

So where's that noun?

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INTRODUCTION

People who study, teach, translate or otherwise manipulate Russian in a formal way quickly become accustomed to the fact that many words and phrases that are understood to play a role in the sentence are missing. I intentionally use the informal and imprecise term "missing" because, until and unless one engages in formal linguistic analysis, all information that is implied but unstated falls into this amorphous category.¹ Of course, all languages permit much to be left unsaid in order to save us from endless specification of presuppositions and the like, which fall into the realm of discourse theory. However, when it comes to things missing *grammatically*, Russian outstrips a language like English.

The literature devoted to Russian provides little accessible information regarding the status of missing categories, or practical guidance regarding their employment. This article seeks to fill one corner of that gap, addressing the topic of missing head nouns within noun phrases (*not* missing noun phrases, which is a different topic altogether).² The discussion is divided into two parts. First, we discuss the ellipsis *per se* of head nouns: properties, Russian-English comparisons, and contexts in which ellipsis is preferred over overt noun specification. Then we move to instances where a head noun appears to be missing but is not (or at least may not be, for borderline cases) because the overt adjective has independent nominal status.

Ellipsis and independent nominals, while quite distinct topics, are interconnected in practical terms for a language learner. Consider a typical scenario. A novice student of Russian encounters what appears to be an attributive adjective with no noun to modify. He or she must either 1) find in the context a referent for that adjective to modify or 2) assume that the adjective functions as a nominal by itself and look it up in the dictionary if the meaning is not known.³ If passive knowledge of the language is the learner's only goal, he or

she might well get accustomed to these phenomena with no special knowledge or analytical tools required. However, proper production of utterances, as well as fielding students' questions about grammar and usage, requires a more solid grasp of the phenomena, which this paper seeks to promote.

The contributions of this work are two-fold: 1) it makes a formal distinction between ellipsis as a productive syntactic process and nominalization of adjectives as a historical-lexical process, and 2) it categorizes phenomena in a readily comprehensible way that easily translates into practical pedagogical application. In addition, since most illustrations are drawn from Russian literature, they have an authentic rather than invented quality and can be used as memorable samples of how Russians really speak and write.

HEAD NOUN ELLIPSIS

Ellipsis can be defined informally as the non-expression of some expected sentence element. In other words, some element that could be expressed is not because it can be understood, or *recovered*, by other means. Consider the following examples, with elided Russian head nouns represented by * and their antecedents (i.e. referents) in boldface.

- (1) «...Я тебе просто хотел загадать шараду». – «**Шараду?**» – «Очень интересную *» (Войнович 2: 23-4).
"...I just wanted to set you a riddle." "A riddle?" "A really interesting one."
- (2) «Ешь». – Лётчик подвинул яблоки. «У нас свои * есть», – гордо отказалась Танька (Токарева: 509).
"Have some." The pilot pushed the apples toward them. "We've got our own," said Tan'ka, proudly refusing.
- (3) Листья опадают и лежат под деревьями **пёстрыми кучками** – под каждым своя * (Рачко: 23).

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The leaves fall and lie beneath their trees in brightly coloured piles — each tree has its own (brightly coloured) pile.

- (4) Я ещё в Вене заметила, что она вызвала у Вас особенный **прилив родственных чувств** (не единственный ли *?) (Рачко: 7). Back in Vienna I noticed that she evoked in you a particular surge of familial sentiment (perhaps the only one ever?).
- (5) «Не имеет значения, сколь вы богаты или бедны, — добавляет она, — две женщины чувствуют одинаковую **боль**, Джекки [Кеннеди] несёт в сердце свою*, я — свою*» (Богуславская: 25).⁴ “It makes no difference whether you’re rich or poor,” she adds, “two women feel the same pain. Jackie [Kennedy] carries hers in her heart and I carry mine in my heart.”
- (6) Чемодан сразу же по прибытии был отнесён в **комнату** Павлика, а не Яночкину * (Хмелевская 1: 37). Right after they arrived home, they took the suitcase to Pavlik’s **room**, not to Yanochka’s *.
- (7) «Господи, до чего жрать хочется!... Жизнь отдала бы за бутерброд с **колбасой**. С копчёной *, конечно...» (Антология: 44). “Boy am I ravenous!...I’d give anything for a sausage sandwich. Smoked sausage, of course...”
- (8) «Помимо экономических **проблем**, о которых теперь думает каждый, есть ещё одна *» (Богуславская: 6). “Apart from economic problems, which everyone thinks about now, there is yet another problem.”

