

THE ROLE OF THE VERB IN RUSSIAN LINGUISTICS

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ABSTRACT: Whether or not Russian exhibits verb movement has been an issue of a long standing debate. Based on the experimental evidence from the grammaticality judgement experiment on adverb position, we show that the immediately postverbal adverb position is degraded in Russian, but is not ungrammatical as in English. Using the derivation by phase approach, we argue that the verb in Russian checks the verb feature of T through agreement, similar to English. This accounts for the high acceptability of immediately preverbal adverbs in Russian and in English. However, we propose that the word order of discourse-dependent sentences is determined through re-arrangement in a post-syntactic component of grammar. As a result, flexible word order Russian allows immediately postverbal adverbs (with degraded acceptability), while fixed word order English rules out immediately postverbal adverbs.

KEYWORDS: adverb test, word order, pragmatic component, verb movement tests, rank-ordering model

Russian grammar employs an Indo-European inflexional structure, with considerable adaptation. Russian has a highly inflectional morphology, particularly in nominals (nouns, pronouns, adjectives and numerals). Russian literary syntax is a combination of a Church Slavonic heritage, a variety of loaned and adopted constructs, and a standardized vernacular foundation.

The spoken language has been influenced by the literary one, with some additional characteristic forms. Russian dialects show various non-standard grammatical features, some of which are archaisms or descendants of old forms discarded by the literary language.

Notes: In the discussion below, various terms are used in the meaning they have in standard Russian discussions of historical grammar. In particular, aorist, imperfect, etc., are considered verbal tenses rather than aspects, because ancient examples of them are attested for both perfective and imperfective verbs. Also, in the tables, the accusative case appears between the nominative and genitive cases. Russian practice places the accusative between the dative and the instrumental.

Nominal declension involves six cases -nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, and prepositional – in two numbers (singular and plural), and absolutely obeying grammatical gender (masculine, feminine, and neuter). Up to ten additional cases are identified in linguistics textbooks,^{[1][2][3]} although all of them are either incomplete (do not apply to all nouns) or degenerate (appear identical to one of the six main cases) – the most recognized additional cases are locative, partitive and vocative. Old Russian also had a third number, the dual, but it has been lost except for its use in the nominative and accusative cases with the numbers two, three, and four (e.g. два стула "two chairs"), where it is now reanalyzed as genitive singular.

More often than in many other Indo-European languages, Russian noun cases may supplant the use of prepositions entirely.^[4] Furthermore, every preposition is exclusively used with a particular case (or cases). Their usage can be summarised as:^[5]

- nominative (именительный):
 - ✓ main subject;
 - ✓ default case to use outside sentences (dictionary entries, signs, etc.);
 - ✓ prepositions: за '(what) kind of?'; в: 'join the ranks of' (with pl. noun only);
- accusative (винительный):
 - ✓ direct object;
 - ✓ some time expressions;

- ✓ prepositions indicating motion: в 'into, in(ward)', на 'onto (the top of)', за 'behind, after', под 'under';
- ✓ other prepositions: про 'about', через 'over', сквозь 'through';
- genitive (родительный):
 - ✓ possession – 'of' (genitive noun);
 - ✓ numerals and quantifiers;
 - ✓ negated verbs (which take direct objects in Accusative) to indicate total absence;
 - ✓ some time expressions;
 - ✓ prepositions: без 'without', вместо 'instead of', возле 'near', вокруг 'around', впереди 'ahead of', для 'for', до 'before', из 'from', из-за 'because of, from behind', от 'from', кроме 'except for', мимо 'past by', около 'near', после 'after', против 'against, opposite', среди 'among', у 'by', близ 'near', вдоль 'along', вне 'out of, outside', внутри 'inside';
 - ✓ verbs: бояться 'afraid of', достигать 'reach', избегать 'avoid';
 - ✓ adjectives: полный 'full of' (genitive noun);
- dative (дательный):
 - ✓ indirect object – 'to' (dative noun);
 - ✓ some time expressions;
 - ✓ impersonal clauses: мне холодно – 'I am cold', lit. "to_me (is) cold";
 - ✓ age statements: мне двадцать лет – 'I am 20 (years old)', lit. 'to_me (is) 20 years';
 - ✓ prepositions: по 'on', к 'to(wards)', благодаря 'thanks to';
 - ✓ auxiliaries: нужно *or* надо 'need/must (to)', можно 'allowed', нельзя 'forbidden';
 - ✓ verbs: верить 'believe', помочь 'help', советовать 'advise', звонить 'call', удивить(ся) 'amaze (self)';
- instrumental (творительный):
 - ✓ instrument used in the action or means by which action is carried out – 'by' (I. noun);
 - ✓ logical subject of passive clause: письмо написано Иваном – 'the letter was written by Ivan';
 - ✓ secondary direct object: его считают студентом – 'he is considered (to be) a student';
 - ✓ durational time expressions;
 - ✓ verbs: интересоваться 'interest (to be interested in)', пользоваться 'use', занимать(ся) 'occupy (to be preoccupied with)';
 - ✓ associates of connective verbs: быть 'be', стать 'became', остаться 'remain', казаться 'appear to be', оказаться 'turn out to be';
 - ✓ prepositions of position: за 'behind', перед 'in front of', над 'above', под 'below', между 'between', (вместе) с '(together) with';
 - ✓ adjective: довольный 'pleased by';
- prepositional (предложный):
 - ✓ prepositions of place: в 'inside', на 'on (top of)';
 - ✓ other prepositions: о 'about', при 'by/of/with';

