

Control violation in Russian converbs

Syntax of the World's Languages 8, Paris, 03-05.09.2018

Evgenii Glazunov, Svetlana Puzhaeva, Natalia Slioussar, Natalia Zevakhina
National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow

The study was supported by the grant #16-18-02071 from the Russian Science Foundation

Subject control violation cross-linguistically

“Universally, the unmarked case is for the implicit subject of a converb construction to be referentially controlled by the subject of the superordinate clause (subject control). Some languages have converbs which explicitly 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 converbial 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., Vâlčkova 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):

Standard usages of converbial clauses

(Russian Grammar 1980)

(Nominative)
subject control

- Canonical control: type 1

Control of PRO in the converbial clause by the Nominative subject in the main clause

\emptyset_i	<i>okončiv</i>		<i>Akademiju</i>		<i>khudožestv,</i>	
PRO	graduate.from.CONV		academy.ACC		arts.GEN	
<i>Serov_i</i>	<i>byl polon</i>	<i>želanija</i>	<i>pisat'</i>	<i>tol'ko</i>	<i>otradnoe.</i>	
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 converbial clauses

(Russian Grammar 1980)

(Null)
subject control

- Canonical control: type 2

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

\emptyset_i	<i>nužno</i>	<i>bylo</i>	<i>vosstanovi't</i>	<i>stantsiju,</i>
SUBJ	necessary	was	reconstruct.INF	station.ACC
\emptyset_i	<i>ne prekraščaja</i>	<i>naučnykh</i>	<i>issledovanij.</i>	
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, nado dat' emu poležat'.

prepare:PFV.CONV dough one.must give to.it lie

‘Having prepared the dough, it is necessary to leave it lying for some time.’

(Null) subject control

Õpiti *kõige enam* *just* *tavatutes* *olukordades*
study.PST.IMPRS most much.COMP unusual.PL.INE situation.PL.INE
ja *tavatuid* *meetodeid* *kasutades.*
and unusual.PL.PRT method.PL.PRT use.CONV
‘Studying was mostly done in unusual circumstances and using unusual methods.’

Non-standard constructions

(Russian Grammar 1980)

(Dative/Accusative)
subject control

- Non-canonical control

Control of PRO in the converbial clause by the Dative or Accusative subject in the main (impersonal) clause

\emptyset_i	<i>vypolnjaja</i>	<i>eto</i>	<i>poručenie,</i>
PRO	perform.CONV	this.ACC	mission.ACC
<i>emu_i</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>khotelos'</i>	<i>oglaski.</i>
he.DAT	NEG	wanted.IMPERS	publicity.GEN

‘Performing this mission, he did not want any publicity.’ (RG 1980)

Non-standard constructions

(Russian Grammar 1980)

(“Passive”
subject control

- Non-canonical control

Control of PRO in the converbial clause by the Nominative subject in the main (passive) clause

\emptyset_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 scream-
ing [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
retsepti 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.’

see Chupasheva (2010),
Glovinskaya (2000), Yokoyama
(1983)

Non-standard constructions (not mentioned in Russian Grammar 1980)

Ungrammatical?

\emptyset_i	<i>pod"ezžaya</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>siej</i>	<i>stantsii</i>	
PRO	approach.CONV	to	this	station.DAT	
<i>i</i>	<i>gljadja</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>prirodu</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>okno,</i>
and	look.CONV	at	nature.ACC	into	window.ACC
<i>u</i>	<i>menja_i</i>	<i>sletela</i>	<i>šljapa.</i>		
PREP I.GEN	flow.off.PST	hat.NOM			

(Genitive)
indirect object
control

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

More different examples...

(Corpus of Russian student texts)

- No control

\emptyset_i	<i>prosypajas'</i>	<i>utrom,</i>	
PRO	wake.up.CONV	in.the.morning	
<i>solntse_j</i>	<i>svetit</i>	<i>jarče</i>	<i>obyčnogo.</i>
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

\emptyset_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*

lestavarusid 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 *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

Converbial clause

\emptyset_i *glyadya* *na* *etu* *kartinu*,
PRO look.CONV at this.ACC picture.ACC

1SG GEN ind-obj

u *menya_i* *voznikli* *strannye* *assotsiatsii*.
PREP me.GEN appear.PST strange.NOM associations.NOM

‘Looking at this picture, I had strange associations.’

Experiments 1 and 2: stimuli

Hyp1:
Explicit>>Implicit

- Preposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

∅_i gljadja na etu kartinu, u menja_i vznikli strannye assotsiatsii.

- Preposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

∅_i gljadja na etu kartinu, vznikli strannye assotsiatsii.

- Postposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

U menja_i vznikli strannye assotsiatsii, ∅_i gljadja na etu kartinu.

- Postposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

Vznikli strannye assotsiatsii, ∅_i gljadja na etu kartinu.

‘Looking at this picture, I had strange associations.’

Hyp2:
Preposition>>Postposition

Experiments 1 and 2: stimuli

Converbial clause in experiments 1 and 2

- Imperfective converbs derived from mental verbs (Babenco 1999): testing for frequencies in (Lyashevskaya, 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 converbial 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

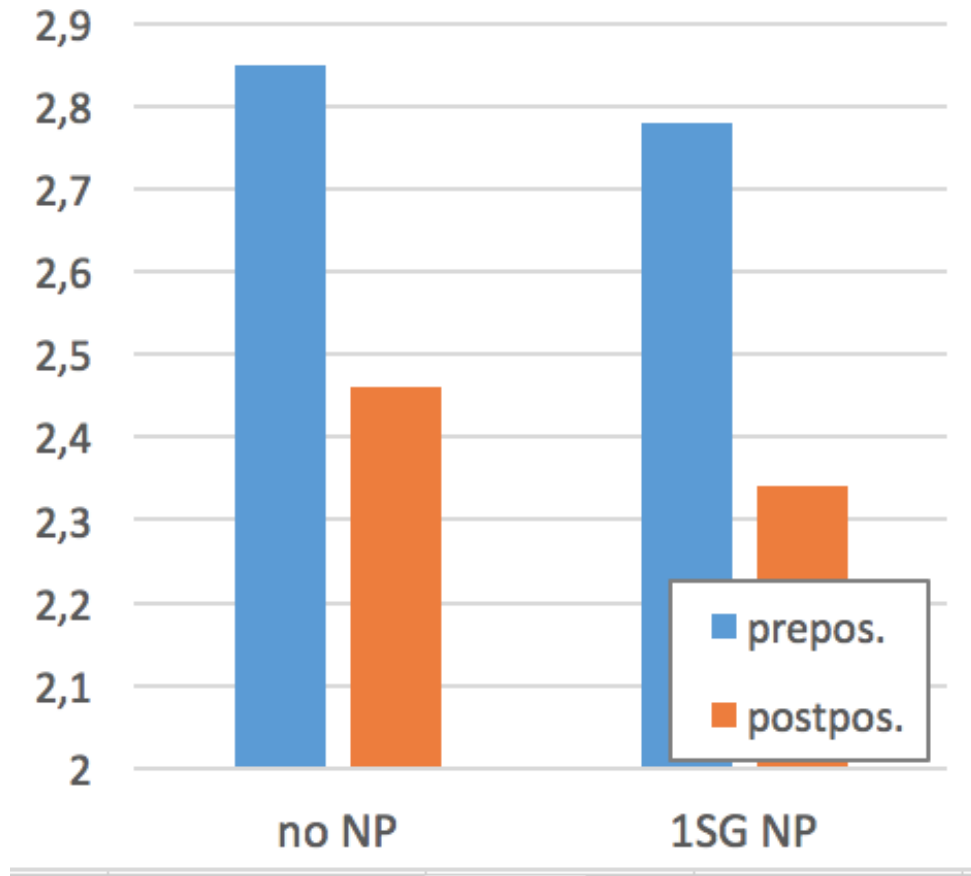


Figure 1. Participants' responses to all stimuli: the distribution of mean values