Examples like these are so common as to go unnoticed by those well familiar with Russian, but there *are* things to notice about them.

- Although it is sometimes stylistically bad to pronounce the head nouns overtly the second time, this could be done, which is a fundamental property of ellipsis: if the category cannot be overt, the process is not ellipsis.
- The inflectional properties of the elided head noun need not match those of its antecedent: for example, in (3) the antecedent *нестрыми кучками* is instrumental plural, whereas the elided head noun would be nominative singular, if overt.
- The antecedent can, itself, be syntactically overt, as in (1), (3), etc., or understood from the preceding context, as in (2) (since the reference to the apples, *яблоки*, is an author’s comment rather than part of the dialogue, it is not a syntactic antecedent and is not in boldface).
- Ellipsis can be carried out by a single speaker

(most examples) or cooperatively among speakers, as in (1).

- The structure of the noun phrases in question need not be parallel, as shown in (6), where the modifier in the antecedent is an adnominal genitive noun (Павлика ‘of Pavlik’) whereas the modifier in the elliptical noun phrase is a derived adjective (Яночкина ‘Yanochka’s’).
- The same type of ambiguity in the recovery of an antecedent that is found in other types of ellipsis can be found here as well: e.g. in (3) the recovered head noun phrase could be *нестрая кучка* ‘brightly coloured piles’ or just *кучка* ‘piles’. Consider a similar situation in English: “I want to try to start to have more time to read.” “I do * too.” A perfectly reasonable interpretation of the second statement is *I want to read more too*, without all the modals (if for no other reason than that one would lose track of them!).⁵
- There are many English strategies to translate missing head nouns in Russian (one variant for each example is cited even though alternatives are often possible): *one* pronominalization (1), (4); use of a possessive pronoun (5); use of an ‘s possessive (6); overt repetition of the head noun (7), (8); or a context-specific strategy (2), (3).⁶

PREFERRED HEAD-NOUN ELLIPSIS

In many contexts, eliding the head noun in Russian is not merely optional, it is preferred in order to avoid a stylistically unacceptable degree of repetition. While the notion “stylistically unacceptable degree of repetition” defies precise definition, there are certain types of contexts that predictably favor head-noun ellipsis and should, therefore, be noted by students and translators.

The two noun phrases are selected by the same verb. This can occur when the verb selects one noun phrase as its subject and the other as its object, or when it selects both noun phrases as objects. (I use “object” here loosely to cover all non-subject elements that are obligatorily selected by the verb.) Since word order and the like might obscure the grammatical relations in the examples below, illustrative rewrites are provided.

- (9) **бы с удовольствием работал двадцать четыре часа в год, но тогда моя годовая зарплата равнялась бы недельной *** (Токарева: 127).
I would be happy to work twenty four hours a year, but then my yearly salary would equal my weekly one.

моя годовая зарплата	равнялась бы	недельной *
<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>object</i>

- (10) **Другой голос** Чик признал за начальнический * (Искандер: 168).

Chik recognized the other voice as the boss’s.

Чик	признал	другой голос
		за начальнический *
<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>object</i>

- (11) ...[Дима] уже не хотел расставаться с тряпкой, стирал ее до тех пор, пока **кусочек мыла** из прямоугольного * не превратился в овальный * (Токарева: 13).

...Dima already didn't want to part with the rag, he washed it until the piece of soap had changed from a rectangle into an oval.

кусочек мыла	превратился	из прямоугольного *
<i>subject</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>object</i>
		в овальный *

The two noun phrases are in a coordinate structure. Coordinate structures are composed of two like categories that are usually joined by a conjunction like *and*, *but*, or *or*. When the two noun phrases in question are in a coordinate configuration, head-noun ellipsis tends to be preferred, regardless of how large the coordinated chunks of text are – they may be noun phrases as in (12), verb phrases, as in (13), or clauses, as in (14) (the coordinated chunks are underlined for clarification).

