Control violation in Russian converbs

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“Universally, the unmarked case is for the implicit subject of a converbal construction to be referentially controlled by the subject of the superordinate clause (subject control). Some languages have converbs which explicit express disjoint reference of the converb subject and the superordinate subject, but it appears that whenever such a different-subject converb exists in a language, there is also a corresponding same-subject converb.”

(Haspelmath 1995: 29)
Subject control violation is non-canonical: indeed, it’s a violation of the norm

Grammarians have often shown a tendency to dismiss such exceptions to subject control. In many cases, traditional prescriptive grammarians have simply declared nonsubject controlled converbal constructions non-normative, i.e., wrong. For example, they have been condemned in Russian grammar (already in Lomonosov’s [1755: 467] pioneering work), in English grammar (cf. Kortmann 1991: 224), in French grammar (e.g., Grevisse 1986: § 885), in Bulgarian and Polish grammar (e.g., Válčkova 1988), and in Hindi grammar (cf. Schumacher 1977: 88). Prescriptive grammarians usually give a functional explanation for their warnings against nonsubject-controlled converbs, e.g., Grevisse (1986: § 885):

(Haspelmath 1995: 30)
Standard usages of conversvial clauses
(Russian Grammar 1980)

• Canonical control: type 1
Control of PRO in the conversvial clause by the Nominative subject in the main clause

Ø₁ okončiv Akademiju khudožestv, PRO graduate.from.CONV academy.ACC arts.GEN
Serov₁ byl polon želanija pisat’ tol’ko otradnoe.
Serov.NOM was full wish.GEN paint.INF only gratifying.ACC

‘Having graduated from the academy of arts, Serov was full of the wish to paint something gratifying.’ (RG 1980)
Standard usages of convervibial clauses
(Russian Grammar 1980)

• Canonical control: type 2

Control of PRO in the convervibial clause by the null subject in the main (impersonal) clause

∅ᵢ nužno bylo vosstanovi’t stantsiju,
SUBJ necessary was reconstruct.INF station.ACC
∅ᵢ ne prekraščaja naučnykh issledovanij.
PRO not stop.CONV scientific.GEN research.GEN

‘It was necessary to reconstruct the station not stopping scientific research.’ (RG 1980)
(Null) subject control

Polish (Weiss 1977: 279)
Chcąc kupić bilet, trzeba stanąć w kolejce.
Want:conv buy ticket one.must stand in line
‘Wanting to buy a ticket, one has to stand in a line.’

Russian (Čeremisina 1977: 5)
Prigotoviv testo, nada dat’ emu poležat’.
prepare:ppf.conv dough one.must give to.it lie
‘Having prepared the dough, it is necessary to leave it lying for some time.’

(Haspelmath 1995:35)
(Null) subject control

‘Studying was mostly done in unusual circumstances and using unusual methods.’

(Plado 2015: 329)
Non-standard constructions
(Russian Grammar 1980)

• Non-canonical control
Control of PRO in the converbial clause by the Dative or Accusative subject in the main (impersonal) clause

∅ᵢ vypolnjaja ēto poručenie,
PRO perform.CONV this.ACC mission.ACC
emuᵢ ne khotelos’ oglaski.
he.DAT NEG wanted.IMPERS publicity.GEN

‘Performing this mission, he did not want any publicity.’ (RG 1980)
Non-standard constructions
(Russian Grammar 1980)

• Non-canonical control
Control of PRO in the converbial clause by the Nominative subject in the main (passive) clause

∅_i polučiv bol’šoe količestvo proboin, PRO get.CONV large.ACC amount.ACC holes.GEN
tank_i byl podožžon.
tank.NOM was set.on.fire

‘After having got a large amount of holes, the tank was set on fire.’ (RG 1980)
"Passive" subject control in French

French (Legendre 1990: 106, 109)

Les policiers ont dispersé les manifestants en
the policemen have dispersed the demonstrators CONV
hurlant.
scream:CONV

‘The policemen dispersed the demonstrators while screaming [i.e.,
the policemen are screaming].’