Definite and indefinite articles (corresponding to *the, a, an* in English) do not exist in the Russian language. The sense conveyed by such articles can be determined in Russian by context. However, Russian also utilizes other means of expressing whether a noun is definite or indefinite:

- The use of a direct object in the genitive instead of the accusative in negation signifies that the noun is indefinite, compare: Я не вижу книги ("I don't see a book" or "I don't see any books") and Я не вижу книгу ("I don't see the book").

- The same goes for certain verbs expressing a desire to achieve something: wait, wish, ask, want, etc. When the inanimate object is definite (certain, or at least expected), the accusative is used; when it is indefinite (uncertain), the genitive is used. Compare: Я жду автобус ("I'm waiting for the bus", a specific, scheduled bus) and Я жду автобуса ("I'm waiting for a bus", any bus, if one will come).^[6]
- The use of the numeral one sometimes signifies that the noun is indefinite, e.g.: Почему ты так долго? – Да так, встретил одного друга, пришлось поговорить ("Why did it take you so long?" – "Well, I met one [=a] friend and had to talk").
- Word order may also be used for this purpose; compare В комнату вбежал мальчик ("Into the room rushed a boy") and Мальчик вбежал в комнату ("The boy rushed into the room").
- The plural form may signify indefiniteness: Вы можете купить это в магазинах ("You can buy this in shops") vs. Вы можете купить это в магазине ("You can buy this in the shop").
- The category of animacy is relevant in Russian nominal and adjectival declension.^[7] Specifically, the accusative has two possible forms in many paradigms, depending on the animacy of the referent. For animate referents (persons and animals), the accusative form is generally identical to the genitive form. For inanimate referents, the accusative form is identical to the nominative form. This principle is relevant for masculine singular nouns of the second declension (see below) and adjectives, and for all plural paradigms (with no gender distinction). In the tables below, this behavior is indicated by the abbreviation *N or G* in the row corresponding to the accusative case.
- Russian uses three declensions:^[8]
- The *first declension* is used for feminine nouns ending with -а/-я and some masculine nouns having the same form as those of feminine gender, such as папа papa or дядя uncle; also, common-gender nouns like задíра tease are masculine or feminine depending on the person to which they refer.
- The *second declension* is used for most masculine and neuter nouns.
- The *third declension* is used for feminine nouns ending in ь.

A group of irregular "different-declension nouns" (Russian: разносклоняемые существительные), consists of a few neuter nouns ending in -мя (e.g. время "time") and one masculine noun путь "way". However, these nouns and their forms have sufficient similarity with feminine third declension nouns that scholars such as Litnevskaya^[9] consider them to be non-feminine forms of this declension.

Conclusion.

Based on the experimental evidence, it is argued that the verb does not move out of vP in the narrow syntax in Russian. This accounts for grammaticality of the preverbal adverb position in both Russian and English. However, the postverbal position of adverbs receives different grammaticality judgments in Russian and in English. It is proposed that the word order permutations are a result of movement in the pragmatic component of the grammar, rather than in narrow syntax. In some languages, such as Russian, word order is determined by topic and focus structure, while in other languages like English, the Linearity-IO constraint prohibits any word orders other than the ones derived by the syntactic component. This accounts for the grammaticality difference of postverbal adverbs in the two languages.

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