- (12) А шофёр, тот так и остался сидеть с открытым ртом, отчего были видны все его белые зубы и один золотой * (Шинов: 73). But the chauffeur kept sitting there with his mouth open, from which you could see all his white teeth and one gold one.
- (13) А Ленка промолчала. Ей требовалось время, чтобы выйти из одного состояния и переместиться в другое * (Токарева: 340). But Lenka remained silent. She needed time to move from one state to another.
- (14) Знаете, у теноров бывают такие тоненькие голоса, что когда услышишь их по радио, невольно возникает вопрос: «Это женщина поёт толстым голосом или же мужчина тоненьким *?» (Шинов: 37).⁸ You know, some tenors have such thin voices that when you hear them on the radio, you unwittingly wonder: “Is that a woman singing in a thick voice or a man in a thin one?”

The two noun phrases are in a comparative structure, often containing *так же... как* or *просто как...*

- (15) Их **привычка** к стабильности так же прочна, как наша * к нестабильности (Богуславская: 261). They were as accustomed to stability as we were to instability.
- (16) «И артист, который играет **козлёнка**, блеет на пластинке, как настоящий *, потому что этот артист – специалист по бляению, и он знает, как это делается» (Шинов: 52). “And the actor playing the goat on the record

brays like a real goat because the actor is an expert at braying and he knows just how it's done.”

To sum up head-noun ellipsis: it is the non-expression of the main noun in a noun phrase composed of the noun plus some sort of modifier. When the head noun is elided, the bare modifier signals that something is missing; that something must be recovered from the speech or real-world context. In some instances, Russian and English produce comparable structures showing head-noun ellipsis; more often, however, head-noun ellipsis in Russian translates into some other type of structure in English. Both in Russian and in English the repetition of a head noun is often stylistically undesirable; head-noun ellipsis is one means of avoiding stylistic infelicity.

THE BARE ADJECTIVE IS A FULL-FLEDGED NOUN

As mentioned above, not all bare adjectives in Russian imply that a head noun has been elided. Consider the words *слепой/слепая*. As adjectives, these words can modify any blind person or animal: *слепой старик* ‘blind old man’; *слепая собака* ‘blind dog’. However, *слепой/слепая* can also function as full-fledged nouns meaning ‘blind man’ and ‘blind woman’, respectively. When we use *слепой/слепая* as nouns, we do NOT start with the collocations *слепой человек/слепая женщина* then elide the head nouns. This might have been what happened historically, but not anymore. In modern Russian, *слепой* and *слепая* are regular nouns that decline like adjectives. The same goes for a word like *столовая*: it can be used as an adjective (*столовая ложка* ‘tablespoon’) or as a noun (*столовая* ‘dining room/dining hall’). The question is, how does one determine whether a word that looks like an adjective also has independent nominal status? This is often not trivial, and there are as many grey areas as there are black or white (even dictionaries do not always agree on where to draw the line). One way to test for independent nominal status is to use the word in a discourse-initial sentence like

- (17) *В бар вошёл слепой.*
‘A blind man walked into the bar’.

If the word can be used as a noun with no supporting context to provide an antecedent for ellipsis, chances are it has full-fledged nominal status.

Keep in mind, however, the following contrast. Virtually any Russian adjective can occur bare in a text if its head noun is implied by the context. For example, two guys are walking down the street and catch sight of a pretty girl; one says to the other:

- (18) *Посмотри на эту чернявую *! Ничего, а?*

‘Hey, look at that dark-haired girl! Not bad, eh?’

Чернявая is not a noun – it is an adjective that is used with an elided head noun, *девушка* ‘girl’, which is supplied from the real-world context. Our two sentences would be analyzed as follows:

(17a) В бар вошёл слепой_{NOUN}
into bar came blind-man_{NOUN}

(18a) Посмотри на эту чернявую_{ADJECTIVE * NOUN}
look at that dark-haired_{ADJECTIVE * NOUN}

The complexity of making decisions regarding independent nominal status can be seen by comparing two semantically similar words, *несчастный* ‘unhappy, unfortunate’ and *грустный* ‘sad’. They can both be used as adjectives in the regular way, but when it comes to being used as nouns, *Словарь русского языка в четырёх томах* (hereafter: *4-Vol.*) describes them differently: it lists *несчастный* as a noun meaning ‘unfortunate person’, but it does not list *грустный* as a noun meaning ‘sad person’. So, compare the structures of the following two sentences (the second of which could only be used in a very particular type of context):

(19) Посмотрите на этого несчастного_{NOUN}!
Look at that unfortunate person!

