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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.