Les manifestants ont été dispersés par les policiers
the demonstrators have been dispersed by the policemen
en hurlant.
CONV scream:CONV

‘The demonstrators were dispersed by the policemen while screaming [i.e., the demonstrators or the policemen are screaming].’

(Haspelmath 1995: 31)
“Passive” subject control in Estonian

Kõik need esemed on käsitsi lakitud
all these thing.PL be.3SG by.hand varnish.PST.IMPRS.PTCP
Vietnamis parimate meistrimeeste poolt, kasutades ajaloolise
Vietnam.INE best.PL.GEN handyman.PL.GEN by, use.CONV historical.GEN
recepti järgi pähklitest valmistatud lakki.
recipe.GEN based.on nut.PL.ELA make.PST.IMPRS.PTCP varnish.PRT
‘All these products are hand-varnished in Vietnam by the best craftsmen, using a nut-based varnish that has been made using a historical recipe.’

(Plado 2015: 328)
Non-standard constructions
(not mentioned in Russian Grammar 1980)

Ungrammatical?

Ø₁ pod”ezžaya k siej stantsii
PRO approach.CONV to this station.DAT
i gljadja na prirodu v okno,
and look.CONV at nature.ACC into window.ACC
u menja₁ sletela šljapa.
PREP I.GEN flow.off.PST hat.NOM

‘While I was approaching this station and looking at the nature, my hat flew off.’ (Classical example from Chekhov)

see Chupasheva (2010),
More different examples…
(_corpus of Russian student texts)

- No control

\[ \varnothing_i \text{ prosypajas` } \text{ utrom,} \]
\text{PRO wake.up.CONV in.the.morning}
\text{solntse_j svetit jarče obyčnogo.}
\text{sun.NOM shine.PRS brighter than.usual}

‘When I woke up in the morning, the sun was shining brighter than usual.’ (CoRST)
More different examples…  
(Corpus of Russian student texts)

• No control

Ø \_i \_  otkryv   kotu\_j \_  dver’   na   balkon,  
PRO open.CONV  cat.DAT  door.ACC  to  balcony.ACC  

on\_j \_  vyskočil \_  iz \_  komnaty.  
he.NOM run.away.PST  from  room.GEN

‘When I opened the door to the balcony, the cat ran away from the room.’ (CoRST)
More examples: Russian and Estonian

*Nynče uvidev ee mel’kom, ona emu pokazalas’ ešče*

now see:PFV.CONV her cursorily she to.him seemed even

lučše.

better

‘Now catching a glimpse of her, she seemed even more beautiful to

him.’ (L. Tolstoy)

(Haspelmath 1995:33)

*Kalurite pikaajalisele praktikale toetudes*

fisherman.PL.GEN long-time.ALL practice.ALL rely.CONV

lestandaruid ei esine.

reserve.of.flounders.PL.PRT NEG be

‘Relying on the fishermen’s long-time practice, there is no reserve of flounders.’

(Plado 2015:333)
Norm/error vs. scale of acceptability

- Grey zone (Itskovich 1982): passive constructions
- Interim zone (Glovinskaya 1996): violation of coreference
- Acceptable zone (Yokoyama 1983): violation of coreference
Experiments 1 and 2: idea and hypotheses

Idea
Control violation is indeed a grey zone

Hypothesis 1
The 1SG GEN ind-obj \textit{u menja} (which controls PRO)
explicit $>>$ implicit

Hypothesis 2
Converbial clause is located before or after the main clause
preposition $>>$ postposition
Experiments 1 and 2: stimuli

Looking at this picture, I had strange associations.
Experiments 1 and 2: stimuli

- Preposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
  \[\emptyset, \text{gljadja na etu kartinu, u menja, voznikli strannye assotsiatsii.}\]
- Preposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
  \[\emptyset, \text{gljadja na etu kartinu, voznikli strannye assotsiatsii.}\]
- Postposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
  \[U \text{menja, voznikli strannye assotsiatsii, } \emptyset, \text{gljadja na etu kartinu.}\]
- Postposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
  \[\text{Voznikli strannye assotsiatsii, } \emptyset, \text{gljadja na etu kartinu.}\]

‘Looking at this picture, I had strange associations.’
Experiments 1 and 2: stimuli

Converbial clause in experiments 1 and 2

• Imperfective converbs derived from mental verbs (Babenko 1999): testing for frequencies in (Lyashevsksaya, Sharov 2009); Russian National Corpus.