(20) Посмотрите на этого грустного_{ADJ * NOUN}!
Look at that sad person!

What justifies these different analyses for seemingly similar sentences? An English comparison might help to clarify. English has a rule that permits adjectives to be changed into nouns indicating the class of people described by the adjective: *poor* → *the poor*; *needy* → *the needy*; *underprivileged* → *the underprivileged*. This process can, in theory, be applied to any adjective, but there are some semantic constraints. For example, we would need a very special context to be able to use *the wet*, *the stiff*, or *the frustrated* (in any but humorous contexts), since these are generally not thought of as classes of people but as temporary conditions. In the following example, Russian *мокрые* is used with an elided head noun as an occasionalism – it is certainly not an independent nominal. The nominalization *the wet* in English is out of the question.

(21) «Ты здесь ждать будешь?» – «Здесь меня комары сожрут: они обожают мокрых *» (Золотые: 64).
“Will you wait here?” “Here the mosquitoes will eat me alive: they love wet people [♦the wet].”⁹

Returning to *несчастный* and *грустный*, we can call on a similar semantic analysis. Being unfortunate is a more permanent condition than being sad. Therefore, it is understandable that Russian would have an independent nominal meaning unfortunate person (*несчастный*) but not one meaning sad person (*грустный*).

Determining which *inanimate* adjective-like words have independent nominal status and which do not is fraught with similar complexity. Consider the following three examples:

(22) «Я непременно приду сюда завтра, именно сюда, на это же место, именно в этот час, и буду счастлив, припоминая **вчера**» (Достоевский: 125).

“I will definitely come here tomorrow, right here, to this very place, at this very hour, and I will be happy, recalling what took place yesterday.”

(23) «Зина... Я должен перед тобой извиниться. За **утреннее**» (Вампилов: 367).
“Zina... I must apologize to you. For (what happened) this morning.”

(24) [Asking Uncle Lyosha about his wife] «Ну, она у тебя хорошая?» – «Да как тебе сказать..., – задумался дядя Лёша. – Ничего вроде бы. Тяжёлая она», – вздохнул он, вспомнив **недавнее** (Войнович 1: 59).

“So, is she nice?” – “How can I put it,” said Uncle Lyosha pensively. “She’s OK, I guess. But difficult,” he sighed, recalling what had recently happened.

Whereas the *4-Vol.* considers *вчера* ‘what happened yesterday’ to be a separate nominal sense of the corresponding adjectival entry, it does consider *утреннее* ‘what happened this morning this morning’ or *недавнее* ‘what happened not long ago’ to have independent nominal status. One can only guess that this has something to do with the higher frequency of *вчера* used as a noun. The rules of lexicographic practice regarding such matters are not always clear.

CLASSIFYING INDEPENDENT NOMINALS

Let us briefly pursue the question of formally classifying the inventory of Russian (deadjectival) nominals. The *4-Vol.* makes a four-pronged distinction (illustrated in Table 1) between adjective/nominal pairs based on their degree of semantic unity. The abbreviation *в знач. сущ.* stands for *в значении существительного* ‘in nominal usage’. The dots indicate parts of the entries that have been omitted for reasons of space; word stress is omitted as well.

