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Case assignment by prepositions in Russian aphasia

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**CASE ASSIGNMENT BY PREPOSITIONS IN
RUSSIAN APHASIA**

MARIA TROFIMOVA





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Всё пройдёт, пройдёт и это ...

(СОЛОМОН)¹

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¹ *Everything passes; this too will pass (Solomon)*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.....	1
History of aphasiology: a short overview	1
Aphasia as a language disorder.....	2
Alexander Luria’s view of aphasia	12
Summary.....	20
CHAPTER II.....	23
LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND.....	23
What is case?.....	23
About Russian.....	28
Prepositions.....	37
CHAPTER III	49
PREVIOUS STUDIES ON CASE, CASE MARKING AND PREPOSITIONS.....	49
In addendum: Data from Russian language acquisition	76
Summary.....	77
The main research question	79
CHAPTER IV	81
PROCESSING OF LOCATIVE PREPOSITIONS IN APHASIA.....	81
Processing of locative prepositions in aphasia: a short survey	81
The goal of the study.....	82
Pilot study: Comprehension of locative prepositions	83
Methods.....	83
Results.....	88
Error analysis	90
Pilot study: Production of locative prepositions	92
Methods.....	92
Results.....	97
Error analysis	98
Summary: Production experiment	102

Production and comprehension compared	103
Conclusions and discussion	104
CHAPTER V	109
CASE, CASE ASSIGNMENT AND PRODUCTION OF PREPOSITIONS IN NARRATIVE SPEECH	109
Analysis of narrative speech	109
Research questions.....	112
Hypotheses.....	113
Results.....	119
Error analysis of prepositions and prepositional phrases.....	127
Discussion.....	129
CHAPTER VI.....	133
SENTENCE COMPLETION EXPERIMENT	133
A brief review of previous findings on case-morphology in aphasia	133
The research questions	135
Hypotheses	137
Methods.....	138
Results.....	148
Results: Subtest-1, ‘noun provided’	149
Error analyses: Subtest-1, ‘noun provided’	151
Error analyses: Subtest-2, ‘case assigner provided’	162
Comparison of the results of the two subtests	167
Discussion.....	170
CHAPTER VII.....	175
PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE INSERTION EXPERIMENT	175
Research prerequisites	175
The main goal of the study.....	176
Hypotheses	178
Results.....	187
Error analyses.....	190
Discussion.....	202

CHAPTER VIII	209
SUMMARY, COROLLARY AND PERSPECTIVE.....	209
Summary of the experiments	209
Corollary	212
Perspectives.....	215
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	219
APPENDICES	231
NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING.....	253
GRONINGEN DISSERTATIONS IN LINGUISTICS (GRODIL)	264

THESIS OUTLINE

The research described here investigates the linguistic abilities of Russian speakers with aphasia. Chapter I provides an introduction to the phenomenon of aphasia, its main characteristics, types and classifications. A short overview of the history of aphasiology development is presented, and a definition of aphasia as a language disorder is provided, with descriptions and clinical characteristics of the two most prevailing aphasic syndromes, which are Broca's aphasia and Wernicke's aphasia. The chapter also deals with the classification of aphasia types proposed by Russian neuropsychologist Alexander Luria, which is practiced in Russia.

Chapter II provides the linguistics background relevant to the present research. The chapter consists of three sections. The first is devoted to a definition of grammatical case and its related phenomena, such as abstract and morphological cases, structural and inherent cases, and the mechanisms of case assignment. The second section of the chapter is a short introduction to several aspects of Russian grammar relevant to this thesis, namely, morphological characteristics of a Russian noun, the case system and morphological realizations of case. The third section of chapter II deals with prepositions and their relation to case. A description of the category of prepositions, and Russian prepositions in particular, is provided, alongside the main functions and meanings of prepositions.

Chapter III is planned as a synopsis that sheds light on the ideas behind the thesis and the reasons for undertaking this research. The main objective here is to familiarize readers with previous relevant aphasiological studies and to provide them with the background to the present study. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. It provides an overview of previous cross-linguistic studies on nominal morphosyntax, namely, case-morphology in aphasic populations. It also looks at studies that have investigated the production and/or comprehension of prepositions. The idea of differential loss of prepositions from structural and semantic perspectives is reviewed cross-linguistically.

THESIS OUTLINE

Chapters IV to VII report on the studies and experiments undertaken over the course of the present thesis. Chapter IV discusses an explorative pilot study, administered prior to performing a series of other experiments. The main objective of the pilot study was to examine the general abilities of fluent and non-fluent aphasic speakers in comprehension and production of simple basic locative prepositions that denoted the spatial relationships of two objects.

After the pilot study showed that production and comprehension of locative prepositions in aphasia, while impaired, is not completely lost, prepositions were examined in the narrative speech of aphasic speakers. This analysis of narrative speech, which is described in chapter V, shows that although aphasic speakers experience difficulties in the production of correct prepositions, when they manage to produce prepositions in narrative speech they were also able to produce correct case-marking morphemes of the complement nouns of these prepositions.

Performance of the aphasic speakers was further examined in restricted tasks. Chapter VI considers the production of correct case-marking morphemes of the complement nouns of case-assigning prepositions in a sentence completion task with two subtests. The subtests differ with respect to the requirements. This difference allows for an exploration of whether a dependency exists between the case-assigning categories and the case-dependent categories, and whether presence or absence of the former has an influence on the latter. Although both groups of aphasic speakers had difficulties producing correct case-assigning prepositions, the overall results of the experiment support the general hypothesis put forward for non-fluent aphasic speakers: the presence of correct case-assigning prepositions facilitates the production of correct case-marking morphemes.

The next experiment, discussed in chapter VII, aimed to investigate whether this hypothesis is valid for all prepositions, since previous cross-linguistic studies have also reported differential impairment of prepositions in aphasia. This chapter looks at case assignment by prepositions in lexical and in subcategorized functions in a prepositional phrase insertion task. Fluent and non-fluent aphasic speakers were impaired in production of prepositions in lexical and subcategorized functions; however, in both groups, prepositions in the lexical function suffered less. With respect to production of correct

THESIS OUTLINE

case-marking morphemes of complement nouns of prepositions in two functions, the hypothesis was justified.

The summary of the research conducted in the context of this thesis is presented in chapter VIII. This work also presents the conclusions drawn from chapter IV onwards. The results of the experiments carried out with Russian aphasic speakers are viewed in the light of the hypothesis and the research questions. The results are also examined within the framework of previous comparable cross-linguistic studies and known theories. Chapter VIII also provides an overview of possible projects for future research.