• Converbial clauses consist of 3-5 words.
Experiments 1 and 2: stimuli

Main clause in Experiment 1
explicit/implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj *u menya*
+ verb + NOM subject NP

Main clause in Experiment 2
explicit/implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj *u menya*
OR
explicit/implicit 3SG GEN ind-obj *u nego*
+ verb + NOM subject NP
Experiment 1: fillers

Sentences with grammatically correct participial clauses (preposed vs. postposed) + u menya ‘PREP I.GEN’

*Podslušannyj segodnja v škole* dialog vyzval *u menja* neprijatnye emotsii. 
overheard.PART today at school dialogue evoked PREP I.GEN unpleasant emotions 
‘The dialogue overheard today at school evoked unpleasant emotions.’

*Prizrak, uvidennyj kogda-to, do sikh por mel’kaet u menja pered glazami.*
ghost seen.PART some.time.ago till these times shows.up PREP I.GEN before eyes 
‘The ghost seen some time ago has been showing up.’
Experiment 2: fillers

Sentences with conversvial clauses (preposed vs. postposed) + grammatically correct vs. incorrect main clauses with 1SG or 3SG pronouns.

*Igraja na starom pianino, mama Govorila so mnoj.*
play.CONV on old piano mom.F talked.F to I.INST
‘Playing the old piano, mom talked to me.’

*Tjotja besedoval s nim, rassmatrivaja semejnyj al’bom.*
aunt.F talked.M to he.INST examine.CONV family album
‘The aunt talked to him, examining the family album.’
Experiment 1: method and design

- Grammaticality judgment task
- 4 conditions (explicit/implicit of the 1SG prepositional phrase × preposed/postposed converbial clause) => 4 lists
- 32 stimulus sentence sets (8 per condition in each list)
- 7-point Likert scale
- 240 participants (60 per list); 97 male, 143 female; age: 17 – 68; 15 participants said that they knew the norm.
Experiment 1: results

Figure 1. Participants’ responses to all stimuli: the distribution of mean values.

Figure 2. Participants’ responses for one stimulus sentence.

Figure 3. Mean responses in different experimental conditions.
Experiment 1: results

Ordinary logistic regression with two factors (the position of the converbial clause and the presence of an overt pronoun) was used to analyze the data. Both factors are statistically significant: preposed clauses are rated higher than postposed ones ($\beta = 0.42, SE = 0.04, z = 97.01, p < 0.01$), and sentences with an overt pronoun are rated higher than the ones without it ($\beta = -0.19, SE = 0.04, z = 20.03, p < 0.01$).

1. Preposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
   $\emptyset_i \text{gljadja na etu kartinu, u menja}_i \text{voznikli strannye assotsiatsii}.$
2. Preposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
   $\emptyset_i \text{gljadja na etu kartinu, voznikli strannye assotsiatsii}.$
3. Postposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
   $\text{U menja}_i \text{voznikli strannye assotsiatsii, } \emptyset_i \text{gljadja na etu kartinu}.$
4. Postposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj
   $\text{Voznikli strannye assotsiatsii, } \emptyset_i \text{gljadja na etu kartinu}.$

‘Looking at this picture, I had strange associations.’
Experiment 1: results

Experiment 1 confirmed both hypotheses
• Explicit 1SG ind-obj >> implicit 1SG ind-obj
• Preposition of a converbial clause >> postposition of a converbial clause

All the stimuli with non-canonical ind-obj control were judged as unacceptable

Position of a converbial clause is more important than the explicitness/implicitness of an ind-obj
Experiment 1: question afterwards

If participants have to speed up their grammaticality judgements, will they still provide responses similar to the observed in experiment 1?

