Narrative inversion, topicality and referentiality in Russian

1. INTRODUCTION

N(arrative) V1 (IC-6 in Bryzgunova 1977 terms according to Yanko 2001):

> (1) Posadil   ded   repku
>
> plant.pfv.pst   old.man turnip
>
> 'An old man planted a turnip'
>
>   the beginning of a well-known fairy tale

Marks the beginning of a short narrative like an anecdote or a fairy tale.

≠ verb focalization (IC-2)

> (2) POLUČITE$_{FOC}$ vy svoju   frakciju v dume
>
> get.FUT   you REFL.POSS   fraction.ACC in duma.LOC
>
> 'You **will** get your fraction in the parliament'
>
> <a to kak starejuš'ij P. krasovat'sa budet na fone molodyx kandidatov?>
>
> <or how else getting old P. will look nice compared to the young candidates?'>
>
>   (taiga corpus)

≠ verb topicalization (IC-3)

> (3) <talking about the second phase of some political project>
>
> Startujet$_{TOP}$ vtoroj   etap   pervogo   ijula
>
> starts.PRS second stage.NOM   first.GENjuly.GEN
>
> 'The second stage starts the second of July.'

A(dverbial) preposing (NAdvV clauses):

Certain adverbials denoting specific indefinite times and places like *odnaždy* ('once'), *v odnom gorode* 'in a (certain) city' etc.

> (4) *Kak-to-raz   povstrečali   oni   v   lesu   Mal'čika-s-Pal'čika*
>
> Once   meet.pfv.pst   they   in   forest Tom.Thumb
>
> 'Once they met Tom Thumb in a forest.'

Embedding constraint: NV1 clauses cannot be embedded, while NAdvV can

(5) *Devočki rasskazyvaly čto* ***(kak-to-raz) povstrečali oni v lesu Mal'čika-s-Pal'čika**

Girls   tell.ipfv.pst   that   once   meet.pfv.pst they in   forest Tom.Thumb

Girls used to tell that once they met Tom Thumb in a forest'.

2. PREVIOUS ACCOUNTS

Common claim: NV1 are thetic (Miller 1995, King 1995, Yanko 2001: topicless; Dyakonova 2009: all-focus)

King 1995:

- VSO as a basic word order (verb moves to T°, subject remains in situ)
- SVO <= subject topicalization
- theticity is derived syntactically
- no explanation for embedding constraint

Erechko 2002 (a brief footnote):

- NV1 as to-Force° movement
- explains embedding constraint
- no explanation for special semantics
- Adverbial preposing is excluded

Rakhman 2019:

- to-C[+uTop]° head movement
  - (unlike verb topicalization which is a phrasal (remnant) movement – see e.g. Slioussar 2007, Harizanov&Gribanova 2018)
- feature-driven mechanics derives the thetic semantics, as the subject should be [-Top]
- embedding constraint is derived semantically: merging *čto* 'that' and an NV1 clause is argued to cause type mismatch.

4. THE EXPERIMENT

Two hypotheses:

- pure NV1 is ungrammatical under embedding

- NAdvV is more appropriate under embedding

Four experimental conditions:

- Matrix clause, pure NV1
- Matrix clause, NAdvV
- Embedded clause, pure NV1
- Embedded clause, NAdvV

Standard Latin square design, 4 experimental lists, 3 stimuli for each experimental condition

43 participants assessing the grammaticality of each sentence from 1 (totally ungrammatical) to 7 (perfectly natural)

Matrix NV1	Matrix NAdvV	Embedded NV1	Embedded NAdvV
4,33	4,19	3,06	3,52

Given multiple side factors possibly increasing the acceptance rate of Embedded conditions, we conclude the results to conform the hypotheses.

5. ADVERBS

No adverbs besides preposable adverbials (see above) can be used in NV1.

(6a) Pročital   odin   student   (*polnos'tju)   sintaksičeskie struktury

read.pfv.pst   one   student   (*completely)   syntactic   structures

(6b) Odin   student   ᵒᵏpolnos'tju   pročital   sintaksičeskie struktury

One   student   completely   read.pfv.pst   syntactic   structures

'A student has read the "Syntactic Structures" completely.'