Indicator	Meaning	Example
... в знач. суц.	The nominal is considered a special use of the corresponding adjectival sense; there is no shift in meaning.	ГЛУХОЙ , -ая, ое ... 1. Полностью или частично лишенный слуха ... в знач. суц. глухой , -ого, м.; глухая , -ой, ж.
... в знач. суц.	The nominal is considered a special use of the corresponding adjectival sense but it has special semantic nuances (<i>смысловатые оттенки</i>) that must be described separately.	ВОЕННЫЙ ... 4. Состоящий на службе в армии, проходящий в ней службу... в знач. суц. военный , -ого, м. Военнослужащий...
[New sense] в знач. суц.	The nominal is considered a separate sense of the corresponding adjective.	ТАНЦУЮЩИЙ , -ая, -ее. 1. <i>Прич. наст. от танцевать.</i> 2. в знач. суц. танцующие , -их, мн. Участники, исполнители танца (танцев)...
Separate entry	The nominal does not correspond to any Russian adjective.	ГОСТИНАЯ , -ой, ж. 1. Комната в квартире, богатом доме для приёма гостей...

The introduction to the 4-Vol. does not list the diagnostics used to distinguish among the first three categories of independent nominals described above. As in many aspects of lexicographic work, it is likely a combination of semantic analysis and native-speaker instinct that determines these judgments. For our purposes, the main point is that all of the independent nominals listed above are explicitly assigned nominal status in the dictionary, which suggests that they have independent nominal status in the mental lexicon of Russian speakers as well. Accordingly, speakers extract these nominals from their mental lexicons as ready-made entities, with no need to engage in processes of word formation (adjective > noun) or ellipsis (adjective + noun a adjective + *). The 4-vol. status of examples to follow will be noted for reference but not lingered over: single-bar subsense [|], double-bar subsense [||], [new sense], [separate entry].

INDEPENDENT NOMINALS REFERRING TO HUMANS

There are two basic groups of independent nominals referring to humans: those that permit singular and plural forms and those that permit only plural forms.¹⁰

Singular and plural. This group contains such members as: [|] **раненый** (-ая/-ые) 'wounded person/people', **больной** (-ая, -ые) 'sick person/people', **любопытный** (-ая, -ые) 'curious person/people', **начинающий** (-ая, -ие) 'beginner(s)'; [||] **мёртвый** (-ая, -ые) 'dead person/people', **приезжий** (-ая, -ие) 'person/people who just arrived', **маленький** (-ая, -ие) 'child/children'.

(25) «А что у вас делали в Первой Конной, если

кто-нибудь издевался над **раненым** или **больным**?» (Войнович 1: 39).

“And with you guys in the First Mounted Division, what did they do if somebody harassed somebody who was wounded or sick?”

(26) Сколько раз это желание – не быть похожим на **маленького**, в моих отношениях с Серёжей, останавливало чувство, готовое излиться, и заставляло лицемерить (Толстой 2: 65).

How many times had that desire not to be like a little kid in my relations with Seryozha halted a feeling that was ready to spill out and forced me to be hypocritical.

Plural Only. This group of words refers only to groups or classes of people rather than to individuals. It includes such entities as: [|] **большие** 'adults, grown ups', некоторые 'some people', многие 'many people', немногие 'not many people', остальные 'the rest of the people'; [separate sense] **родные** 'relatives', **наши** 'one's family and close friends', **домашние** 'one's family', **избранные** 'the chosen few', **танцующие** 'people dancing'.

(27) Мы поговорили о том, о сём, о последней передаче «Голоса Америки», о наших **домашних**, о его сыне Тишке... (Войнович 2: 12).

We talked about this and that, about the latest broadcast of “Voice of America”; about our families, about his son Tishka ...

(28) «Виноват! Я выпустил из вида, что писать пьесы и играть на сцене могут только

немногие **избранные**» (Чехов: 401).

“Guilty! I lost sight of the fact that only the chosen few can write plays and perform on stage.”

INDEPENDENT NOMINALS REFERRING TO INANIMATES

Inanimate independent nominals that look and decline like adjectives fall into at least three categories: words indicating “something with the *adjective property*” (*плохое* ‘something bad, unpleasant’), rooms (*столовая* ‘dining room/hall’), and what I will bunch together as miscellaneous (*выходной* ‘day off’).

“**Something with the adjective property**”. All words in this group are neuter singular, which is the default for Russian. They include such items as: [|] *плохое* ‘sth. bad, unpleasant’, *общее* ‘something in common’, *одно* ‘the only thing’, *остальное* ‘the rest (of it)’, [||] *своё* ‘something that is one’s own’; [separate sense] *хорошее* ‘sth. positive, worthy’, *многое* ‘sth. large in quantity or content’, *новое* ‘something that appeared recently’

(29) Танька сидела на почте, сортировала письма и думала о **своём** (Токарева: 494-5).