In other words, will the results of experiment 1 (grammaticality judgment task) be replicated in experiment 2 (speeded grammaticality judgment task)?
Experiment 2: method and design

- Speeded grammaticality judgment task (sentences flashed on the screen word by word)
- The same conditions and lists as in Experiment 1 (+ 3SG ind-obj)
- 24 stimulus sentence sets (8 per condition in each list)
- Binary scale (yes/no)
- 65 participants (10-11 per list); age 16 – 52
Experiment 2: results

*Figure 4.* Mean responses in different experimental conditions
Experiment 2: results

- Grammatical fillers >> stimuli
  - Preposed conversational clauses >> postposed conversational clauses
- Ungrammatical fillers << stimuli
  - Preposed conversational clauses \approx postposed conversational clauses
- Explicit 1SG ind-obj >> implicit 1SG ind-obj
  - Preposed conversational clauses >> postposed conversational clauses
- Explicit 3SG ind-obj \approx implicit 3SG ind-obj
  - Preposed conversational clauses >> postposed conversational clauses
Experiments 1 and 2: discussion

• Although non-canonical control occurs in written (and oral?) texts in Russian (cf. examples from the RNC and the CoRST), it is regarded as degraded when presented to the speakers. Still, they are judged as acceptable significantly more often than sentences with other grammatical errors.

• The linear position of the converbial construction has a significantly greater impact on the ratings of acceptability than explicit/implicit coreference.
Experiments 1 and 2: question afterwards

• Is the effect of the linear position of the converbial construction preserved in corpus texts?

• Is there any diachronic change in non-canonical constructions?
Corpus study: hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1**
Non-canonical ind-obj control in preposed converbial clauses >> non-canonical ind-obj control in postposed converbial clauses

**Hypothesis 2**
Diachronic increase of sentences with non-canonical ind-obj control (XVIII, XIX and first ½ XX >> second ½ XX and XXI)
Corpus study: texts and query

- Subcorpus of modern texts 1950 – pres.
- Subcorpus of old texts XVIII, XIX and till 1950

- The structure of the corpus query was the same as in the experiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause type</th>
<th>Converbial clause</th>
<th>Main clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position of a clause</td>
<td>Preposition/postposition</td>
<td>After a comma + before a dot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of a clause</td>
<td>3-5 words</td>
<td>4-6 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of a clause</td>
<td>Converb</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parameters of clause elements</td>
<td>Imperfective, mental and perceptual semantics</td>
<td>noun, oblique case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Corpus study: sample

- 1910 sentences found and browsed
- Only 87 sentences are non-canonical (i.e. they lack NOM subject control)
- There are several classes and a range of separate cases
Corpus study: class 1

Dative subject control
69 sentences

\textit{Ej_i} \quad \textit{tak togda} \quad \textit{zakhôtelos’ za} \quad \textit{gorod}
\textit{she.DAT} \quad \textit{so then} \quad \textit{want.PST} \quad \textit{PREP} \quad \textit{city}

\textit{Ø_i} \quad \textit{gljadja} \quad \textit{na} \quad \textit{derev’ja.}
\textit{PRO} \quad \textit{look.CONV} \quad \textit{PREP} \quad \textit{trees}

‘She wanted to go to the countryside while she was looking at the trees.’ (RNC, 1960-1963)
Corpus study: class 2

{Dative/Genitive} indirect object control
6 sentences

*Serdtse krov’ju obliilos’ u menja, Ø_i slušaja rasskaz Lidy.*
heart blood cover.PST PREP I.GEN PRO listen.CONV story Lida
‘My heart was covered with blood, when I was listening to Lida’s story.’ (RNC, 1855)