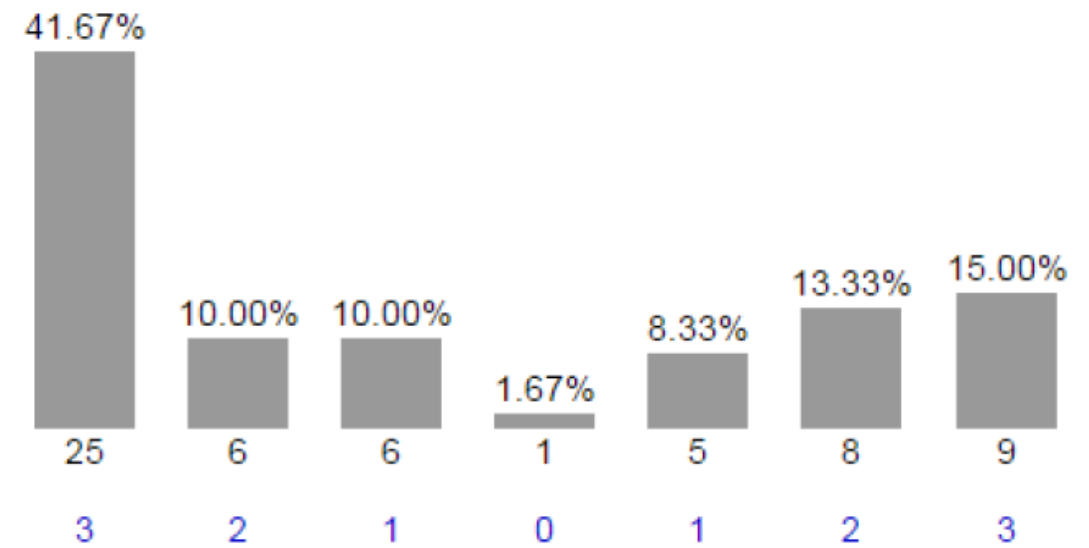


Figure 2. Participants' responses for one stimulus sentence

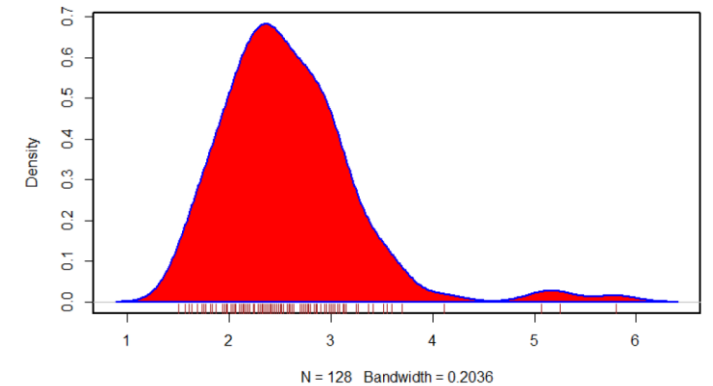


Figure 3. Mean responses in different experimental conditions

Experiment 1: results

1/2>>3>>4

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

Ø_i gljadja na etu kartinu, u menja_i vznikli strannye assotsiatsii.

2. Preposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

Ø_i gljadja na etu kartinu, vznikli strannye assotsiatsii.

3. Postposition + explicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

U menja_i vznikli strannye assotsiatsii, Ø_i gljadja na etu kartinu.

4. Postposition + implicit 1SG GEN ind-obj

Vznikli strannye assotsiatsii, Ø_i 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