Tan’ka sat at the post office, sorting letters and thinking her own thoughts.

(30) Написано это было, как всегда, из рук вон плохо, но я увидел в глазах его такое отчаянное желание услышать **хорошее**, что сердце моё дрогнуло (Войнович 2: 13).

As always, this was written deplorably, but his eyes betrayed such a desperate desire to hear something positive, that it tugged at my heart.

(31) ...Для других [ленинградская блокада] превратилась в синоним детства – с маминой любовью, с бабушкой-дедушкой, с праздниками, страхами, с **новым!**.. (Рачко: 31).

...For other people, the blockade of Leningrad became synonymous of childhood – with mother’s love, with Grandma and Grandpa, with holidays, and fears – with all sorts of *new things!*..

Rooms. All nouns expressing rooms are feminine for the obvious reason: historically, they derived from collocations that had *комната* ‘room’ as the head noun. They include such entities as: [||] *классная* (*obsolete*) ‘classroom’; [separate sense] *учительская* ‘teacher’s lounge’, *приёмная* ‘foyer’; [separate entry] *столовая* ‘dining room/hall’; *детская* ‘nursery’; *гостиная* ‘living room’; *ванная* ‘bathroom’, *уборная* ‘lavatory’.

(32) «Sind sie bald fertig [Скоро вы будете готовы? – *German*]» – послышался из **классной** голос Карл Иванович (Толстой 2: 7).

“Will you be ready soon?” Karl Ivanovich’s voice rang from the classroom.

(33) На перемене я иду в **столовую**. Мне надо прежде зайти в **учительскую**, положить журнал (Токарева: 133).

During the break between classes I go to the lunchroom. But first I have to stop by the teacher’s lounge to drop off my magazine.

(34) Чтобы совершенно успокоиться, она пошла в **детскую** и весь вечер провела с сыном... (Толстой 1: 142).

In order to fully calm down, she went into the nursery and spent the whole evening with her son.

Miscellaneous. For the miscellaneous nouns, sometimes the combination of their meaning and gender suggests an earlier [adjective + noun] collocation, sometimes not; sometimes that collocation is still possible in modern Russian, sometimes not. For example, both the one-word and two-word variants of the following are possible in Russian: *выходной/выходной день* ‘day off’; *борзая/борзая собака* ‘borzoi (dog)’. By contrast, one generally says *наличные* ‘cash’ rather than *наличные деньги* ‘available money’, and one always says *жаркое* ‘roast meat’ rather than **жаркое мясо* ‘hot meat’. Apart from these examples, others include: [|] *отбивная* (*котлета*) ‘cutlet’; [||] *кондитерская* ‘candy store’; [separate sense] *уборочная* (*кампания*) ‘harvesting’, *посевная* (*кампания*) ‘sowing’, *пивная* ‘pub’; [separate entry] *животное* ‘animal’, *шампанское* ‘champagne’, *мороженое* ‘ice cream’, *пирожное* ‘pie’, *закусочная* ‘fast-food restaurant’, and the list goes on.

(35) «Прадедушка... составил перечень своего имущества и пометил, чтобы не забыть, что и где он попрятал, превратив имущество в золото, **наличные** и драгоценности» (Хмелевская 2: 195).

“Great Granddad made a list of his belongings and noted, so as not to forget, where he hid what, having converted all his belongings into gold, cash, and jewelry.”

(36) «Невероятно! – восторженно произнёс он. – Мне и во сне такая свинина не снилась!» **Отбивные** и в самом деле удались... (Хмелевская 2: 181).

“Unbelievable!” he exclaimed in delight. “I never dreamed of such delicious pork!” The cutlets had, indeed, turned out well...

(37) Одна дама держала **закусочную** в Катовицах, где я некоторое время жила, все ходили к ней обедать... (Хмелевская 2: 181). There was this lady who had a fast-food restaurant in Katowice, where I lived for a while; everyone went there for lunch...