*Ø_i sprygnuv s poezda, u Vronskogo_i pojavilos’ v glazakh udivlenie.*
PRO jump.off.CONV from train PREP Vronskij appear.PST in eyes astonishment
‘Having jumped off the train, Vronskij was astonished.’ (RNC, 2005)

*Ø_i ogljadyvajas’ nazad v nastojaščee vremja, mne_i vsjo eto kažetsja strannym.*
PRO surprise.CONV back in present time I.DAT all this seem.PRS strange
‘Looking back at the present time, it seems strange to me.’ (RNC, 1891)
Corpus study: ellipsis

Implicit indirect object
78 sentences (out of 87)

Ø_i ogljadyvajas’ nazad v nastojaščee vremja, <mne_i> vsjo eto kažetsja strannym.

PRO surprise.CONV back in present time I.DAT all this seem.PRS strange
‘Looking back at the present time, it seems strange to me.’ (RNC, 1891)

Ø_i gljadja na eto lukavstvo, <u menja_i> net na serdtse obidy.

PRO look.CONV at this slyness, PREP I.GEN no on heart offence
‘Looking at this slyness, I don’t have offence in my heart.’ (RNC, 1987)
Corpus study: possessive

Serdtse *mojo* sžimalos’, Ø”, smotrja na ego stradanie.
heart my clench.PST PRO look.CONV at his suffering
‘My heart was clenching when I saw his suffering.’ (RNC, 1830)

Cf. Estonian (Plado 2015: 331)

Lahkudes on aga Rehe väärtus väga kõrge,
leave.CONV be.3SG but Rehe.GEN value very high
[sest maksuameti juht teab tõesti väga palju.]
‘At the moment of leaving, Rehe’s value was really high, [because the chief of
the Tax Board really knows a lot].’
Corpus study: no control

Despite at all precautions whole fields wipe out by frost.

‘Despite all precautions, fields are wiped out by frost.’ (RNC, 1831)

Compare with the CoRST example (discussed earlier)

‘When I woke up in the morning, the sun was shining brighter than usual.’ (CoRST)
Corpus study: results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-canonical control</th>
<th>Canonical control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposed</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>converbial clause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postposed</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>converbial clause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 1 was confirmed** ($p<0.001$)
Non-canonical ind-obj control in preposed converbial clauses $>>$ non-canonical ind-obj control in postposed converbial clauses
Corpus study: results (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-canonical control</th>
<th>Canonical control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>till 1950</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 – pres.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2 was confirmed ($p<0.05$)

Diachronic increase of sentences with non-canonical ind-obj control
(XVIII, XIX and first ½ XX >> second ½ XX and XXI)
Corpus study: 1SG vs. other NPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Till 1950</th>
<th>1950 – pres.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposed converbial clause</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postposed converbial clause</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although no statistic test is applicable here due to a small set of data, we still can see that $u+1SG > u+NP$. 
Corpus study: discussion

• Non-canonical control rarely occurs in written corpus texts of the selected time intervals (XVIII – pres.)
• The corpus study confirmed the findings of the two experimental studies
• Two types of non-canonical control: Dative subject control and indirect object control
• Diachronic increase of non-canonical indirect object control
General discussion

• Studying non-canonical realizations of constructions helps a lot in determining the ways and stages of language change.
• The results supported the claim by V. Xrakovskij that the parts of the taxis pair are conditionally related to each other: mental converbs express a condition of some event in the main clause, therefore, they should be located before the main clause. Converbial clauses are moved in the sentence more freely if they become parenthetical expressions (thanks to Olga Bikkulova for this observation).
Future work

• Within one language
  • Experimental test for stimuli with other types of canonical and non-canonical control in Russian
  • Verbal semantics (so far only mental)

Among languages

• There is an assumption that cross-linguistically non-subject control is something special (see Haspelmath 1995); however, many questions are to be answered, e.g.:
  • to what extent is it special?
  • is there any qualitative and/or quantitative variation in types of non-subject control?
References


Corpus of non-standard written texts – http://web-corpora.net/learner_corpus/)