Constructional variation vs. constructional contamination: a special case of new Russian [N[N]] compounds

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This paper brings together the issues of constructional variation and constructional contamination. Constructional variation is a relatively well-studied phenomenon where the choice of the respective alternative may depend on a number of syntactic and semantic factors (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004; Goldberg 2006; Bresnan 2007; Bayeen et al. 2013, etc.). Constructional contamination, on the other hand, has gained attention in scholarly literature relatively recently and occurs when usage frequencies of one construction influence, or "contaminate", patterns of variation in another construction (Pijpops & Van de Velde 2016). For instance, highly frequent nominal expressions such as *sexually transmitted disease* make native speakers prefer adverb-initial order in the passive (*The disease was sexually transmitted*) over adverb-final order (*The disease was transmitted sexually*) (Hilpert & Flach 2022). Are there any similarities between constructional variation and constructional contamination?

We present an overview of the processes that accompany the integration of new [N[N]] compounds (*top-igrok* 'top player'), with the modifier element borrowed from English, into the Russian grammatical system. The data for our analysis has been extracted from the Russian National Corpus and the General Internet Corpus of Russian.

On the one hand, we show that Russian new [N[N]] compounds are at variance with inflectional adjectives (*topovyj*-ADJ *igrok*-N from *top-igrok*-N 'top player') that are particularly common in non-formal genres. There are at least three factors that can block the selection of inflectional adjectives over compound modifiers: 1) statistical preemption (see Robenalt & Goldberg 2015), which is overridden by pragmatic factors; 2) multiplicity of competing alternatives, when several suffixes could be added to the stem in order to form a relational adjective; and 3) semantics that leads to a split between the two forms (i.e. the compound *top-model*-N' is used about a person working in the fashion industry, while the adjective phrase *topovaja*-ADJ *model'*-N 'top model' refers to equipment and vehicles).

On the other hand, there is a competition going on between compound modifiers and appositions, which normally are post-positional to the head noun. Certain units (abbreviations and names of styles) can be used both pre-positionally to the head noun (*VIP zal* 'VIP lounge' and *gril'-mašina* 'grilling machine') and post-positionally (*zal VIP* 'VIP lounge' and *kurica-gril'* 'grilled chicken'). This alternation reflects a competition between [N[N]] compounds and appositions, which differ semantically. In the [N[N]] pattern the first element as a rule is relational: *gril'-mašina* 'grilling machine' is a piece of equipment that is used for grilling (i.e. is related to grill). The apposition pattern rather marks names and titles, where the expression *kurica-gril'* 'grilled chicken' basically names what the dish is called.

The salience of the borrowed [N[N]] pattern in Russian affects the usage of adjective phrases and appositions and in this sense resembles constructional contamination. However, while constructional contamination establishes associative links between formally (and semantically) different constructions within one language, the phenomena analyzed in this study present a case of competition between semantically similar constructions, one of which is a linguistic borrowing. In this way, a borrowed construction brings constructional variation and constructional contamination together.

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