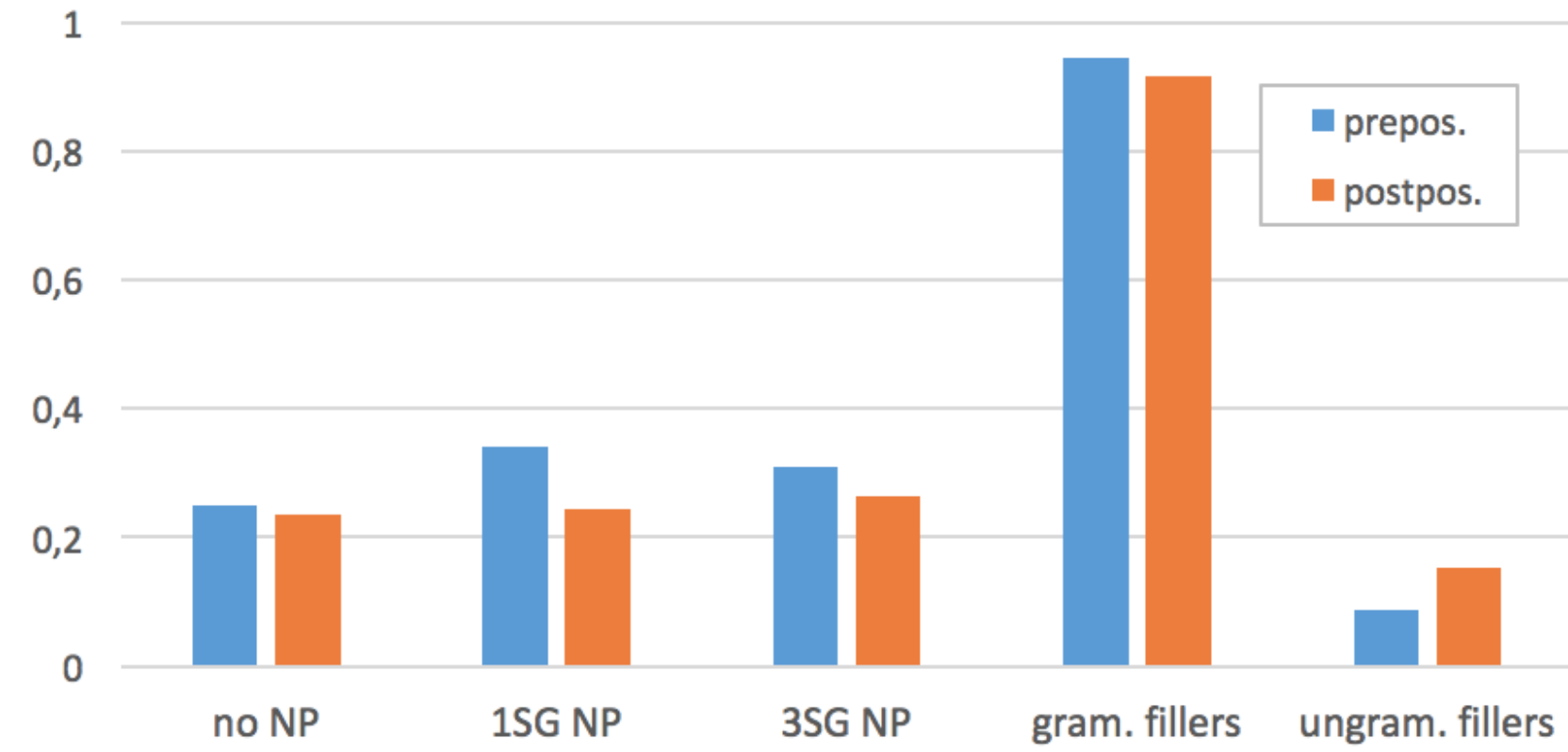


Figure 4. Mean responses in different experimental conditions

Experiment 2: results

- Grammatical fillers >> stimuli
 - Preposed converbial clauses >> postposed converbial clauses
- Ungrammatical fillers << stimuli
 - Preposed converbial clauses \approx postposed converbial clauses
- Explicit 1SG ind-obj >> implicit 1SG ind-obj
 - Preposed converbial clauses >> postposed converbial clauses
- Explicit 3SG ind-obj \approx implicit 3SG ind-obj
 - Preposed converbial clauses >> postposed converbial 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 1/2 XX >> second 1/2 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

Clause type	Converbial clause		Main clause
Position of a clause	Preposition/postposition		After a comma + before a dot
Length of a clause	3-5 words		4-6 words
Elements of a clause	Converb	object	
Parameters of clause elements	Imperfective, mental and perceptual semantics	noun, oblique case	

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

E_i *tak togda* *zaxotelos' za* *gorod*
she.DAT so then want.PST PREP city

∅_i *gljadja* *na* *derev'ja.*
PRO look.CONV PREP 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

Serditse krov'ju oblilos' 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, 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)

∅_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)

∅_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

*Serditse **mojo**_i sžimalos', \emptyset _i 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

\emptyset_i *ne_vziraja na vse predostorožnosti, tselye polja_j istrebljajutsja morozom_k.*

PRO despite at all precautions whole fields wipe.out.PRS frost

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

Compare with the CoRST example (discussed earlier)

\emptyset_i *prosypajas' utrom,*

PRO wake.up.CONV in.the.morning

solntse_j svetit jarče obyčnogo.

sun.NOM shine.PRS brighter than.usual

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

Corpus study: results

	Non-canonical control	Canonical control
Preposed converbial clause	38	383
Postposed converbial clause	49	1440

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)

	Non-canonical control	Canonical control
till 1950	12	465
1950 – pres.	75	1358

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

	Till 1950		1950 – pres.	
	<i>u</i> +1SG	<i>u</i> +NP	<i>u</i> +1SG	<i>u</i> +NP
Preposed converbial clause	3	4	3	1
Postposed converbial clause	4	0	1	5

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

Babenko, Ljudmila. 1999. *Ob'yasnitel'nyj slovar' russkix glagolov* [Explanatory Dictionary of Russian verbs]. Moscow.

Glovinskaya, Marina. 1996. Prohibited converbial constructions. In *Russian of the end of XXth century* [Russkiy yazyk kontsa XX stoletiya]. Moscow: Yazyki russkoy kul'tury.

Lyashevskaya, Olga, Sergey Sharov. 2009. *The new frequency dictionary of Russian lexemes*. URL: <http://dict.ruslang.ru/freq.php>

Yokoyama, Olga. 1983. Advocating prohibited converbs. In *American contributions to the IXth International congress of slavists*. Vol. 1, 373–381. Los Angeles.

Itskoich, Viktor. 1982. *Ocherki sintaksicheskoy normy* [Studies on syntactic norm]. Moscow.

Russkaya grammatika [Russian grammar]. 1980. Shvedova, Natalia (ed.).

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