.] [m.] [f.] [m.] [f.] [f.] *exception = gen. sg. form

This is further evidence for the weakening of gender as a grammatical category (possibly through interference from English "two"). It is interesting that in Kodiak Russian the collective numerals 'dvoje' and 'troje', restricted in CSR to male persons, are generalized to cover female persons also:

dvóe synov'já but also: dvoje sěstry, troje docer'a
 2 sons [num. pl.] 2 sisters [DIR. pl.] 3 daughters [DIR. pl.]
 or
 DIRECT pl.

8. Conclusion

The above evidence from adjective-noun agreement, verb-subject agreement, and government by numerals indicate that, despite vestigial traces, gender has systematically disappeared as a grammatical category in NR.

Comparison with Russian dialects, where the erosion of this category has nowhere been so severe, suggest that gender loss in NR was not a purely internal development, i.e. a natural development of the sort that a language might undergo when cut off from the normative influence of a literary tradition. Most likely the reason is due to bilingualism through contact with languages without the grammatical category of gender. Though Sugpiaq and Tanaina are in principle plausible candidates for this influence, it seems that the major contact of NR was with English. It is significant that the lack of gender agreement is apparent even in the speech of the oldest informants, born circa 1910. It is

likely that even at this early stage Russian-English bilingualism was prevalent in the village (through contact with teachers, traders, government administrators) and that even before 1920 children growing up in Ninilchik acquired both NR and ~~the~~ Ninilchik English ^(NE) simultaneously. The absence of written norms for NR coupled with the lack of grammatical gender in NE may have encouraged learners to generalize the simpler NE patterns, i.e. to abandon a system of morphological agreement that was morphologically redundant.

The intensified contact of NR with English since 1950 has further strengthened this tendency. The fund of lexicalized expressions, folkloric texts where standard agreement patterns are preserved, has further diminished through the massive functional reduction of NR. Present-day NR speakers may be described as 'semi-speakers', their acquisition of the language 'imperfect': this is true both in terms of function (NR alone is not a sufficient tool for their communication needs, but needs must be supplemented by English), and of structure (the inflectional system as a whole and the category of gender in particular are weak in comparison to those in all other varieties of Russian). The problem of causality remains: it is hard to decide whether structural reduction in NR is a direct result of interference from English (i.e. the transferral of grammatical categories from 'dominant language' to 'language of low prestige'), or whether such simplification is a natural result of severe reduction in function (in which case English would not necessarily provide the 'model', rather NR would be following some universal principles

of simplification). It is possible that both of these factors are operating simultaneously. Either way, Ninilchik Russian represents an interesting case of functional and structural reduction in language death.

(N.B. some bibliographical references are only approximate)

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