(7a) Vyučil   odin   professor   (*ideal'no)   latyn'

learn.pfv.pst one   professor   perfectly   Latin

(7b) ᵒᵏOdin   professor   ideal'no   vyučil   latyn'

one   professor   perfectly   learn.pfv.pst Latin

'A professor has learned Latin perfectly'

Our proposal:

- Generally, only surface scope readings are available in Russian (Ionin 2003, Ionin & Luchkina 2015)
- If the verb moves to the CP area, it moves out of adverbs' scope => the sentence is ungrammatical

- The same holds for other operations, moving the verb in CP area[1]:

(8a) [Objasnil matematiku]$_{TOP}$ Vas'a (*polnos'tju) (*bystro) (*xorošo) Pet'e

explain.pfv.pst maths V. (*completely) (*quickly) (*well) to.P.

[Explaining maths]$_{TOP}$ is what Vasya has done to Petya$_{FOC}$.

(8b) [OBJASNIL]$_{FOC}$ Vas'a (*polnos'tju) (*bystro) (*xorošo) Pet'e matematiku

explain.pfv.pst V. (*completely) (*quickly) (*well) to.P. maths

Vasya DID$_{FOC}$ explain maths to Petya.

A problem:

The NV1 movement must be visible for LF (contra Rakhman 2019)

we will come to the solution later

6. TENSE AND ASPECT: EVENT SEMANTICS

Tense: past and historical present

(9) *Pokupajet kovboj novuju lošad'.*

buy.prs cowboy new horse

A cowboy is buying a new horse.

(10=1) Posadil ded repku

plant.pfv.pst old.man turnip

'An old man planted a turnip'

Aspect: only stage-level predicates can form NV1 clauses.

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[1] Adverbs can be used in these constructions if they bear a narrow focus:
(i) [Objasnil matematiku]$_{TOP}$ Vas'a Pet'e (POLNOS'TJU / BYSTRO / XOROŠO)$_{FOC}$
explain.pfv.pst maths V. to.P. (completely / quickly / well)
'Talking about explaining maths, Vas'a did it to Pet'a completely/quickly/wellFOC.'
We assume that such an effect is caused by some special traits of right-dislocated narrow foci in Russian and will not discuss them in this paper.

(11) **Boitsa   mal'čik   myšej*

fear.prs   boy   of.mice

'A boy fears mice.'

(12) [ok]*Sidit   vorona na   dereve*

sit.PRS   crow   on   tree

'A crow is sitting on a tree'

Ladusaw 1994, Jager 2001: thetic clauses must be formed by SLPs

  - Recall that NV1 clauses are mostly considered to be thetic

Jager 2001: thetic clauses topicalize their event argument. A "bridging relation" is required. A typical bridging relation is local nearness => ILPs and habitual readings of SLPs cannot be linked with the discourse.

  (i) *John has a cottage. The roof$_{TOP}$ is made from straw.*

                               (Jager 2001)

  (ii) *I arrived about six. A bell rang and dogs barked.*

                               (Jager 2001)

  - Recall that the analysis employed in (Rakhman 2019) requires the verb to be [+Top]

- In many cases an introductory term like *slučaj* 'case, event', *anekdot* 'anecdote' in the previous context is required. We suppose that bridging relations of NV1 event topics are somehow more restricted and require such a designated target.

  (13a) <A Police officer shows a barman a photo>

  P: Vy   videli   etogo   čeloveka?

  you   saw   this   person

  'Have you ever seen this person?'

  B: Konečno.

  'Sure.'

  B: *(Byl smešnoj slučaj): Zakazyvaet   on   des'at' litrov   piva.

  was   funny   story   order.PRS   he.NOM ten   liters.GEN beer.GEN

  'There was a funny story: he orders ten litres of beer...'

A problem:

Preposable adverbials (even being used postverbally!) make an introductory term unnecessary.

