Non-standard use of participles in Russian: a corpus study

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Non-standard use of grammatical phenomena as a field of linguistic research

This field unifies several *methodologically and theoretically distinct* areas:

- first language acquisition (Ceitlin 2000; a.o.)
- second language acquisition and heritage language (Ellis 2003; Polinsky, Rakhilina and Vyrenkova 2014; Polinsky 2018; a.o.)
- adult native speakers’ written and oral discourse (Kukushkina 1998; Rusakova 2013; a.o.)
Non-standard phenomena as evidence for microvariation

The paper takes into consideration only regular non-standard phenomena viewed as evidence for microvariation within the contemporary Russian language (Apresjan 1990; Kukushkina 1998; Rusakova 2013)
Our study: materials and goals

Materials: Russian non-standard participles in written (official and scientific) discourse of adult native speakers

Goals:

• to **determine** strategies that speakers are guided by when they use non-standard phenomena

• to **classify** the materials according to such strategies

• to **reveal** principles underlying the strategies
Why participles?

Participles represent a grammatical phenomenon difficult to be produced even for adult native speakers due to their:

• Old Church Slavonic origin (Borkovsky and Kuznetsov 1981)

• use in written (not oral) mode of discourse

• typical of bookish (not colloquial) style

• non-finite morphosyntax: non-finite clauses are viewed as “wrapped” and denote separate events (Say 2011, Letuchiy 2011)
Our study: methods

• The study was conducted on the basis of the Russian National Corpus (RNC), the Corpus of Russian Student Texts (CoRST), the search system Yandex, electronic mass media texts, email authors’ correspondence (all in all, 71 discourses).

• Additionally, the participles were evaluated by 21 native speakers who do professional applied work with written Russian language (philologists, translators, editors, journalists) on a 3-point scale ranging from “1” (nobody can say so/I cannot say so) to “3” (one can say so/I can say so). The results of the survey showed that no sentences were judged as standard.
4 types of non-standard participles in Russian written texts

- Excessive anaphora
- Explicit presupposition
- Violation of information structure
- Excessive quantifier semantics
Participial clauses as relative clauses

• Additionally, according to Say (2011), attributive (= within noun phrases) participial clauses are classified as relative clauses and divided into two mutually exclusive types: restrictive and appositive.

• According to our data, there is one more type that is used non-standardly and that is neither restrictive not appositive.
Excessive anaphora

In modern world, mass media play a very important role, being a main source of information about what is going on in the world and around us. This significance has been growing as well as a number of consumers of the provided information.

(CoRST)
Excessive anaphora

• Excessive anaphora exhibits participles which **anaphorically refer** to some clause in the previous discourse.

• The restrictiveness/appositeness is **not applicable** to this variety.

• A plausible explanation for using this strategy is the speaker’s tendency to **make a discourse coherent**.

• One way to make this redundant strategy a standard restrictive participial clause is to add arguments/adjuncts to the participle.

<...> **predostavljamoj mediasferoj informatsii** <...>

‘the information **provided by media** (adjunct)’.
If a person puts a dot in a message that is being sent, it is likely that he is angry at his interlocutor. (CoRST)
Explicit presupposition

• Explicit presupposition introduces an **appositive** participle which makes some presupposition redundant in the utterance.

• Not only the presupposition of existence of the message, but also the presupposition of sending it are **accommodated in the local context**, i.e. in the embedded clause of the conditional (for accommodation see Heim 1983).

• One way to make the sentence standard is to convert it into a finite clause:

  Esli čelovek **otpravljaet** soobščenie…

  ‘If a person **sends** (finite form) a message’.
Within a few last years, we observe a growing interest to the question of whether to use dangerous chemical substances in electronic products.

(CoRST)
Violation of information structure

- Violation of information structure suggests that participles are **appositive** and convey **new or accessible information** (cf. Chafe 1976).

- This type of information is typically expressed by finite verbal forms in a **focused** position of a clause.
Violation of information structure

- One way to make the sentence standard is to delete the redundant participle:

Poslednie neskolk’ko let my nabljudаем rastuščij interes k voprosu
last several years we observe growing interest to question

ispol’zovaniya opasnyh khimičeskikh veščestv v produktakh elektroniki.
of.using dangerous chemical substances in products of. electronics

‘Within a few last years, we observe a growing interest to the question of whether to use dangerous chemical substances in electronic products.’
(CoRST)
Excessive quantifier semantics

V učreždenijakh kul’tury postojanno vedjotsja razvitie

in institutes of culture permanently is realised development

suščestvujuščikh sistem bezopasnosti ob’ektov <…>.

of existing systems of safety of objects

‘In the culture institutions, there is a permanent development of existing systems of safety.’ (RNC)
Excessive quantifier semantics

- Excessive quantifier semantics includes both **restrictive and appositive** participles which function similarly to quantifiers.

- E.g., participles derived from **verbs of existential semantics** such as *suščestvovat’* or *imet’sja* ‘exist’.
Excessive quantifier semantics

• One way to make the sentence standard is to delete the redundant participle:

V učreždenijakh kul’tury postojanno vedjotsja razvitie
in institutes of.culture permanently is.realised development
suščestvujuščikh sistem bezopasnosti ob”ektov <…>.
of.existing systems of.safety of.objects

‘In the culture institutions, there is a permanent development of existing systems of safety.’ (RNC)
Reason underlying all the strategies of redundant use of participles

- **Interference** of *written* bookish and *oral* colloquial Russian speech.

- This interference has **pragmatic roots**: the authors of the presented discourses seem to follow both types of principles, resulting in redundant use of participles.
Relevant principles for using written bookish Russian speech

- **packaging** information into “wrapped” structures
- use of nominalizations and **non-finite** verbal forms (participles, converbs)
- **coherence** of written mode of discourse
- **consistency** of written mode of discourse
Relevant strategies for using oral colloquial Russian speech

• oral discourse is given in **portions** and tends to be packaged in **finite** verbal forms

• reference to the extra-linguistic **current** state of affairs

• **conciseness** of oral colloquial speech

• **brevity** of oral colloquial speech
Relevant strategies for using oral colloquial Russian speech

- excessive explicitness of discourse relations and discourse references
- reiterations in oral colloquial speech (especially naming/description)
- use of collocations and clichés (cf. Zemskaya et al. 1981; Kibrik and Podlesskaya 2006; a.o.)
Collocations and clichés

• We argue that collocations and clichés are a key source of non-standard use of participles.

• Noun phrases with participial clauses include a modified collocation of a verbal phrase.

• …*predostavljaemoj* informatsii… ‘provided information’
  (VP collocation = *predostavit’ vozmožnost* ‘provide information’)
• …*rastuščij interes*… ‘growing interest’
  (VP collocation = *interes rastjot* ‘the interest grows’)

Conclusion

• Non-standard use of grammatical phenomena reflect microvariations within a language.

• We argue for four types of non-standard use of participles in Russian.

• The main source of non-standard use of participles is interference of written bookish and oral colloquial speech, which combines various strategies of producing these types of discourse.

Thank you!
Bibliography


Bibliography


