

Russian imperfective past passive participles Berit Gehrke (based on joint work with Olga Borik)

In this talk, I discuss Russian periphrastic passives with imperfective (IPF) past passive participles (PPPs), which are standardly assumed not to be grammatical, but for which we find ample evidence in contemporary corpora, as reported in Borik & Gehrke (2018). Take, for instance, example (1).

- (1) a. **Stroeno** bylo èto ploxo, xromo, ščeljasto.
built.PF was this badly lamely with.holes
'It was built badly, lamely with holes.'
b. Pis'ma ego **pisany** byli černo i kruglo [...]
letters his written.IPF were black and round
'His letters were written in black and round letters.'

In both these examples, the PPP is compositional, in the sense that its meaning is composed of the lexical base verb and the semantic contribution of PPP morphology, and furthermore both examples involve a regular verbal passive.

In Borik & Gehrke (2018) we argue that constructions like those in (1) exemplify the event counterpart of definite descriptions. In particular, we show that the licensing conditions for this type of construction necessarily involve a link to a previously established or inferable eventive discourse referent. This use of the IPF aspect that relies on anaphoric reference is called 'presuppositional' (after Grønn 2004). We show that presuppositional IPF PPPs are parallel to definite descriptions in the sense that they signal under which file card / discourse referent the event description has to be stored. We argue that such uses of the IPF are parallel to definite descriptions in the sense that the IPF signals an anaphoric link to a previously introduced or inferable eventive discourse referent, for example (2).

- (2) Čto kasaetjsa platy deneg, to **plačeny** byli naličnymi [...]
what concerns payment.GEN money.GEN then paid.IPF were in cash
'Regarding the payment, it was paid in cash.'

In the talk I will also show that just like definites, IPF PPPs can establish anaphoric links that are not based on identity but on associative contextual relations, which we take to be parallel to bridging.

What is striking, however, is that we do not find IPF PPPs in which the IPF meaning expressed is one of an event in progress (of the sort 'the house was being built'). For example, the other IPF PPPs we set aside in the analysis in Borik & Gehrke (2018), can be argued to involve the so-called existential meaning of the Russian IPF (on which see Grønn 2004), which can roughly be paraphrased as 'There was an event of type V'. The absence of a process/event-in-progress meaning is striking insofar as cross-linguistically, periphrastic passives can express such a meaning (as in English above), and this meaning is also one of the core meanings of the Russian IPF in other verb forms (and also of IPF cross-linguistically). Furthermore, in other Slavic languages, e.g. in Czech, IPF PPPs are derived quite regularly, and they can also express a process/event-in-progress meaning. Reflecting on the role of aspectual affixes in the interplay between lexical and grammatical aspect, as well as that of participial morphology, I will speculate why there are these cross-Slavic differences and why we find these restrictions on IPF PPPs in particular in Russian.