  (13b) <the same previous context as in (13a)

  B: ᵒᵏzakazyvaet   *on*   odnaždy   des'at' litrov   piva.

  order.PRS   he.NOM once   ten   liters.GEN   beer.GEN

  'Once he orders ten liters of beer...'

A suggestion:

Preposable adverbials provide a bridging relation by themselves

The event argument topicalization approach can explain the **impossibility of negation**, as negation makes the event argument non-specific => it cannot be topicalized (see e.g. Reinhart 1981).

  (14) *Ne   prixodit   Vovočka   na   jege

  neg   come.prs   V.   on   unified.state.exam

  'Vovocka doesn't come to the "unified state exam".'

  (15) ᵒᵏProgulivajet   Vovočka   jege

  skip.prs   V.   unified.state.exam

  'Vovochka is skipping "the unified state exam".'

7. Reconsidering embedding constraint

Some speakers claim that preposable adverbials make embedding licit when **present at all**, not only when they are preposed.

(61) ʔ*Devočki rasskazyvaly čto* **povstrečali oni kak-to-raz v lesu Mal'čika-s-Pal'čika**

Girls   tell.ipfv.pst   that   **meet.pfv.pst they once in**   forest Tom.Thumb

Girls used to tell that once they met Tom Thumb in a forest.

Just like in case of introductory terms!

A proposal:

- Preposable adverbials can provide bridging relations (see above)
- Subordinate contexts do not provide a bridging target by default (e.g. because an introductory term is missing)
- Preposable adverbials thus can make them grammatical

Consequences:

- LF invisibility is not required => adverbs' ungrammaticality problem solved
- This line of analysis allows for the traditional architecture of CP-domain in Russian
- NB: the movement to C-domain is still needed in order to account for adverbs' ungrammaticality

7. Referential properties of NV1 subject

Available options:

- Proper names
- Definite bare NPs and personal pronouns
- *odin*-NPs (specific known in (Haspelmath 1997) terms according to Ionin 2013)
- Indefinite bare NPs (those are of specific interest)

Geist 2010: indefinite bare NPs in Russian always get non-specific weak existential reading

Prima facie, in NV1 clauses they are specific both epistemically and scopally (contra Geist 2010):

(16) *Zaxotel professor otčislit' nekotoryx studentov.*

want.pfv.pst professor expel some languages

'A professor decided to expel some students.' ᵒᵏ∃ > some / *some > ∃

If so, they would behave like *odin*-indefinites. Now consider the following examples:

<U nas v derevne nedavno proizošel zabavnyj slučaj.>

| At | we | in | village | recently | happen.pfv.pst | funny | incident |

'A funny incident happened recently in our village.'

(17a) *Zalezla odna koza na kryšu avtobusnoj ostanovki*

| climb.prf.pst | one | goat.fem | on | roof | bus.gen stop.gen |

'A goat has climbed onto the roof of the bus stop.'

#koza 'female goat' refers to an animal

ᵒᵏkoza 'female goat' is a pejorative naming of a woman

(17b) *Zalezla koza na kryšu avtobusnoj ostanovki*

| climb.prf.pst | goat.fem | on | roof | bus.gen stop.gen |

'A goat has climbed onto the roof of the bus stop.'

ᵒᵏ*koza* 'female goat' refers to an animal

Ionin (2013) shows that [*odin* α]NP always denotes a unique entity, which can be distinguished from other entities satisfying lexical condition imposed by α on the basis of "identifying property" known to the speaker. Such a property is hardly imaginable for a goat in (), but easily accessible for any person. If the context presupposes such a property though, a literal reading is possible:

(18) Rodilas' odna koza s četyr'm'a rogami

| be.born.prf.pst | one | goat.fem | with | four | horns |

A goat was born with four horns.

ᵒᵏkoza 'female goat' refers to an animal

Bare NPs do not exhibit such a restriction.

Our proposal: indefinite bare NP subjects of NV1 receive non-specific existential reading.

