

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910511750403321
Autore	Bozzone Ph.D
Titolo	Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Enslow Publishing, LLC
ISBN	0-7660-9811-7
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
2. Record Nr.	UNINA9910971509803321
Titolo	Case and grammatical relations : studies in honor of Bernard Comrie / / edited by Greville G. Corbett, Michael Noonan
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Amsterdam ; ; Philadelphia, : John Benjamins Pub. Co., c2008
ISBN	9786612104664 9781282104662 1282104667 9789027290182 9027290180
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	ix, 290 p. : ill., maps
Collana	Typological studies in language, , 0167-7373 ; ; v. 81
Classificazione	ET 660
Altri autori (Persone)	ComrieBernard <1947-> CorbettGreville G NoonanMichael (Michael P.)
Disciplina	415
Soggetti	Grammar, Comparative and general - Case Grammar, Comparative and general
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
Nota di contenuto	Case and Grammatical Relations -- Editorial page -- Title page -- LCC data -- Table of contents -- Preface -- Determining morphosyntactic feature values -- 1. The canonical approach in typology -- 2. Canonical

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Sommario/riassunto

This paper presents and analyzes the encoding of aspect in Heritage Russian (HR), an incompletely acquired language spoken by those for whom another language became dominant at an early age. The HR aspectual system is distinct from the baseline. Aspectual distinctions are lost due to the leveling or loss of morphological marking. As a result, heritage speakers often maintain only one member of a former aspectual pair. Such HR verb forms are underspecified for aspect. To compensate for that, heritage speakers regularly express aspect through the use of analytical forms with the light verbs 'be', 'become', 'do'. The frequent occurrence of these forms supports the notion that aspectual distinctions are universal, belonging with the conceptual representation of events. What varies is the actual linguistic encoding of these distinctions, but not the underlying distinctions themselves.