English noun 'derivative'. Both look and decline like adjectives but they have different genders: in chemistry, the neuter *производное* is used; in maths, the feminine *производная*. Go figure.

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IN CLOSING...

This paper has shown that head nouns in Russian are liberally elided, leaving bare modifiers behind. Such ellipsis is employed in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of the head noun. However, not all independently occurring adjective-like entities are actually bare adjectives with an elided head noun: some are full-fledged nouns that just happen to look and decline like adjectives. Such full-fledged nouns were referred to here as independent nominals. Determining which adjective-like entities have independent nominal status and which do not is an inexact science, as is determining how closely an independent nominal is related to the corresponding adjective (if there is one).

The list of independent nominals in Russian is very long. If one should want to create such a list, a good place to start would be the *Обратный словарь русского языка* (Лазова, 1974): words ending in *-ое, -ее, -ая, -яя, -ые, -ие* are good candidates (words ending in *-ый, -ий* are ambiguous between adjectives and nominals and require more sifting through). Available corpora can be used to collect examples of words of interest for class discussion, drilling, or testing purposes.

Although the primary goal of this article is pedagogical, it must be mentioned that close analyses of connected phenomena like these have other applications as well. One obvious example is the machine processing of text. Programs that instruct a computer to take certain actions when certain types of text elements are encountered must be very precise, and must derive from inventories of what might be encountered. There is a non-trivial similarity between non-native speakers trying to understand and text and computers trying to do so: in both cases, analysis draws upon information about what eventualities should be expected (e.g. ellipsis, independent nominal usage of adjective-like elements), and what action should be taken under each eventuality (e.g. search for an antecedent for the elided category, look up the entity in the dictionary). Moreover, both in the educational context and the computer context, examples support learning (machine learning being one aspect of natural language processing) – it is for this reason that quality, non-invented examples should be liberally collected for all learning purposes.

Let us finish up with one curious fact, which serves to emphasize the complexity and, sometimes, fickleness, of independent nominals in Russian: there are two Russian nouns for the

NOTES

- ¹ Colloquially, the term “ellipsis” is often used as an umbrella term, but this is imprecise and ambiguous.
- ² The head noun is the main noun in a noun phrase, shown in bold in the following examples: *a very big mansion*; *my friend's Volvo*. For discussions of various aspects of noun phrase ellipsis in Russian, Polish, and Czech see McShane, 1998, 1999a,b, 2001, 2002.
- ³ At the very earliest stages of learning, nominals of this sort will probably be presented lexically as they are encountered e.g. *столовая* might occur in the first few lessons. Later on, when more extensive, less strictly guided reading is begun, students must have more tools for analyzing such contexts.
- ⁴ Both in Russian and in English possessive pronouns can be used in independent function (Quirk et al.'s term) to avoid repeating a head noun. In Russian, the possessives and attributives share the same form: *мой, твой, свой*, etc. In English, by contrast, they have different forms: *her pain* but *hers* (and never ♦*hers pain*). This synchronism in Russian makes the analysis of contexts like (5) rather ambiguous: one can analyze *свою* as a pronoun in independent function without ellipsis, or as a pronoun in attributive function with ellipsis. For now, we will consider the utterance elliptical because, even if one considers the *syntactic* structure non-elliptical, the *semantic* structure is still elliptical: “hers” must, in all cases, be linked back to “pain”.
- ⁵ See Neijt, 1981 for a discussion of stacked infinitives in gapping structures.
- ⁶ For native speakers of English this choice is not difficult; however, developing selection criteria for non-native speakers or natural language processing systems would be a significant challenge.
- ⁷ Actually, *моей* is elided as well: *...равнялась бы моей недельной зарплате*.
- ⁸ The last clause of this example has an elided verb as well. Its full form would be: *или же мужчина поёт тоненьким голосом*. This type of verbal ellipsis is called gapping.
- ⁹ I use (♦) to indicate ungrammaticality, according to general linguistic practice.
- ¹⁰ There is actually another subclass: words that have a masculine singular and plural form but no feminine singular form, but there are relatively few members, e.g. *военный/военные* ‘military man’ and *свой/свои* ‘one of us’.