- Scopal "specificity" effect arises due to the strong preference for surface scopes in Russian.
- Epistemic "specificity" effect arises due to NV1 pragmatics of a short story.
- This conforms with Geist (2010)
- Non-specific NPs cannot serve as topics => an argument in favor of thetic treatment

8. COERCION EFFECTS

4.1 TENSE-INDUCED COERCION

Less strict SLP-only constraint in past tense:

(19a) ?*l'ubil Vasilij Ivanovič krasnye sicilijskie apel'siny*

| love.ipfv.pst | V. | I. | red | sicilian | oranges |

'Wassily Ivanovich liked red Sicilian oranges'.

(19b) *l'ubit   Vasilij Ivanovič krasnye   sicilijskie   apel'siny

love.prs   V.   I.   red   sicilian   oranges

'Wassily Ivanovich likes red Sicilian oranges'.

An explanation: past tense semantics enforces coercion effect, as ILPs are no more interpreted as holding forever. Their holding interval can thus be topicalized.

A problem: habitual SLPs don't coerce

(20) Tancevala   maša   pol'ku.

dance.ipfv.pst   M.   polka

'Mary was dancing polka.'

[ok]Mary was dancing polka at the moment when something happened

*Mary was a polka dancer

An explanation:

Chierchia 1995:

(21a) *Fred smokes*[HAB]
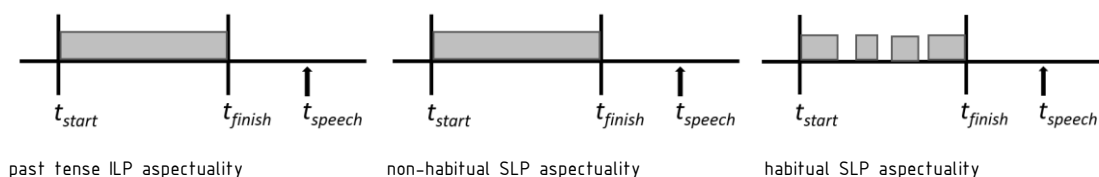
Gen s[C(f,s)] [smoke(f,s)]

(21b) *Fred is a smoker*

Gen s [in(f,s)] [smoker(f,s)]

The C set represents the set of "felicity conditions" which predict Fred to be smoking if he is smoking generally. In ILP case it is enlarged a to all situations including Fred.

=> habitual SLP hold discontinuously

Our proposal:

Past tense ILPs represent an aspectuality similar to non-habitual SLPs (and thus can be coerced), while habitual SLPs do not:

| t_{start} | t_{finish} | t_{speech} | t_{start} | t_{finish} | t_{speech} | t_{start} | t_{finish} | t_{speech} |

past tense ILP aspectuality   non-habitual SLP aspectuality   habitual SLP aspectuality

No bare indefinites effect

Past-tense-induced coercion is impossible with bare indefinite subjects:

(22)*L'ubil   professor   krasnye   sicilijskie   apel'siny

love.ipfv.pst   professor   red   Sicilian oranges

'A professor used to like red Sicilian oranges.'

Milsark 1977 (and many others): weak indefinites are incompatible with ILPs.

Diesing 1992, Kratzer 1995, Chierchia 1995: weak indefinites are rule out locally (the exact mechanism differs)

Past-tence-induced coercion is likely to be related with T°. A weak existential indefinite is already ruled out.

=> A non-specific treatment of bare indefinite subjects can explain this effect.

4.2 ODIN-INDEFINITES EFFECT ON COERCION

Odin-indefinites facilitate past-tense-induced coercion. (NB: not only subjects!)

(23a) [ok]*L'ubil   odin   professor   krasnye   sicilijskie   apel'siny.*
love.ipfv.pst   one   professor   red   sicilian   oranges
'A (certain) professor used to love red Sicilian oranges'.

(23b) [?ok]*L'ubil   Vasilij Ivanovič   odnu   aktrisu   Mariinki.*
love.ipfv.pst   V.   I.   one   actress   of.Mariinksy.theater
Wassily Ivanovich used to love a (certain) actress of Mariinsky theater.

