

Constructions within and beyond a single clause in the system of Russian reduplication

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This study focuses on 28 Russian constructions called Discourse “Echo” Constructions. Constructions of this type require the repetition of a word or phrase from a previous clause (thus creating an “echo” effect) and add a comment referring to the previous discourse, as in (1):

(1) *Skažeš' tože – XP*

– *On takoj xoroš-ij!* – *Skaž-eš' tože – "xorošij"!*
he such nice-NOM.SG.M say-FUT.2SG also nice-NOM.SG.M
'–He's so nice! –Hah, sure he's “nice”. I actually do not think so!'

While most research in Construction Grammar focuses on clausal, phrasal, and lexical constructions, patterns that exceed a single clause are also constructions. This study takes the perspective of the entirety of Russian constructions as represented in the Russian Constructicon (<https://constructicon.github.io/russian/>), a free open-access resource containing over 2200 multiword constructions.

We argue that reduplication is widespread and systematic in Russian. Reduplication is found in nearly all Syntactic types and all of the most frequent Semantic types in the Russian Constructicon. All parts of speech as well as entire clauses or phrases can be repeated. Our data includes 141 constructions that involve exact, partial, or modified repetition of a constructional anchor and/or slot, including the 28 Discourse “Echo” Constructions.

Unlike reduplication that is attested within a single clause, most Discourse “Echo” constructions express Agreement, Disagreement, or Surprise and are almost uniformly colloquial and exclamatory. The Discourse “Echo” type particularly highlights the negotiation of meaning among interlocutors, an otherwise understudied area of linguistics (with notable exceptions, e.g., Hopper 1988, Schegloff 1991, Ono and Thompson 1995, Helasvuo 2001, Mesch et al. 2015). We propose a theoretical expansion of the definition of reduplication to include the Discourse “Echo” type, arguing that constructions are not limited to a single clause or even to a single speaker, thus giving concrete examples of the co-creation of communication in discourse.

While some researchers might eschew the Discourse “Echo” type as not reduplication in the strict sense of the word, we argue that inter- and intraclausal reduplication cannot be clearly distinguished due to the existence of five constructions like (2) where the constructions both contain a reduplication and an “echo” of something said in a previous utterance.

(2) *ne Noun, a ~Noun-išče*

Éto bylo ne bolot-o, a bolot-išč-e.
this be-PST-3SG NEG swamp-NOM.SG but swamp-AUG-NOM.SG
'It wasn't just a swamp, it was a monster [huge] swamp.'

In (2) the speaker is both echoing a noun provided in a previous utterance (here: *boloto* ‘swamp’) and then reduplicating that noun with a modification on the copy (here: addition of the augmentative and derogatory suffix *-išče*). The formal and functional characteristics found among Russian Reduplication and Discourse “Echo” constructions reflect the distribution of such characteristics among constructions in the Russian Constructicon as a whole, suggesting that Discourse “Echo” constructions are well integrated as a type of reduplication in the construction grammar of Russian.

References

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