(23c) *L'ubil   Vasilij Ivanovič   aktrisu   Mariinki.
love.ipfv.pst   V.   I.   actress   of.Mariinksy.theater
Wassily Ivanovich used to love a (certain) actress of Mariinsky theater.

A STEP ASIDE: *ODIN*-INDEFINITES PRAGMATICS

Ionin 2013:

(24) Ionin's (2013) pragmatics for *odin*:

For [odin α] ß, the speaker is able to name an identifying property $\varphi \in D_{<s,et>}$ such that $\varphi(w_c)(y)=1$ and $\forall z[[\alpha(w_c)(z)=1$ and $z \neq y] \rightarrow \varphi(wc)(z) \neq 1]$ and $\varphi \neq \alpha$ and $\varphi \neq ß$

Consider the following examples:

(25a) [ok]Vas'a byl blondinom.
V.   was   blond
Vasya was blond

(25b) *Odin mužik byl blondinom.
One   man   was   blond
A certain man was blond

(25c) [ok]Odin   arab   byl   blondinom.
One   arab   was   blond
A certain Arab was blond

Our proposal: the following condition should be added to *odin*-indefinites pragmatics:

(26) For [*odin* α] ß,

$\exists \chi \in C$ [χ(y) $\wedge$ $\forall$w'[R_{epist}(w_c, w')] $\exists \varphi \in C_{speaker}$ such that $\forall$y'[α(w')(y')] χ(w', y') $\rightarrow$ φ(w', y')

$\wedge$ $\forall$z[in(w_c)(z, s(ß)) $\wedge$ α(w_c)(z) $\wedge$ z $\neq$ y] ¬φ(w_c)(z)

$\wedge$ φ $\neq$ α $\wedge$ φ $\neq$ ß]

C refers to a set of propositions, which are true in the world of the current context w_c and known both to the speaker and to the hearer, including the proposition being asserted. $C_{speaker}$ refers to the set of propositions which are assumed to be true by the speaker. R_{epist}(w_c) denotes a set of possible worlds epistemically accessible form w_c. s(ß) refers to the situation which is denoted by the predication (roughly, the event and other events which can potentially be bridged to it in Jager's (2001) sense).

Speaking informally, the hearer must be able to imagine a specific identifying property of y relying on the context.

Our proposal:

Novel *odin*-indefinites in an isolated discourse of a short story need badly any property χ for the hearer to rely on. The semi-grammatical mechanism of past-tensed-induced coercion thus acquires a strong reason to occur.

10. CONCLUSION: CORE FINDINGS

- The experiment confirms the hypotheses: pure NV1 clauses are ungrammatical under embedding, NAdvV are much more appropriate

- Adverbs (besides preposable adverbials) are ungrammatical in NV1. This can be explained by the strong preference for surface scope in Russian.

- Preposable adverbials (even used postverbally) make the use of introductory terms unnecessary.

- Embedding constraint is reanalyzed in terms of bridging relations.

- Besides coercion cases, NV1 clauses are only compatible with SLPs. This can be explained by their thetic semantics.

- NV1 bare indefinite subjects are in fact weak existential indefinites, although at the first sight they seem to be specific.

- Past tense can make an ILP (not a habitual SLP!) able to form an NV1 construction, as it delimits the predicate temporally, making its aspectuality similar to that of non-habitual SLP.

- Odin-indefinites not only require the speaker to be able name Ionin's (2013) identifying property, but also require the speaker to be able to imagine such. The need of some noteworthy property χ facilitates the semi-grammatical process of coercion

4. Selected references

Bryzgunova 1977

Carlson 1977

Chierchia 1995

Davidson 1967

Dekany 2018

Dyakonova 2009

Erechko 2002

Geist 2010

Ionin 2003

Ionin 2013

Ionin, Luchkina 2015

Harizanov, Gribanova 2018

Haspelmath 1997

Jager 2001

King 1995

Kratzer 1995

Miller 1995

Rakhman 2019

Reinhart 1981

Slioussar 2007

Yanko 2001